

INTRODUCTION

The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) is governed by a Board of Education (Board) comprised of seven elected members, and is subject to local, state, and federal laws. SFUSD's mission is to provide each student with an equal opportunity to succeed by promoting intellectual growth, creativity, self-discipline, cultural and linguistic sensitivity, democratic responsibility, economic competence, and physical and mental health so that each student can achieve his or her maximum potential.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

The Board's priorities for student assignment are:

1. Reverse the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school;
2. Provide equitable access to the range of opportunities offered to students; and
3. Provide transparency at every stage of the assignment process.

SFUSD's Educational Placement Center (EPC) manages the majority of school enrollments centrally.

- Admissions to Lowell High School and Ruth Asawa School of the Arts are administered by EPC according to an October 16, 2001 proposal developed by a *Taskforce on Admissions to Lowell High School and School of the Arts* and approved by the Board on October 23, 2001.
- All other enrollments administered by EPC are implemented according to the Board's student assignment policy, P5101, which was unanimously approved by the Board in March 2010 and has been amended a few times since then (see Appendix 2 for details).
- Historical context and details about our current student assignment policy are provided in the Appendix.

SFUSD's *Student, Family, and Community Support Department* manages enrollment in continuation schools; SFUSD's *Early Education Department* manages Pre-K enrollment; and each charter school has its own enrollment process.

MONITORING STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

Board Policy P5101 calls on the Superintendent to conduct an annual assessment of the student assignment system governed by P5101, and to develop an annual report and present it to the Board of Education each year.

This is the fourth annual report since P5101 was approved by the Board; the first annual report was shared with the Board and public on March 5, 2012, the second report was shared on January 25, 2013, and the third report was shared on April 24, 2014.

BOARD RESOLUTION TO MODIFY THE HIERARCHY OF PREFERENCES

On June 24, 2014 Commissioners Rachel Norton and Sandra Fewer **submitted Resolution 146-24A1 Supporting Equity in Student Assignment** to the Board of Education for First Reading. The resolution requests that the Superintendent modify the hierarchy of preferences to place CTIP1 residency immediately following the attendance area residency for kindergarten enrollment.

At the August 26, 2014 Board meeting, Chair Fewer announced that Resolution 146-24A1, *Supporting Equity in Student* was being held in abeyance and that there would be further review of this resolution and it would come before the Board for action at a future meeting.

The Board of Education and staff have discussed the potential implications of changing the hierarchy of preferences for kindergarten enrollment at a number of public meetings since the resolution was first introduced in June 2014.

This annual report captures key questions and analysis related to changing the hierarchy of preferences, including information from earlier annual reports, findings from our research during the development of the current student assignment policy, and analysis shared with the Board over the course of the past year.

RESOLUTION 146-241 SUPPORTING EQUITY IN STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

At the August 26, 2014 Board meeting, Chair Fewer announced that Resolution 146-24A1, *Supporting Equity in Student Assignment*, introduced on June 24, 2014 by Commissioners Norton and Fewer, was being held in abeyance and that there would be further review of this resolution and it would come before the Board for action at a future meeting. This proposal would be an addendum to the full [student assignment policy](#).

Subject: Resolution No. 146-24A1

Supporting Equity in Student Assignment

- Commissioners Sandra Lee Fewer and Rachel Norton

WHEREAS: In March 2010, the Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District adopted a new student assignment policy with the following objectives:

- Reverse the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school;
- Provide equitable access to the range of opportunities offered to students; and
- Provide transparency at every stage of the assignment process; and

WHEREAS: The Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District strongly believes that all students are best served in learning environments that are racially and socio-economically integrated; and

WHEREAS: The San Francisco Unified School District has promised our students and families that we will reverse the predictive power of demographics in academic achievement;

WHEREAS: Academic results for students enrolled in San Francisco Unified School District schools continue to show gaps in academic achievement between groups: between African-American and Latino students and their White and Asian classmates; between English-proficient students and their classmates who are English Learners; and between students who do not have a disability and those students who do;

