

# A Dream Deferred



**Innovate**  
Public Schools



How San Francisco schools leave behind the most vulnerable students

Among similar districts across California, San Francisco currently ranks near the bottom in learning outcomes for low-income African American students and low-income Latino students.

San Francisco's educational challenges take the form of three contradictions. This report explores these dynamics and highlights a way forward.

*To the moms, dads, grandfathers,  
grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and other  
caregivers who go to sleep every night worried  
about their children's future.*

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore

and then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over

Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

Like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

"Harlem" by Langston Hughes  
1951

Source: Selected Poems of Langston Hughes (Random House Inc., 1990)





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# Introduction

San Francisco has two unique visions of itself.

In one vision, San Francisco is a glittering international capital where pioneers come to seek their individual fortunes — from the gold rush to the technology boom.

The other is a place of progressive ideals that welcomes everyone, especially the vulnerable — a place that doesn't just offer a home to many diverse people, but supports them and nurtures their individual gifts.

Both of these visions of San Francisco continue to draw thousands of people each year from around the world.

There have always been tensions between these visions and the realities in San Francisco. But rarely has that tension been deeper than today — and nowhere is that clearer than in the city's schools.

San Francisco's wealth is astonishing, and its fortunes are booming. With fewer than one million residents, the San Francisco metropolitan area's economy produces more than \$400 billion in Gross Domestic Product a year — eclipsing entire countries like Austria and Norway.<sup>1,2</sup> More than two dozen San Franciscans are billionaires.<sup>3</sup> In this city's booming business world, it seems there is no problem that can't be overcome with ingenuity and hard work.

Life is very different for San Francisco's poor and working class. The contrast is most visible in the number of people who sleep huddled at the feet of the city's glittering towers. But just as troubling is that the city is failing to provide a decent education for families of color struggling to keep a foothold in the city.

<sup>1,2</sup>Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce. (2017, September 20). Retrieved October 6, 2017, from [https://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp\\_metro/2017/pdf/gdp\\_metro0917.pdf](https://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp_metro/2017/pdf/gdp_metro0917.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Salchert, R. (2017, March 21). Where The Wealthiest Live: Cities With The Most Billionaires. Forbes. Retrieved September 15, 2017, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryansalchert/2017/03/21/where-the-wealthiest-live-cities-with-the-most-billionaires/#4068472e3677>

San Francisco isn't the only city where life is hard for working-class and poor people, but it stands out. Because for low-income African American and Latino families, San Francisco is among the worst places in California to send a child to school.

The simple fact is this: among similar districts across California, San Francisco ranks near the bottom in learning outcomes for low-income Black and low-income Latino children.

It's not that San Francisco doesn't educate some kids to very high levels. It does. But the achievement gap separating San Francisco's Black and Latino children from all others is wide.

And while San Francisco's public schools include some high performers, there are very few where low-income African American and Latino students are thriving.

This is not an indictment of the hardworking teachers and school staff who serve children every day with passionate hearts — the same people who often struggle to afford to live in this city themselves. Instead, the current results should raise deep questions about the will of district and city leaders to recognize the problem and do what's necessary to fix it. A school system that leaves so many children behind should be held accountable.

For all our money, genius, and famous problem-solving powers, we have yet to solve a problem that should trouble our conscience.

There are clear solutions in sight. Other cities have taken paths that have translated into better schools and better lives for their families and children. We can learn from them and improve the lives of our children. We can give working-class families a path to opportunity in a fast-changing city.

That's what this report is about. And it's never mattered more than it does today.



# Three Contradictions

*San Francisco's educational challenges take the form of three contradictions, which this report explores:*

## **Good ideals, bad outcomes**

San Francisco sees itself as a caring and progressive place. But that vision is badly out of sync with the educational opportunities that working-class and poor Black and Latino residents experience, in ways that threaten the very existence of a working class within the city.

## **Choice without opportunity**

San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) aims to offer access to good schools for all students through its unique choice system. But there are simply not enough schools delivering a high-quality education for the most underserved students.

## **Great jobs, out of reach**

San Francisco's booming economy and high-paying jobs draw people from across the world. But those jobs are far out of reach for most African Americans and Latinos who grow up here because they haven't received a high-quality education.



Together, these three realities amount to an indictment of how San Francisco serves its most vulnerable children and they make a powerful case for change.

