Our Schools, Our Voices: Mapping the Way to Success

Report of Findings and Considerations
From Community Conversations about
San Francisco Unified School District’s
Local Control and Accountability Plan

April 30, 2015
Community Engagement in SFUSD’s Local Control and Accountability Plan: A Collaborative Effort

Regulations under the State of California’s Local Control Funding Formula require a Parent Advisory Council and District English Learner Advisory Committee to provide feedback to the district’s Local Control and Accountability Plan, as well as a process for stakeholder engagement in the process of developing the Local Plan, or LCAP.

Based on recommendations from the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) last year, in fall 2014 SFUSD convened staff and representatives of advisory groups, labor partners and community organizations to work collaboratively as the LCAP Task Force. Members of the Task Force developed the objectives, content and outreach plan, and helped convene and lead conversations, for community engagement in spring 2015.

The overall goals of this community engagement process were to engage our district’s students, families, educators and community members, to:

- Understand state funding priorities and SFUSD’s approach to allocating resources, services and supports to schools,
- Inform these central district allocations, and
- Help shape the district’s updated Local Control and Accountability Plan.

Our Approach

Community members and district staff from the LCAP Task Force organized and led a series of conversations to share information about SFUSD’s existing LCAP, and hear participants’ questions, suggestions and priorities, through:

- **Community conversations** in schools and community centers (conducted in Spanish or Cantonese, or in English with interpretation)
- **Focus groups** with community organizations working with families and serving students (including youth in transition or foster care) and with United Educators of San Francisco
- Three **forums open to the general public**, co-hosted by SFUSD with Parents for Public Schools, the Second District PTA, and Support for Families of Children with Disabilities.
- SFUSD’s website provided **an online survey** and information that was presented through the forums and conversations, for people who couldn’t attend in person.

From March 19 - April 28, 2015 we heard from over 300 participants in 23 conversations. By conducting conversations at schools and in trusted community settings we aimed to hear from participants reflecting the diversity of SFUSD’s students and families across differences in language, ethnicity, neighborhood and socioeconomic background. Throughout this process we also prioritized hearing from students, families and communities intended to be served by LCFF and SFUSD funding priorities: English Learners, low-income students, youth in foster care, African American students and students who receive special education services.
CONSIDERATIONS FOR SFUSD’S REVISED LOCAL PLAN

Through these community conversations we identified several goals and measures to be strengthened or incorporated into SFUSD’s revised LCAP for 2015-2016:

1. Include a specific goal for improving the rate of reclassification as “Fluent English Proficient” for English Learners whose primary language is Spanish.
2. Include goals and measures for youth in foster care.
3. Strengthen goals for further reducing suspensions of African American and Latino students.
4. Include goals related to measuring and reducing out-of-class referrals and in-house suspensions (overall and for African American and Latino students).
5. Add goals and measures for achievement and progress among elementary and middle school students, including those that highlight social-emotional skills development.
6. Include goals and measures related to implementing the district’s Family Engagement Plan and Family Engagement standards.

We also identified several actions, services and supports related to achieving current LCAP goals and measures, to be articulated in the revised LCAP for 2015-2016:

1. How centrally-allocated resources, including staff positions, are being increased to support teachers and students - in particular student populations prioritized by LCFF funding and SFUSD strategic initiatives.
2. How these supports are being allocated, coordinated and prioritized to serve high-needs students – including those with needs for mental health services, suffering from trauma, receiving Special Education services and/or with behavioral challenges.
3. Strategies being implemented to increase English language proficiency among Spanish speaking English Learners, in particular, to close the gap in their reclassification as Fluent English Proficient.
4. Strategies being implemented to increase kindergarten readiness for children in SFUSD PreK programs.
5. Specific activities to engage and support families, including at least three family-centered workshops to be provided at school sites each year.

How We Got Here: Information We Shared Through Community Conversations

In each conversation we presented information about the Local Control Funding Formula and the state’s emphasis on equity, flexibility and accountability. Through small group activities we shared information about the different levels of supports SFUSD provides schools; examples of goals and measures described in SFUSD’s current LCAP; and district data related to these goals.
Finally, we asked participants to share ideas about resources and services that are effective, and could be improved or increased; then identified their priorities and supports they feel are most important to support students.

The information was organized through three themes: Student Access & Achievement, Student Engagement & School Climate, and Family Engagement. Participants identified priorities related to all three of these areas, but in nearly every conversation the theme that generated the most discussion and feedback was Student Engagement and School Climate.

