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Weighted Student Formula Yearbook
San Francisco

by Katie Furtick & Lisa Snell

San Francisco Unified School District

Program Name: Weighted Student Formula
Implementation: 2002–2003
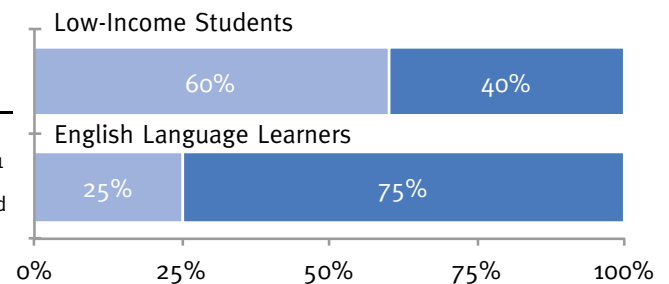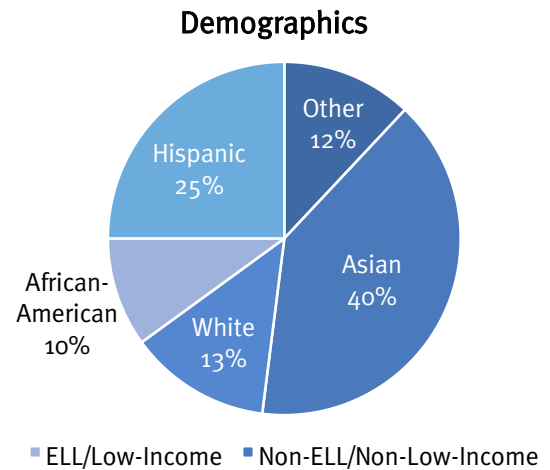**Program Type:** District-Wide Program
Legal Authorization: School Board Policy

Overall Grade: B

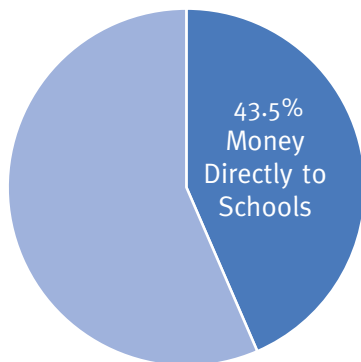| Category	Grade	Rank*
Overall Grade **	B	7
Principal Autonomy	B	6
School Empowerment Benchmarks	C	12
2011 Proficiency Rates	A-	3
Proficiency Rate Improvement	F	13
Expected Proficiency vs. Actual	A-	1
Expected Proficiency Improvement	C+	8
2011 Graduation Rates	D	10
2011 Achievement Gaps	C	10
Achievement Gap Improvement	B-	6
Achievement Gap Closures:		
■ *Internal District*	B-	7
■ *Internal District vs. Internal State*	B-	6
■ *External Achievement Gaps*	C-	9

* Tied with New York for "Expected Proficiency vs. Actual". Tied with Oakland for "Improvement in Expected Proficiency." Tied with Prince George's County for "2011 Graduation Rates." Tied with Minneapolis for "Internal District vs. Internal State" achievement gap closures. Tied with Newark for "External Achievement Gaps." Tied with Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Oakland for "School Empowerment Benchmarks."

** Overall grades and ranks may not equal the average of individual grades and ranks because categories are weighted differently to reflect their importance.

Demographics

Hispanic 25%
Other 12%
Asian 40%
White 13%
African-American 10%

■ ELL/Low-Income   ■ Non-ELL/Non-Low-Income

Low-Income Students
60% | 40%

English Language Learners
25% | 75%

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Source: SFUSD Enrollment October 2012.

2012–2013 Principal Autonomy

43.5% Money Directly to Schools

Source: SFUSD 2012–2013 Budget

School Empowerment Benchmarks

School budgets based on students not staffing	Yes
Charge schools actual versus average salaries	No
School choice and open enrollment policies	Yes
Principal autonomy over budgets	Yes
Principal autonomy over hiring	No
Principal training and school capacity building	Yes
Published transparent school-level budgets	Yes
Published transparent school-level outcomes	Yes
Explicit accountability goals	Yes
Collective bargaining relief, flat contracts, etc.	No

SFUSD Met 7 out of 10 School Empowerment Benchmarks

1. Overview of San Francisco's Weighted Student Formula Program

San Francisco has approximately 53,000 students with student demographics that are 40 percent Asian, 25 percent Hispanic, 10 percent African-American, 13 percent White, and 12 percent categorized as other. Twenty-five percent of San Francisco's students are English language learners, and 60 percent of students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program.[1] San Francisco's former Superintendent of Schools Arlene Ackerman introduced the weighted student formula (WSF), which allows money to follow students to the schools they choose while guaranteeing that schools with harder-to-educate kids (low-income students, language learners, low achievers) get more funds. Ackerman also introduced site-based budgeting, so that school communities—not the central office—determine how to spend their money. Finally, she worked to create a true open-enrollment student assignment system that gives parents the right to choose their children's schools.[2]

Immediately after assuming the superintendent position in San Francisco in 2000, Dr. Ackerman created a number of committees to focus on improving equity, including convening the Weighted Student Formula Committee.[3] The WSF committee provided a forum for stakeholders to discuss the possible design and implementation of WSF. The district began a pilot of a WSF policy with 27 schools in 2001–02. Based on the results of the pilot policy, in 2002, Dr. Ackerman created a five-year plan, "Excellence for All," which had three main goals: to improve academic achievement for all students, increase the equitable allocation of district resources, and establish accountability for student outcomes.[4] In 2008, the district redefined its focus on three main priorities—*Access and Equity*, *Achievement* and *Accountability*—through its current strategic plan *Beyond Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now.* This plan has been extended through the updated *Walking the Talk: Strategic Plan Progress Report.*[5]

During 2002–03, the district moved toward school site-based authority in resource planning and budget development by implementing the weighted student formula (WSF) as the primary method of allocating local funds to schools. Instead of delivering resources through full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing allocations, as had previously been the case, resources are allocated and distributed in dollars. The funding levels of the WSF are based on student needs. A basic funding amount by grade level is provided for each student and supplemented by an additional amount if the student requires English language learner services or is from a low socio-economic household.