The stakes are enormous — morally and economically. San Francisco is already in danger of becoming a place where working-class people are driven out completely, commuting long distances every day to serve San Francisco's rich. Without better schools, that fate seems nearly certain.

San Francisco needs schools that change lives and enable children to advance, that build a foundation for permanence and an anchor for neighborhoods. The good news is that there is a path to get there. It takes commitment, hard work, and willingness to recognize that change is necessary and that creative solutions are vital. It takes leaders and families and regular citizens working together towards a common vision. Fortunately, there are great examples from which to draw in the Bay Area, the state and the nation.

This report is a call to action. It's a call to come together, as a city, to face where we are and step up to make our ideals real.

We can be a city that welcomes and provides a home to all our children, that nurtures all of them, and prepares them for productive and fulfilling lives. Let's join together to do better for our kids.

# Good Ideals, Bad Outcomes



*San Francisco sees itself as a caring and progressive place. But that optimistic vision is badly out of sync with reality: San Francisco Unified is one of the worst districts in the state for low-income African American and Latino students.*

San Francisco prides itself on being one of the most welcoming communities in America. For generations, San Francisco has been a place where people who were excluded elsewhere could find a home, where those who are struggling could find support, and where diversity thrived. It's a place that believes in taking care of its own and providing opportunity to all.

But a striking fact challenges those ideals: San Francisco has become one of the worst places in California for low-income African American and Latino families to send their children to public school.

If we don't fix this, there are real questions about whether African American and Latino families will be able to thrive here.

In this section, we look at the academic performance of San Francisco's students to understand how the city serves its White, Asian, African American and Latino students. We also compare student outcomes in San Francisco with those in districts that have a similar size and demographics and look at trends over multiple years.

We end the section by exploring the experiences of two different San Francisco families: one immigrant family who fought low expectations at their children's schools and another who decided to change schools because their child was falling behind.

For all of San Francisco's advantages, it's low on the list for the quality of opportunity in its public schools. The city sees itself as leading the country on everything from the innovative talent of its businesses to the quality of its leading restaurants. It also sees itself as a leader in progressive and equitable ideals.

However, when it comes to equity in education, San Francisco is far behind.

In 2016-17, almost eight out of 10 White students from non-low-income families were on grade level in math and English – but just one out of 10 low-income African American students.

In researching this report, we asked: how well is San Francisco Unified educating low-income African American and Latino students in comparison to similar California districts? We looked at unified districts that are both similar in enrollment size to SFUSD and which serve a similar percentage of low-income, Latino and African American students.

The answer: San Francisco is near the bottom for low-income African American and low-income Latino students (see Figures 2 and 3 on the following pages).

**SFUSD is not only near the bottom of comparable school districts, but all districts statewide.**

To take one example, 44% of low-income African American students in Corona-Norco Unified School District in Riverside County are on grade level in English, compared to just 14% in SFUSD. In Clovis Unified School District in the Central Valley and in Long Beach Unified in southern California, low-income Latino students are proficient in both English and math at about two times the rate of SFUSD.

