



**Update on
Student Assignment Redesign**

November 13, 2009

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Why the Board of Education is Redesigning Student Assignment

The Board of Education sees the achievement gap as the greatest civil rights issue facing the District today and it is committed to transformation through the implementation of its equity-centered strategic plan - *Beyond the Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now*.

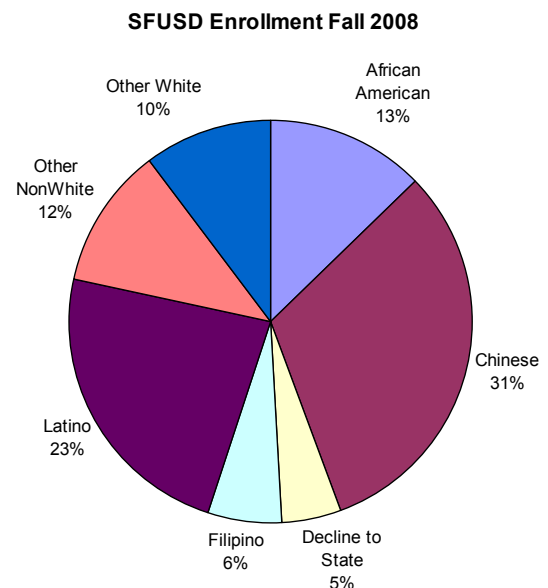
The strategic plan focuses the District's policies, practices, and structures on the goal of making sure that every school is a quality school. Major initiatives within the plan include:

- Increasing the professional capacity of teachers and principals;
- Transforming the curriculum;
- Using data and results to improve learning;
- Providing better support to students and families.

Redesigning student assignment is one part of a system-wide effort to assure that every school is a quality school.

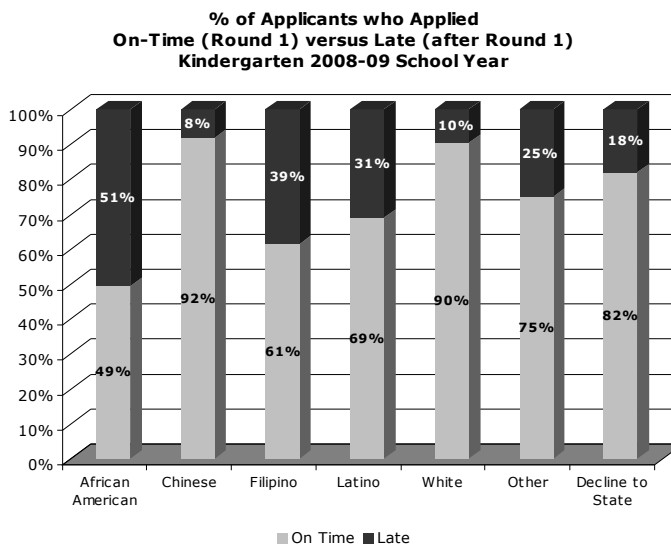
Concerns about the Current System

- The current student assignment plan is not meeting SFUSD's longtime goals of **reducing racial isolation and improving educational opportunities** and outcomes for all students.
 - A quarter of our schools have more than 60% of a single racial/ethnic group, even though the District is racially/ethnically diverse and does not have a majority group.
 - The number of schools with high concentrations of a single racial/ethnic group has increased since the implementation of the current system.
 - Although SFUSD's standardized test scores have steadily increased over the past few years, the achievement gap has persisted for African American, Latino, and Samoan students.



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- Racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students (students whose educational needs have not been met) in the same school is correlated with **other school factors that define the quality of a school**, such as average years of teacher service, teacher turnover, attendance, and suspension rates.
- **Students who apply late have less opportunity for choice since many schools fill up in Round 1.** Participation in our choice process varies greatly by racial/ethnic group. For example, 51% of all African American applicants, 39% of Filipino applicants, and 31% of Latino applicants for the 2008-09 school year applied late, compared to 8% of Chinese applicants and 10% of white applicants.



- **Boundaries for attendance areas have not been revised** since the early 1980s; since then SFUSD has closed, opened, merged, and redesigned schools. As a result, about one-third of our schools do not have an attendance area boundary.
- Some **schools are under-enrolled while others are over-enrolled.**
- Many families report finding the current system **time consuming, unpredictable, and difficult** to understand.

