

The BRIDGE

sanfrancisco **education** fund

Fall 2006

Creating a Fair and Just Society Community Engagement to Improve Our Schools

Efforts to create a more fair and just society – from the civil rights movement to the women's suffrage movement to the labor movement – share a critical characteristic: each of these movements engaged the community as a driving force for change. Implementing strategies to engage the community in improving our schools is relatively new to education reform efforts. Our collective history, however, demonstrates that community involvement is essential for sustaining any long-term reform.

What is the role of the community outside the school in ensuring educational success for all young people? We know that it takes a village to raise a child. Part of our collective responsibility in raising children is ensuring that they are well educated and graduate ready to participate in our democratic society. It is essential that educators, parents, community leaders, businesses, and others understand that they have a role to play in ensuring educational success. The San Francisco community – our village – must recognize that if there is a problem in public education, then the problem, and the responsibility for solving it, belongs to everyone. A democracy depends on equal opportunity for participation on the part of its populace; if only some of our students graduate from high school ready to go to college or enter the work world, our democratic society suffers. We must seek ways to ensure that all students are able to participate and to succeed.

An increasing number of communities throughout the country are implementing promising strategies to improve public education through community engagement. These strategies share the common goal of creating public will and mobilizing the community to become part of the solution to problems in education.

We can make significant improvements in the quality of public education. We have the resources, the know-how, and the models to do this. What is lacking is the will and conviction to make it happen.

Professor Pedro Noguera,
Harvard Graduate School of Education

In Mobile, Alabama, the Yes We Can Initiative brought together more than 1,400 community residents to develop a community-wide agreement for reconnecting the Mobile community and its schools. As a result, Mobile has a more unified voice in the district around the values of citizens; a "civic brigade" attends school board meetings as a way to hold the district accountable; and school funding allocations were changed to match citizens' values on equity and accountability.

In Seattle, Washington, a city of 563,000 people and 190 languages, the community held a series of discussions to gather input on the school district's five-year transformation plan. In three years,

nearly 10,000 residents participated in these conversations, helping the community build the knowledge and trusting relationships necessary to transform high schools and take on tough issues such as school closures.

In Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a high school that was on the state's "Academic Watch" list was slated to be transformed into five small schools within the building. After several community forums discussing the issue, stakeholder-led governance boards were created to guide the school's direction. Today, the school has been rated "Effective" and the school and community continue to work together.

Here in San Francisco in 2004, the Ed Fund launched a Public Engagement Initiative aimed at effecting changes in policy to ensure San Francisco public school students have quality teachers and supportive learning environments.

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Teachers in our Networks see dramatic improvement in student achievement!

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As the Ed Fund reflects on our mission to improve conditions in our schools and community so that all San Francisco public school students receive an excellent and equitable education, we are steering the organization toward focusing more specifically on a goal we call “graduate ready.” This goal aims to increase the number of students who will graduate from high school, ready for college, ready to pursue their passion in the work world, and ready to participate in society.


We are not alone in the pursuit of these outcomes, and we join with other communities in making progress to improve public education. Across the nation, schools, districts, and communities are implementing strategies that work to increase educational success for youth. In Arizona, 12 elementary and middle schools with a predominantly poor, Latino student population beat the odds by raising reading and math scores. In Chicago, creating small learning communities increased attendance rates at high schools and lowered the drop-out rate. In Boston, district-wide reforms are attributed to overall improvement in student achievement and reduced achievement gaps.

In San Francisco, those working hard to improve public education have made progress. There is good news in the development of a small schools policy, expansion of the number of dual-immersion programs that show San Francisco’s commitment to multilingual education, and the launching of a new arts education master plan.

Research has shown that we have the ability to create an education system that brings excellent education to all youth. We have seen low performing schools and underachieving students make dramatic gains. We are more clear about the necessary elements in the classroom, in the teacher, in the leadership of the school and district, and in the greater community. In short, we know what it takes to create an education system in which all young people succeed. The challenge now is to implement what we have learned and to join with others to make it happen.

The Ed Fund is playing a key role in meeting the challenges. We are continuing to work for effective teacher professional development so that quality teachers are in every classroom. We are teaching high school students to mentor and educate their peers, to provide peer conflict mediation where needed, and to create powerful youth leaders working for school improvements. We are working to mobilize and engage the public to be a catalyst for making improvements in the public education institution in San Francisco in order to fulfill its highest aspirations of successfully educating every child.