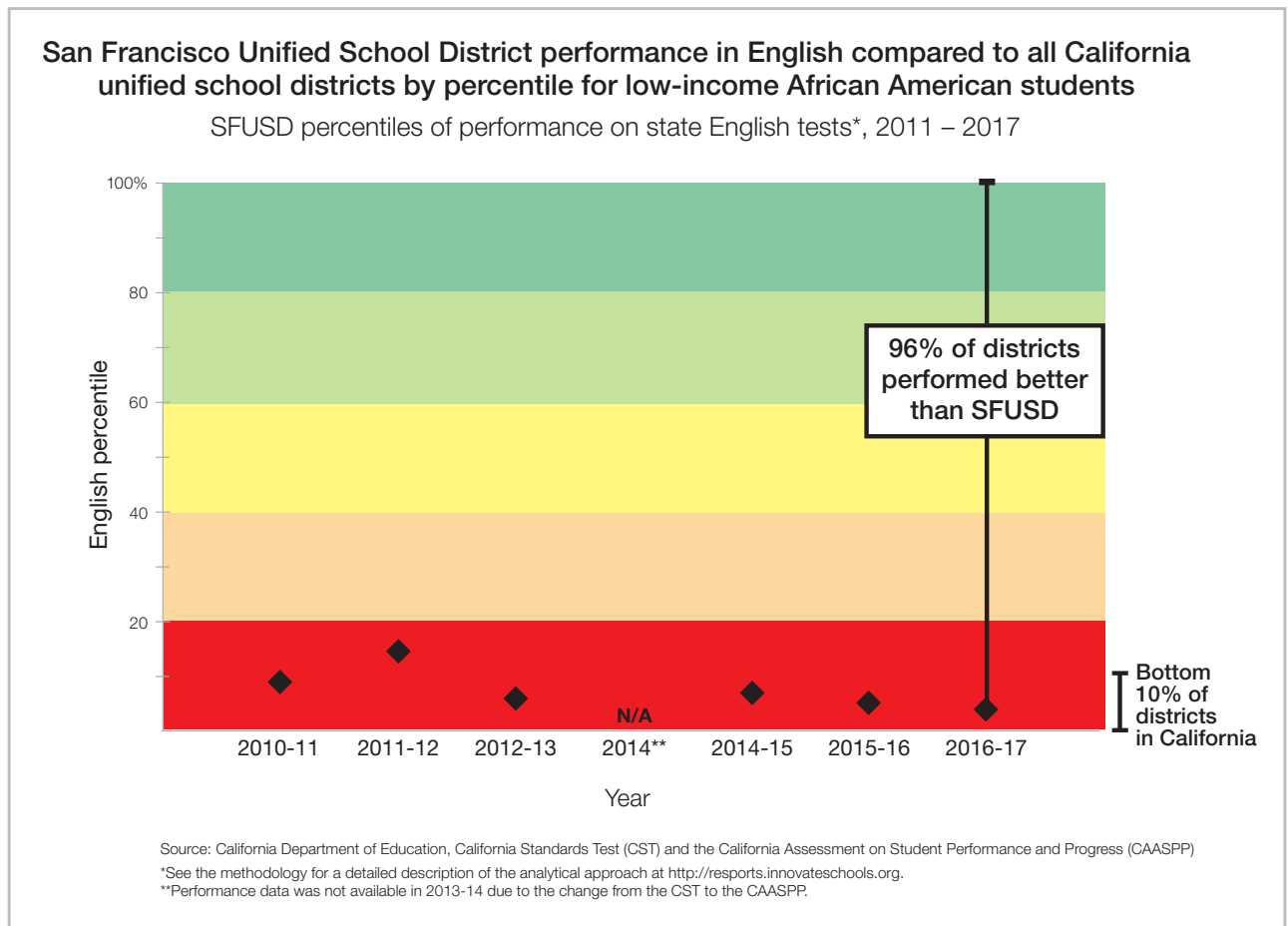
SFUSD is not only near the bottom of comparable school districts, but all districts statewide. In 2016-17, 96% of all California unified school districts serving African American students had better results for low-income African Americans than SFUSD in English. 79% had better results in math.

This has been the trend for six years under both California's previous state standards test and the new tests aligned to the Common Core with results for African American students worsening, not improving. Compared to similar

districts and to all districts statewide, San Francisco has continued to be in the bottom 20% in English and in math. (See the Appendix for English and math results for both low-income African American and Latino students.)

The Education Trust-West found similar results year after year from 2010 to 2013.<sup>4</sup> They graded more than 100 districts on test scores, growth, closing achievement gaps, and preparing students for college. They found that SFUSD ranks the lowest out of all 129 large, unified school districts in the state in closing the achievement gap between African American students and their White peers. SFUSD ranks the second lowest — 143rd out of 144 districts — for closing the gap for Latino students. On an A through F grading scale, Education Trust-West gave SFUSD an F for their efforts in closing achievement gaps for these groups of students in 2013.

**FIGURE 1**



<sup>4</sup>The Education Trust–West. (n.d.). California District Report Card. Retrieved February 21, 2017, from [http://reportcards.edtrustwest.org/district-data?county=&district=San+Francisco+Unified&report\\_year=2013](http://reportcards.edtrustwest.org/district-data?county=&district=San+Francisco+Unified&report_year=2013)



