District Redesigning Special Education Services

In the spring of 2010, as part of SFUSD’s goal of ensuring a quality education for all students, the Superintendent and Board of Education commissioned an independent evaluation of the programs and services for students with disabilities.

The audit has been completed and it provides recommendations that will help the district move forward with revamping the vision, approach, and services for Special Education students.

Overall Findings
The audit was conducted between March and May 2010, including eight school site visits and six days on-site interviewing more than a hundred stakeholders. Auditors also spent over seven months analyzing and reviewing documents and data, making feedback and made adjustments every year. This fall is the first time that every elementary school will use them.

For each marking period for each subject, teachers assess a limited number of standards. Berger, who has helped develop the report cards and has been using them for the past three years, explains that he looks at the entire school year and maps out which standards he’s going to focus on, and when. “The new report cards are directly aligned to what we do in class. It makes teaching simpler and enriches the dialogue I have with students and their families.”

Teachers in California are required to teach a set of standards that corresponds to each grade level and subject area, and an annual California Standards Test (CST) is administered to students every spring starting in second grade. By the time the scores for this annual test come in, students are moving on to the next grade.

The new report cards are part of a district wide effort to use more real time data to make sure that students are on track — and to make adjustments if they are not.

For every standard, the teachers look at a common set of rubrics, which provides a clear definition of what the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 look like for each standard. For example, at the end of fourth grade, students are expected to “Add and subtract multi-digit numbers.” If a student receives a “1” (needs more time/practice to develop) then the rubric describes a student who “records addition and subtraction problems accurately by correctly
New SFUSD Elementary School Attendance Area Boundaries

Final Recommendations for Elementary Attendance Areas
Prepared for September 28, 2010 Board Meeting

City-wide schools (schools without boundaries) – light gray symbols on map:
1. Alice Fong Yu
2. Buena Vista
3. Bessie Carmichael
4. Chinese Education Center
5. Chinese Immersion School at DeAvila
6. Fairmount
7. Lawton
8. Lilienthal
9. Marshall
10. Mission Ed Center
11. Paul Revere
12. Rooftop
13. SF Community
14. SFUSD Public Montessori

Considerations: Neighborhood demographics. Where students live now and where enrollment changes are expected in the future. Size and location of schools. Major roads and highways. Geography.

New student placement policy does not require you to choose your attendance area school; nor does it guarantee a placement at your attendance area school.

Most attendance area boundaries run along the centers of streets.

The San Francisco Board of Education has approved new elementary school attendance areas. These attendance areas will take effect for students entering Kindergarten in 2011.

The new school borders will be used as a factor in determining student placement into San Francisco’s public elementary schools. In the school placement policy adopted by the board last spring, elementary school students will be assigned to schools based on the choices parents submit in their application. When demand for a school exceeds capacity, the district will use a new set of tie-breakers to determine which students will be offered placement in those high-demand schools. Where a child lives will play a more prominent role than in the previous system.

The vote marks the first time since the early 1980s that attendance areas for elementary schools have been redrawn. The district has since closed and moved some schools, and several schools did not have attendance areas before this new set was approved.

For more information about SFUSD’s new Student Placement System, go to www.sfusd.edu/enroll

This paper is made possible with the support of The Examiner
When I first came on to the Board of Education, I thought from a deficit approach—"We don’t have enough money. We don’t have enough teachers. We don’t have enough books." I realized midway through my term that we had a surplus of one asset—real estate.

One of SFUSD’s greatest assets, besides our students and teachers, is our real estate. And according to California Department of Education, it is highly underutilized. We can do more to fully utilize our property to serve our families and raise revenue. More importantly, we can use our buildings and campuses to be a part of our strategic plan to close the achievement and opportunity gap.

We have 134 school buildings with about 7.5 million square feet of indoor space and 5.5 million outdoor square feet. This is up to double what California recommends per individual student. Here are a couple of ideas:

1) Build Educator Housing to retain our teachers and paraprofessionals: We need to keep our staff from leaving San Francisco because of housing prices. We have vacant sites that could be better utilized as educator housing and maybe in the future, family housing.