What We Heard: Findings from the Conversations

- Students, families and staff shared many concrete examples of supports and services that are important – and that work – to support students.

- While the overall tone of many discussions was positive, participants in every conversation had questions about how funds and services are being monitored and evaluated, and about the mechanisms for accountability.

- Participants in some conversations (especially in African American communities) were deeply skeptical about whether this engagement process would result in changes or improvements for their children’s schools.

- Many participants expressed dismay about the trauma that students are experiencing and bring to school. They emphasized the importance of better aligning and prioritizing resources, such as sufficient staff supports in classrooms and school-wide where students are experiencing trauma and teachers are struggling to create more positive learning conditions, as well as adequate space for students who need time to de-escalate.

These primary themes emerged across the different conversations among students, families, school staff and community members, related to the overall themes of the LCAP:

Student Access and Achievement

- Participants in every conversation emphasized the importance of teachers being culturally competent, caring about their students as individuals and understanding the experiences that students bring to school. This point was particularly emphasized by those working with families and youth in transition, youth in foster care and in communities experiencing trauma.

- They highlighted the need to build the capacity of teachers to manage their classrooms and provide differentiated, integrated instruction, noting the combination of class size reduction and increased classroom staff as concrete actions to support these ends.
• Many participants – especially students – emphasized the **need for a curriculum that’s more engaging, hands-on, and relevant**. They also prioritized the need for tutoring, bilingual paraprofessionals, and **increased support in afterschool programs aligned with specific student needs**, especially for English Learners and students receiving Special Education services.

• Participants had many questions and concerns about students being ready for Kindergarten, and some wanted to see measures of academic achievement in the LCAP in addition to those focused on high school data points (such as graduation rates and UC/CSU eligibility) and Kindergarten readiness.

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**Student Engagement and School Climate**

• Participants observed that African American and Latino students continue to be disproportionately suspended, across all grade levels. They emphasized that, while formal suspensions may be down, **in-house suspensions and out of class referrals are significant** and not being reported.

• Across all the conversations participants identified the need to **provide behavior supports** to reduce out of class referrals. They highlighted the need to **increase, prioritize and better coordinate staff providing mental health and behavior supports**, including counselors; social workers; nurses; psychologists; RtI, Behavioral Action Team and Restorative Practices coaches; student advisors; and paraprofessionals.

• In several instances, participants stressed the need for physical space to safely address behavioral challenges and **still provide a learning environment to reduce loss of instructional time**.

• Most families of English Learners – even parents who felt welcomed and involved in their children’s schools – did not understand or know about the procedures and the importance of students being reclassified as Fluent English Proficient. Participants were deeply concerned that while SFUSD’s English Learners on the whole are meeting district goals for reclassification, **students who are Spanish speakers are significantly behind and wondered what strategies are being put into place to address this gap**.

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**Family Engagement**

• As in every community engagement initiative over the past several years, families, students, educators and community members emphasized the **need for better communication with teachers and schools** on the whole.
• Many parents expressed the desire to learn about ways to support their children at home, including information at the beginning of the year about milestones and expectations that are used to assess their children’s development, growth and success to advance in school.

• Parents, district staff and community members talked about the importance of working with families to support their students and schools, and noted the current LCAP does not include goals or measures related to family engagement, or refer to SFUSD’s Family Engagement Standards.

Serving Youth in Foster Care or in Transitional Housing

• During focus groups with students, families, and community agencies providing services to youth in foster care and to families and youth in transitional housing, participants stressed the importance of school and district staff reaching out to encourage and support students to stay in school.

• Participants noted that students and families need additional help to access the services that are available. Students, guardians and community members expressed the need for both communication about ways to support their students’ education; and for direct services such as help applying for college, financial aid and scholarships.

Conclusion

We hope that SFUSD will seriously consider what we learned and shared from these conversations as the revisions of the district’s LCAP are being drafted. Some of the specific points detailed in this report are new, but many of these ideas, concerns and questions have been expressed before. The fact that they continue to come up highlights the need for students, families, staff and community members to see and feel concrete changes that reflect their experiences and acknowledges the value of their voices.