Sincerely,



Hugh Vasquez

San Francisco Education Fund

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Event Spotlight

Save the Date: April 18, 2007 1st Annual High Tea Fundraiser

This year, the Ed Fund's annual Holiday Lunch will be reborn as a traditional High Tea. This exciting transformation means that guests not only will enjoy an afternoon tea, but also will be able to attend the Spring Showcase, a celebration of innovative teacher-led projects made possible in classrooms throughout San Francisco public schools by our Leadership and Professional Development Grants.



What: High Tea Fundraiser & Spring Showcase
When: April 18, 2007 at 4:00 PM
Where: St. Francis Hotel, Union Square

At the event, we will be honoring JaMel Perkins, a longtime member and former president of our Board of Directors, for her longstanding commitment to the Ed Fund and to San Francisco's public schools.

We appreciate your continued support, and as we move the annual fundraiser to the spring, we want to ensure you still have an opportunity to make your 2006 donation. Please use the enclosed return envelope, or visit www.sfedfund.org, to make your end-of-year donation.

Watch your mailbox for an invitation!

Please contact Sarah Newman at 415.912.2929 or snewman@sfedfund.org for more information.

Youth Are Resources Conferences

Peer Resources will soon be hosting its annual middle and high school Youth Are Resources Conferences (January 18, 2007 and December 14, 2006 respectively). These events not only give Bay Area peer programs an opportunity to showcase the changes they are making in their schools and communities, but they also allow students involved in and affiliated with Peer Resources programs to lead helpful workshops. The conferences are a consistent highlight of the school year for coordinators and students alike, as they come together to share their passions, ideas, and lessons.

Resource Library Expanded

As part of our ongoing efforts to offer high quality professional development opportunities for SFUSD teachers and to improve student outcomes, the Ed Fund has updated and expanded its online database of resources for teachers. Located in the Resources section of our website, the resource library provides a comprehensive listing of organizations, articles, grant opportunities, and many other sources of support in San Francisco. We are thrilled to be able to provide a direct link between educators and the many resources that are available to improve the quality of teaching and learning in San Francisco. Take a look at www.sfedfund.org!

Bulletin Board

Leadership Institute Fellow Contributing to NY Times



(L to R) LI Fellow Klaus Uebelacker and LI Program Manager Mark Triplett talk shop at the program's first meeting of the new school year.

Our very own Leadership Institute Fellow Klaus Uebelacker, from E.R. Taylor Elementary School, was one of just five teachers nationwide selected to contribute articles to the *New York Times Select* column "Lesson Plans." Writing on topics such as adjusting to new students each year and gaps in computer literacy among his students, Mr. Uebelacker is giving voice to and raising the visibility of issues all teachers face, both in San Francisco and around the country.

**Don't Forget
to Check Out
Our Website
for Other News!**

www.sfedfund.org

Peer Resources

Creating a Fair and Just Society (continued from page 1)

The lesson learned from these communities is that effective community engagement includes several key elements: an active and informed constituency; a vision of reform shared by the community and schools with clear expectations of what elements need changing; a strategy for change that is implemented based on the agreed upon expectations; and a process to maintain accountability for sustaining the improvements.

Even in communities with these critical elements in place and considerable public desire and energy directed toward reform, significant challenges to effective community engagement for sustained education improvement remain. These include building the capacity of the public education system to partner with an engaged community; moving from the community engagement stage to policy development and implementation; and creating an effective system of accountability to monitor and evaluate improvement efforts.

Ultimately, successful community engagement should result in sustained education policy changes and increased school and community capacity to prioritize and problem-solve together. If, as a community, we are successful in working together to create long-lasting education reform, then all our public schools and our children will thrive.

— *Katie Albright and Hugh Vasquez*

Reviving Lunch at International Studies Academy

Through ReSearch 4 Change, a youth organizing and advocacy program in its second year, Peer Resources classes identify pressing issues in their schools and act to produce improvements. Last year, peer helpers at International Studies Academy (ISA) developed and administered a survey to 200 ISA students and discovered a passionate conviction that the school's food offerings were inadequate; students wanted healthier, more appetizing food that reflected their cultural diversity. The survey results also communicated the importance of such reform: at least 50% of students said they did not eat a full lunch regularly; 25-30% said they never ate during the school day.

