



San Francisco Board of Education  
Parent Advisory Council

**Coming Together:  
Focusing on Early Education Department  
Enrollment**

**Report of Findings and Recommendations**  
for  
San Francisco Unified School District  
Early Education Department

**April 10, 2018**

# Report of Findings from Focus Groups about SFUSD's Pre-K & Out of School Time Enrollment

April 2018

## Executive Summary

Over the past two months the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and Early Education Department (EED) collaborated to gather feedback from various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, clerks, and site administrators to hear their ideas, questions and concerns about the idea of streamlining the EED Out of School Time (OST) enrollment process. Through our joint efforts, we held focus groups, conducted interviews, and collected surveys online and in person to identify what is working, areas for improvement, and solutions for making the overall OST enrollment process more family-friendly.

The objectives of our conversations were to:

- Share what we have heard from families in the past about the enrollment process
- Gather additional feedback about what is working and where to improve the system
- Identify solutions and supports needed to help families navigate the enrollment process successfully.

From late January through mid March, we collectively heard from over 70 participants about what is working, what could be improved, the pros and cons of both a site-based model versus a centralized enrollment system, solutions for creating a more efficient system and streamlining the overall process.

We used multiple approaches to gather stakeholder input, including:

- **Family focus groups**, one in the Bayview and the other in the Mission with language interpretation offered at both
- **Meetings and interviews with site administrators and supervisors** and
- **Surveys** online and in person with enrollment site clerks.

As a result of these conversations, we discovered that any recommendations for the OST enrollment process would need to include a shift in the overall EED enrollment system. This report presents our findings from these stakeholder engagement opportunities, and includes recommendations to strengthen and improve the EED enrollment process over the next two years.

## How We Gathered Feedback

During each interaction we asked all participants to share:

- What is working with the Out of School Time enrollment process?
- What needs to be improved?
- What would make the enrollment process easier?

Specific to families we asked them to:

- Identify the factors that influenced their choice for OST programs.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between the enrollment processes of the Educational Placement Center and the Out of School Time program, including the documentation required for each application process.
- Identify the benefits and/or potential challenges of combining the Pre-K enrollment process with OST enrollment process if OST were to become centralized.

Similarly, we asked site administrators to:

- Identify supports and strategies they implement to help families enroll their children successfully.
- Share lessons learned from transitioning the Pre-K enrollment from a site-based model to a centralized system.
- Identify the pros and cons of an OST site-based model versus a centralized system.

Through our engagement efforts, families and staff shared concrete examples of resources that help families navigate the enrollment process, generated ideas for improving the overall system, and surfaced the pros and cons of both a site-based model and a centralized system of enrollment. The content below reflects the themes that emerged across conversations and the perspectives of stakeholders who shared the experiences.

## What is Working

- Participants **emphasized the importance of accessibility and convenience for families to enroll their children in Out of School Time Programs**, especially when they had other children already enrolled in a Pre-K or OST programs. They specifically indicated **the convenience of no appointment requirement, flexible hours families have to drop off paperwork** at pick up time and after work, and **appreciated the fact that recertification is every two years**.

### What is Working (cont.)

- Families **highlighted the elements of support that are working**, including **friendly enrollment specialists** and help from teachers, having a **list of required documents, materials available in various languages**, and the **ability to speak with staff in their home language** to complete the application.
- Families and staff alike **appreciated the opportunities to interact, build strong relationships, and create a sense of community**, which has allowed families to become familiar with the system, teachers, staff, and the partnerships that exist at sites.
- Others pointed out that **OST staff have knowledge of the program history**, and are **familiar with the changes** as they develop.

### What Needs to Be Improved

While stakeholders recognized many aspects of the enrollment process are working well, they also shared feedback about how to improve the process.

- They acknowledged the **need for continued alignment from site-to-site to develop consistency** across programs.
- Participants **identified the challenges of communication breakdowns** among staff during the enrollment process and the need to clarify the transfer system for both families and staff—there is confusion about what families of transitioning preschoolers need to do to move to after school programs.
- We **heard the need for flexible and extended office hours** so families can enroll their children without missing work, and the desire for **additional customer service training** for staff to communicate effectively, with responsible compassion, and understanding.
- Both **families and staff expressed that the amount of paperwork is overwhelming**, too much, and the documentation **needs to be simplified**. Many also thought **families would benefit from enrollment workshops to help them complete the application process**, especially for first time applicants.
- Across all conversations, **families and staff alike urged the district to streamline the OST enrollment process by creating an online system**, which would **reduce the amount of paperwork** and **allow for a hybrid system** – the ability to send documents online or fax, and still hold face-to-face interviews to foster relationships.
- Families made suggestions to **improve program quality** by expanding resources to **include activities such as language classes, sports, and activity clubs**.

