

The BRIDGE

sanfrancisco **education** fund

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www.sfedfund.org

Spring 2007

Catalysts for Change

An Interview with Executive Director Hugh Vasquez

In 2006, the Ed Fund embarked on the development of a new strategic plan focused on supporting excellent and equitable outcomes for all students. Executive Director Hugh Vasquez talks about the plan and about how the community can help increase the number of students in the SFUSD who "graduate ready."

How did this strategic planning process develop?

Any great community organization has to periodically take a critical look inside and ask, is our mission on target? Are we doing the things that make the most difference in the community? We began looking into this mirror almost a year ago, asking what strategies have been successful in improving public education and how does the Ed Fund's direction align with these proven or promising strategies? We asked ourselves how the Ed Fund could best contribute to improving the public education system so that more children succeed. We do not want to be an organization that maintains the status quo when the status quo has so many young people failing. This forced us to examine our direction and our programs to see if we were making enough of a difference and, if we found that we were not, to make changes in our strategy.

What does the Ed Fund hope to accomplish?

Our long-term goal is to increase the number of youth who "graduate ready" from our public schools. We use the term "graduate ready" because it means going

deeper than simply earning a diploma. Increasing the number of youth who graduate ready means increasing the number who graduate from high school with a diploma, ready to go to college or start on a productive work path, and ready to participate as a member of civil society.

The main question is, what actions are necessary to increase the success rates for all students in public education, especially those who are at risk of dropping out? Our theory of action says we must take action in three areas: 1) change what teachers do in the classroom to ensure that all students succeed; 2) change what entire school sites do so that the primary focus is creating a climate focused on learning; and 3) change what happens at the district level so that policies and structures most effectively serve the needs of the schools as they work for all students to succeed. What is the common element in our theory of action? It is change—change in the classroom, at the school site, and in the entire system surrounding the schools via the district.

Talk about your background in equity work and how it has informed your work at the Ed Fund.

I have worked intensively with many organizations and community groups across the country and in Central America for over 20 years. I am part of a collective of incredible trainers, facilitators, writers, and activists who refuse to

accept racism, sexism, and all other forms of social oppression. My focus over these many years is to be a facilitator of transformation, that is, someone who brings people together across the many cultural differences and transforms communities so that social justice and equal opportunity become a reality for all. Equity can only come about through deep-seated change both within individuals in our communities and in the institutions around us. This belief has informed my work at the Ed Fund, that we must focus on change within individuals who affect the educational success of our young people as well as within the educational institution itself.

How can the Ed Fund be most effective in improving public education in San Francisco?

We are producing the outcomes the system is designed to produce. This may sound harsh, but it is true. The achievement gap exists as a result of our current system. (continued on page 4)

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San Francisco Teaching and Learning Community Resource Center

Interview

With Board President Jo Ellen Brainin-Rodriguez

Ed Fund Board President Jo Ellen Brainin-Rodriguez is a psychiatrist at the UCSF School of Medicine, the Medical Director of Bridge to Wellness, and a dedicated community activist. She and her husband have two daughters who attended San Francisco public schools, and here's what she had to say about the Ed Fund and public education in San Francisco.

How did you get involved with the Ed Fund?

Kathy Turner, the former executive director, and I were neighbors, and she recruited me to read LPD Grant applications during the early years. I read grants for five or six years, and about seven years ago she asked me to be on the board. I became board president in 2005. I am very committed to public education from an activist perspective, as I believe it is one thing that can begin to level the playing field for poor people and allow them to participate in civil society. We don't really have a democratic civil society if we don't have a quality public education for every child.

Can you talk about the background of this new strategic planning process?

Our previous strategic plan had been in place for three years, and we took a serious look at the external conditions in San Francisco. We wanted to know how a relatively small organization like ours could have a big impact on equity—on increasing access to high quality public education for traditionally underserved youth. We looked for evidence-based strategies that other organizations were employing to see what might be useful for our city and district. We saw that all the Ed Fund's strategies were mentioned in successful approaches but that we lacked some internal consistency and an evaluation plan that would accurately measure our impact.