FIGURE 2

## San Francisco performs worse than most California unified school districts for low-income African American students\*

Percent proficient in English, 2016-17

RANK	SCHOOL DISTRICT	COUNTY	LOW-INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS % PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH		TOTAL ENROLLMENT	SUBGROUP % IN DISTRICT**
1	Corona-Norco Unified	Riverside	44%		53,157	3%
2	Clovis Unified	Fresno	43%		42,746	2%
3	Chino Valley Unified	San Bernardino	40%		27,673	2%
4	Orange Unified	Orange	38%		27,502	.49%
5	Visalia Unified	Tulare	33%		28,557	1%
6	Desert Sands Unified	Riverside	33%		28,958	1%
7	Riverside Unified	Riverside	32%		41,621	5%
8	Long Beach Unified	Los Angeles	31%		76,187	10%
9	San Jose Unified	Santa Clara	29%		30,930	2%
10	Elk Grove Unified	Sacramento	26%		62,603	10%
11	San Juan Unified	Sacramento	20%		45,219	7%
12	Sacramento City Unified	Sacramento	19%		42,960	13%
13	Lodi Unified	San Joaquin	19%		28,847	6%
14	Mt. Diablo Unified	Contra Costa	17%		31,814	3%
15	San Francisco Unified	San Francisco	14%		53,065	6%
16	Stockton Unified	San Joaquin	14%		37,404	9%

Percent proficient in math, 2016-17

RANK	SCHOOL DISTRICT	COUNTY	LOW-INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS % PROFICIENT IN MATH		TOTAL ENROLLMENT	SUBGROUP % IN DISTRICT**
1	Clovis Unified	Fresno	27%		42,746	2%
2	Corona-Norco Unified	Riverside	26%		53,157	3%
3	Chino Valley Unified	San Bernardino	24%		27,673	2%
4	Orange Unified	Orange	23%		27,502	.49%
5	Riverside Unified	Riverside	20%		41,621	5%
6	Desert Sands Unified	Riverside	20%		28,958	1%
7	Long Beach Unified	Los Angeles	20%		76,187	10%
8	Visalia Unified	Tulare	17%		28,557	1%
9	San Jose Unified	Santa Clara	16%		30,930	2%
10	Elk Grove Unified	Sacramento	15%		62,603	10%
11	Lodi Unified	San Joaquin	13%		28,847	6%
12	Sacramento City Unified	Sacramento	13%		42,960	13%
13	San Juan Unified	Sacramento	10%		45,219	7%
14	San Francisco Unified	San Francisco	10%		53,065	6%
15	Stockton Unified	San Joaquin	9%		37,404	9%
16	Mt. Diablo Unified	Contra Costa	9%		31,814	3%

Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

\*See the methodology for a description of the data and approach used for this analysis (find the methodology on <http://reports.innovateschools.org>). School district results on the CAASPP include all district schools, excluding independent charter schools (direct-funded).

\*\*Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status included is for the 2015-16 school year because the data is not publicly available in 2016-17. All other data included in this figure is from 2016-17. See methodology for more details.

**FIGURE 3**

## San Francisco performs worse than most similar California unified school districts for low-income Latino students\*

Percent proficient in English, 2016-17

RANK	SCHOOL DISTRICT	COUNTY	LOW-INCOME LATINO STUDENTS % PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	SUBGROUP % IN DISTRICT**
1	Clovis Unified	Fresno	52%	42,746	22%
2	Corona-Norco Unified	Riverside	43%	53,157	34%
3	Garden Grove Unified	Orange	39%	44,223	44%
4	Chino Valley Unified	San Bernardino	38%	27,673	37%
5	Long Beach Unified	Los Angeles	37%	76,187	45%
6	Elk Grove Unified	Sacramento	35%	62,603	18%
7	Orange Unified	Orange	34%	27,502	39%
8	Lodi Unified	San Joaquin	31%	28,847	36%
9	San Jose Unified	Santa Clara	28%	30,930	38%
10	Sacramento City Unified	Sacramento	27%	42,960	32%
11	Mt. Diablo Unified	Contra Costa	25%	31,814	31%
12	San Juan Unified	Sacramento	23%	45,219	16%
13	West Contra Costa Unified	Contra Costa	23%	28,518	44%
14	San Francisco Unified	San Francisco	22%	53,065	20%
15	Oakland Unified	Alameda	21%	36,814	36%