In addition, budgetary decisions using WSF resources are made at the school site by local school site councils (SSCs) instead of centrally. In this way, the WSF method of allocation allows schools to be more creative, innovative and responsive to local needs. It also makes the SFUSD's system of resource allocation more accountable and transparent to parents and other stakeholders. After doing a thorough assessment of

current conditions and needs each year, each school conducts a monitoring process to see how well their implemented strategies are meeting their goals. Each school's annual academic plans, beginning in 2008–09, prioritize the continuing needs of the school and outline specific strategies to meet the school's objectives. Starting in 2009, each San Francisco school uses a template called the "Balanced Scorecard" that prioritizes the continuing needs of the school and outlines specific strategies to meet the school's objectives.

School site councils and principals prepare preliminary budgets using initial allocations based on enrollment projections. Each spring, schools receive preliminary budget allocations that serve as the basis for academic plans, as well as budgets and staffing plans developed using a schedule of average salaries. An annually published academic planning guide tasks school site councils and central offices with funding and administrative responsibilities. This guide is produced each year and disseminated to schools.

In San Francisco, school site-based budgeting goals include:[6]

- Provide more flexibility to local schools to fit unique objectives, circumstances, strengths, weaknesses and strategies
- Build authentic participation of school community stakeholders
- Coordinate, simplify and improve local school planning processes and make site plans more helpful
- Build a facilitative relationship between central offices and sites

2. How Does San Francisco's Student-Based Budgeting Process Work?

In San Francisco the weighted student formula gives each school a foundation allocation that covers the cost of a principal's salary and a clerk's salary.[7] The rest of each school's budget is allocated on a per-student basis. There is a base amount for the "average student," with additional money assigned based on individual student characteristics: grade level, English language skills, socio-economic status, and special education needs. These weights are assigned as a percentage of the base funding. For example in 2012, a kindergartner would receive funding 1.2640 times the base allocation, while a low-income kindergartner would receive an additional 0.09 percent of the base allocation. In 2012–2013 San Francisco's base allocation was $2,848. Therefore, the kindergartner would be worth $3,599, and the low-income kindergartner would generate an additional $256 for his school.

Schools' budgets are based on:

- Total dollars available for the WSF
- Foundation allocation
- Salary and benefits equivalent to a principal and a clerk

- The Base Funding Factor—the dollar amount associated with a 1.0 weight

- Weighted factors and respective weights

- Grade levels

- English Language Learners

- Low Socio-Economic Status students

- Special Education students

The weighted student formula funds are based on the total general purpose funding available for the weighted student formula at the district level. The table below shows SFUSD dollar allocations and weights for the 2012–2013 school year.

Table 1: San Francisco Unified School District's 2012 – 2013 Weighted Student Formula

		K – 3rd	4th – 5th	6th – 8th	9th – 12th	
⭕	Base Allocation	$3,599 (1.264)	$2,848 (1.00)	$3,247 (1.1402)	$3,389 (1.19)	
$	Below Poverty Line	$256 (0.090)				
➕	Disabled[8]	**Special Day Class**		Resource Specialist		
		Non-Severe $51 – $54 (0.0179 – 0.0189)	Severe $90 – $93 (0.0315 – 0.0328)	$28.00 (0.0097)		
💬	English Language Learners	**Beginning / Intermediate**			Advanced	Long-Term
		K – 5th $200 (0.0702)	6th – 8th $240 (0.0843)	9th – 12th $530 (0.1861)	$155 (0.0544)	$240 (0.0843)

In an American Institutes for Research study, district administrators in San Francisco explained the rationale behind the level of weights for different student populations.[9] For example, the district argues that the weights for grades K–3 are higher than those for grades 4 and 5 because California's class size reduction categorical funding requires more teachers, and therefore greater resources, for the lower grades. Currently, districts have some flexibility from the state of California over small class size categorical allocations but San Francisco has still maintained smaller class sizes in the early grades. In addition, the district indicates that the weights for lower performance on the English language learner test—the CELDT—increase as the student gets older because it becomes more difficult to attain English in the higher grades. Finally, most
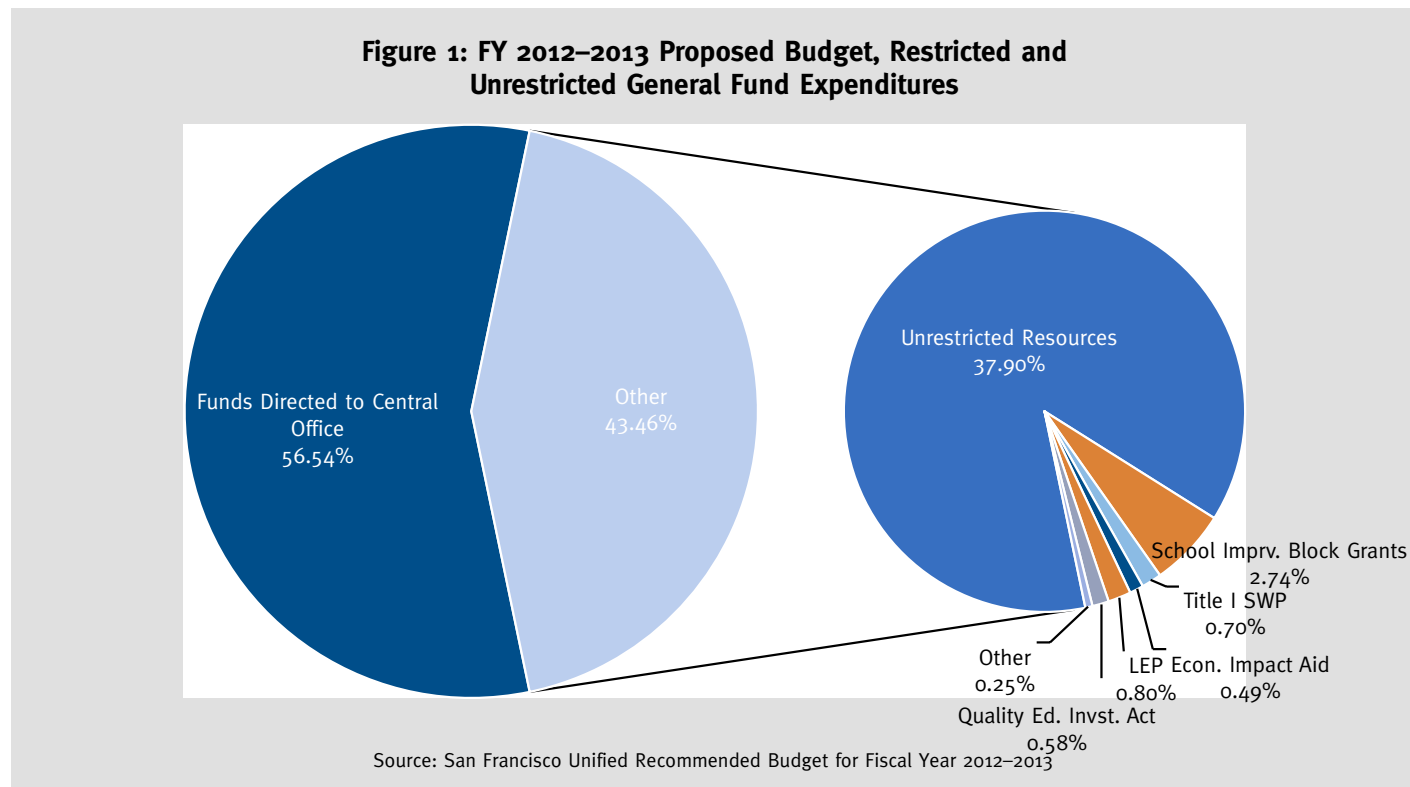
special education staff members are allocated centrally, and the weights for special education students are intended for small expenses, such as additional instructional supplies or professional development activities.