## Pros and Cons: Site-Based Vs. a Centralized System

We asked site administrators and clerks to identify the pros and cons of both a site-based model and a centralized system of enrollment. Similarly, we invited families to name the potential benefits and challenges of the OST enrollment process transitioning to a centralized model combined with Pre-K enrollment. Here is what they shared:

<b><u>Site-Based Enrollment</u></b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Pros</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and families are able to build relationships, which foster a sense of greater engagement and investment in the program</li> <li>• One stop shop, less running around for family, especially if co-located Pre-K and OST program</li> <li>• Families access services quickly, less delay before service begins</li> <li>• Sharing information is easier, able to share student information with teacher beforehand due to short turnaround time</li> <li>• In general, sites offer longer hours (7:30 am-5:30 pm)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Cons</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistency from site-to-site on eligibility and quality assurance</li> <li>• Challenge if families have students in multiple locations</li> <li>• Limited language access -if language is not available on site.</li> <li>• Marketing, outreach, and recruitment for OST sites currently varies depending on the site’s capacity.</li> <li>• Site clerks working hours: most of them have a part time schedule.</li> </ul>

<b><u>Centralized System of Enrollment</u></b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Pros</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater consistency of service, family files, quality assurance, site clerk hours, and marketing plan</li> <li>• More consistency for enrollment process, less gatekeeping of picking and choosing students to accept at sites, ensuring greater equity</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Cons</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not able to meet families’ immediate needs, two week delay before service begins</li> <li>• Location is not convenient (555 Franklin), and some parents have to take time off work</li> </ul>

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One place, one person, one file, one process, one-stop-shop</li> <li>• System of city-wide enrollment list is working</li> <li>• Centralizing enrollment would help streamline outreach and recruitment efforts across sites, making it more equitable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduled appointment is required and extremely limited at the moment</li> <li>• Perceived loss of relationship building opportunities, connections and sense of community between families and site staff</li> <li>• Restricted hours, EPC is open 8 am-4:30 pm, less than eight hours a day</li> <li>• Perception that Pre-K families can get lost in the EPC shuffle of enrollment</li> </ul>

**Lessons Learned: Transitioning Pre-K Enrollment from Site-Based to a Central Model:**

Benefits that emerged as a result of this transition:

- Created transparency, consistency, and standardization.
- Ensured language access.
- Eliminated the gatekeeping of picking and choosing students and assured more equity and access among families during the enrollment process.

Concerns that surfaced as a result of the Pre-K enrollment transitioning to a centralized process:

- Overlap is still unclear regarding the responsibility/accountability between central and site-based enrollment.
- Sense of loss of relationship building with families since the centralized process began.
- No real buy-in with stakeholders, no explanation of what was happening; missing the who, what, why and how to implement as a department.

Other reflections and considerations:

- A critical point that surfaced among participants was the concern that site clerks may lose their jobs if the OST enrollment process were to become centralized. However, if intentional, this shift could provide increased opportunities for site clerks to support family engagement efforts and build stronger relationships with parents as partners in their children’s education.

For example, with less compliance paperwork site clerks would have more time to follow up on student attendance matters with families and/or elementary schools early and often as a strategy to reduce absenteeism. Additionally, site clerks could be more involved with the onboarding process with students and their families.

- Out of School Time regulations changed in February 2017, and staff are still determining the impact on the workload and families as the changes continue to be implemented.
- SFUSD is committed to a Pre-K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade approach to early education as a means to impact student outcomes and narrow the gap in achievement early on. Opportunities to strengthen systems, structures, and services that support the success of the Pre K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade alignment need to be explored for this initiative to have its intended impact. The set of recommendations below provides such opportunities.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR SFUSD'S EED ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

Based on the themes that emerged across the conversations **we identified the following recommendations** for the Out of School Time enrollment process:

#### **1. Move the EED enrollment process to a digital platform.**

##### Implications and considerations:

- Financial and other resources required to implement
- Explore leveraging existing resources, such as ParentVu and School Messenger
- Site clerks and enrollment clerks need to be trained on how the system works
- Staff should be available centrally and at sites to support families who either need help with online enrollment process or who prefer to do the process manually

#### **2. Create a hybrid system of online enrollment and paper application option**

##### Implications and considerations:

- This would look different depending on the type of site, i.e. OST at a standalone site, OST at co-located elementary school, Pre-K & OST at a co-located elementary school, OST sites that are licensed and those that are exempt.
- Principals who oversee multiple sites would not be bogged down by paperwork since it would be centralized, yet would have enrollment available on site to give families the accessibility and convenience of hours.
- Centralizing the paperwork process would ensure compliance is standardized across sites and addresses the tension of sites acting as gatekeepers for student admittance.