Limitations of our Current System

- The diversity index lottery is only applied when there is competition for seats at a particular site. As a result, **the size of an applicant pool can greatly affect the lottery's ability to facilitate diversity.** There is great variation in demand for our schools, with approximately 11% of schools receiving fewer total requests (first through seventh choice) than seats available. If there is room to accommodate all the students who applied to a school, students automatically get assigned without consideration of the diversity factors.
- Another limitation of the current process in facilitating diversity is that **the applicant pools at individual schools are segregated:** in approximately 60% of our elementary and middle school application pools, more than 45% of students are from a single racial/ethnic group. Since the diversity index lottery only assigns students to a school they choose, its ability to facilitate diversity is constrained by the diversity of the applicant pool.

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Complex: No Simple Solution

San Francisco's **residential patterns and hills present key challenges**. Underserved students (students whose educational needs have not been met) are residentially concentrated in the southeast part of the city.

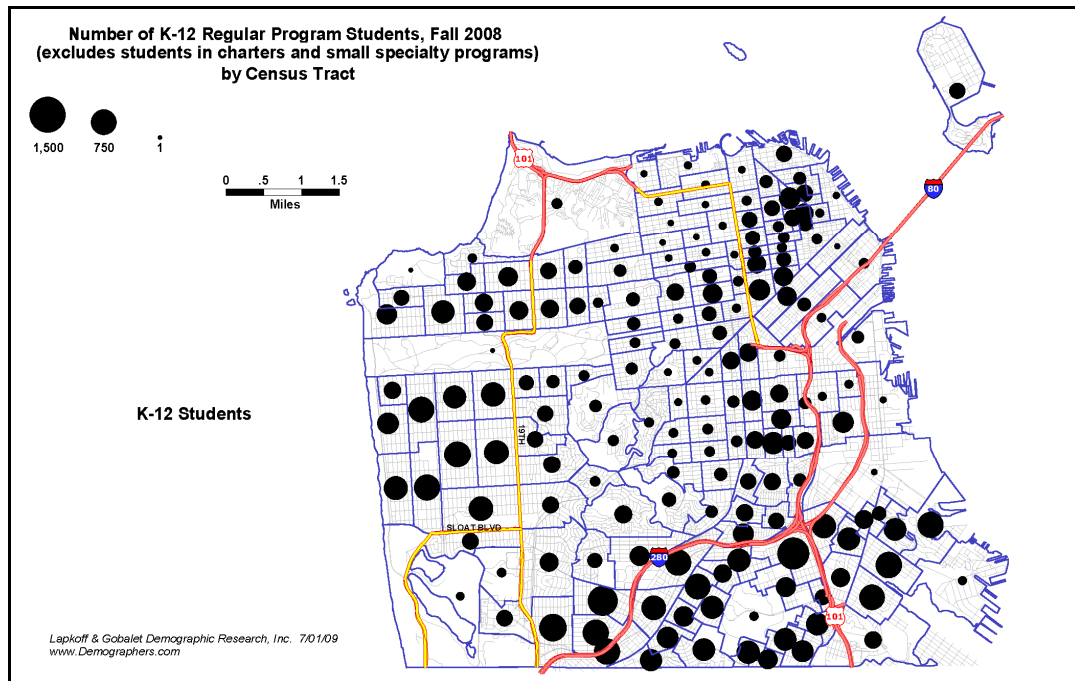
Under the current system there is **great movement between neighborhoods**.

- In the 2008-09 school year, only 36% of students attended a school in their neighborhood.
- Of the 4,266 students who submitted an application in Round 1 for the 2008-2009 school year, 46% (1947) listed their attendance area school as a choice.

There is also **great variation in movement among neighborhoods**, where some neighborhoods have higher percentages of students leaving their neighborhoods for school.

- For example, 70% of students who live in the Bayview neighborhood (in the southeast) attend schools in other areas, compared to 46% of students who live in the Outer Richmond (west).

Student **density patterns vary throughout the city**, with heavy concentrations (37%) of the overall currently enrolled student population living in the southeast part of the city.



There is a **mismatch between where students live and where schools are located**.

- If all students who live in the southeast attended school in the area, over time the schools in the southeast could run out of space. Schools in the north and west could become under-enrolled over time.