3. How Much Autonomy Do San Francisco School District Schools Enjoy?

There are two ways to view school-level autonomy. First, autonomy at the school site can be evaluated by budget discretion—what proportion of funds is sent to the schools versus retained at the district level? Second, one can evaluate by planning discretion—how much control over staffing and programmatic offerings do principals have?

The letter grade given to school districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* indicating the level of autonomy over school budgets is based on the percentage of yearly operating funds that are allocated to the school level.[10] The higher the percentage of operating funds allocated to the school level, the greater budget autonomy the principal enjoys.[11]

SFUSD weighted student funds make up 43.5 percent of the district's fiscal 2012–2013 general operating budget, which makes up between 70 and 80 percent of individual school operating budgets.[12] This is shown in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1: FY 2012–2013 Proposed Budget, Restricted and Unrestricted General Fund Expenditures

Funds Directed to Central Office
56.54%

Other
43.46%

Unrestricted Resources
37.90%

School Imprv. Block Grants
2.74%

Title I SWP
0.70%

LEP Econ. Impact Aid
0.49%

Other
0.25%

Quality Ed. Invst. Act
0.58%

Source: San Francisco Unified Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2012–2013

This is a large percentage of budget autonomy relative to other school districts highlighted in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*, giving SFUSD a "B" in principal autonomy.

The weighted student formula allows school leaders to more flexibly allocate staff in nuanced ways that are not possible using staffing ratios.[13] In an American Institutes for Research study comparing student-based budgeting in Oakland and San Francisco, school leaders reported on the multiple ways they used their discretion:[14]

- Hire additional teachers to reduce class size or provide additional assistance to English learners.
- Hire additional counselors, attendance clerks, parent liaisons and extra security officers.
- Increase certain useful part-time staff (such as a parent liaison) to full-time status.
- Retain teachers to maintain their desired class numbers despite declining enrollment.

For example, one San Francisco principal indicated that the control over retaining teachers despite fluctuations in enrollment gave her a sense of stability and community that would have been lost if the district controlled her staffing ratio based only on student enrollment.

While the weighted student formula gives principals flexibility, full autonomy is limited. San Francisco principals are constrained in discretion over personnel and school-level innovations—such as changing instructional minutes—by collective bargaining agreements.

4. How Does San Francisco Unified School District Support Principals?

Through the district's leadership development office, SFUSD offers Principal Training Institutes. This training includes instructional leadership, site management, partnerships and collaboration with higher education, and training in accountability, technology and closing the achievement gap. In addition, San Francisco offers a school planning summit to explain district- and school-level goals as part of the budget and planning process for principals and school site councils.[15] San Francisco also offers a yearly guide on site-based budgeting and developing school-level plans.[16]

5. The Site-Based Management of San Francisco Unified School District Schools

School site councils are required at every school in California as a condition for participation in certain state and federally funded categorical programs. SFUSD has expanded the role of the SSC to include oversight of the academic plan and budget in recognition that all stakeholders (students, parents, community members, teachers, other staff and principals) must contribute to the success of the school. School principals are the critical leaders at school sites. They are responsible for establishing a vision for improving achievement for all students. Principals are ultimately accountable for achieving the goals of the school and

the district. Therefore, principals must ensure that the academic plan and budget are focused on meeting the identified needs of all students. If principals or any other members of school site councils are not confident that an academic plan, as drafted, is adequately focused on needs of all students, they have recourse with the district to ensure that their concerns are heard. San Francisco Unified maintains detailed and transparent materials related to school site council development and school-site budgeting, with frequent updates of district procedures and practices.[17]

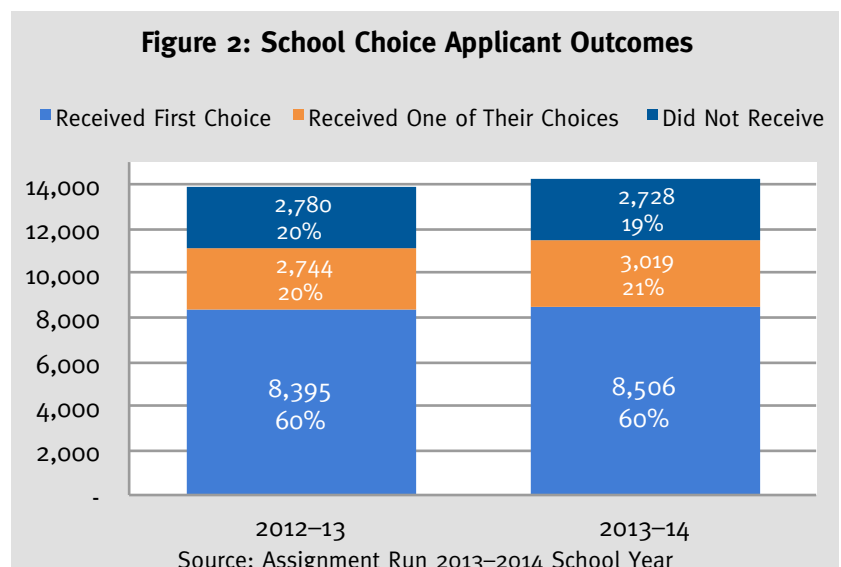## 6. The School Choice Component of San Francisco's Weighted Student Formula Program

In March 2010, the San Francisco school board unanimously approved a new school-choice-based student assignment system that simplified the system and differentiated it for elementary, middle and high school. The new system places students in their highest ranked requests as long as there is space. If there are more requests for a school than openings, the student assignment system sorts all requests using a series of preferences, called tie-breakers, to assign applicants to schools.[18] Placement tie-breakers include factors like a younger sibling attending a school, living in certain school feeder patterns, and living in an area with the lowest average test scores.[19] Students who do not get assigned to a requested school because of space limitations are offered a school through a process that considers geographical distance and assigns a school with space closest to the student's home.