Percent proficient in math, 2016-17

RANK	SCHOOL DISTRICT	COUNTY	LOW-INCOME LATINO STUDENTS % PROFICIENT IN MATH	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	SUBGROUP % IN DISTRICT**
1	Clovis Unified	Fresno	38%	42,746	22%
2	Long Beach Unified	Los Angeles	29%	76,187	45%
3	Corona-Norco Unified	Riverside	28%	53,157	34%
4	Chino Valley Unified	San Bernardino	25%	27,673	37%
5	Garden Grove Unified	Orange	25%	44,223	44%
6	Elk Grove Unified	Sacramento	23%	62,603	18%
7	Orange Unified	Orange	21%	27,502	39%
8	Lodi Unified	San Joaquin	21%	28,847	36%
9	Sacramento City Unified	Sacramento	20%	42,960	32%
10	San Jose Unified	Santa Clara	16%	30,930	38%
11	San Francisco Unified	San Francisco	16%	53,065	20%
12	San Juan Unified	Sacramento	15%	45,219	16%
13	Mt. Diablo Unified	Contra Costa	15%	31,814	31%
14	Oakland Unified	Alameda	14%	36,814	36%
15	West Contra Costa Unified	Contra Costa	13%	28,518	44%

Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

\*See the methodology for a description of the data and approach used for this analysis (find the methodology on <http://reports.innovateschools.org>). School district results on the CAASPP include all district schools, excluding independent charter schools (direct-funded).

\*\*Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status included is for the 2015-16 school year because the data is not publicly available in 2016-17. All other data included in this figure is from 2016-17. See methodology for more details.

These findings show why San Francisco needs urgent change. African American and Latino students are learning less than their peers elsewhere. And within the city, achievement gaps between these groups and others are strikingly wide (see Figure 4 below).

**FIGURE 4**

## San Francisco Unified School District has large gaps in student learning

Percent proficient in English and math, 2016-17



Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

Indeed, San Francisco's African American and Latino students are struggling by more than one measure. In 2015-16, 71% of African American students in SFUSD graduated in four years compared to 95% of Asian students and 84% of White students.<sup>5</sup> A city report found that the African American population is shrinking everywhere except the city's jails: African Americans make up only 5% of the city's population, but 53% of the city's inmates.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System. (n.d.). Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2015-16. Retrieved July 27, 2017, from <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates/GradRates.aspx?Agg=D&Topic=Graduates&TheYear=2014->

<sup>6</sup>Sabatini, J. (2017, July 5). SF's unprecedented look at jail population quantifies racial disparity and mental health needs. S.F. Examiner. Retrieved on September 15, 2017 from <http://www.sfexaminer.com/sfs-unprecedented-look-jail-population-quantifies-racial-disparity-mental-health-needs/>

The city's most underserved students are not just stuck at low-performing schools. They also are not getting experienced teachers. In 2011, one of four teachers in San Francisco's highest-poverty schools was in their first year of teaching. That's five to 10 times higher than comparable districts, per data from the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, teacher turnover is high in many areas serving underserved students in SFUSD. For example, students attending schools in the Bayview neighborhood of San Francisco — an area serving a large population of low-income African American students — were about twice as likely to experience high teacher turnover in 2014-15 compared to the district as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Such teacher turnover impacts student performance, and schools in the Bayview have some of the worst student proficiency rates in the district. While about half of SFUSD students overall are meeting state standards, 17% of students in district schools in the Bayview are meeting standards in English, and just 14% are meeting standards in math.<sup>9</sup>

For San Francisco to continue to offer a home to its African American and Latino working-class residents, it will have to offer them a better education.

“Opportunity for all” is a laudable goal for our city. But as it stands, it's a hope, not a reality. The good news is, in a city with an extraordinary capacity for innovation, we can change things. We can make this hope a reality.

<sup>7</sup>Educator Equity Profile [PDF]. (2011-12). U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved September 6, 2017, from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/caeep.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>Committee of the Whole Bayview Update[PDF]. (2016, December 6). San Francisco : San Francisco Unified School District. Retrieved on July 14, 2017 [http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/board-presentations/2016-12-06\\_Bayview%20COW\\_publish.pdf](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/board-presentations/2016-12-06_Bayview%20COW_publish.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>Based on 2016-17 CAASPP scores. Includes Willie L. Brown Jr. Middle School, Marshall High, Bret Harte Elementary, Malcolm X Academy, Drew College Preparatory Academy and Carver Elementary. Excludes the two independent charter schools in the region: KIPP Bayview Academy and KIPP San Francisco College Preparatory.

