SFUSD Board of Education
Committee of the Whole
April 19, 2016

Ruth Asawa School of the Arts
Admissions Task Force Report
Tonight’s Objectives

1. Summarize Board resolution calling for the formation of an Admissions Task Force for Asawa SOTA

2. Describe the process followed by the Admissions Task Force

3. Present the thinking and recommendations of the Task Force for consideration by the Board

4. Set the stage for further collaboration between the school and the district
1. All school improvement is collaborative in nature, and requires strong partnership

2. Equity and excellence are not competing values
3. The Task Force will lead to a collaborative process for reflection and ongoing partnership between the school and the district
4. The Task Force did not engage in the question about whether to have auditions, but focused on how to accomplish equity goals in the context of an audition-based arts high school
5. In January, 2016, the Curriculum Committee heard an update on Round 1 applications (handout). Tonight’s presentation takes up the broader Board resolution.
Review of January 4, 2016 Memo to the Board on the Task Force Process

1. Groups to be represented
   • School Leaders, Arts Directors and Academic Faculty, Students, Parents, VAPA, Arts Community

2. Convening Committee
   • Principal, VAPA Director, Arts Directors, Academic Instructor, FoSOTA, Asst. Supt., CAO

3. Adaptive, Ongoing Nature of our Work Together
Task Force Members

Brian Kohn, Principal, Ruth Asawa School of the Arts
Heather Woodward, Arts Head, Creative Writing
Lyndsey Schlax, Academic Teacher
Cora Nelson, Asawa SOTA Student
Simone Moore, Asawa SOTA Student
Charles Nelson, Asawa SOTA Parent
Colleen Ivie, Executive Director, Friends of SOTA
Paulette Cauthorn, Asawa SOTA Alumni Parent, Admissions Coordinator
Margaret Murray, FoSOTA, Parent
Sherri Young, African-American Shakespeare
Rob Daniels, Director, VAPA
William Hack, Supervisor, VAPA
Brent Stephens, Chief Academic Officer
Unresolved Questions and Dilemmas

1. Eventual impact of the 2015 interdistrict transfer decision on diversity and the ability to fully enroll programs has yet to be determined
2. Understanding the role of all schools in meeting equity goals - especially as they relate to the composition of the student body
3. SDC assignment is currently independent from the arts focus of the school
4. The impact of income inequality, gentrification, and the departure of many families of color on school and district diversity
DRAFT: Task Force Process: Key Objectives

• Aspects of the Board Resolution
  – Consider the outreach and recruitment efforts for Asawa SOTA
  – Consider the quality of elementary and middle school arts education in SFUSD
  – Consider potential partnerships that would expand access to Asawa SOTA
  – Consider potential challenges to the Asawa SOTA admissions process

• Essential Questions
  – What does equity mean as it relates to an arts education generally, and more specifically to attending Asawa SOTA?
  – How would a school system identify and serve students with “artistic potential”? How would a school system know that it hasn’t missed a student with artistic potential?
Clarified Vocabulary: Equity

Every student is provided access to the necessary tools and resources ze needs within ze’s respective academic institutions to ensure ze has an enriching arts education/experience.
“Potential” is a moving target because determining one’s level of “artistic potential” is a highly subjective process. Additionally, a student must display more than just “artistic potential” to thrive at Asawa SOTA. Motivation and commitment are qualities that are at least, if not more important, than “artistic potential.”