Here are the highlights of the first round of the school choice process for the 2013–2014 school year.[20]

Overall (K-12), 81 percent of applicants (11,525) received one of their choices and 60 percent of applicants (8,395) received their first choice, shown in Figure 2.

Eighty-five percent of kindergarten applicants (4,232)—compared to 84 percent last year (4,051)—received one of their choices, and 61 percent of kindergarten applicants (3,040)—compared to 56 percent last year (2,668)—received their first choice.

Eighty-three percent of 6th grade applicants (2,894) received one of their

Figure 2: School Choice Applicant Outcomes

■ Received First Choice   ■ Received One of Their Choices   ■ Did Not Receive

	2012–13	2013–14
Did Not Receive	2,780 / 20%	2,728 / 19%
Received One of Their Choices	2,744 / 20%	3,019 / 21%
Received First Choice	8,395 / 60%	8,506 / 60%

Source: Assignment Run 2013–2014 School Year

choices compared to 85 percent last year (2,774), and 70 percent of 6th grade applicants (2,418) received their first choice compared to 70 percent last year (2,269).

Eighty-six percent of 9th grade applicants (3,709) received one of their choices compared to 86 percent last year (3,601) also, and 61 percent of 9th grade applicants (2,645) received their first choice compared to 73 percent last year (3,040). School choice applicant outcomes, by grade, are shown in Figure 3, below.

Figure 3: School Choice Applicant Outcomes 2012–13 to 2013–14 by Grade

Legend: Received First Choice · Received One of Their Choices · Did Not Receive

	Kindergarten		6th Grade		9th Grade	
	2012–13	2013–14	2012–13	2013–14	2012–13	2013–14
Did Not Receive	748 16%	736 15%	478 15%	590 17%	587 14%	625 14%
Received One of Their Choices	1,383 29%	1,192 24%	505 16%	476 14%	561 13%	1,064 25%
Received First Choice	2,668 56%	3,040 61%	2,269 70%	2,418 69%	3,040 73%	2,645 61%

Source: Assignment Run 2013–2014 School Year

Students who request high demand schools are less likely to receive one of their choices than students who request schools with smaller applicant pools, and students living in areas of the city with the lowest average test scores are more likely to get assigned to one of their choices than students in other areas of the city.

7. Initiatives to Increase School-Level Accountability in San Francisco

In San Francisco the district uses an academic plan called the "balanced scorecard" to guide school-level accountability.[21] The balanced scorecard focuses schools, departments and individuals on common goals and objectives so that each understands its role in supporting the plan, while also providing a mechanism to communicate progress and feedback throughout SFUSD. The plan outlines a school's programs and strategies for improving student achievement, as well the responsibilities for everyone involved in that process. In this way it provides a framework for continuous improvement and holds schools accountable for improving student achievement. School principals and school site councils are provided with a template for a balanced scorecard and Single Plan for Student Achievement that is designed to align school performance goals with district goals and available budget resources.[22]

The district's academic plan is useful for the following purposes:

- To specifically define a school's targets for meeting the district's primary goals of improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap.
- To identify and align the strategies, programs, services and resources that a school will use to meet its student achievement goals.
- To identify and communicate to the whole school community the roles and responsibilities for implementing the components of the plan.

In addition, SFUSD has also created the Superintendent's Zone to provide extra support to lower-achieving schools with the goal of helping every school in the Zone to reach the district average academic performance ranking. All schools receiving School Improvement Grant funding are included in the Superintendent's Zone, as are five additional schools. The district chooses which schools to place in the Superintendent's Zone by using a cluster analysis to sort schools by looking at their academic performance, the number of African-American and Latino students, teacher turnover and how many years of experience the teachers had, student demographics such as the percentage of low-income students or English learners, and qualitative data such as the suspension rate and how safe the school was rated on the 2008 School Climate Survey.

In 2012, when compared to the district as a whole, schools in the Superintendent's Zone showed double the rate of growth for English language arts (ELA) and three times the rate of growth for math.[23] In 2008, the Superintendent's Zone schools had 19.4 percent of their students classified as proficient in ELA. By contrast, in 2012, 35.5 percent of Superintendent's Zone students were proficient in ELA, a gain of 16.1 percentage points.[24] Schools with federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) showed even greater improvement since 2008, with an 18.4 percentage point gain in ELA proficiency.[25] For math, Superintendent's Zone students in

grades two through seven showed a 23.7 percentage point gain, moving from 25.1 percent proficient in 2008 to 48.8 percent proficient in 2012.[26] SIG schools in the Superintendent's Zone had a 26.9 percentage point gain in math since 2008.[27]

According to the district press release:

The rate of accelerated growth in the Zone demonstrates what is possible when you combine a clear vision and strategy, with the additional resources necessary, for serving our historically most underserved students," said Guadalupe Guerrero, Deputy Superintendent for Instruction, Innovation and Social Justice. "Teachers in the Zone continue to work together to develop effective and engaging instructional practices. Principals, instructional coaches and school support teams provide strong leadership focused on continuous improvement. In addition, the adoption of a community-schools approach provides for enhanced student supports and aligned community partnerships. This combination of essential school supports is resulting in significantly improved outcomes for students.[28]

8. Performance Outcomes in San Francisco Unified School District

While compiling this *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*, Reason Foundation conducted an analysis to determine how the school districts that have adopted a Weighted Student Formula are performing relative to other districts in their state, and relative to each other.

Reason's analysis grades 10 performance metrics. Scores are determined by comparing the school district in question—in this case San Francisco Unified—with other school districts in the same state (California, in this instance), and sorting them into a decile ranking. Based on the school district's decile rank within its own state, the analysis then compares it with the other districts studied in this *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*. Finally, the analysis assigns the studied school districts a grade based on how they measure up against one another. This analysis also grades and ranks studied school districts on two other measures: the number of school empowerment benchmarks the district has reached, and the degree of autonomy principals have over school budgets. In determining the grades on these two measures, districts are compared only with the other districts covered in this *Yearbook*. A detailed explanation of the methodology used to determine performance metrics and grading can be found in the methodology chapter of the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*.