# A Look at Charter Schools

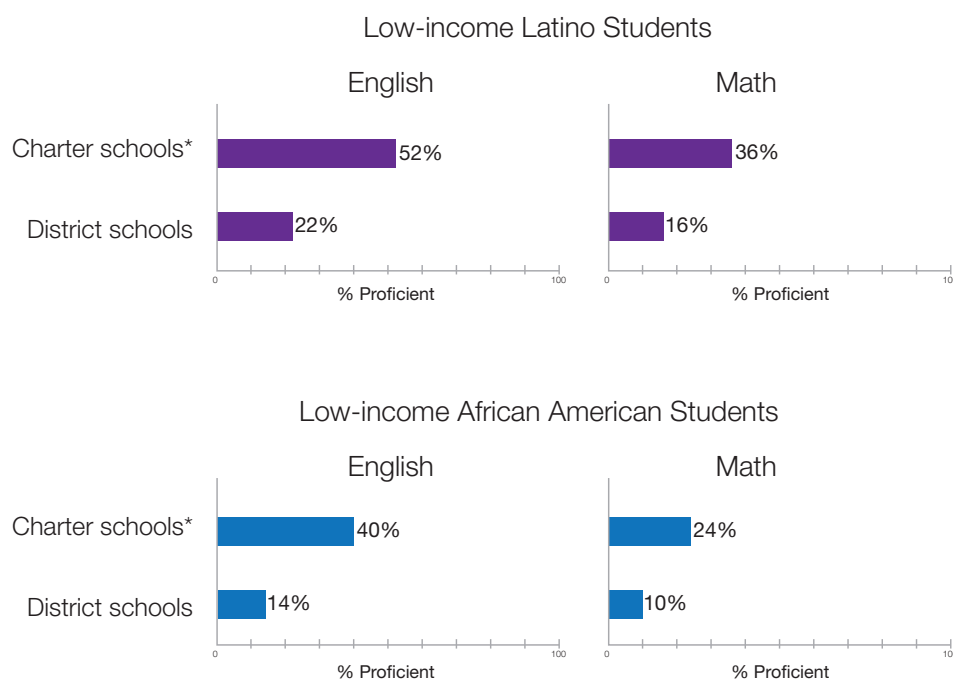
*There are major achievement gaps in San Francisco public schools of all types – both district and charter schools. However, the majority of charter schools have notably better academic results for low-income Latino and low-income African American students. Many of these schools are providing better options to families who don't have many.*

There are currently more than 3,700 students enrolled in 10 independent charter schools in San Francisco. About half of these charter schools serve primarily low-income students. Seven out of the 10 schools serve a higher percentage of low-income Latino and African American students than the district.<sup>10</sup>

**FIGURE 5**

## San Francisco Charter vs. Traditional District School Performance, 2016-17

All public schools located within San Francisco Unified School District



Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

\*These results only include direct-funded charter schools, which receive funding directly from the state.

<sup>10</sup>There are 10 direct-funded charter schools in San Francisco with CAASPP scores for low-income Latino and low-income African American students. There are additional charters in the district; but they are either locally funded by the district or do not have available test scores. Enrollment data used for this analysis is 2015-16 socioeconomically disadvantaged enrollment disaggregated by race which is not publicly available for the 2016-17 school year. See methodology for more details.