Our community recognizes that work is happening in SFUSD to provide supports for students, teachers and schools. Many of these efforts, however, are not captured in the current LCAP. We believe that incorporating the above considerations – and implementing these strategies across the district - will help reduce the level of skepticism that exists and even begin to restore trust in SFUSD with many of our students’ families and communities.
Appendix I: SFUSD’s LCAP Task Force

Based on recommendations from the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) last spring, in the fall of 2014 SFUSD convened district staff and representatives of advisory groups, labor partners and community organizations to work collaboratively as the LCAP Task Force. Members of the Task Force developed the objectives, content, and outreach plan, and helped convene and lead conversations, for the community engagement process during spring 2015. Participants in SFUSD’s LCAP Task Force include:

SFUSD Staff and Labor Partners
• Access and Equity
• Family and Community Engagement
• Families and Youth In Transition (FYIT)
• Foster Youth Services
• Policy and Operations
• United Educators of San Francisco

SFUSD Advisory Committees
• African American Parent Advisory Council (AAPAC)
• District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC)
• Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
• Student Advisory Council (SAC)

Community-Based Organizations
• Chinese for Affirmative Action
• Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
• Mission Graduates
• Parents for Public Schools-SF (PPS)
• Peer Resources
• Second District PTA
• Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

The purpose of SFUSD’s LCAP Task Force is to:

1. Increase and improve transparency, accountability and communication about the Local Control and Accountability Plan (both the current Plan, and revisions for 2015-16)

2. Review specific elements within the LCAP for the current year (2014-15), including
   • Section 3 - Appendix A budget for 2014-15
   • Section 2 – Goals & measures, and whether these reflect/demonstrate student success

3. Support timely community engagement to inform revisions to the LCAP for 2015-16.
Appendix II: Who We Heard from: Participants in Community Conversations

From March 19 - April 28, 2015 we heard from over 300 participants in 23 conversations, surpassing our objectives for both the number of conversations and participants.

By conducting conversations at schools and in trusted community settings we were successful in reaching our goal of hearing from participants reflecting the diversity of SFUSD’s students and families across differences in ethnicity, language, neighborhood and socioeconomic background. We also prioritized hearing from students, families and communities intended to be served by LCFF and SFUSD funding priorities: English Learners, low-income students, youth in foster care, African American students and students who receive Special Education services.

Based on surveys of participants:

✓ 72% were parents or guardians
✓ 4% were students
✓ 14% were educators/district staff
✓ 9% were community members

Participants spoke many home languages:

✓ 46% speak English at home
✓ 32% speak Spanish at home
✓ 27% speak Chinese at home
✓ 15% speak other languages, including Arabic, Cambodian, Czech, Navajo, Russian, Samoan, Tagalog, and Vietnamese
Participants represented **44 different SFUSD schools**:

**Early Education and Elementary Schools**: Alvarado, Bret Harte, Bryant, Carver, Cesar Chavez, Chinese Education Center, Cleveland, ER Taylor, Flynn, Garfield, Glen Park, Grattan, Guadalupe, Junipero Serra, Longfellow, Malcolm X Academy, Marshall, Mission Education Center, Moscone, Sanchez, Sheridan, Spring Valley, Tenderloin Community School, Tule Elk Park

**K-8 Schools**: Bessie Carmichael, Buena Vista Horace Mann, Lawton, Claire Lilienthal

**Middle Schools**: Aptos, Denman, Everett, Francisco, AP Giannini, Hoover, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., James Lick, Marina, Presidio, Roosevelt, Visitacion Valley

**High Schools**: Lincoln, Lowell, Mission, John O'Connell, Washington

**Charter Schools**: Edison Charter Academy, KIPP Bayview Academy, San Francisco Flex Academy

**Where we held the conversations and focus groups:**

**At schools**: Carver Elementary School, Chinese Education Center, Denman Middle School, Garfield Elementary School, Hoover Middle School, Longfellow Elementary School, Malcolm X Academy, Mission High School, Spring Valley Elementary School, and Tenderloin Community School.


**Focus groups**: Families and Youth in Transition, Family Engagement Network, Foster Parent Association, Foster Youth Stakeholders, and United Educators of San Francisco/Division Meeting.

**SFUSD advisory committees**: Indian Education Parent Advisory Council and Parent Advisory Council to Board of Education.
For more information about the Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control Accountability Plans...

SFUSD:  www.sfusd.edu/lcflcap
        or email budget@sfusd.edu

San Francisco Board of Education’s Parent Advisory Council:
        www.pacsf.org

Chinese for Affirmative Action:  www.caasf.org

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth:
        www.colemandadvocates.org

Mission Graduates:  www.missiongraduates.org

Parents for Public Schools-SF (PPS):  www.ppssf.org

Parent Teacher Association/2\textsuperscript{nd} District PTA:  www.sfpta.org

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities:
        www.supportforfamilies.org

California state PTA:  www.capta.org