More than Voting: 
Students Make Politics Their Own

If 16 year old De’Anthony Jones had a megaphone that could reach every student in the city he would shout, “If you don’t take elections seriously, you might as well not take life seriously.”

Jones, a junior at Mission High School, is one of the many students around the district eager to collaborate with classmates, teachers and other community members to involve more young people in political discourse and civic participation.

“At Mission, we’re lucky because the teachers engage us about these topics. Even in my chemistry class, the last place you would expect to talk about politics, my teacher asked us to think broadly about how the election might affect us and our education,” Jones said.

Ben Martinez, 17, a senior at Burton High School, said his school is making this year’s presidential race a backdrop for its student election. He and his classmates will present a multimedia show about John McCain and Barack Obama that will play before and after student speeches.

“We stitched together video clips of the presidential candidates from YouTube. While we play the video, we will have a simultaneous slide show presenting the two different campaigns,” Martinez said.

He said the purpose of the presentation was to reach students with a medium that reflects their lifestyle.

“Most kids today are wired, constantly on cell phones and the internet. This is something they can connect to,” he said.

While Martinez and Jones are eager for the presidential election, they both stressed the importance of getting students excited about local politics. Earlier this fall, they were among a roomful of SFUSD students who questioned school board candidates during a special forum sponsored by YouthVote, a city program that collaborates with public schools to engage students in elections and local government.

“We are trying to get away from the traditional efforts that just blankly encouraged kids to vote,” said Peter Lauterborn, YouthVote Education Policy Coordinator.

“We want students to understand how politics works. We want them to see early on that their voice can effect change.”

Youth Vote has seen a surge in student interest during this election year. Over 7,000 SFUSD students cast a ballot during YouthVote’s mock primary election last February.

Thurgood Marshall Academic High School had

21st Century Learning: 
Our Vision of Student Success

Every student who enrolls in our schools will graduate from high school prepared for the option of enrolling in a four-year college or university, pursuing a successful career, and living a healthy life.

Our students will have the confidence, competence, and information needed to make positive choices for their future and will have demonstrated strength and competence in all areas needed for full participation in the 21st century economic, political, cultural, and intellectual life of our nation and global society. In addition to academic competency, these areas include multilingual and cross-cultural competency; technological literacy; communication skills; aesthetic sensitivity; critical and creative thinking, reasoning, and solution-seeking; social, environmental, and civic responsibility; and strength of character.

High School ‘Turkey Day’ 
Football Game Continues 80-Plus Year Tradition

Every year on Thanksgiving day, about 5,000 fans gather in Kezar Stadium to watch a championship football game. It’s not the 49ers, and it’s not the Super Bowl, but to thousands of high school students, their families, staff, and alumni, it’s much bigger.

Officially called the Turkey Day Championship, it’s a competition that began over 80 years ago as a match between Lowell and Polytechnic high schools. In addition to academic competency, these areas include multilingual and cross-cultural competency; technological literacy; communication skills; aesthetic sensitivity; critical and creative thinking, reasoning, and solution-seeking; social, environmental, and civic responsibility; and strength of character.

High School ‘Turkey Day’ 
Football Game Continues 80-Plus Year Tradition

Balboa makes a play for the ball in Turkey Day 2004 (Lowell vs. Balboa). The championship game has been a Thanksgiving tradition for SFUSD for over 80 years.

What is Kindergarten Like?
Kindergartners talk about their first impressions ... page 2
What is Kindergarten Like?

Ricardo, El Dorado ES
What’s your favorite thing to do in Kindergarten? I like to draw animals like lions in my journal.

What’s the funniest part of Kindergarten? People make funny faces at me and they get me in trouble.

What is important about Kindergarten? You have to go to Kindergarten to learn everything you absolutely have to know in the whole wide world.

Paris, Jose Ortega ES
Do you remember your first day of Kindergarten? I was a little bit shy. But then I did an art project and my teacher was funny.

What’s the most important part of an education? Learning Mandarin.

What’s your favorite part of school? My favorite part of kindergarten is P.E. We run and play with hula-hoops or do some skipping.

Brandon, Jean Parker ES
What’s the most surprising part about Kindergarten? The computers. What’s the scariest part about Kindergarten? Kindergartners scream. The regular ones do.

Nani, Guadalupe ES
What subjects do you learn in class? We do math, science, nap, writing workshop and closing circle.

Tell me about your writing workshop? We write about our stories. I did a story about how once it was Halloween and we were all like, “AHHHHH!”

What would you tell future little girls and boys about Kindergarten? I would tell them that when I was a little girl, there was a picture day and it was so fun. I had a new shirt on.

Eric, Charles Drew College Prep Academy
Describe your classroom for me? There’s toys and books and tables and friends.

