SF Families Receiving School Assignments

Most Applicants’ First Choice for Schools were Located Outside of their Neighborhood

March 18, 2011 (San Francisco) - A month ago, 14,347 families submitted applications for public schools in San Francisco and, starting today, they will be receiving their assignment offers in the mail.

This year SFUSD saw 229 more kindergarten applicants than last year, a five percent increase.

The district analyzed the requests from applicants and found one result particularly surprising - less than 25 percent of kindergarten applicants requested schools closest to home as their first choice.

“Over our years of gathering community feedback, we heard from the majority of parents that they wanted to be able to choose the schools they felt would be best for their child,” said Deputy Superintendent Myong Leigh, who oversees the district’s Educational Placement Center. “This year, as with previous years, parents overwhelmingly chose schools based on multiple factors, with proximity appearing to be less important than other school offerings.”

For kindergarten applicants, there was high demand for K-8 schools and schools with language programs. More than one third listed a language program as a first choice.

Student assignment has been a widely discussed topic in San Francisco and in urban districts across the nation. After years of reviewing data, hearing from the community and national experts on the topic, the San Francisco Board of Education adopted a new student placement policy in March, 2009.

“Today is a milestone – it marks the first cohort of families to have their choices run using this new assignment system,” said Board President Hydra Mendoza. “We’re happy to see that demand is up - there is more interest in our schools overall.”

One of the district’s concerns about maintaining a student assignment system driven by parent choice was that choice creates a disadvantage for families who don’t apply on time. Historically, fewer African American and Latino families were applying on time and therefore most high-demand schools were fully enrolled before families applied. The district and partnering community organizations put concerted effort into outreach to encourage families to apply on time. This year, the African American on-time applicant pool grew 20 percent (from 293 applicants to 352 applicants) and the Latino applicant pool grew 17 percent (from 961 applicants to 1,122 applicants).

Four out of five applicants received one of their choices.
Darlene Lim, Executive Director of the Educational Placement Center, reviewed the most highly demanded schools and illustrated how demand exceeded capacity at many of the most highly requested schools - 14 schools were listed as a first choice for 50 percent of kindergarten applicants.

“The system is designed to accommodate as many people in their first choice as possible,” said Darlene Lim. “We’re seeing the similar percentages of families getting their top choices as we did in previous years.”

The next step for families is to enroll at their assigned school by April 15. Additionally, they can submit an amended application by the same date.

More information on www.sfusd.edu

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SFUSD March 18, 2011 Enrollment Highlights

- **More interest overall in SFUSD**
  - 4,930 kindergarten applicants, which is 229 more than last year (5% growth).
  - This year’s kindergarten pool has 900 more applicants than 2005 (22% growth).
  - 3,131 6th grade applicants, which is 211 more applicants than last year (7% growth).
  - We predict middle school enrollment will grow 31% by 2018.

- **More African American and Latino on-time kindergarten applicants**
  - African American applicant pool grew 20% (from 293 applicants to 352 applicants).
  - Latino applicant pool grew 17% (from 961 applicants to 1,122 applicants).

- **Low demand based on closest school or attendance area school**
  - 23% of kindergarten applicants listed their attendance area school as a 1st choice; 24% listed a city-wide school, and 53% listed another attendance area school as their 1st choice.
  - The % ranged across attendance areas from 2% to 59%.
  - The majority of attendance areas (42 out of 58) had fewer than 30% of students list their attendance area school as a first choice.
  - 24% of kindergarten applicants, 28% of 6th grade applicants, and 26% of 9th grade applicants listed the school closest to where they live as a 1st choice.

- **High demand for K8 schools**
  - 20% of kindergartners listed a K8 school as a 1st choice.

- **High demand for language pathways**
  - 39% of kindergarten applicants listed a language pathway as a 1st choice.

- **Demand outpaces capacity**
  - First choice requests for:
    - Chinese immersion are 219% of capacity;
    - Japanese foreign language in elementary school are 174% of capacity;
    - Spanish immersion are 147% of capacity; and
    - K8 schools are 206% of capacity.
  - 14 schools were listed as a first choice for 50% of kindergarten applicants.
  - There were 11 requests for every opening at these 14 schools.
  - 74% of 6th grade applicants listed six out of 13 middle school options as a first choice: Giannini, Presidio, Aptos, Hoover, Roosevelt, and Lick.
  - 80% of 9th grade applicants listed five out of 15 high school options as a first choice: Lowell, Lincoln, Washington, Balboa, and Galileo.

- **Percent who get choice similar to prior years**
  - Four out of five applicants received one of their choices.
  - Kindergarten: 74% received 1st, 2nd, or 3rd choice.
  - 6th Grade: 85% received 1st, 2nd, or 3rd choice (86% received one of their choices).
  - 9th Grade: 84% received 1st, 2nd, or 3rd choice (86% received one of their choices).