## **RECOMMENDATION FOR SFUSD'S OST ENROLLMENT PROCESS (CONT.)**

### **3. Establish flexible office hours to accommodate working families.**

#### Implications and considerations:

- This shift could be seasonal with extended hours occurring during the peak enrollment months and season.
- Creating a flexible work schedule would require union negotiations.

### **4. Develop a pilot program plan for a couple of after school programs to transition to a central model.**

### **5. Establish Onboarding /Transition plans for students and families for new enrollments as well as transfers.**

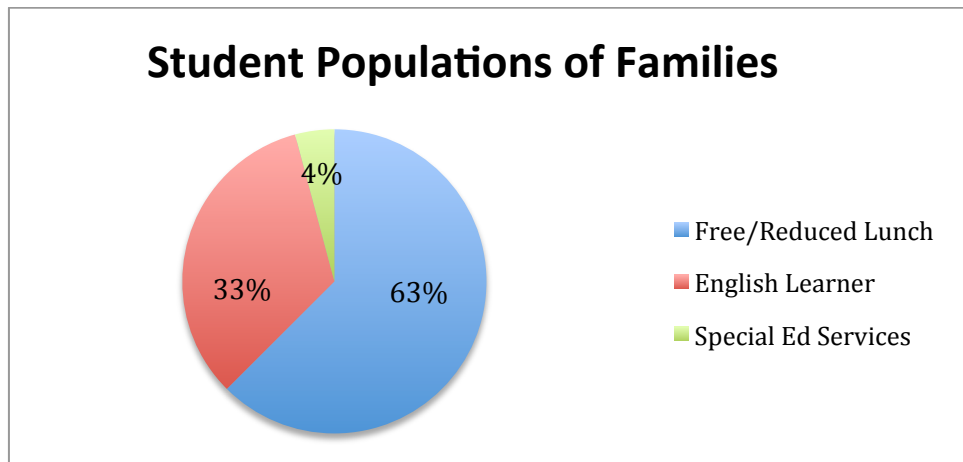
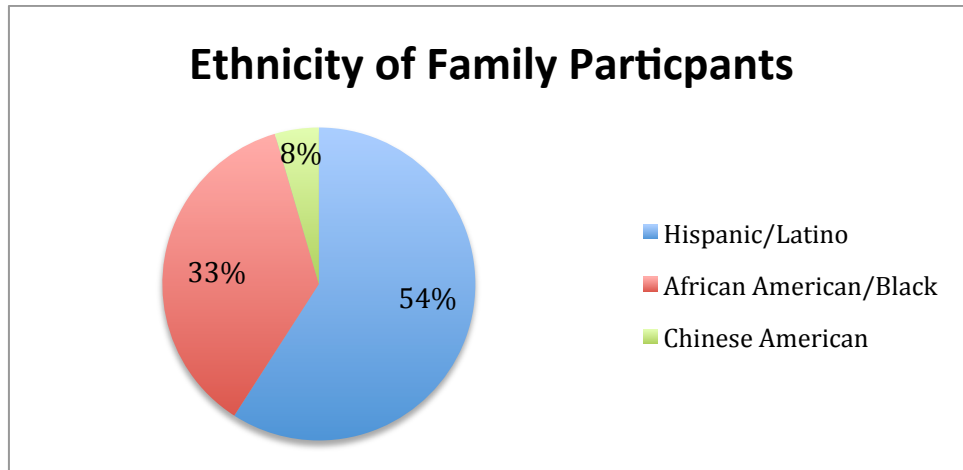
## **Conclusion:**

A major take-away from these listening sessions is that the development of any streamlined enrollment process needs to be intentional, well planned, and coordinated. To this end, the development of an online system that can accommodate the entire Early Education Department enrollment process and Transitional Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment needs to be in concert with the Educational Placement Center, and leverage existing resources. Shifting to an online system will still require staff certification and centralized satellite options, extended office hours, and on-site support for families who need help navigating the online system. As a result, this shift would provide increased opportunities for clerks and principals to support family engagement efforts and build stronger relationships with parents as partners in their children's education. Family partnership begins with enrollment.



## Appendix: Demographic Information of Families

During our stakeholder engagement sessions we decided to collect only the demographic information of the families and not that of the administrators, site clerks, or other staff. In all, a total of 24 parents returned the demographic surveys during the two focus groups. The following charts reflect their demographic information.



### Family Participants have children attending the following SFUSD schools:

**Early Education:** Las Americas and Leola Havard

**Elementary Schools:** Charles Drew, Fairmount, George Washington Carver, Guadalupe, Moscone, and West Portal.

**K-8 Schools:** Alice Fung

**Middle Schools:** AP Giannini

### Family Participants live within the following San Francisco zip codes:

94110, 94124, 94132, and 94134