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The Role of Student Assignment in Creating Quality Schools

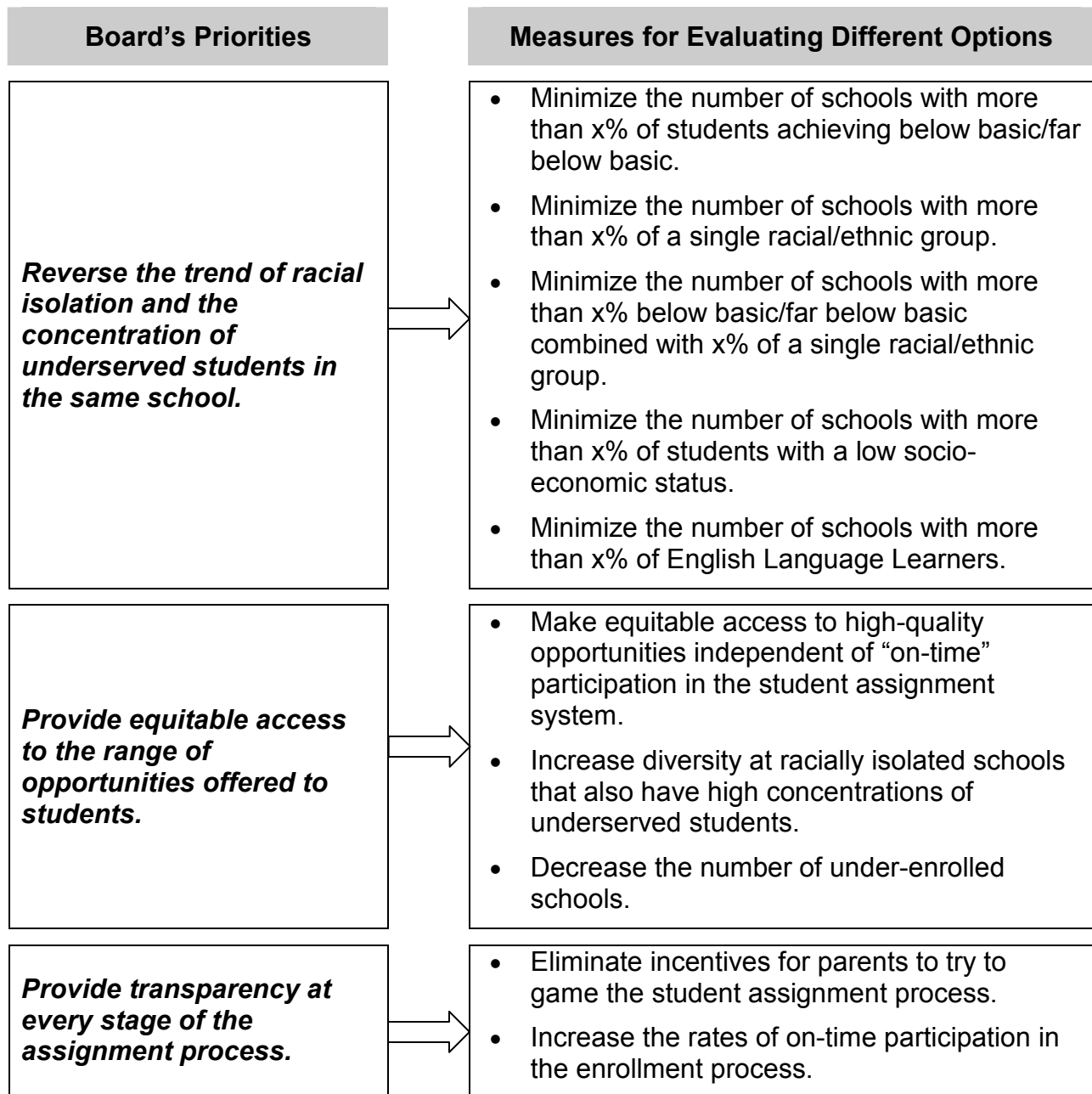
Student assignment alone will not create quality schools. However, it does have a role to play in creating diverse learning environments where all students can flourish and in providing equitable access to the range of opportunities available in SFUSD.

- A new student assignment system should help create diverse learning environments.
 - There is a link between racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students (students whose educational needs have not been met) in the same school and academic achievement.
 - To become truly socially conscious and globally competitive students prepared for success in the 21st century, we know our students must learn from and collaborate with diverse peers.
- The new student assignment system should also help create robust enrollment at all our schools.
 - There is a link between robust enrollment and the ability of schools to provide equitable access to an enriched learning environment.

