



Office of Public Outreach and Communications

555 Franklin Street, Room 305

San Francisco, CA 94102

Tel: 415.241.6565 • Fax: 415.241.6036

www.sfusd.edu

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Gentle Blythe

415 241-6565

Officials Denounce Governor's Proposed Education Cuts and Prepare for a Fiscal State of Emergency

January 17, 2008 (San Francisco) – Local and state officials, parents and students gathered at the San Francisco Unified School District headquarters this afternoon to send a clear message to the governor regarding his proposed cuts to education.

"This is a time to stand united for children. Kids didn't create this fiscal crisis and their progress shouldn't be undermined because of it," said Superintendent Carlos Garcia. "When we fail our children, we fail ourselves."

"San Francisco's public school children deserve a world class education," said Mayor Gavin Newsom. "The city, in partnership with the school district, will do what it takes to make sure that our children, our teachers, and our schools have the resources they need to succeed."

Currently, California's per pupil spending is one of the lowest in the nation; according to a recent Education Week report, California spends an average of \$1,900 less per student than the national average. The report gave California a "D+" for finances.

"To short change and deny our children a top quality public education and thereby deny their hopes and dreams, merely to bow down to the false god of 'no taxes' is simply criminal," said Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco).

School officials are waiting for more details of the Governor's proposed budget and will perform further analysis to determine the impact of the reductions. According to San Francisco schools' superintendent Carlos Garcia, the district is preparing for a fiscal state of emergency.

"Given the lean budget that we already operate under, the state's budget proposal could require drastic measures including increasing class size, closing schools to consolidate resources, and eliminating transportation services within the extent permitted by law."

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Garcia said that, based on the information that has been made available, the San SFUSD would be expected to cut as much as \$40 million from its budget. The cuts for San Francisco's public schools would be part of the largest one-time, state-wide cut to education since voters passed Proposition 13 in 1978.

"Drastic cuts will reverse the forward momentum for children in this city," said Board President Mark Sanchez. "Our schools have been making steady academic gains for the last seven years and, with local voter-approved revenue measures, we have brought back arts, music, sports, and counseling."

"But we have so much more work to do and no money with which to accelerate progress," Sanchez added.

Budget allocations for Proposition H, the Public Education Enrichment Fund, will be discussed by the Board of Education this evening. The superintendent is recommending that all new spending proposals be put on hold in order to lessen cuts to school budgets.

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