WHEREAS: Three years of results of the district's new student assignment policy have not shown any reversal of the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students at the same school; and

WHEREAS: The Board of Education created the Census Tract Integration Preference (CTIP) in its 2010 adoption of the Student Assignment Policy, currently representing the 20 percent of census tracts in San Francisco with the lowest-average scores on the California Standards Test posted by students who live in those census tracts and attend a San Francisco public school; and

WHEREAS: Choice patterns from families living in CTIP areas vary according to racial/ethnic group. For example, according to the District's 2013-14 enrollment process results, White families living in CTIP areas were most likely to request Rooftop, Clarendon, and Grattan for Kindergarten. African-American families

with a CTIP tiebreaker were most likely to request Drew, Rooftop, and New Traditions for Kindergarten. Latino families living in CTIP areas were most likely to choose Buena Vista/Horace Mann, Moscone or Cesar Chavez for K placement; and

WHEREAS: Residents of attendance areas corresponding to high-demand attendance area schools – Clarendon Elementary is one example – arguably have less access to the range of educational opportunities offered to students due to demand from families who live in CTIP areas;

WHEREAS: Attendance area schools like John Muir Elementary and Sanchez Elementary would be able to draw on a more diverse pool of potential students if residents of CTIP census tracts in their attendance areas were not encouraged to apply to other schools due to the high preference the District's student enrollment policy currently assigns to CTIP residents for Kindergarten enrollment; and

WHEREAS: Each year about 15 percent of families applying for Kindergarten placement in SFUSD do not receive any of their choices in the first round; and

WHEREAS: Increasing the likelihood that families that wish to attend their attendance area school will actually be able to do so will correspondingly increase the transparency and predictability of San Francisco's assignment process; and

WHEREAS: The current hierarchy of preferences in the school district's Student Assignment Policy may encourage San Francisco residents to lie about their occupancy in a CTIP census tract for purposes of school enrollment, thereby fraudulently displacing attendance area residents at high-demand schools; and

WHEREAS: Residents of CTIP areas who do not wish to attend their attendance area schools will still have expanded priority to attend other attendance area schools and city-wide programs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: The Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District requests that the Superintendent modify the hierarchy of preferences for the district's Student Assignment Policy to place CTIP residency immediately following attendance area residency for Kindergarten enrollment; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District requests that the Superintendent make the above change effective for the enrollment cycle for the 2015-16 school year and beyond.

EXCERPT OF THE ANNUAL REPORT INCLUDING STANFORD'S RESEARCH ON THE STUDENT ASSIGNMENT SYSTEM

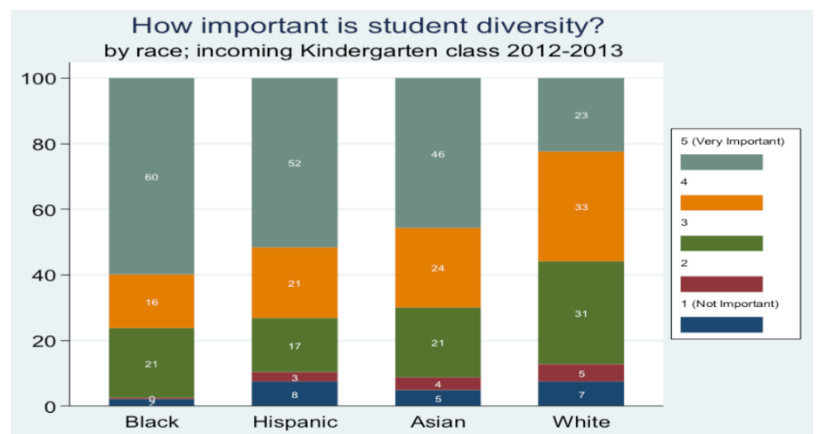
1. How does our student assignment system, in conjunction with parental choices, shape the degree of racial isolation in SFUSD schools?

