Discussion of Implementation Considerations for The Proposed SFUSD's Student Assignment Policy

November 17, 2020

Co-Hosts

- Stanford University Graduate School of Education
- UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education

In support of partner districts:

- San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)
- Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)

Panelists

- **Mary Filardo**, Executive Director, 21st Century School Fund
- **Francisco Martinez**, Admissions Manager, Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD)
- **Tomas Monarrez**, Research Associate, Urban Institute
- **Orla O'Keeffe**, Chief of Policy and Operations, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)
- **Henry O'Connell**, Project Manager, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)
- **Irene Lo**, Assistant Professor, Management, Sciences and Engineering, Stanford University
- **Itai Ashlagi**, Associate Professor, Management, Sciences and Engineering, Stanford University

Facilitator:

- **Moonhawk Kim**: OUSD-UC Berkeley Research-Practice Partnership

Objective and Agenda

Objective: SFUSD community members learn about the design of SFUSD's proposed student assignment policy, and gain perspectives from the policy and research experts about the questions and considerations for successful implementation of the policy.

Agenda:

- Why discuss research and evidence around student assignment?
- Presentation of the Proposed Policy
- Panelists' Reflections on the Policy and Implementation
- Audience Q&A
- Quick feedback survey and closing

Why Discuss Implementation Considerations for the Proposed SFUSD's Student Assignment Policy

- SFUSD is currently revisiting its policy for how elementary school students are assigned to schools, and the San Francisco Board of Education will vote on a new policy on December 8, 2020.
- OUSD—with its Equitable Enrollment Initiative—has begun to reexamine enrollment policies in the school district with a lens towards increasing equitable access to schools.
- This speaker series will help infuse policy discussions with additional evidence and facilitate a public dialogue around these complex issues related to SFUSD's and OUSD's student assignment policy.

Questions for Panelists' Reflections

1. What will it take for this policy to be implemented successfully and achieve its goals? What lessons can SFUSD learn from other districts when implementing this policy?
2. One of the goals of SFUSD is to ensure authentic community engagement in drawing zones and implementing the policy. What are key components of doing such engagement well? What are best practices from other districts?

Proposed Student Assignment Policy

History and Context

- San Francisco is residentially segregated
- History of school desegregation efforts dating back to 1971
- Recently, have attempted to use district-wide choice as a tactic to integrate schools
    - Has not helped integrate schools (segregated choice patterns)
    - Seen as increasing inequity
    - Lacks predictability, simplicity
    - Barrier to strong community connections
- 2018 began process of redesigning elementary school assignment system
    - Goal is to increase diversity, predictability, and proximity

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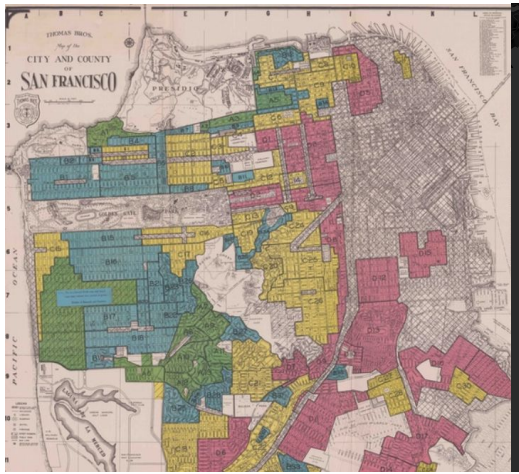
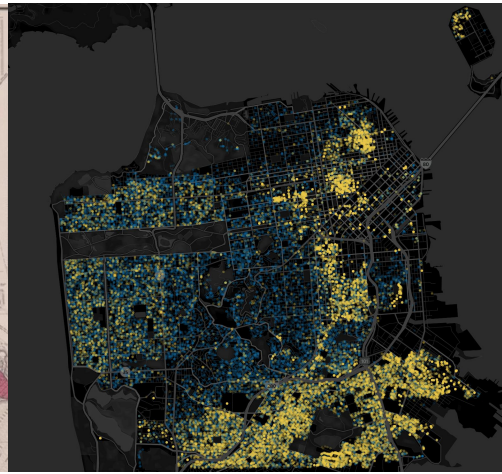


Redlining Map

2020



Free/Reduced Meal Eligibility

Free/Reduced, Paid

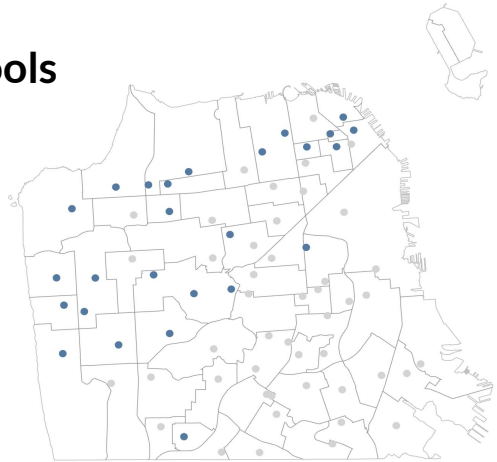
Towards achieving policy goals: Proximity, predictability, diversity