The new student assignment policy needs to be strategically aligned with and supported by other district policies designed to assure that all our schools are quality schools.

Board of Education’s Priorities for Student Assignment

In response to the concerns about the current student assignment system, the Board of Education established three priorities for a new student assignment system, and they also established measures for evaluating different options.



These measures will be used to analyze various options to see if a particular option is more or less likely to meet the Board of Education’s priorities for a new student assignment system.

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

The Board of Education's Process and Timeline

	December 2008 to June 2009		July 2009 to January 2010	January to March 2010	April to October 2010	Nov 2010 to Sept 2011
Stage	1. Analyze current conditions.	2. Develop priorities.	3. Design and analyze different options.	4. Develop & approve a new student assignment policy.	5. Build the infrastructure to support the new policy.	6. Implement and monitor the new student policy.
Key Activities	<p>Complete a demographic study of school age children in San Francisco.</p> <p>Analyze achievement and enrollment data.</p>	<p>Identify key challenges.</p> <p>Establish priorities.</p> <p>Develop guidelines for boundary simulations.</p>	<p>Create measures to evaluate options.</p> <p>Develop and simulate different options.</p> <p>Gather community feedback.</p> <p>Complete a qualitative study of student assignment and the attributes of quality schools.</p> <p>Complete a quantitative study of the connections between diversity and achievement.</p>	<p>Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Results of the simulations; - Feedback from the community; - Findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies. <p>Submit a new policy for First Reading in February.</p> <p>Approve a new policy in March.</p>	<p>Redraw the attendance area boundaries.</p> <p>Create a new transportation policy.</p> <p>Build the technology to support the new policy.</p> <p>Retrain staff.</p> <p>Create and implement a community engagement strategy, including multilingual materials.</p>	<p>Kick off the enrollment period for the 2011-12 school year (Fall 2010).</p> <p>Generate assignment offers for the 2011-12 school year (Spring 2011).</p> <p>Monitor the effectiveness and gather data for evaluation of the assignment process (Fall 2011).</p> <p>Approve any necessary modifications (Fall 2011).</p>
Ongoing	<p>Secure resources. Review national data. Collaborate with other districts and national experts. Engage and inform the community. Braid the work to redesign student assignment with other district policies designed to assure that all our schools are quality schools.</p>					



SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

Student Assignment Options Being Explored

FOR ALL OPTIONS

- No one who is already enrolled in a school would have to change schools.
- The Board of Education could choose different student assignment options for elementary, middle, and high school.
- The required program needs of Special Education and English Learner students would be met.
- Younger siblings would continue to get priority to attend the same school as an older sibling.
- Boundaries would be redrawn so that all schools except those with criteria for admission, newcomer schools, and language immersion schools, would have an attendance area. The following schools would not have an attendance area.*
 - *Criteria for Admission*
 1. Lowell High School
 2. SOTA High School
 - *Newcomer Schools*
 3. Chinese Education Center (K5)
 4. Mission Education Center (K5)
 5. Newcomer High School
 6. SF International High School
 - *Immersion Schools*
 7. Alice Fong Yu K8 (Cantonese)
 8. Buena Vista Elementary (Spanish)
 9. DeAvila Elementary (Cantonese)
 10. Fairmont Elementary (Spanish)
 11. Marshall Elementary (Spanish)

* Language programs located within schools would be open to city wide attendance although the school itself would have an attendance area.

SIX DIFFERENT OPTIONS

The Board of Education is exploring three primary types of options: (i) lottery; (ii) zone; and (iii) local school.

The options could be modified in different ways, and additional options could still be proposed by the Board of Education before they vote on a new policy.

At this point in the process, the Board of Education has not selected any option, and the numbers below do not represent any preference from the Board of Education; numbers are provided to make it easier to discuss the different options.

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

LOTTERY OPTIONS

The Board of Education is exploring three different lottery options that have some things in common with our current system but also differ in important ways. While there are still a lot of details to be determined, right now the key differences between these options and the current system are that:

- the attendance areas would be revised and there would be fewer, more defined, city-wide schools; and
- instead of a diversity lottery being used to place students, these options would use a new lottery with different preferences.

Under the lottery options, students are not automatically assigned to a school. Students can apply anywhere, and each lottery option uses a different preference system to assign students. Students who do not get one of their choices receive a designated assignment to a school that has openings after the lottery process.