We established that we want greater numbers of children in the district graduating from high school ready for college, for the workplace, and for active participation in our communities. We believe that we need to target particularly the kids who have not been served adequately by the current policies in the educational system; in this city, that's mostly African American and Latino youth.

What is the single best thing an individual can do to support this new work?

We need money to support our work, but more than that we want people to get involved with the schools—to know what's happening on in at least one or two schools in the City. We want to humanize and add urgency to our efforts, so that when we talk about "at-risk kids," parents and community members can picture someone in their minds who makes this issue real.

Improving education for our kids can be done on many different levels, and we should think about what we're doing at all levels of the community. We're lucky that SF is on a scale that makes these kinds of discussions possible. Improvements in education also need sustained effort on the part of the district and the community in order to succeed. These challenges aren't conquered in six months or even six years.

So, get involved, be willing to tackle the complexities. I think of what Margaret Mead said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

SF Ed Fund

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Event Spotlight

Get Your GROW Tickets Now!

Help support San Francisco public school students by attending our first annual GROW (Gathering to Recognize Outstanding Work) Event: A Celebration of Change on April 18, 2007 at 3:00 PM at the beautiful Westin St. Francis Hotel on Union Square.

This dynamic new event includes an afternoon tea and program, an opportunity to honor philanthropist JaMel Perkins, and our annual Spring Showcase, a celebration of outstanding teacher-led grant projects.

Please join us in recognizing our amazing public school teachers for their innovative teaching and dedication to preparing students for life beyond the classroom.

What: GROW: A Celebration of Change
When: April 18, 2007 at 3:00 PM
Where: St. Francis Hotel, Union Square

To buy a table or ticket for the event, please visit www.sfedfund.org/rsvp, or contact Sarah Newman at 415.912.2238 or snewman@sfedfund.org.

Bulletin Board

LPD Grants in Action!

On January 30, more than 20 Ed Fund donors, board members, staff, and friends participated in the first Leadership and Professional Development (LPD) Grants Open House. Teachers at six schools throughout the City welcomed visitors to their classrooms for a chance to experience and explore firsthand the amazing projects made possible by an LPD Grant.

Included in the Open House were Sanchez Elementary in the Mission District, where an LPD Grant is improving student outcomes using Tribes, a research-based teaching method that builds students' resiliency and brain-compatible learning through cooperative learning. An LPD Grant at Miraloma Elementary in Diamond Heights is supporting a schoolwide initiative to develop inquiry-based, investigative science instruction across all grade levels in order to meet the California State Science Standards. The entire math department at Mission High, in the heart of the Mission, has used LPD Grant funds to incorporate reading, writing, and technological literacy into all their math classes. This fosters deeper understanding of math concepts by linking real world situations with the abstract realm of mathematics—while also increasing students' reading and writing skills.

For an in-depth look at the Tribes Training Grant at Sanchez Elementary School, written by a longtime donor to the Ed Fund, visit our website at www.sfedfund.org/pressroom/press_success.php.

Thank A Teacher Today Campaign

The Public Engagement Initiative is once again leading the Thank A Teacher Today Campaign this May to celebrate and support San Francisco's teachers during Teacher Appreciation Month. Building on last year's success, the campaign will feature bright signs on Muni buses and trains, bus shelters, and billboards throughout San Francisco; a toolkit for parents and students; and opportunities for community members to talk about and recognize great teachers.

Please help us show our public school teachers the gratitude they deserve: donate, volunteer, or just learn more at www.thankateachertoday.org.