Student proficiency rates, as determined by standardized state tests and student enrollment data were used to calculate the following:

- 2011 proficiency rates;

- Improvement (average change) in proficiency rates from 2008 to 2011;

- Expected versus actual proficiency rates;

- Improvement in expected proficiency from 2008 to 2011;

- Achievement gap, and

- Each of three achievement gap closure metrics.

San Francisco Unified School District student proficiency rate data was obtained from the 2012 Broad Prize District Data Reports.[29] Proficiency rate data from 2008 to 2011 are derived for English/language arts (ELA), mathematics and science from the California Standards Test (CST) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). For comparability across states Reason categorizes ELA as "reading" in its analysis. Student achievement including 2012 proficiency rates are also discussed, but this analysis does not include 2012 data because in many school districts the data were not yet available at the time of writing. Therefore, 2012 student achievement is discussed, but not compared relative to other school districts in California and in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*.

Graduation rate data were obtained at the school level from the California Department of Education website Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data files. The data were gathered for 2009–2010 and 2010–11 adjusted cohort graduation rates, the most recent data available at the time.[30]

The grade given for school empowerment benchmarks is based on 10 benchmarks determined to be best practices within existing weighted student formula programs and recommendations of other studies on student-based budgeting.
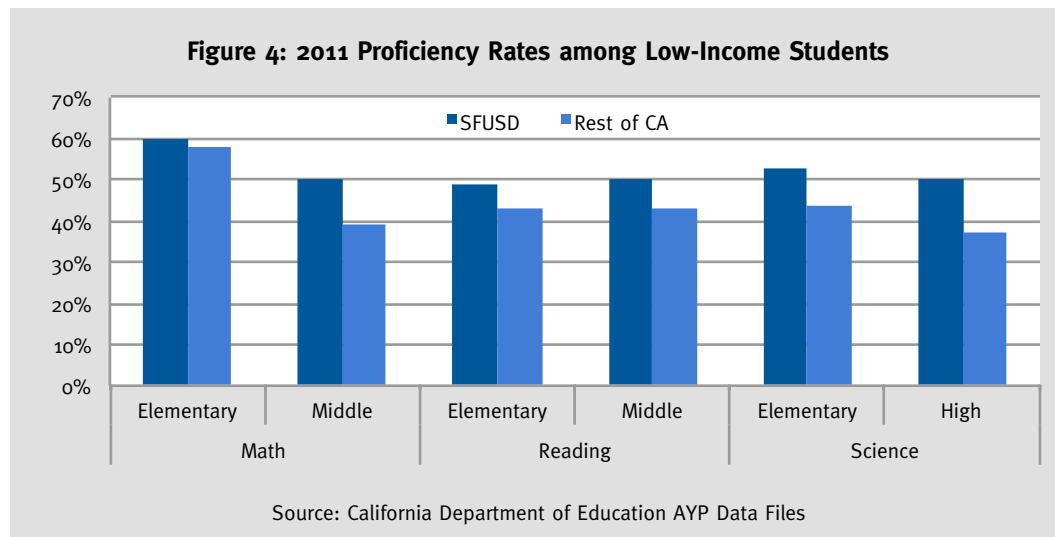
The following sections expand upon each graded category by highlighting areas in which SFUSD performed exceptionally well relative to other districts in California, and to other districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*. This analysis also discusses areas in which SFUSD has fallen behind or could use improvement.

Student Achievement

Category	Grade
2011 Proficiency Rates	A-
Proficiency Rate Improvement	F
Expected Proficiency vs. Actual	A-
Expected Proficiency Improvement	C+
Graduation Rates	D

San Francisco Unified School District outperformed at least 60 percent of California school districts in many categories for 2011 proficiency rates among low-income students. Specifically, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) was among the top 20 percent of California school districts in mathematics proficiency rates among low-income middle school students, and science proficiency rates among low-income high school students. SFUSD also outperformed 60 percent of California school districts in 2011 mathematics, reading and science proficiency rates among low-income elementary school students, shown in Figure 4. Relative to other school districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) ranked highest in these categories.[31]

Figure 4: 2011 Proficiency Rates among Low-Income Students

Source: California Department of Education AYP Data Files

District-wide, over 37,000 students in grades 2–11 took the California Standards Test (CST) in the spring of 2012. From the 2012 CST test results, SFUSD's standards-based test scores have improved in both English/language arts (ELA) and math. As of 2012 more than three-fifths (60.5 percent) of students district-wide are now classified as 'proficient or above' in ELA, and more than two-thirds (67.6 percent) of students are 'proficient or above' in math (grades 2–7). Combining grades 2–7 and "end of course" (Algebra, Geometry), 57 percent of students are 'proficient or above' in math.[32]

These achievement rates continue an upward trend for SFUSD, which from 2008 to 2012 has seen proficiency rates in ELA improve by 10 percentage points and math (grades 2–7) by 8.2 percentage points.[33] When performance gains are disaggregated, almost all grades and major ethnic groups, as well as English language learners and special education students, have shown the same positive trend in performance as the district, with increased or maintained rates of 'proficient or above' in both content areas.[34]

Even though proficiency rates are improving among SFUSD students, the district received a poor grade for improvement, because relative to other California school districts, SFUSD is not improving as quickly year to year. The slower rate of improvement is likely due to ceiling effects, meaning that because SFUSD

proficiency rates are already relatively high, it is more difficult to achieve large gains in improvement quickly.

San Fransico Unified School District outperformed expected proficiency given the percentage of low-income students in the school district across several categories. Proficiency rates for mathematics, reading and science at all school levels (elementary, middle and high school) were predicted for all California school districts, taking into account the percentage of low-income students at each grade level. The percentage of low-income students is taken into account because, generally, school districts with a higher concentration of low-income students have lower performance. The predicted proficiency rates were then compared to the actual district proficiency rates to find if a given school district is performing above or below expected (predicted) proficiency.

SFUSD is among the top 20 percent of California school districts for expected proficiency in middle school mathematics and high school science. The district also is among the top 30 percent of all California school districts for expected proficiency in middle school reading and elementary science. Of the nine categories for 2011 expected proficiency, SFUSD ranked the highest relative to other *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* school districts in four of them (mentioned above).

San Francisco Unified School District graduation rates increased each year from 2010 to 2012, and among African-American students, increased by 14 percent during that time. Relative to other California school districts, SFUSD has low graduation rates overall and among each sub-group of students. However, graduation rates overall and among African-American students have improved each year, shown in Figure 5. Graduation rates among low-income and Hispanic students fell slightly in 2012, but are still higher than the 2010 graduation rates.