What’s the most fun thing you’ve done in class? Play Duck, Duck Goose. It’s when you say “duck, duck, goose” and then you run around and someone tries to catch you.

How do you like the people at your school? I like Ms. Rice. She’s my favorite principal.

Rohini, Leonard R. Flynn ES
What do you love most about going to school? The school has a mural. I love it. It’s just really good.

How are your skills as an artist? Really bad, but a little bit good.

What message would you like to send to the next President? I would tell them to make everyone more kind. Like, even if you don’t like a picture, it matters if somebody else likes it. You don’t want to hurt their feelings.

Charlene Armstrong has two sons at June Jordan High School in the Excelsior district, and has been involved in all of her sons’ schools since pre-school. Armstrong says she’s always had a passion to help all children grow academically and socially.

“The most joy from helping in the classroom, especially from the one-on-one conversations with younger students. They have fascinating questions that really challenge you!”

Armstrong encourages families to get involved in their children’s schools in any way they can. “Once you volunteer, you see that you gain more than you give. You get joy, and love, and a feeling of contributing to your community.”

“When you’re involved at the school, Armstrong adds, “you’re part of the solution.”

What are some things that parents can do to help their children succeed in Kindergarten?

Diane Huang arrived in San Francisco from China 10 years ago. As the mother of two daughters attending Ulloa Elementary in the Sunset district, Huang has been volunteering in the classroom and on field trips since her oldest daughter was in Kindergarten. Even though she is still learning English, she did not let the language barrier prevent her from volunteering in the classroom.

“I would look for someone at the school who was bilingual - another parent, or someone on the staff – plus the teacher was always happy to find a way to communicate with me.”

Once her daughters were older, however, Huang figured her volunteer days were done, but says she was inspired by her daughters to explore ways to get involved outside the classroom. “They saw how much I liked volunteering and encouraged me to take on more.”

Huang began attending meetings of the Chinese Parents Club, a part of Parents for Public Schools in San Francisco, and learned about issues she cared deeply about, such as improving after-school programs.

When she learned that the Parent Advisory Council was focusing on improving access to after-school programs in the city, she applied to the PAC.

On September 9 of this year, she helped present a report to the Board of Education on issues working families face when they can’t find a safe, affordable, quality program for their children. (She presented her part of the report in Mandarin, through a district interpreter.)

“I was nervous at first,” says Huang, “But families were counting on me to share their stories, so I wasn’t shy.”

Parent Jacques-Menegaz has also joined with the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and she helps to reach out to parents at schools across the district by organizing “community conversations” in different neighborhoods, which are small meetings for parents to talk about issues that affect them. She explains to parents some of the crucial decisions the school board is making so they can weigh in with their concerns and suggestions.
A year ago, our efforts as a district lacked focus. But today, with the unifying vision of our new strategic plan, the district, the school board and the community are coming together to make things up for kids. There’s energy in the air, and I couldn’t be more excited about the new course we’re charting.

We want our kids to love going to school, and that starts with lessons that reflect the diversity of students’ real life experiences, interests and aspirations. That’s why we’re dismissing the one-size-fits-all learning approach. As part of our new 21st Century Curriculum Initiative, we are building a bank of creative, rigorous and contemporary learning practices to share with all of our teachers. To develop this resource, we’re looking in and outside the district for practices that have been successful at improving the achievement of all types of students.

Our vision for 21st century learning was illustrated this summer, when we piloted a performing arts workshop at one of our schools that serves students who have had a difficult time in their lives and are on parole, the Principals’ Center Collaborative. There, students worked with community artists to produce their own music, dance and spoken word pieces. Through this project, the students discussed social issues they care about, practiced creative writing skills, and learned how to use music production software. This two week course was just one example of how we are committed to making learning relevant and meaningful to all of our students at every grade level.

As we continue to find ways for our students feel more connected to school, we also plan to connect more with parents.

Starting in January, 16 schools will pilot a new online program that enables parents to track their child’s progress in real time. Using this new technology, a parent can go online to see how their child is performing in class and what he or she has for homework that day. By facilitating better communication between parents and teachers, we can make sure our students are getting the timely support they need.

This year we are also figuring out what the vision in our strategic plan really looks like on the ground — meaning, in and outside the district, the school board and the community are coming together to shake things up for kids. There’s energy in the air, and I can’t wait to see what everyone will create! □

San Francisco Unified School District

Fall 2008
SFUSD School Times

Vol. III Issue 1

Published by the San Francisco Unified School District
Executive Editor, Gentle Blythe
Mgr. Editor, Heidli Anderson
Assistant Editor, Mitzi Mock
Office of Public Outreach & Communications
555 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-241-4563
email: newsline@sfusd.edu
visit: www.sfusd.edu

Viewpoints

Mark Sanchez
President
SF Board of Education

Carlos A. Garcia
Superintendent
San Francisco Unified School District

Parents Contribute

from page 1
Jacques-Menegaz echoes what so many parent volunteers have expressed when she says, “It’s our responsibility to every child in this city to get involved in their education.”

