

## **SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign**

### **History of Student Assignment in SFUSD**

**In 1978, the San Francisco NAACP** brought a case against SFUSD and the State of California. The NAACP argued that the District and the State engaged in discriminatory practices and maintained a segregated school system in violation of the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes, and the State of California Constitution.

**In 1983, the U.S. District Court approved a type of agreement between the parties called a “Consent Decree”** which had two primary goals for the San Francisco Unified School District:

1. continued and accelerated efforts to achieve academic excellence for all students with a particular focus on African American and Latino students; and
2. elimination of racial/ethnic segregation or identifiability in any school, program, or classroom to the extent practicable.

In implementing the 1983 Consent Decree, SFUSD created a student assignment plan and a transportation system designed to support SFUSD’s efforts to desegregate its schools. The student assignment plan used a combination of schools with both contiguous and noncontiguous attendance areas, alternative schools (without attendance areas), and optional enrollment requests which allowed students to transfer to schools outside of their attendance area school. In addition, no school could have fewer than four racial/ethnic groups, and no racial/ethnic group could constitute more than 45% of the students at attendance area schools or 40% at alternative schools.

**In 1994, a group of San Francisco parents sued the District** for using race as a factor in school assignment, and as part of a 1999 settlement, SFUSD was prohibited from using race or ethnicity as a consideration in student assignment. In attempting to comply with that agreement, SFUSD initially proposed an assignment plan that used a lottery process in which race/ethnicity was one factor, but the Court rejected that plan.

**In 2001, the Court approved a settlement agreement** that included a new student assignment method called the Diversity Index, which was implemented for the 2002-03 school year and has been in use ever since. The Diversity Index is designed to:

1. give parents choice;
2. ensure equitable access; and
3. promote diversity without using race/ethnicity.

**On December 31, 2005, the Consent Decree expired**, and for the first time in 22 years the SFUSD student assignment process was not regulated by the courts.

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### **Hearing from the Community**

SFUSD has partnered with different community members and organizations over the past five years to gather feedback on the student assignment system. SFUSD has heard from thousands of parents and other community members regarding their experience, concerns, and suggestions for student assignment. Families consistently report wanting quality schools and a fair and equitable system that is easy to understand.

While families consistently report wanting quality schools, there are many divergent perspectives on what a new student assignment plan should prioritize and support. For example, some parents want a school close to home, while others feel that choosing a school with particular programmatic features is more important than having a school close to home.

Here is a high-level summary of key findings from the community reports. For the purposes of the summary, we have pulled out findings that relate only to the student assignment system. However, within these reports there is also rich material regarding the kinds of schools parents and other community members want.

- Some parents, particularly elementary school parents, want a quality school close to home or easy to get to. Other parents feel that choosing the school that is best suited for their child is more important than having the school in their neighborhood.
- Most parents want their school communities to reflect San Francisco's socioeconomic and cultural diversity. But for parents across the city, diversity is often trumped by a school's location, academic quality, and their own feeling of belonging.
- Even parents who are happy with their children's schools want more predictability in the enrollment process and are uncomfortable with a process that feels excessively complicated or random.
- Parents want the District to provide clear and accessible information that will help them choose a school that is a good fit for their child.
- Parents want to participate fully in the enrollment process, but many encounter significant language, time, and information barriers.

The content of past community reports can be found on our website: [www.sfusd.edu](http://www.sfusd.edu). (<http://portal.sfusd.edu/template/default.cfm?page=policy.placement.assignment.community>)

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### **SFUSD's Current Student Assignment System**

The current student assignment plan, in place since 2001, is designed to:

1. Give parents choice;
2. Ensure equitable access; and
3. Promote diversity without using race/ethnicity.

Under the current system, the biggest determinations of where a student goes to school are parent choice and available seats at any given school.

Students are not automatically assigned a school. Families can request up to seven schools anywhere in the district.

Younger siblings get priority to attend school with their older sibling.

While there is some local preference, the district is using the same attendance area boundaries created over 15 years ago, and about 1/3 of schools do not have any attendance area boundaries.

Some schools have more applications than seats for students. For those schools a diversity lottery assigns students to one of their choices.

The diversity lottery seeks to achieve economic, linguistic, and academic diversity. It defines and measures diversity using a complex formula that calculates the probability that in a given grade randomly chosen students will be different from each other.

The calculation is based on five race-neutral factors:

1. extreme poverty;
2. socioeconomic status;
3. student's home language;
4. academic performance index of student's prior school; and
5. student's prior academic achievement.