Figure 5: Graduation Rates

Source: California DOE Ed-Data 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates
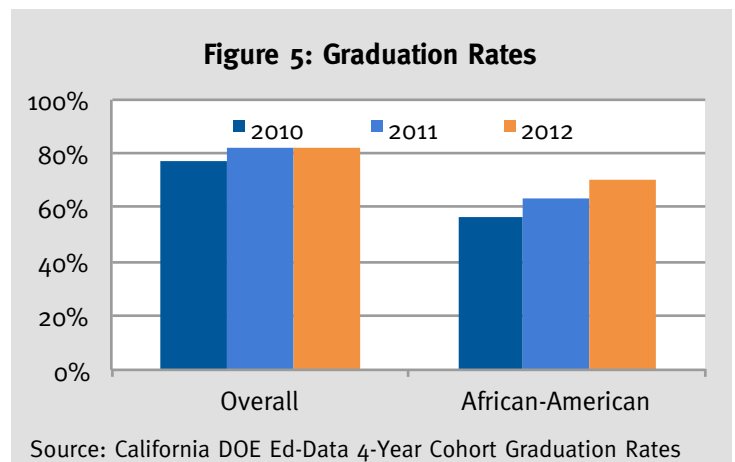
Achievement Gaps

Category	Grade
2011 Achievement Gaps	C
Improvement in Achievement Gaps	B-
Achievement Gap Closures:	
Internal District	B-
Internal District vs. Internal State	B-
External Achievement Gaps	C-

The following three achievement gaps are measured across all grade levels (elementary, middle and high school) and school subjects (reading, mathematics and science):

- African-American versus White student proficiency;

- Hispanic versus White student proficiency, and

- Low-income versus non-low-income student proficiency.

Internal district achievement gaps (IDG) are measured as proficiency gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged student groups within a given district. Because this analysis assesses internal district achievement gaps for each district in the state, it can rank relative size of achievement gaps across districts in the state, and how quickly those achievement gaps are closing from 2008 to 2011.

An achievement gap is considered to be closing if the disadvantaged student group proficiency rate is increasing faster than the advantaged student group proficiency rate.

San Francisco's achievement gaps are smallest between low-income and non-low-income students. SFUSD is among the top 30 percent of school districts for smallest 2011 reading proficiency achievement gap between low-income and non-low-income middle school students, and top 40 percent of students in science proficiency among high school students.

SFUSD ranked poorly relative to other districts in California for nearly all 2011 achievement gap categories measured between African-American and White students, and Hispanic and White students.

When measuring the rate of achievement gap closure over time, SFUSD performed well relative to other school districts in California. In particular, achievement gaps between African-American and White middle school students are the fastest closing achievement gaps in San Francisco Unified School District. Elementary school African-American students are also gaining higher achievement and succeeding in quickly closing achievement gaps in reading and mathematics proficiency, shown in Figure 6, below.

Figure 6: Middle School Achievement Gap Closure
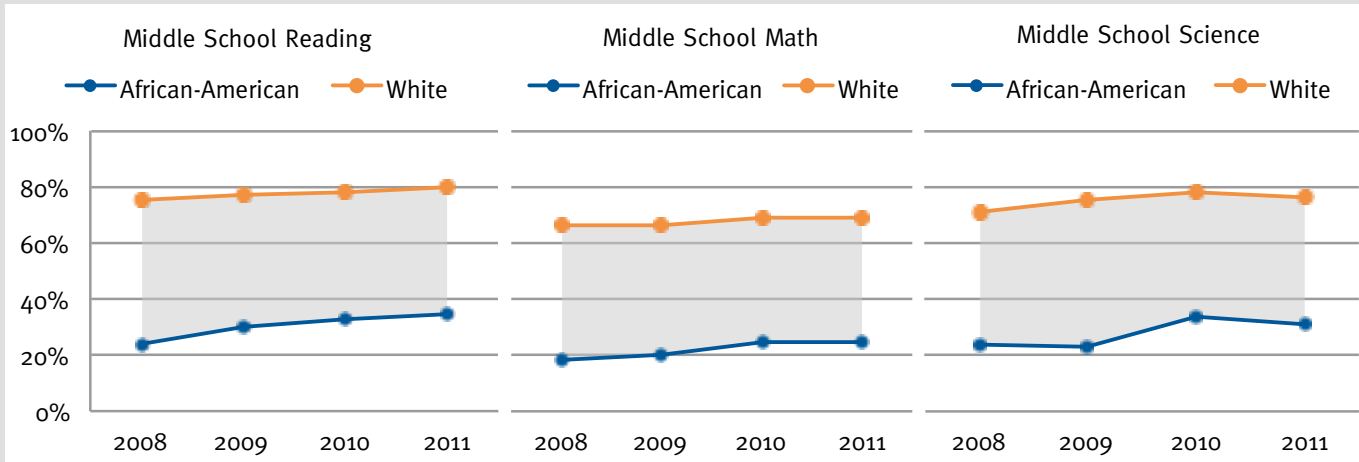
Source: 2012 Broad Prize District Data Reports

In addition to internal district achievement gaps (IDG) discussed above, this analysis also measures internal district versus internal state (ID vs. IS) achievement gaps and external district achievement gaps (EDG).

Internal district achievement gaps (IDG) measure student groups within the district. Internal district versus internal state (ID vs. IS) achievement gaps show the district's achievement gap versus the average achievement gap of every other district in California (excluding SFUSD). If a given SFUSD achievement gap is closing faster than that of the rest of the state, the ID vs. IS gap is considered to be closing. Finally, external achievement gaps (EDG) quantify the difference between a district's disadvantaged student group proficiency rate and the advantaged student group average proficiency rate of all other districts in the state. External achievement gaps are considered to be closing if a district's disadvantaged group proficiency rate is increasing faster than the state averaged advantaged group. Table 2 shows which achievement gaps SFUSD is closing, and which achievement gaps are not closing, given the available data.