Changing a school's food is considered extremely difficult because of the complex bureaucracy involved, but the Peers students decided to tackle the issue nonetheless. They studied the system's policies and began attending every meeting of the SFUSD nutrition subcommittee.

The peer helpers determined that they could increase the school's food budget by encouraging all students who qualify for free and reduced lunches (FRL) to register for them. They began a campaign to increase FRL enrollment, which continues this year. They have revitalized the menu offered by The Beanery, the school's à la carte eatery, introducing healthier items and foods students said they would eat.

As a result of a presentation they made to the nutrition subcommittee, peer helpers were invited to attend the annual district food-vendor fair

and help ISA determine which vendors will provide its food. Additionally, they have partnered with the ISA student council to locate funding for healthier food at club meetings and to educate their peers about nutrition. Finally, ISA peer helpers are reaching out to other SFUSD schools to encourage them to change their own food offerings, increasing the number of students across the district who have access to the nutrition they need to succeed in school. —*Sarah Newman*



Peer Resources students have plenty to smile about as they make positive changes in their schools.

Public Engagement Initiative

New Engagement Efforts Target Student Issues

Achieving the goal of quality public education for all children requires every one of us to take action. Community members have a powerful role to play in impacting the quality of public education and setting high expectations for schools and students: electing school board members and other public officials who make decisions daily about education policy; voting for school bond referenda and other funding mechanisms; paying taxes to support public schools; participating in community conversations to solve problems facing our schools; and voicing our opinions in the public arena to support all students. Experience shows that when the public is committed to improving their schools, real change is possible. The Public Engagement Initiative (PEI) is pleased this year to be part of two new community engagement efforts directed toward improving public education for all San Francisco's students.

Student Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention Initiative

In October, the SFUSD, in partnership with the Ed Fund's Public Engagement Initiative and the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), led a broad-based public engagement effort on issues regarding student enrollment, recruitment, and retention. The process included more than 35 small community conversations in locations throughout the City aimed at hearing community needs, ideas, and suggestions on this important issue in the district. The information gathered during these community conversations will help inform the San Francisco Board of Education in making decisions in January 2007 on the key issues of a new student assignment method and potential school consolidations caused by declining enrollment projections.

Working together with the district and the PAC, the Ed Fund seeks to develop an ongoing and long-term strategy for assuring that community members have opportunities to voice their needs and contribute suggestions. Conversations in small groups enable participation from a range of people from diverse language and educational backgrounds, providing for rich input and authentic building of public will and support. The PEI plans to host community conversations in a variety of venues throughout the City to maximize the quantity and diversity of participants.

Once this initial effort is completed, we will help the district review and revise the community engagement process for use in addressing other important opportunities and challenges.

Give Kids Good Schools

Through its membership in the Public Education Network, the PEI will also be participating this fall in Give Kids Good Schools, a new national campaign that seeks to provide Americans with the information and resources they need to take action in their communities to improve their public schools. Through online resources and local activities, Give Kids Good Schools encourages individuals to learn, vote, and act on behalf of quality public education. Visit the campaign's website at www.GiveKidsGoodSchools.org to learn more.

To find out how you can participate in these and other Public Engagement Initiative efforts, please visit our website at www.sfedfund.org or email getinvolved@sfedfund.org.

LPD Program Spotlight

Teacher Networks Lead to Big Improvements in Student Achievement

In fall 2005, Talat Jabbar, a 3rd grade teacher at Miraloma Elementary School, decided to see what would happen if she taught math concepts to a small group of her lowest-performing students before she introduced the same concepts to her class as a whole. What she discovered was revolutionary: as a result of this new method, students who were her lowest performers showed confidence, enthusiasm, and better comprehension of the subject matter simply as a result of having been introduced to the topic before the main lesson.

At Sanchez Elementary, K-3rd grade reading specialist Rose Curreri saw dramatic improvements in her Spanish Bilingual English Language Learner students' writing, syntax, and test scores after she began teaching vocabulary every day. Daily English phonics lessons weren't addressing their lack of comprehension, but her addition of explicit vocabulary instruction improved their writing immensely. At year's end, Curreri's students were reading at grade level and were no longer in danger of being held back.