Idea 1: Assignment to neighborhood schools

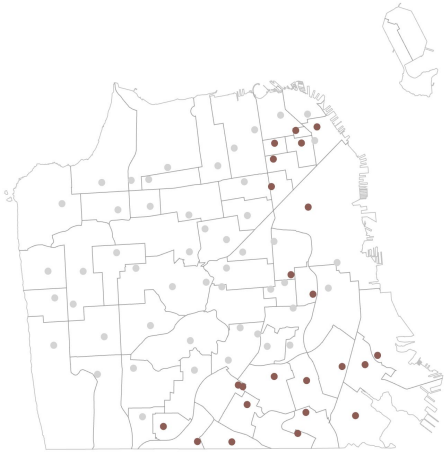
- Proximity **v**
- Predictability **v**
- Diversity **x**

Idea 2: Current policy

- Proximity **x**
- Predictability **x**
- Diversity **x**



Schools with lowest percentage of AALPI students



Schools with highest percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch

- Too many options
- CTIP priority is insufficient to create enough diversity
- Students from SE travel to schools in the NW and few students travel in the other direction
- Note: Capacity imbalance in existing middle school feeder zones

Towards achieving policy goals: Proximity, predictability, diversity

Proposed policy: Zones with guard rails

- Proximity **v (zones)**
- Predictability **v (zones)**
- Diversity **v (zones with guard rails)**

Step 1: Restrict choice to **zones** based on:

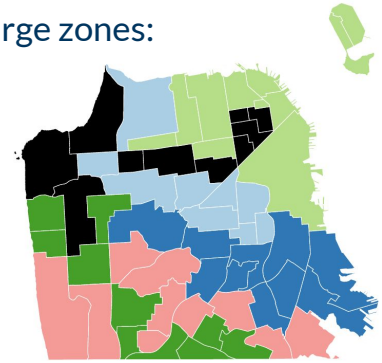
- Socioeconomic and ethnic diversity
- Balancing the number of programs per zone
- Balancing school capacity with students
- Distance, travel times

Step 2: Simplify **tie-breakers** and use **guard rails**

- Guard rails based on diversity categories
- Guard rails make sure that each school is sufficiently diverse

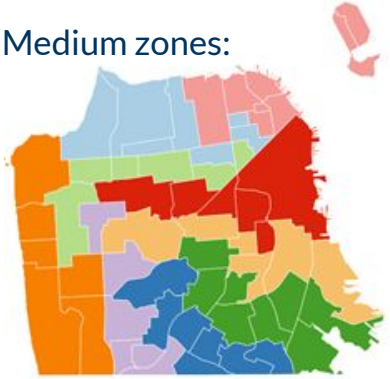
Example zones:

Large zones:



Example large zone:
6.7 miles, 40.6-50.0% students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch
Average over all large zones:
7.2 miles, 38-52% FRL

Medium zones:



Example medium zone:
5.4 miles, 37.2-57.4% students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch
Average over all medium zones:
6.6 miles, 31-60% students FRL

Tradeoffs in drawing zones

We simulated and evaluated thousands of zones:

- Used **attendance areas** as building blocks for zones
- Used optimization techniques to generate zones that achieve **balance of students**, **balance of capacity**, and **socio-economic and ethnic diversity** before and after choice
  - Compared small (4-5 schools) vs medium (10-12 schools) vs large (13-14 schools) zones
  - Compared contiguous vs non-contiguous zones
- Measured predictability, proximity, and diversity of assignments after choice

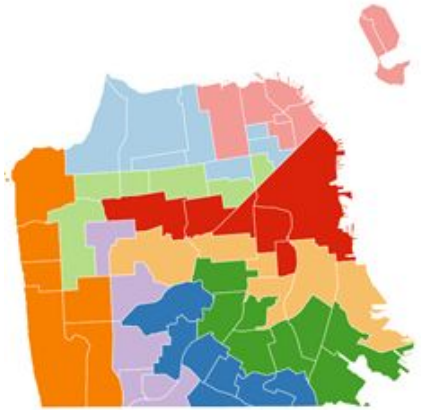
Tradeoffs:

- Residential segregation means that **smaller zones are less socioeconomically diverse**.
- **Non-contiguous zones best disrupt existing residential patterns** of socioeconomic disparity. Contiguous zones have to run from the NW to the SE to be sufficiently diverse.
- Large zones have the most diverse student populations, but **choice can lead to resegregation within zone** (i.e. need guard rails)