Table 2: All Achievement Gap Closures

Achievement Gap	School Level	Subject	IDG	ID vs. IS	EDG
African-American vs. White	Elementary	Math	√	X	√
Hispanic vs. White	Elementary	Math	√	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Elementary	Math	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	Elementary	Reading	√	√	√
Hispanic vs. White	Elementary	Reading	√	X	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Elementary	Reading	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	Elementary	Science	√	X	√
Hispanic vs. White	Elementary	Science	√	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Elementary	Science	X	X	√
African-American vs. White	Middle School	Math	√	X	X
Hispanic vs. White	Middle School	Math	X	X	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Middle School	Math	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	Middle School	Reading	√	√	√
Hispanic vs. White	Middle School	Reading	√	√	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Middle School	Reading	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	Middle School	Science	√	√	√
Hispanic vs. White	Middle School	Science	√	√	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Middle School	Science	√	√	X
African-American vs. White	High School	Math	X	X	X
Hispanic vs. White	High School	Math	X	X	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	High School	Math	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	High School	Reading	X	X	X
Hispanic vs. White	High School	Reading	X	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	High School	Reading	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	High School	Science	X	X	X
Hispanic vs. White	High School	Science	X	X	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	High School	Science	X	X	X
Total Gaps Closing out of Total Available:			12/27	6/27	11/27

Shown in the table above, nearly all achievement gaps between African-American and White elementary and middle school students are closing. Also, the majority of achievement gaps between Hispanic and White elementary and middle school students are closing, but very few achievement gaps are closing among low-income students. This is likely due to the fact that achievement gaps between low-income and non-low-income students in the district are small.

Few internal district versus internal state gaps are closing, meaning that other school districts in California are closing achievement gaps more quickly than San Francisco Unified. Also, SFUSD is struggling to close external achievement gaps. This means that the "rest of state" average advantaged student group is increasing proficiency more quickly than SFUSD disadvantaged student groups.

Areas for Improvement

San Francisco Unified School District's 2011 mathematics proficiency rates fell into the bottom 10 percent of California school districts for African-American and Hispanic elementary and high school students. In many categories SFUSD outperformed other districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* for 2011 proficiency rates—particularly among low-income students. However, among African-American and Hispanic elementary and high school students SFUSD performed

Figure 7: 2011 Proficiency Rates Mathematics

Source: California Department of Education AYP Data Files

poorly, shown in Figure 7. The district received some of the lowest rankings relative to all other districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* for 2011 proficiency rates and improvement in proficiency in high school reading among African-American and Hispanic students, shown in Figure 8.

SFUSD received low rankings in several categories for improvement in proficiency rates among low-income students as well. Though, it is important to note that the low rankings in these categories among low-income students are due to ceiling effects. SFUSD low-income students have consistently been high performing in many categories relative to other districts in California and therefore do not show high gains in proficiency rate improvement.
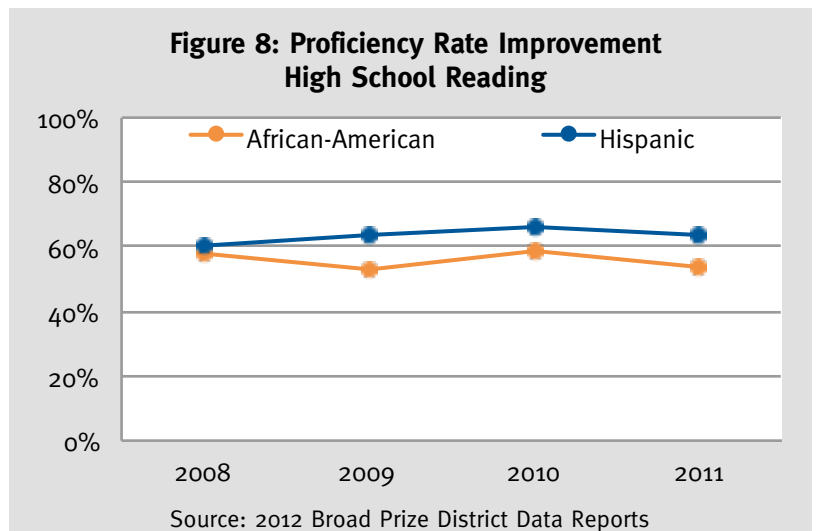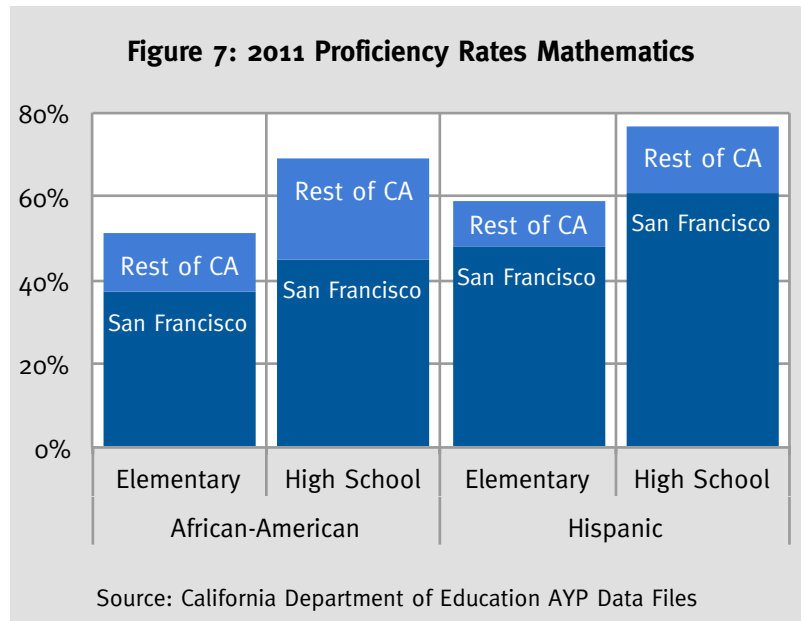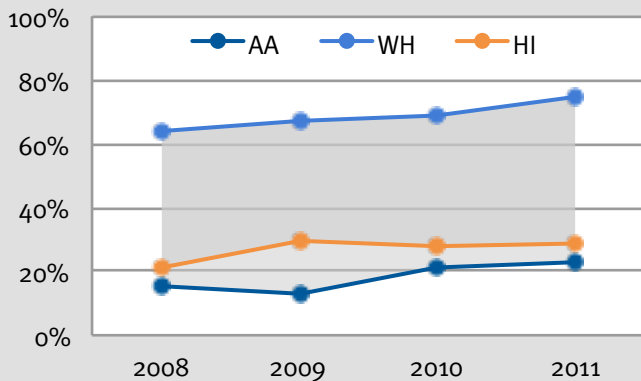
Figure 8: Proficiency Rate Improvement High School Reading

Source: 2012 Broad Prize District Data Reports

Figure 9: 2011 Achievement Gaps High School Science

Source: 2012 Broad Prize District Data Reports

San Francisco Unified School District fell in the bottom 10 percent of nearly all 2011 achievement gap categories between African-American students and White students and Hispanic and White students. SFUSD performed poorly for 2011 achievement gaps relative to all other school districts in California. However, SFUSD was tied in nearly every category in which it fell in the bottom 10 percent with at least one other *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* school district.