2) Address needs in our neighborhoods which widen the opportunity and achievement gap: If certain neighborhoods don’t have enough grocery stores or access to fresh and healthy food, let’s create more community gardens on our school sites. We can partner with neighborhood association and community-based organizations who can manage the garden, planting and food distribution. I am currently working with POWER (www.peopleorganized.org) to manage one of our school gardens in Bayview Hunter’s Point to be accessible to the community for gardening and harvesting.

3) Raise Revenue: We currently make between $1 to $1.5 million from school sites rentals. That means we generate about $0.20 per indoor square foot. However, we pay $28.74 per square foot per year to maintain our facilities. We can invest in staff to rent underutilized property to raise more revenue for our schools!

We must be creative because public schools are not adequately funded and there is inequity in our communities. Policies and practices can create and support opportunities in our neighborhoods that some of our children don’t have. Let’s make our facilities and real estate a part of our strategic plan and close the gap!
District Redesigning Special Education Services

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following up on interview data, and conducting additional research on SFUSD.

In general, the auditors found - and new Assistant Superintendent for Special Education Cecelia Dodge agrees - that SFUSD does not educate students with disabilities in an integrated, inclusive manner. However, moving toward a more inclusive approach, where students are learning in the least restrictive environment possible, will take a district wide shift, not just a change in the Special Education department.

“I came to work in San Francisco because I see that the district is committed to social justice,” says Dodge, a veteran Special Education leader. “Having worked in other districts that offer far more inclusive services, I experienced what is possible and look forward to moving San Francisco in this direction.”

Full Report Available, Community Meetings Planned

The district is holding publicic meetings at various locations in the city to discuss the report with interested community members. To read the full report and learn about future meetings, go to the Special Education page on sfusd.edu.

More about what's happening in SFUSD – and how you can get involved

- Deciding on a new school transportation policy. This fall, the Board of Education will adopt a new policy related to student transportation and school busing. To find out more about the policy under development, go to sfusd.edu.

- Changing middle school student assignment and redesigning our district's middle school programs. The district is developing a new system for assigning students to middle schools, which will emphasize strengthening school communities, improving school programs and expanding access to language programs and Special Education services for middle schoolers. The new plan will be in place for the 2012-2013 school year. To find out more about the middle school assignment and program redesign process, visit sfusd.edu/enroll.

- New district-wide plan for parent & family engagement. In May, 2009, the Board of Education passed a resolution calling for a new parent involvement plan to establish specific goals and objectives for building effective partnerships among families and schools. The district has worked with families and community groups to identify strategies that work to involve and empower our students’ families, set standards for all schools, and define ways to hold the district accountable for achieving these goals.

To learn more about the district’s plan for parent involvement, contact the SFUSD’s Office of School-Family Partnership, at (415) 241-6185.

New Report Cards

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lining up place value positions.” A student who receives a “4” for this standard (exceeds standards) would be able to “design a project to illustrate the addition and subtraction of a multi-digit number in a real world context and explains the use of multiple strategies when adding and subtracting multi-digit numbers.”

They also help teachers share specifics with parents about what a child is working toward and how well they are progressing.

There are four ‘marking’ (grading) periods. The only report card that is filed permanently is the final one – the others are to indicate progress. The goal is for each child to reach a three or four, in every standard, by the end of the school year.

These numbers mean they fully understand the standard and have mastered the standard for that grade.

Special Assistant to the Superintendent, Hoover Liddell, and a committee of SFUSD school teachers across grade levels have been leading the development of the new report cards.

“Frequently parents don’t know what is expected of their child academically,” says Liddell. “For example, what does third grade work look like? Each report card should give you a sense of where your child is along the path to mastery.” Liddell says that the new report cards tell parents very clearly what their child knows in relation to the grade level standards. So no final mark should be a surprise.

CC Sofronas Ades has two daughters, ages 6 and 8, at Sunset Elementary.

Sofronas Ades says “I appreciate having a grading system for each standard in the report card. It is more specific so I know more about how my children are doing.”

That is exactly what the teachers who developed the report cards had in mind.

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