Nick Driver contributed to this story.

To learn more about volunteering in San Francisco public schools, please visit your child’s school or contact:

San Francisco Unified School District:
www.sfusd.edu
415 241-6185

The Parent Advisory Council:
www.pacsf.org
415 263-0308

Parents for Public Schools:
www.ppsfs.org
415 861-7077

San Francisco PTA
www.capta.org
916 440-1985

San Francisco School Volunteers: www.sfsv.org
415 749-3700

□

This paper is made possible with the support of The Examiner

Fall - Winter School Calendar

Tuesday, November 11
Veterans’ Day (no school)

November 26-28
Thanksgiving break (no school)

December 22 – Jan. 2
Winter break (no school)

Monday, January 19
Dr. Martin Luther King Day (no school)

Tuesday, January 20
Teachers’ Professional Development Day (no school)

Monday, January 26
Lunar New Year (no school)

Monday, February 16
Presidents’ Day (no school)
Students Make Politics Their Own

from page 1

the highest rate of participation, with 80% of the students filling out a ballot. And William Sloan, chair of Marshall’s social studies department, says his students are just getting started.

“We’re planning a mock election with student candidates from different government classes running against each other,” Sloan said. “We’re giving students the freedom to develop their own platforms and debate the local issues they care about.”

But come Election Day, the halls might be quiet at Galileo High School.

“I expect the majority of my seniors to be out working the polls,” said Rosemarie Langley, an American Democracy teacher, who says her colleagues at Galileo have been strongly encouraging students to volunteer as poll workers in their community.

“It’s imperative for our schools to prepare students to be citizens of tomorrow,” said Board of Education Commissioner Jane Kim, who spearheaded Youth Vote’s expansion in public schools. “It’s important that they get in the habit of voting and learning about elections.”

21st Century Learning

Imagine a class where students film their own rock videos—to teach their classmates how sand, pebbles and boulders form. It’s a class where local musicians join with scientists from the best universities in the country to teach students how sound waves work; the sort of class where students construct their own instruments and put their poetry to music for homework.

This summer, scientists, artists, researchers and SFUSD teachers and administrators came together at the University of California, San Francisco to discuss how they are going to turn visions like these into classroom realities.

While implementing its new strategic plan, Beyond the Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now, SFUSD is designing an interdisciplinary curricular initiative that will weave science, literacy and arts into daily lesson plans. Slated for implementation in the Fall of 2009, the 21st Century Curriculum Initiative will aim to keep students engaged in class while giving them an arsenal of learning experiences that will encourage innovation and creativity.

Teachers are eager to collaborate with colleagues—at their own school and others—to plan projects that will excite their students. They envision schools that are more alive and vibrant.

There is still a lot of work to be done in the design phase of this initiative and all aspects of the SFUSD strategic plan. To get from where schools are now to what we imagine them to be, we need everyone to get involved.

This year every school in the district will be engaging staff, parents and students in the process of creating their own scorecards—the set of objectives and outcomes that each school will be using to meet the goals of the strategic plan: making social justice a reality; engaging high achieving and joyful learners and keeping our promises to students and families.

All SFUSD community members are encouraged to attend the School Community Summit on November 22, at Everett Middle School, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. To read the district’s plan, go to www.sfusd.edu.

Jeanne D’Arcy contributed to this story.

‘Turkey Day’ a Football Tradition

from page 1

Turkey Day game. They show up every year to talk about the game they played and watch the new kids play ball,” says Collins.

“Teams are not selected to play Turkey Day,” he adds. “You have to win your way there.”

At Lincoln High, “It’s the pinnacle of the school’s football program, everyone’s ultimate goal,” says coach Phil Ferrigno. Lincoln has won seven Turkey Day titles, including the last three years. He says he has some challenges.

Although Balboa lost, Rinaldi’s coach Keith Minor confirms what Athletic Commissioner Collins says happens at the big game. “Old men and if you play Turkey Day, you never ever forget it.”

Turkey Day by the Numbers

First game: November 27, 1924
Number of SFUSD schools that have played in Turkey Day: 10

Highest attendance at the game: 50,000 (1928)
Current attendance: 5,000 (expected for 2008)

This year’s game day and time: November 27, 10:30 a.m.

Location: Kezar Stadium, 755 Stanyan St.

Ticket Price: $7 for adults and $5 for high and middle school students (free for children fifth grade and under)

This paper is made possible with the support of The Examiner