Therefore, relative to other school districts in this *Yearbook*, San Francisco Unified fell in the middle of the pack and received a grade of C.

School Empowerment Benchmarks

San Francisco Unified School District met seven out of the 10 school empowerment benchmarks. This is about average relative to the districts discussed in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*, but leaves room for improvement and for SFUSD to reach its full potential in student achievement.

Category	Grade
School Empowerment Benchmarks	C
School budgets based on students not staffing	Yes
Charge schools actual versus average salaries	No
School choice and open enrollment policies	Yes
Principal autonomy over budgets	Yes
Principal autonomy over hiring	No
Principal training and school capacity building	Yes
Published transparent school-level budgets	Yes
Published transparent school-level outcomes	Yes
Explicit accountability goals	Yes
Collective bargaining relief, flat contracts, etc.	No

9. Lessons Learned in San Francisco

1. San Francisco demonstrates the importance of using a weighted student formula in conjunction with school-level academic plans that tie instructional strategies to budgets and outline specific academic goals for each school. The weighted student formula in isolation is just a funding mechanism, but when budgets are aligned with academic goals it helps school leaders to focus on how best to use school-level resources to raise student achievement.

2. San Francisco also demonstrates the usefulness of offering individual schools differentiated central support based on school performance and other individual factors. The school district was able to target central office resources to Superintendent Zone schools rather than dilute resources across all schools. Recognizing that schools can have different levels of autonomy and support based on performance can

help districts to prioritize their scarce resources to focus on improving the lowest-performing schools with the most difficult challenges.

3. WSF can be used to increase within-district equity. For example, the American Institutes for Research 2008 analyses of the San Francisco weighted student formula implementation found that high-poverty middle and high schools in San Francisco benefitted significantly from the implementation of the WSF policy. Focusing on the overall per-pupil spending, they found that San Francisco increased the proportion of total resources allocated to high-poverty relative to low-poverty middle and high schools after implementation of the WSF.[35]

Resources

- Balanced Scorecard Development and Site-Based Budgeting Guide, 2013–2014 School Year, San Francisco Unified School District, http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/councils-and-committees/files/SSC/FINAL%20GUIDE.pdf.

- *Beyond the Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now*, 2008–2012 Strategic Plan, San Francisco Unified School District, May 2008, http://portal.sfusd.edu/data/strategicplan/strategicplan_summary_ENG.pdf.

- Jay Chambers et al., *A Comparative Study of Student-Based Budgeting and School-Based Decision-making in San Francisco and Oakland Unified School Districts*, American Institutes for Research, October 2008, http://www.air.org/news/documents/A%20Tale%20of%20Two%20Districts_Final.pdf.

- Larisa Shambaugh, Jay G. Chambers and Danielle DeLancey, "Implementation of the Weighted Student Formula Policy in San Francisco: A Descriptive Study of an Equity-Driven, Student-based Planning and Budgeting Policy, American Institutes for Research, August, 2008, http://www.air.org/news/documents/REL_2008061.pdf.

- For school-based budgets, see: http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/budget/FY12-13-recommended-budget.pdf; http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/councils-and-committees/files/2012-2013%20Budget%20Allocations-FINAL.pdf.

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Endnotes

1   "Facts at a Glance 2012–2013," San Francisco Public Schools, http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/sfusd-facts-at-a-glance%20-2013.pdf

2   Lisa Snell, "The Agony of American Education," *Reason*, April 2006.

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4   Ibid.

5   "Walking the Talk: Strategic Plan Progress Report," San Francisco Unified, June 2012, http://www.sfusd.edu/assets/sfusd-staff/Strategic%20Plan/files/SFUSD_Strategic%20Plan_End%20of%20Year%20Report_Final%20Draft_062812.pdf

6   "Introduction to the Weighted Student Formula and Site-based Budgeting," San Francisco Unified School District, Spring 2012, http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/councils-and-committees/files/WSF%20Overview_02_2012.pdf

7   Ibid.

8   Students classified as "special day class non-severe" receive $51 for grades K – 5th and $54 for middle and high school. Students classified as "special day class severe" receive $90 for grades K – 5th and $93 for middle and high school.

9   Ibid.

10 Oakland Unified School District, 2012–2013 Adopted Budget, June 27, 2012.

11 The methodology used for determining principal autonomy is explained in detail in section 2 of the methodology chapter of the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*.

12 "San Francisco Unified School District Recommended Budget For Fiscal Year 2012–2013." http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/budget/FY12-13-recommended-budget.pdf

13 Ibid.

14 Jay Chambers et al., *A Comparative Study of Student-Based Budgeting and School-Based Decision-making in San Francisco and Oakland Unified School Districts*, American Institutes for Research, October 2008, http://www.air.org/news/documents/A%20Tale%20of%20Two%20Districts_Final.pdf.

15 SFUSD School Planning Summit, March 2nd, 2013, http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/councils-and-committees/files/SSC/2013-school-planning-summit-plenary.pdf

16 "Balanced Scorecard Development and Site-Based Budgeting Guide 2012–2013 School Year," San Francisco Public Schools, http://www.sfusd.edu/es/assets/sfusd-staff/councils-and-committees/files/2012-2013%20Final%20Guide.pdf

17 San Francisco Unified School Site Council website, http://www.sfusd.edu/en/councils-committees/school-site-council.html

[18]   For more information on the school choice process see the San Francisco Unified school enrollment form at http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/enroll/files/2013-14/2013-14_enrollment_application_en.pdf and the San Francisco Public Schools Enrollment Guide at http://issuu.com/hansgong/docs/2013-14_enrollment_guide_en.

[19]   Ibid.

[20]   Highlights March 15, 2013 Assignment Run 2013–2014 School Year, San Francisco Public Schools, http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/enroll/files/2013-14/2013-14_enrollment_highlights_.pdf

[21]   "Balanced Scorecard Development and Site-Based Budgeting Guide 2012–2013 School Year."

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[24]   Ibid.

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[26]   Ibid.

[27]   Ibid.

[28]   Ibid.

[29]   http://www.broadprize.org/resources/reports2012.html.

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[31]   Tied with Houston, New York and Oakland for 2011 mathematics proficiency rates among low-income elementary school students.

[32]   http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/aypdatafiles.asp.

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[34]   Ibid.

[35]   Shambaugh, Chambers and DeLancey, "Implementation of the Weighted Student Formula Policy in San Francisco."