These teachers' success stories were made possible by their participation in the Ed Fund's Math and Science Network and Literacy Network, respectively. Professional teacher networks (teachers working directly with one another in peer-to-peer networks that meet regularly over time) like these are sweeping the country and bringing instruction to the forefront of school reform, as an ever-growing body of research proves their superiority in helping teachers raise student achievement.

Research now shows that the single greatest determinant of student learning is instruction. In the SFUSD, Pacific



Islander, Hispanic, African American, and Native American students have consistently graduated ready to move on to college at lower rates than their Asian and White peers. Nearly one-third of the district's diverse population are English Learners. Given that success in reading and math is crucial for obtaining a diploma and continuing on to higher education, and that achievement in these subjects varies widely and correlates strongly with student ethnicity, SFUSD teachers must be able to address different levels of preparedness in their classrooms.

The Networks allow teachers in the same context—subject area, curriculum, and student population—to build upon each other's ideas and successes and thus more effectively teach all their students. By increasing teachers' knowledge about how best to tailor their instruction for specific students, developing them as instructional leaders, and supplementing the basic district curriculum with best practices from the field, the Teacher Networks represent the most promising approach for sustained school improvement.

For more information about the Teacher Networks, check our website at www.sfedfund.org.

Programs of the San Francisco Education Fund

Leadership and Professional Development (LPD) Grants

For teachers, supporting innovative teacher learning and community-school partnerships.

Leadership Institute

A professional learning community for teachers using reflective action research to improve student achievement and to influence education policymaking.

Literacy Network

A professional learning community for teachers addressing the inequities in literacy achievement among K through 8th grade students in the SFUSD.

Math and Science Network

A professional learning community for teachers addressing the inequities in math and science achievement among K through 12th grade students in the SFUSD.

Peer Resources

A program for middle and high school students providing youth leadership development and peer support to increase all students' success and to achieve systemic improvements in schools.

Public Engagement Initiative

A project to engage the community in effecting changes in policy to ensure that all students in San Francisco public schools have quality teachers and supportive learning environments.

Teaching and Learning Community Resource Center

Connecting San Francisco public school students and teachers with quality community resources in the Bay Area.

Please visit our website at www.sfedfund.org for more information.

Thanks to the Following Donors Who Made Contributions

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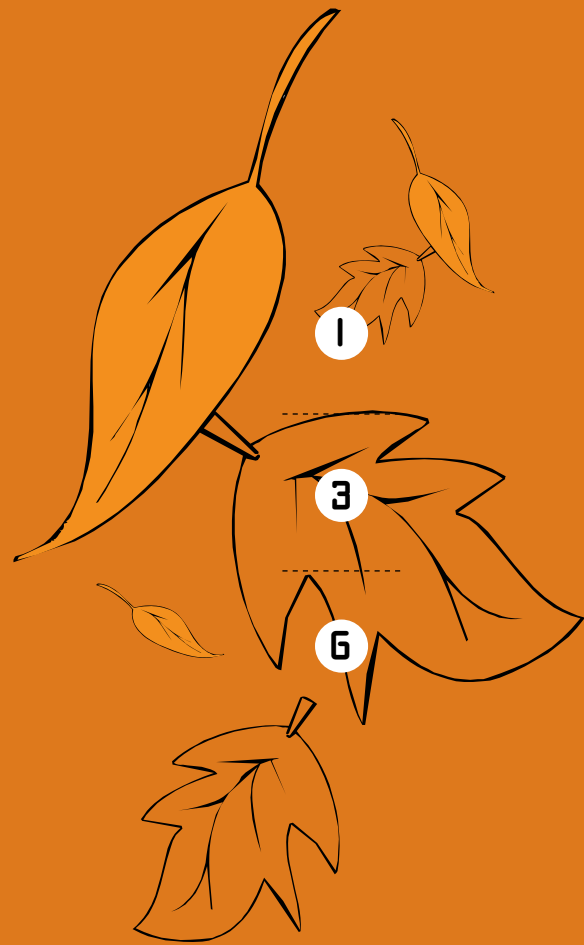
Fall 2006

When the entire community supports public education, student achievement increases, schools improve, and our society benefits. It's possible – **read how!**

Our new annual fundraiser is a spring High Tea!
Save the date for April 18, 2007 and check your mailbox for more info soon!

Peer Resources students at a local high school lobby for change and **make a difference!**

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