In 2013 Matt Kasman, a doctoral candidate at Stanford explored the degree to which SFUSD's student assignment system, in conjunction with parent choices, shape the degree of racial isolation in SFUSD's schools. The findings below were shared with the Board at an Ad Hoc Committee on Student Assignment in September 2013.

WHAT SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS DO PARENTS SAY THEY VALUE?

Mr. Kasman reviewed the school choice surveys on the application forms for the 2012-13 school year and found that among the most important factors were:

- Academic reputation of schools (>75% say "very important")
- Teacher and principal quality (>75% say "very important")
- Neighborhood safety (>75% say "very important")
- Proximity to home (>50% say "very important")
- Recommendations from friends and family (~50% say this is "very important")



While there were no significant differences by race/ethnicity in the importance of these factors, on the question of diversity **White respondents were less likely to indicate that diversity is important than non-White respondents.**

WHAT TYPES OF SCHOOLS DO FAMILIES LIST AS THEIR TOP CHOICES?

Mr. Kasman examined choices using the following school characteristics: distance to school; achievement (school average CST scores); racial/ethnic composition of school; and socioeconomic composition of school.

Reviewing the data, Mr. Kasman found that **choices differed by race/ethnicity.**

- African American families select schools that are further from home than Hispanic, Asian, and White families.
- White and Asian families select schools with higher average achievement than African American and Hispanic families.
- Families tend to select schools with higher proportions of students of the same race as them.
- White families select schools with lower proportion of free/reduced lunch eligible students than non-White families.

WHAT DO FAMILIES DO AFTER ASSIGNMENT?

After being assigned to a school, 63% of families enroll in their assigned school, 19% request and enroll in a different SFUSD school, and 18% leave SFUSD.

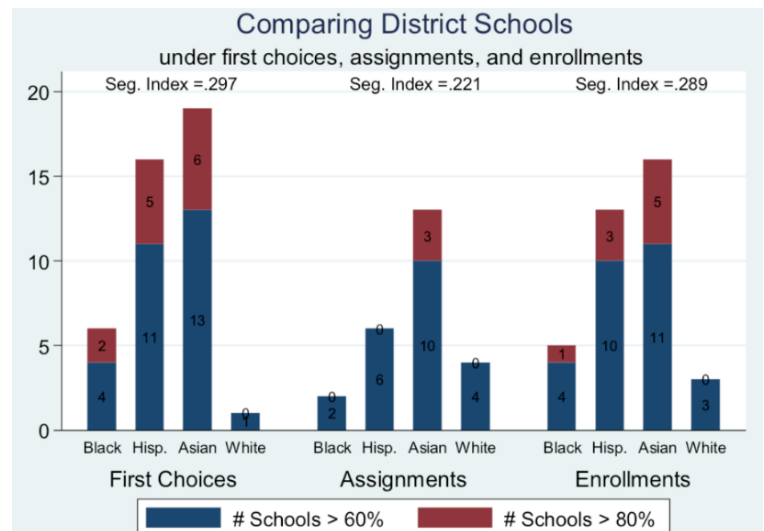
- White families were more likely than non-White families to leave SFUSD after assignment than any other racial/ethnic group.
- Attrition and reassignment was higher for families who did not get their first choice.
- There was no appreciable difference in attrition based on proximity.
- Attrition was higher for families offered a school with:
 - lower achievement than their first;
 - greater percent of students eligible for free/reduced meals than their first choice;
 - lower percent of same racial/ethnic student population than their first choice.

HOW DO CHOICE/ASSIGNMENT/ENROLLMENT AFFECT RACIAL ISOLATION?

To answer this question, Mr. Kasman compared the patterns of racial isolation that would result under three different scenarios.

1. If all students went to their first-choice schools
2. If all students went to the school initially assigned
3. Actual enrollment patterns.

The analysis revealed that first choice assignments would result in more racially isolated schools, that student assignment reduces the number of racially isolated schools, but that enrollment patterns increase them again.