1. **Lottery with Local School Preference.** Students get assigned based primarily on choice with a preference for students who live in the attendance area and request the school. Students who do not get one of their choices receive a designated assignment.
2. **Lottery with Academic Diversity Preference.** Students get assigned based primarily on choice with a system that would give preference to maximizing the academic diversity of the incoming class. The Board of Education is testing different ways to achieve this. Students who do not get one of their choices receive a designated assignment.
3. **Lottery with Academic Diversity and Local Preference.** Students get assigned based primarily on choice with a system that would give preference to maximizing the academic diversity of the incoming class, followed by a preference for students who live in the attendance area and request the school. Students who do not get one of their choices would receive a designated assignment.

Although our current choice system has resulted in racially isolated schools with high concentrations of underserved students, the Board of Education wants to **see if a different choice lottery with revised attendance area boundaries could result in more diverse enrollments**. The Board of Education will use historical choice data and test the lottery options to see if they could result in more diverse enrollments.

Something to keep in mind about the lottery options is that they do not provide predictability; if families do not get one of their choices then they will be designated to a school that has space after the lottery process. The amount of time required for families to participate in this process, and the implications of participating late, would be similar to the challenges in our current system.

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

ZONE OPTION

4. **Zone assignments.** The exact zones have not been determined; however each zone would encompass the east and the west side of the city. In order to achieve the desired diversity, families would be assigned to a school within their zone using a system that would give preference to academic achievement diversity. Each zone would be able to accommodate all the preK-12 students who live in the zone; families would not be able to attend a school outside their zone. Programs would be added/moved to ensure that every zone provided the same range of options.

This option aims to **achieve diversity by clustering schools into a common boundary area** that has a lot of diversity within the boundary.

Something to keep in mind about the zone option is that providing adequate transportation, especially between the east and west, could be costly and, depending on where a student is assigned in his/her zone, students may have long commutes. Also, it could take several years to reconfigure the schools so that each zone offers the full range of program options.

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LOCAL SCHOOL OPTIONS

5. **Local school assignments with choice for city-wide programs only.** Students get assigned to their attendance area school unless they cannot be accommodated by that school (e.g., the Special Education or English Learner program they need is not available at the school). Students can submit choices to attend a city-wide school/program.
6. **Local School Assignments with choice for all schools.** Seats are reserved for students who live in the attendance area. Students can submit choices to attend any school in the District, and choice assignments would be made using a system that gave preference to academic achievement diversity. Students who do not get one of their choices get assigned to their attendance area school.

Under our current system, there is great movement among neighborhoods, and this has contributed to racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school. **In some cases, our neighborhoods are more diverse than the schools in those neighborhoods.** The Board of Education will use historical choice data and test the local school options to **see if they could result in more diverse enrollments.**

Things to keep in mind about the local school options: (a) Some areas of the city have more children than there are seats; this may be taken care of by those who request other schools. (b) How the boundaries are drawn for attendance areas cannot be permanent and fixed. Boundaries would need change over time as populations shift across the city and as schools change through the addition and/or deletion of programs and services.

APPENDIX

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

History of Student Assignment in SFUSD

In 1978, the San Francisco NAACP brought a case against SFUSD and the State of California. The NAACP argued that the District and the State engaged in discriminatory practices and maintained a segregated school system in violation of the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes, and the State of California Constitution.

In 1983, the U.S. District Court approved a type of agreement between the parties called a “Consent Decree” which had two primary goals for the San Francisco Unified School District:

1. continued and accelerated efforts to achieve academic excellence for all students with a particular focus on African American and Latino students; and
2. elimination of racial/ethnic segregation or identifiability in any school, program, or classroom to the extent practicable.

In implementing the 1983 Consent Decree, SFUSD created a student assignment plan and a transportation system designed to support SFUSD’s efforts to desegregate its schools. The student assignment plan used a combination of schools with both contiguous and noncontiguous attendance areas, alternative schools (without attendance areas), and optional enrollment requests which allowed students to transfer to schools outside of their attendance area school. In addition, no school could have fewer than four racial/ethnic groups, and no racial/ethnic group could constitute more than 45% of the students at attendance area schools or 40% at alternative schools.

In 1994, a group of San Francisco parents sued the District for using race as a factor in school assignment, and as part of a 1999 settlement, SFUSD was prohibited from using race or ethnicity as a consideration in student assignment. In attempting to comply with that agreement, SFUSD initially proposed an assignment plan that used a lottery process in which race/ethnicity was one factor, but the Court rejected that plan.

