



San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

Report to the Board of Education

May 22, 2012

The role of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to represent parent voices and perspectives to inform Board of Education policy discussions. This report focuses on who we heard from during community conversations the PAC conducted this winter and spring, about reducing student suspensions and improving school climate through Restorative Practices.

Why and How We Conducted the Community Conversations

During community conversations the PAC has led over the past few years related to student assignment, many parents shared concerns about lack of communication, bullying, unfair disciplinary practices, and the urgent need to improve the learning environment in their children's schools.

It was clear that **most families didn't know about the Board of Education's 2009 resolution embracing Restorative Justice** as a way to reduce student suspensions overall, and to address the disproportionately higher rates of suspension for African American and Latino students.

This year the PAC decided to conduct community conversations to **inform families** about these strategies, **hear their questions and concerns**, and **identify ways to strengthen implementation of Restorative Practices** across the district.

During this project the PAC worked in partnership with SFUSD staff leading implementation of Restorative Practices, to learn more about these practices and how the district is implementing them. PAC members and staff attended district training on Restorative Practices, and two members are participating in the district's ongoing "training of trainers" course.

The PAC developed a discussion guide and handouts, which were translated into Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Samoan, Tagalog and Vietnamese. In each conversation we presented information about why SFUSD has embraced Restorative Practices, the district's approach to implementing these practices, and some of the basic strategies that schools are using.

We used some of these strategies ourselves while facilitating the conversations, for example by having everyone sit in a circle, using a "talking piece" when people were speaking, and in some conversations practicing the "restorative questions" used to address and resolve conflicts. **The heart of each conversation was open discussion of participants' questions, concerns, and suggestions** for strengthening the implementation of Restorative Practices across the district.

Conversations were conducted by PAC members, volunteers and staff from February through early May 2012. Most were conducted in the primary language of participants, while others had the support of interpreters. We also conducted a short survey to capture demographic information, as well as additional data about participants' experiences with suspension, bullying, conflict resolution and Restorative Practices.

Who We Heard From

The PAC facilitated **20 conversations** and heard from **292 participants**, most of them parents, as well as middle and high school students, school site and afterschool program staff, and community members. We held conversations at **13 different schools**, at **three community centers**, during a workshop at the district's annual School Planning Summit, and at a regular meeting of the Parent Advisory Council.

The PAC is committed to actively reaching out to hear from families who are often left out of education policy discussions. We are pleased that **participants in these conversations reflected a broad diversity of the district's families across language, ethnicity, geography, types of schools their children attend, and socioeconomic background.**

Because we heard from people who played different roles in schools, and had different experiences with suspensions and school climate, **we learned a great deal about different needs, concerns, and suggestions for how to strengthen the implementation of Restorative Practices across the district.**

More detail about participants:

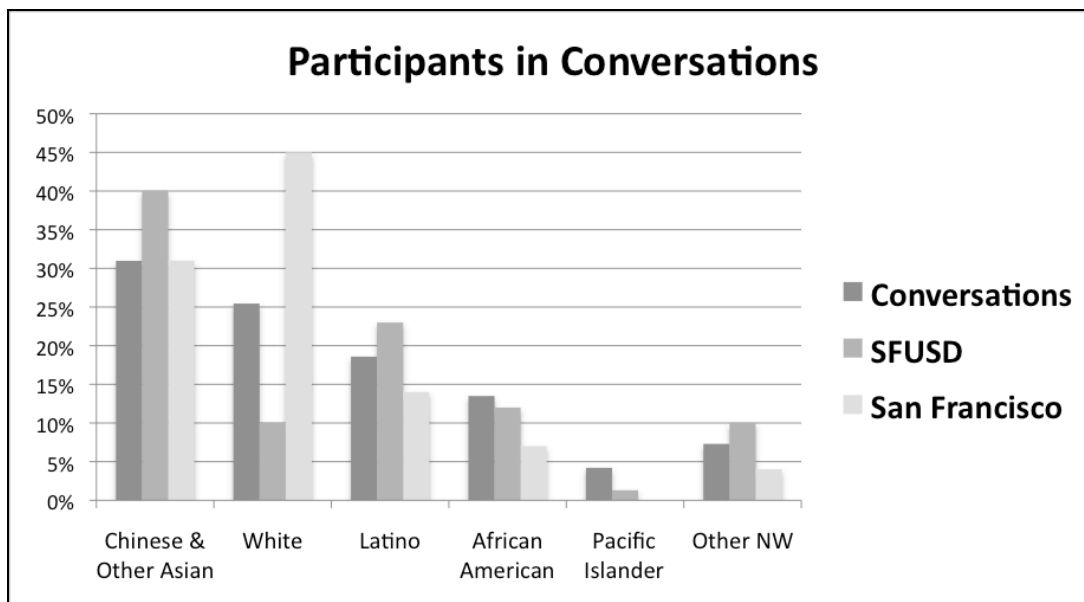
Based on survey data from 211 written surveys:

- 78% of participants who completed a survey were parents of SFUSD students
- 13% were school staff (including principals, teachers, counselors, yard monitors, cafeteria workers and afterschool program staff)
- 7% were middle or high school students, and 2% were other community members.

Only 40% of participants had heard of "Restorative Practices" before the conversation. About **14% of the parents had a child who had been suspended** (or as a student had been suspended themselves). Amazingly, nearly **40% had children who had been bullied** or harassed at school, and 17% had bullied or harassed another student.

Participants lived in communities across the city, in **23 different zip codes** and **all 11 electoral districts**. The top five zip codes (about 52% of survey respondents) were **94112** (the Excelsior, Mission Terrace and Sunnyside), **94134** (Visitacion Valley and Portola), **94110** (the Mission and Bernal Hts.), **94133** (Chinatown and North Beach) and **94118** (the Richmond).

Ethnicity of participants, compared to population of the SFUSD and city of San Francisco:



Where Conversations Were Held & Schools that Students Attend

Conversations were conducted at the following schools and community centers. (Many participants shared their experiences at schools in addition to where conversations were held.)

Elementary schools: George Washington Carver, LR Flynn, Grattan, Lakeshore, New Traditions, Rosa Parks, and Daniel Webster ES. *Participants' children also attended* John Yehall Chin, Clarendon, Fairmount, Garfield, Guadalupe, Hillcrest, Gordan Lau, Marshall, Miraloma, Sheridan, Tenderloin Community, and Ulloa ES.

Alternative grade level schools: SF Community K-8. *Participants' children also attended* Rooftop K-8 and International Studies Academy, grades 6-12.

Middle schools: Denman, Everett, and Francisco MS. *Participants' children also attended* Marina, Presidio and Roosevelt MS.

High schools: Burton HS and June Jordan School for Equity. *Participants' children also attended* Balboa, Galileo, Lincoln, Thurgood Marshall, and Washington HS.

Community Centers: Community Youth Center (Tenderloin), Samoan Community Development Center (Sunnydale), and Wu Yee Children's Services (Chinatown).

Of conversations at school sites, **33% were STAR schools**. (About 40% of the district's schools are STAR schools; they are historically under-performing and receive additional support.)

Presenting our Findings and Recommendations

On Monday, June 4, at the Board's Augmented Curriculum Committee meeting, the PAC will report on our findings from these conversations, as well as our recommendations for strengthening Restorative Practices across the district. We are excited about this project and look forward to working with district staff on concrete action steps to support these efforts.

Wrapping Up this School Year

In our reports during the last two meetings of the Board of Education for the 2011-2012 school year, the PAC will address the following topics:

- **June 12:** Appointment of new members. Last week the PAC voted to recommend ten parents for appointment to the PAC. Many of these candidates will be available to introduce themselves, and this action will be the focus for our time on this agenda.
- **June 26:** PAC members will present our year-end report, briefly summarizing our goals and achievements during this school year.

If you have any questions or comments about this report, or the PAC's work in general, please contact the PAC at (415) 355-2201, or at pac@sfusd.edu.

You can also visit our website at www.pacsf.org