Observations

The degree of racial isolation is the result of three sequential mechanisms:

1. *Choice*: Parents list their school preferences (given available options)
2. *Assignment*: The district assigns students to schools (based on the assignment policy)
3. *Enrollment*: Parents decide whether to enroll their child, appeal the assignment, or enroll their child outside of SFUSD

The ways in which families choose school programs and make enrollment decisions subsequent to assignment tend to work against racial/ethnic diversity.

The district might alter the outcome of choice/assignment/enrollment processes in several ways:

1. Influence parental choices
 - a. More/different information about schools
 - b. Altering location/size/types of school programs
 - c. Increase participation in choice process
2. Alter school assignment policy/algorithm

3. How might modifications to the algorithm produce better results?

Following up on his findings from 2013, Mr. Kasman conducted a series of simulations in 2014 to explore policy conditions that might produce better results. His research had two goals in mind. The first was to try to detect developing trends in racial diversity in schools and SFUSD as a whole. The second was to gain some intuition about how specific actions that SFUSD might take would affect these trends. Mr. Kasman employed an agent-based model simulation of the entire enrollment process, which consists of three primary components: school program selection, student assignment, and enrollment. The simulation took “plausible” cohorts of simulated students whose families make decisions that reflect those of actual families. The simulation was run using an environment based on current conditions in SFUSD as well as a series of counterfactual conditions that represent potential policy interventions. Mr. Kasman validated the model by using the cohort of prospective kindergarten students from the 2011-2012 school year; these simulated students made program selections, were assigned to schools, and enrolled in district schools in ways that closely adhered to the actual cohort of students. The simulations were *not* intended to make specific predictions about enrollment in a given year or school, but were rather intended to give a general intuition about trends over time and policy effects. In addition, the simulations were based on input from past cohorts of students and their behavior. Therefore, the findings will not provide useful insight if the composition or decision-making of families in the district changes dramatically.

The table below describes the three different kindergarten scenarios simulated along with findings about the potential impact on the gap in average achievement and the impact on racial isolation.

Simulation	Tiebreaker Rank	Findings: Gap in Achievement	Findings: Racial Isolation
1. Baseline	CTIP1 Attendance Area	Not a big difference; tends to increase not decrease.	32 schools had more than 60% of a single racial/ethnic group, and of these 10 had more than 80%.
2. Increase Attendance Area Priority	Attendance Area CTIP1	Not a big difference; tends to increase not decrease.	34 schools had more than 60% of a single racial/ethnic group, and of these 9 had more than 80%.
3. Remove Low Test Score	Attendance Area	Not a big difference; tends to increase not decrease.	34 schools had more than 60% of a single racial/ethnic group, and of these 11 had more than 80%.

Observations

Here is a summary of Mr. Kasman's most noteworthy findings from the simulations:

- **There appears to be a good deal of stability in patterns of enrollment in SFUSD's kindergarten programs.** This finding is consistent with the long-standing nature of school choice in the district.
- **Increasing participation in the school choice process has a moderate, positive impact on racial diversity in district schools.** The choices that families who otherwise would not have participated may result in a wider distribution of these students than simply placing them into their attendance zone or closest available schools. Therefore, interventions that increase engagement among families have the potential to improve school integration.
- If families replace their consideration of school achievement levels with basic measures of school value-added, there is a decrease in the gap of the achievement levels of schools in

which White and Asian students enroll in relative to Black and Hispanic students. This is largely driven by the enrollment patterns of White families, who appear especially sensitive to achievement levels when making school selections and enrollment decisions. However, this finding is based on the ambitious assumptions that families will fully replace their consideration of achievement levels with the new information, and that value-added remains stable over time. With that being said, the literature on school choice makes it clear that **changing the information available to families can alter their decision-making; providing more nuanced, sophisticated, or contextualized information might result in families making decisions that result in greater equity and integration in the district.**

- **Ranking the attendance area priority higher than the low test-score priority and/or eliminating low test-score priority from the assignment process resulted in a decrease in racial diversity** in district schools as well as an *increase* in the gap of the achievement levels of schools in which White and Asian students enroll in relative to Black and Hispanic students.