All processes, including auditions, are time-bound and constrained by available resources.
DRAFT: Task Force Process

1. Group Discussion
   - Data Available to the Task Force
   - Essential Questions
   - Membership
   - Process Reflections

2. Working Groups
   - K-8 Arts Education
   - Recruitment
   - Admissions Process
Data Available to the Task Force

• **Research: Application and Admission Trends**
  – Asawa SOTA Auditioner Survey Highlights
  – Auditioner Summary Data
  – Application Comparison
  – Asawa SOTA New Student List
  – Asawa SOTA Research and Program Development, 2014

• **B. Research: Admissions Procedures in other Arts High Schools**
  – Compilation of admissions procedures from other major public arts high schools (by SFUSD VAPA)

• **C. Research: Admissions Criteria by ASAWA SOTA Department**

• **D. Research: Past Documents Related to the ASAWA SOTA Admissions Process**
  – Proposal for Admissions to School of the Arts, Admission Task Force, 2001
  – Legislative Analyst Report: School of the Arts Civic Center Campus, 2007
  – In Support of Access, Equity, and Diversity in the Arts at Ruth Asawa School of the Arts and Throughout SFUSD, 2015
  – Update to the Augmented Curriculum Committee
  – of the SFUSD Board of Education, January 4, 2016
A. Research: Application and Admission Trends

- Round One application data showed an overall increase in applications
  - Applications received by Asawa SOTA in December 2014: 219
  - Applications received by Asawa SOTA in December 2015: 391
  - Enrollment Applications received by EPC, December 2015: 145
  - Auditions scheduled by Asawa SOTA based on December applications: 280

- Round Two application data still pending

- Data demonstrates that applicants tend to be from schools with more VAPA courses, and from private schools.
B. Research: Admissions Procedures in other Arts High Schools

– Some variation in admissions processes across districts, with key differences in:
  • whether all students get an audition
  • who judges audition (arts teachers, academic teachers, artists-in-residence)
  • participation of arts community in auditions
  • criteria for admissions (arts and academic criteria)
  • consideration of other supporting materials (like grades, recommendations)
C. Research: Admissions Criteria by Asawa SOTA Department
   - Collection of dept. criteria not fully updated
   - Differences between depts. with respect to requirements, criteria, the role of students, the role of artists, and the accessibility of information about the application process

D. Research: Past Documents Related to the ASAWA SOTA Admissions Process
   - A wide variety of recommendations to the Board on a range of admissions topics
   - A “start and stop” quality to these documents
Ruth Asawa SOTA in Context

1. Student diversity data (handout)
2. LGBT Identification
3. Teacher diversity data
4. Diversity in middle school arts programming
5. Round One Application Data
Data Slide 2:
Demographic Comparison of SFUSD High Schools

Handout
### LGBTQ High School Student Population
#### 2013-2014

#### 2013-2014 California Healthy Kids Survey

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Data Slide 1: Middle School VAPA Enrollment

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<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent of Students Enrolled in at Least One Visual and Performing Arts Class by Race-Ethnicity 2014-15</th>
<th>Ethnicity Breakdown of Middle School Arts Students</th>
<th>Ethnicity Breakdown of High School Arts Students</th>
<th>% of SOTA</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Middle School</td>
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<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
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<td>African American</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
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<td>57%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
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<td>71%</td>
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<td>1.5%</td>
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<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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Goals:

In the context of Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, what should K-8 Arts Education look like?

1. To provide access to sequential arts education for all students
2. To address students’ and parents’ navigation of the Asawa SOTA Application process
Challenges or Barriers --- What is getting in the way of our further success?

1. English Learners, Dual Language Immersion, some Special Education and students assigned to intervention classes do not have equitable access to Visual and Performing Arts classes leads to competing priorities.

2. Site based decision making (SSCs) often determines course offerings in the Middle School.

3. PEEF/VAPA currently manages only funding allocations to middle schools for arts courses.
Opportunities

1. Exploring a seven (7) period schedule could increase access to art courses
2. Improve curriculum planning aligned to the TK-12 VAPA Standards, so that students have more consistent access to the arts, independent of what school they attend
Recommended Next Steps

1. Funding for dedicated district and site staff to expand outreach and recruitment, and to strengthen partnership between VAPA and Asawa SOTA to achieve those goals

2. Include “High Leverage Activities” specific to and recommended by VAPA in schools’ Balanced Score Cards at both the elementary and secondary levels

3. Identify schools that offer strong programs in various art disciplines and articulate to students/parents an identifiable pathway that best serves the student’s interest in an arts discipline.
In the context of Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, what should recruitment look like?