Peer Resources

Catalysts for Change

(continued from page 1)

Those children who succeed in education do so because the system around them is designed for them to succeed. Similarly, those who fail, drop out, or graduate without the skills necessary to have a productive life do so because the system produces that result. If we want to maintain the current patterns of success and failure, we can continue doing what we are doing now. If we want different outcomes, we have to do something different. Our new direction relies heavily on innovation, a core Ed Fund value. In the largest sense, we are an organization that acts as a catalyst for improvements in education. We are working for change because not all youth have the opportunity to graduate ready, and until they do, we will continue to be a catalyst for innovation and change.

What is the single best thing an individual parent or community member can do to help the Ed Fund?

In short, take action. Mobilize and join with us and others to actively engage in working to improve education for all youth. This comes not only in the form of financial support, but in creating a web of people who are conscious of the challenges we face as a community and who will enlist others to join in the struggle. Convince neighbors, relatives, business leaders, and others to see the importance of a highly successful public education system and to not give up until we have at least a 90% success rate for all youth.

—Interview by Jennifer Franco

JumpStart Gives Freshmen a Leg Up Building a Community at Lincoln High

Each fall, approximately 600 freshmen join Lincoln High School's student body. These students come from middle schools around the City and find themselves looking for friends and a sense of belonging among 2,450 strangers. Because of the size of its student body and the students' diverse background, Lincoln has had difficulty creating a sense of community.

Responding to this need, Christopher Pepper, the head of Lincoln's Peer Resources program, and teacher Diana MartinezMoles planned a new freshman orientation program called JumpStart. Centered around a day-long orientation before the beginning of the school year, JumpStart was designed to welcome Lincoln's newest students, to introduce them to one another and to upperclassmen, and to begin to connect them to resources they need to be successful in high school.

Nearly 100 Lincoln juniors and seniors donated parts of their summer to prepare to lead an orientation day a few days before school began. During the orientation, Lincoln upperclassmen talked to the new freshmen about how to be successful in high school, showed their groups around the school building, and led conversations and activities.

The positive impact of JumpStart on the freshman class has been evident to everyone involved. From the first day of school, 9th graders recognized one another and even knew some of the upperclassmen. For the first time, the freshman class entered with a sense of community already established.

The student leaders of JumpStart continue to play a central role in creating a welcoming atmosphere for freshmen. Freshmen are following their student leaders into activities, which has been shown to increase students' connection to their school as well as academic achievement. JumpStart has also been a positive experience for the upperclassmen involved, providing them with an opportunity to take pride in their school and in themselves.

Building on the success of JumpStart, Lincoln's Peer Resources program is providing mentoring services throughout the year for struggling 9th graders, with both students and teachers serving as mentors. Mentors provide freshmen with the support they need to develop academically and with the knowledge that they have someone rooting for them to succeed.

Through JumpStart, Peers is creating a stronger community at Lincoln High, welcoming new students from their first day on campus and continuing to build that sense of excitement and connection throughout the year.

—Sarah Newman



The new Peers freshman orientation at Lincoln High gives students plenty to smile about.

Public Engagement Initiative

Students Speak Out About Public Schools

From September 2006 to February 2007, the Ed Fund, along with representatives from the SFUSD and Parent Advisory Council, collaborated on a special community engagement initiative to gather input on student enrollment, recruitment, and retention. Working together, we elicited the opinions of more than 1,000 parents, students, and community members in nearly 85 small community conversations across the City.

Conducted in schools, community centers, and private homes, conversations took place in English, Cantonese, Spanish, Samoan, and Russian. A discussion guide led participants through a series of questions about their visions of ideal schools as well as more focused queries about school choice and the enrollment process.

The Ed Fund is committed to making sure that youth opinions are represented in conversations about San Francisco schools

When we set out on this effort to look at student enrollment, we made sure that we heard from young people. In the past six months, we have spoken with nearly 175 students from Balboa, Galileo, Lincoln, Lowell, and O'Connell High Schools and Everett Middle School. Students offered their definition of good schools, talked about what they consider when making decisions about schools, and described what it was like to participate in the school enrollment process. When students make decisions about which school to attend, they ask themselves many questions, including: What are my options? How will I get there? Will I feel safe there, and on the way



there? Will I be challenged and supported? Will I get in? Their answers to these and other questions are influenced by the opinions of their families and friends. They also factor in their individual goals, personal preferences, and things outside of their control, such as where they live and their previous school experiences.