For many schools, the applicant pools are not diverse. Since the diversity lottery only assigns students from the applicant pools, it has limited opportunity to reduce racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school.

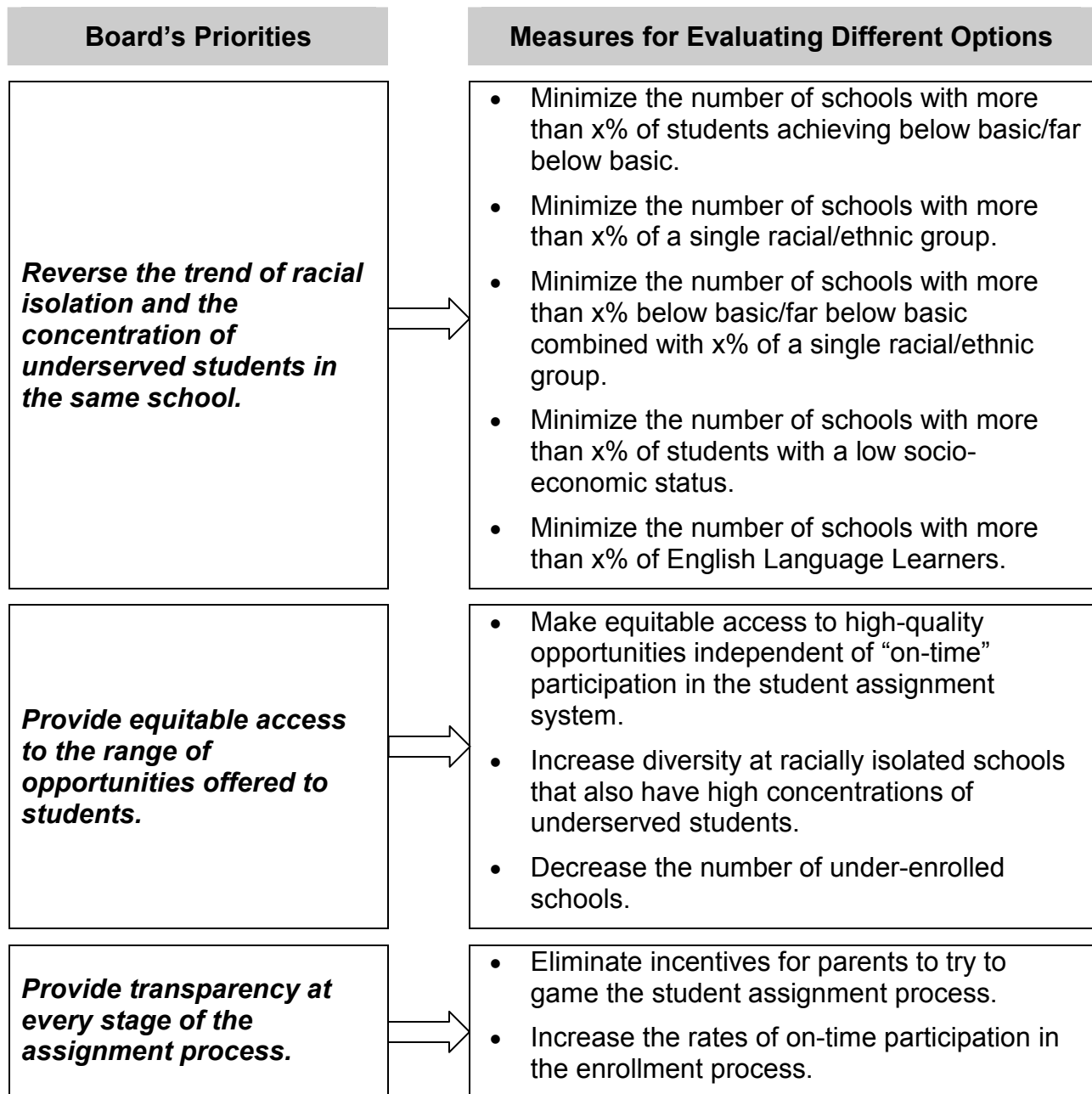
Students who do not get one of their choices get offered the school closest to where they live with a seat available.

You have to turn your application in on time to choose among all the schools. If you don't turn your application in on time, you can only request schools that still have space.

There is limited connection between where students live and where they go to school, and as a result school assignments are not predictable.

## **Board of Education’s Priorities for Student Assignment**

In response to the concerns about the current student assignment system, the Board of Education established three priorities for a new student assignment system, and they also established measures for evaluating different options.



These measures will be used to analyze various options to see if a particular option is more or less likely to meet the Board of Education’s priorities for a new student assignment system.