Comparison of a few policies based on simulations

Zones with guardrails can **significantly improve ethnic and socio-economic diversity**, but result in **slightly worse proximity**

		2018-19 Assignment	Medium Zones	Medium Zones with Guardrails
Choice*	Rank Top 3	80.23%	54.71%	49.67%
	In-Zone Top 3	80.23%	82.09%	76.05%
	Designated	11.59%	10.73%	14.50%
Proximity	Average Distance	1.39	1.03	1.29
	Distance < 0.5	34.24%	41.18%	30.69%
	Distance > 3	13.78%	5.97%	9.04%
Predictability	Average Neighborhood Peers	6.12	9.55	7.10
Diversity	Hellinger	0.36	0.33	0.31
	Thiel	0.27	0.22	0.20
	Ethnic isolation 50% - GE	15.38%	16.92%	10.77%
	School w/in 15% district FRL	68.57%	63.89%	90.28%



Example medium zones

Policy Recommendation for Elementary School Student Assignment

- **Controlled choice within zones**
  - Move from *district-wide* choice to *choice within zones*
  - Preserve access to language, K-8, and special education programs
  - Control choice using “diversity categories”
    - Each block assigned to a *diversity category* based on factors like:
      - Household income
      - Race/ethnicity
      - Academic performance
    - Each student assigned to a diversity category based on the block they live on *(not based on individual student’s characteristics)*
    - Each school accepts a certain number of students from each diversity category so that it’s reflective of the zone it’s in

Reflections on the Policy and Implementation

Francisco:

1. Ensuring Success / Learning from Other Districts

- Transparency
- Community trust in process
- Student assignment fairness
- Informed and trustworthy staff
- Community, administrative and Board support
- Comparable Schools
- Accountability

Francisco:

2. Community Engagement and Boundary Drawing

- Parent engagement equity
  - Targeted student recruitment
  - Information equity
- Comparable zone boundaries
  - Fair attendance zones
  - Community input to zone boundary

Mary:

1. Ensuring Success / Learning from Other Districts

- What lessons can SFUSD learn from other districts when implementing this policy?
  - Successful implementation is all about community fully on board with the policy.
- “Fully on board” means the community must:
  - Agree that the problems solved by the policy are also their priority problems.
  - Wrestle with each other and the District on the tradeoffs embedded in the challenges of diversity, proximity and predictability and agree that the policy creates fair compromises.

Mary: Community Engagement and Boundary Drawing

- Drawing boundaries is a tactical application of the policy. Since these changes can have a major impact on family logistics, full transparency is needed.
- Once there is community consensus on the policy trade-offs, then boundary scenarios are developed that align to the policies and the community and District wrestle with the impact of various scenarios on families and on the District. For examples:
    - District considerations: School building enrollment capacities, building conditions, in-school programs offered, OST programs offered.
    - Family considerations: travel distance, in-school programming match for your child, OST programming requirements or priorities for your family, parental judgements about peer effects on your child.

Tomas:

1. Ensuring Success / Learning from Other Districts

- Main takeaways from study of school boundaries across the US
  - A. In most districts, school boundaries replicate neighborhood patterns of segregation
  - B. But some districts have boundaries that are better at promoting equity
- Characteristics of equitable school boundaries
  - A. Opt for equity in assignments in the trade-off between proximity and equity
  - B. Frequently discontiguous. ‘Satellite zones’ are frequently used to overcome residential segregation
  - C. Tend to look quite ‘gerrymandered’ - tilting scale against neighborhood segregation is tricky!
- Characteristics of districts with equitable boundaries:
  - A. Less likely to be inhabited by White residents with intolerant views toward diversity
  - B. More likely to be under a desegregation court order

Tomas:

2. Community Engagement and Boundary Drawing

- The Good
  - Districts like San Antonio ISD, Texas, have implemented promising new “diverse by design system” and school boundaries based on “priority radii”
  - Key to engage parents from diverse backgrounds, especially those that are less likely to actively voice their preferences to the board
- The Bad and the Ugly
  - Records of parents’ furious opposition to equity improving school boundary changes
    - Need more evidence on “flight” responses and impact on real estate values
  - Documented instances in which influential parents made ‘back door’ deals to obtain the preferred school zoning for their home
  - Research suggests that political ideology of school board members is linked to equitability of enacted school attendance zones

Audience Q&A

Thank you and Survey

- Thank you so much for attending!
- Thank you to Stanford University GSE and UC Berkeley GSE!
- Please share your feedback by filling out this survey: http://bit.ly/SF-OAK-input