- Students in underrepresented middle schools are both prepared for and interested in high school arts programs, including RASOTA
- Interactive presentations to targeted middle schools from all departments
- Invitations to RASOTA shows

Challenges or Barriers

- Lacking financial support and additional resources
- Significant time constraints for students and educators
- Uneven distribution of arts programs and VAPA presence at middle schools (applicants primarily come from schools with a higher VAPA presence)
- 88% of Asawa SOTA applicants have had 3+ years of art classes in middle school
Opportunities

• CBOs willing to form partnerships with Asawa SOTA, such as:
  • Mission cultural center, SF Ballet, MOMA, SF Jazz
• CBO partners that work in under-represented schools could also support students’ and families’ awareness of RASOTA
• SFUSD Summer Arts Camp, with support from RASOTA staff
• FoSOTA ArtMobile outreach plan (pending grant application)
• Potential direct contact with MS counselors and teachers in targeted middle schools
• Contemporary programming at RASOTA could expand interest
Next Steps

- Continue to explore summer programs in targeted middle schools
- Learn more about and then attend community events in underrepresented communities
- Continue conversations about programmatic changes to make the arts offerings more relevant
- Propose the addition of a VAPA staff member to support recruitment efforts
- Further investigate and resolve the barriers to arts courses in middle schools
- Further explore the concept of articulated arts programming within feeder patterns
Goals:

The audition process should be transparent, easily understood and accessible, and bring in to Asawa SOTA a pool of students who are here because of their love of and devotion to the arts, and who can take the best advantage of the classical and contemporary interdisciplinary and disciplinary arts/academic program that we intend to offer here.
• **Challenges or Barriers**
  – Individual art department directors may be resistant to changes to their programs, and programmatic change at any public school is a slow process.
  – Arts education opportunities aren’t equitable across the district
  – We have students who are very talented in the arts but who struggle academically, and so we need to be able to provide the proper supports to those students to ensure their success
  – Audition and application process is sometimes opaque and/or misleading; they need to be more clear, transparent, and easily understandable to people who are not experts in the arts
  – Website information about the audition process is not translated
  – Our Arts programs are funded primarily through active fundraising by FoSOTA (parents, grants, ticket sales, etc) and as we make changes, our funding needs will increase
• **Opportunities**
  
  – We can reframe our understanding of this school and its purpose by thinking of it as a School of the **Artist**, rather than a school of the arts. This makes our program and our goals student-centered, and couches the need for our unique curriculum, schedule and structure.
  
  – Create time for departments to develop a list of factors in the audition process, and come to a consensus on how these criteria should be weighed (For example, how are report cards used in each department’s audition process?)
  
  – How can the Asawa SOTA website be modified so that it is consistently accessible and supportive of students from targeted groups? For example, could example of successful audition work be displayed on the website?
Recommended Next Steps

These are all intended to be used in targeted ways that will create opportunities to increase diversity (especially with regard to students of color and students who face financial disadvantages)

- Clarifying, unifying and standardizing Audition Rubrics
- Clear information on RASOTA Website regarding what students can expect while attending RASOTA
- Offer audition workshops/application readings/master classes
Recommended Next Steps

- Shift our arts offerings away from all-classical to a blend of classical and contemporary arts offerings that are more culturally relevant, interdisciplinary, and infused with modern technology opportunities.

- Displays of student art online - show the progression of students who have been here for 4 years in order to prevent students from being discouraged from applying if they don’t believe that they can.

- Create “How to Get Into SOTA” videos (based on “How to Get Into Julliard”)

- Provide opportunities for middle school arts teachers to have residencies and visits at SOTA to gain an understanding of the programs and prerequisites.
Proposed Next Steps

• Share Task Force Presentation with groups at the school

• With feedback from the Board this evening, create an action plan based on the work of the Task Force

• Provide the Curriculum Committee of the Board with periodic updates on this work
Acknowledgements