In 2001, the Court approved a settlement agreement that included a new student assignment method called the Diversity Index, which was implemented for the 2002-03 school year and has been in use ever since. The Diversity Index is designed to:

1. give parents choice;
2. ensure equitable access; and
3. promote diversity without using race/ethnicity.

On December 31, 2005, the Consent Decree expired, and for the first time in 22 years the SFUSD student assignment process was not regulated by the courts.

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

SFUSD's Current Student Assignment System

The current student assignment plan, in place since 2001, is designed to:

1. Give parents choice;
2. Ensure equitable access; and
3. Promote diversity without using race/ethnicity.

Under the current system, the biggest determinations of where a student goes to school are parent choice and available seats at any given school.

Students are not automatically assigned a school. Families can request up to seven schools anywhere in the district.

Younger siblings get priority to attend school with their older sibling.

While there is some local preference, the district is using the same attendance area boundaries created over 15 years ago, and about 1/3 of schools do not have any attendance area boundaries.

Some schools have more applications than seats for students. For those schools a diversity lottery assigns students to one of their choices.

The diversity lottery seeks to achieve economic, linguistic, and academic diversity. It defines and measures diversity using a complex formula that calculates the probability that in a given grade randomly chosen students will be different from each other.

The calculation is based on five race-neutral factors:

1. extreme poverty;
2. socioeconomic status;
3. student's home language;
4. academic performance index of student's prior school; and
5. student's prior academic achievement.

For many schools, the applicant pools are not diverse. Since the diversity lottery only assigns students from the applicant pools, it has limited opportunity to reduce racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school.

Students who do not get one of their choices get offered the school closest to where they live with a seat available.

You have to turn your application in on time to choose among all the schools. If you don't turn your application in on time, you can only request schools that still have space.

There is limited connection between where students live and where they go to school, and as a result school assignments are not predictable.

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

Hearing from the Community

SFUSD has partnered with different community members and organizations over the past five years to gather feedback on the student assignment system. SFUSD has heard from thousands of parents and other community members regarding their experience, concerns, and suggestions for student assignment. Families consistently report wanting quality schools and a fair and equitable system that is easy to understand.

While families consistently report wanting quality schools, there are many divergent perspectives on what a new student assignment plan should prioritize and support. For example, some parents want a school close to home, while others feel that choosing a school with particular programmatic features is more important than having a school close to home.

Here is a high-level summary of key findings from the community reports. For the purposes of the summary, we have pulled out findings that relate only to the student assignment system. However, within these reports there is also rich material regarding the kinds of schools parents and other community members want.

- Some parents, particularly elementary school parents, want a quality school close to home or easy to get to. Other parents feel that choosing the school that is best suited for their child is more important than having the school in their neighborhood.
- Most parents want their school communities to reflect San Francisco's socioeconomic and cultural diversity. But for parents across the city, diversity is often trumped by a school's location, academic quality, and their own feeling of belonging.
- Even parents who are happy with their children's schools want more predictability in the enrollment process and are uncomfortable with a process that feels excessively complicated or random.
- Parents want the District to provide clear and accessible information that will help them choose a school that is a good fit for their child.
- Parents want to participate fully in the enrollment process, but many encounter significant language, time, and information barriers.

The content of past community reports can be found on our website: www.sfusd.edu. (<http://portal.sfusd.edu/template/default.cfm?page=policy.placement.assignment.community>)

SFUSD Student Assignment Redesign

Definitions

Assignment System	The way students are assigned to schools.
Local School	A school with a newly defined attendance area - a geographic boundary drawn around a school which is periodically adjusted as population shifts occur.
City-wide School	A school that has no attendance area because it offers a specified program, or has an entry requirement, and therefore does not have a geographic preference area. It has city-wide enrollment.
Academic Performance Index (API)	A measure used by the California Department of Education to measure the academic performance and growth of student performance by school.
Designated Assignment	When families do not get any of their requested schools, the district makes an assignment to a school with openings.
Over/Under-subscribed Schools	<p>Schools are over-subscribed if there are more requests than there are openings at the school (e.g., 200 applicants and 100 openings).</p> <p>A school is under-subscribed if there are fewer requests than openings (e.g., 50 applicants and 100 openings).</p>