Like most parents and community members, students have strong opinions about what it means for schools to be good. Above all, students want schools that are safe and safe to get to. A Galileo student believed this was basic logic: "How are you going to do well in school if you feel unsafe or worried about your safety?" Students also want to be taught by good teachers who care about them. Students want facilities that are clean, in good repair, and that offer basic resources, such as paper and books, that are essential to learning.

Students didn't only talk about the school selection process. Many also raised questions about the sincerity of the community engagement efforts and were doubtful that their voices would be brought to bear on Board of Education decisions. "This [conversation] isn't going to make a

difference; it's just for politics. They're making us think that they will listen to us and do something, but they won't," explained one student.

The Ed Fund and our partners in this initiative are committed to making sure that youth opinions are represented in continued conversations about San Francisco schools. Youth input from conversations will be highlighted in our formal report to the Board of Education in March 2007. Recommendations in that report will work to ensure that board decisions are informed by young people's experiences and concerns and will provide young people with the kind of schools they not only want, but deserve.

Help us improve teaching and learning in our public schools. Visit www.sfedfund.org/index_community.php or email getinvolved@sfedfund.org.

LPD Program Spotlight

San Francisco Teaching and Learning Community Resource Center Takes Off

For more than 26 years, the Ed Fund has worked to improve the quality of public education by providing leadership and professional development opportunities directly to teachers. The LPD programs are based on our conviction that teachers can be catalysts for change leading to improved student outcomes, and that investing in teacher leadership and professional development leads to positive, more equitable student outcomes. Last year, the LPD program department dedicated itself in a new way to supporting teachers' abilities to offer their students high quality learning opportunities through developing the San Francisco Teaching and Learning Community Resource Center (TLCRC).

Piloted in summer 2006, the TLCRC is a consortium of community-based organizations, higher education representatives, and educators that will improve student achievement through increasing access to Bay Area resources that enhance teaching and learning. San Francisco is a community rich in "place-based," or onsite, learning opportunities as well as technology-based instructional resources; yet public schools, particularly those with a high population of underserved students, often lack the resources, the technology, or the coordination to take full advantage of all the City has to offer.

Through an organic, collaborative process, the TLCRC is creating new pathways for public school teachers and students to take advantage of the Bay Area's resources and building the capacity for new



initiatives through developing partnerships among member organizations. The TLCRC is focused initially on two core subject areas—Science/Environmental Studies and Social Studies—and members convene according to subject area to develop solutions to challenges of access and to coordinate, implement, and publicize those solutions.

An integral component of the TLCRC is to help Center members offer high quality professional development to teachers in a more uniform way, to ensure that schools and teachers have increased access to those vital resources. This coordinated approach to professional development will enable teachers to maximize place-based learning opportunities so that their students get the full benefit of these activities.

Ultimately, the TLCRC will help ensure that all San Francisco's public school teachers and students will have access to vital community resources that contribute to improved teaching and learning and more equitable student outcomes.

Help us increase access to the Bay Area's rich teaching and learning resources—visit www.sfedfund.org/index_educators.php.

Programs

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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Spring 2007

Executive Director Hugh Vasquez and Board President Jo Ellen Brainin-Rodriguez talk about the Ed Fund's new goal of helping all students **graduate ready!**

Mark your calendar and buy your ticket for **GROW**, our high tea fundraiser and educational showcase! **April 18, 2007, 3:00 P.M.** at the St. Francis Hotel - visit www.sfedfund.org/rsvp for more details!

The Public Engagement Initiative gets students talking about **their vision for better schools!**

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