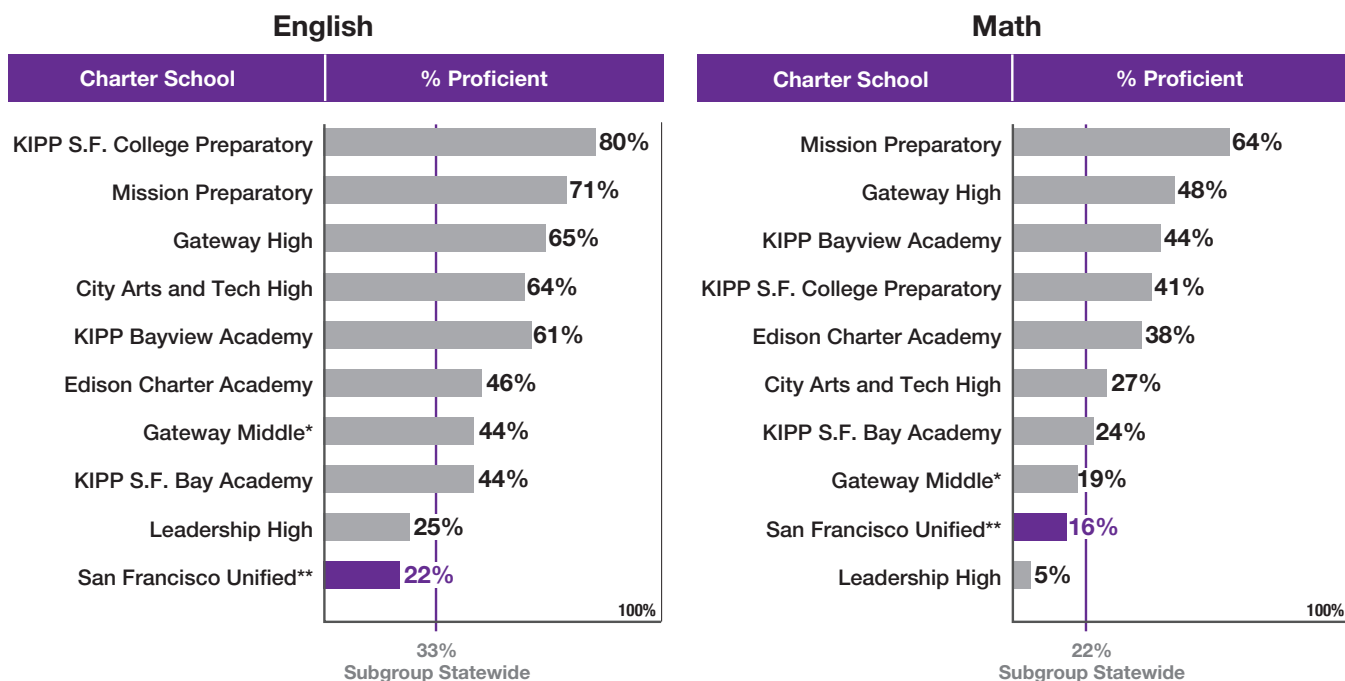


FIGURE 6

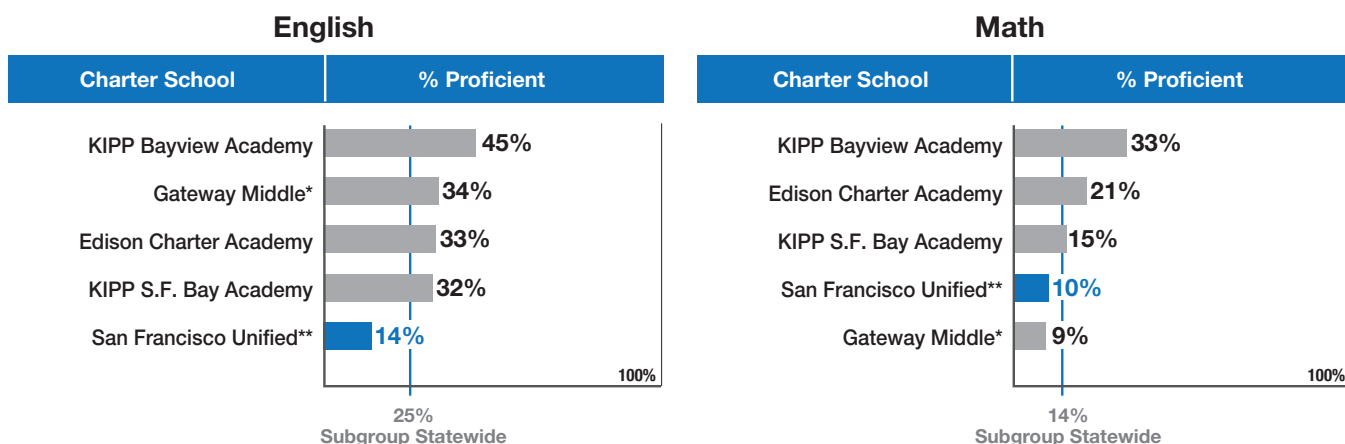
## The vast majority of charter schools are doing significantly better in English and math for underserved students

Percent proficient, 2016-17

### Low-income Latino



### Low-income African American



Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

\*This charter school is identified as having large gaps in learning for low-income African American and low-income Latino students. See the methodology for a detailed description of the data and approach used for this analysis (find the methodology at <http://reports.innovateschools.org>).

\*\*San Francisco Unified's results on the CAASPP include all district schools, excluding independent charter schools (direct-funded).





# Taking on Low Expectations

*As a new immigrant to the U.S., Juana Laura Chavero quickly learned that she would have to fight hard for her children to get the education they needed. The barriers weren't just resources or opportunities, but low expectations.*

When Juana Laura moved her family to San Francisco from Mexico, she enrolled her daughter in Washington High School and her sons in Mission High School.

From the beginning, things did not go well for her daughter, Viviana. The school placed her in the wrong classes and gave her the wrong books. When Juana Laura tried to speak to someone at the school who could help set things right, the school was unresponsive.

"Viviana's counselor did not want to give me an appointment. She said there was no one at the school who could help me in Spanish," said Juana Laura.

When Juana Laura finally got a meeting with the counselor, she was given only five minutes.

Rather than assign Viviana to new classes, the school ultimately took her out of all her classes except two. She was still required to be in school all day, so she was assigned to help write hall passes for other students. The next year, she was put in a lower grade. In the end, she graduated two years late.

When Juana Laura's younger sons -- Henddel and Alexis -- started at Mission High School, they also encountered problems. First, they were both placed in the same grade - even though they are two years apart.

"I asked at the school and the district, but no one could ever explain to me why they were placed in the same grade," said Juana Laura.

At the start of the school year, Juana Laura also found Henddel repeating work he had already done in Mexico. She worried this would put him even further behind his classmates. She tried to get in touch with the school counselor to address this issue, with no luck. It took three weeks to get his classes changed.

The following year, the school again incorrectly gave Henddel classes that he had already taken.

"I know there are many kids who are not able to get into universities because of an error like this by their school," says Juana Laura. "They are not able to complete their A-G requirements."



In Juana Laura's case, she ended up finding out the real problem: the school's guidance counselor did not expect her sons to attend university at all.

"When my kids had been here for just one month, they didn't want to say much in English," said Juana Laura. The counselor determined immediately that they should aim for community college because of this. She said this in front of them.

After the meeting with the guidance counselor, Henddel asked, "Mama, did you hear what she said?"

Juana Laura told him, "We will show her that we are capable. It won't be today or tomorrow. It will be the day you show her your letter of acceptance from a university."

“ People say there are lots of parents who don't care about their kids' education, but the truth is there are lots of single parents or parents who cannot afford to leave one of their jobs to do all that is required to advocate in the system.”  
— Juana Laura Chavero







“I think the district needs to completely re-evaluate its approach. And we, as parents, if we see that a school is not what we want for our kids, let’s not just accept it.”

– Juana Laura Chavero

Juana Laura did not relent in her advocacy for her sons. She built a support network that included an independent tutor and the staff at College Connect, a family-based college access and success program. Juana Laura had been working two jobs, but the time needed to advocate for her sons and sort through the complicated college admissions process was overwhelming. So she left her morning job working at Starbucks and continued working as a janitor in the evenings.

“I was lucky that I could leave that job and spend the time advocating. People say there are lots of parents who don’t care about their kids’ education, but the truth is there are lots of single parents or parents who cannot afford to leave one of their jobs to do all that is required to advocate in the system.”

Because of her consistent advocacy, her sons ultimately completed their required courses to attend a state university and they graduated on time. In fall of 2018, Henddel will start at San Francisco State, and Alexis will attend UC Merced.

“My sons graduated in 2017 and are able to attend university because we demanded the materials, and the right classes. I think the district needs to completely re-evaluate its approach. And we, as parents, if we see that a school is not what we want for our kids, let’s not just accept it.”



# NORMA AND FAUSTINO VALENZUELA

## Looking for a Better Option

*Norma and Faustino Valenzuela's three children all attended SFUSD schools, but when their son fell two years behind, they switched schools.*

Norma and her husband, Faustino Valenzuela, have been raising their three children in the Bayview neighborhood since moving here from Mexico 20 years ago.

When their oldest daughter, Ivonne (now 24-years-old), started kindergarten, they simply sent her to the nearest district school, Taylor Elementary.

"It was a good school at that time," said Norma. "There was a lot of support, and it was in a good state and had dedicated teachers."

They did the same for their son, Cesar, who now attends Lowell High School.

But things haven't gone as smoothly for their youngest, Diego, who attended Flynn Elementary from kindergarten up until the middle of 5th grade. While both of her older children benefited from free preschool and tutoring programs, when she went to enroll Diego, they told her that her family's income no longer qualified.

"Those programs help a ton. My son didn't have the support to learn to read. We have a low salary and multiple jobs," said Norma, who works at a Mexican restaurant in the Mission district. "We rely on the school to provide the education."



The class sizes at Flynn were big - usually about 30 students.

"The teacher just couldn't handle that many kids," said Norma. "The schools have gone down a lot because the teachers don't have support. The teachers turn over a lot. A teacher comes, sees the conditions, is just there for a year and leaves. That makes too much work for the principal, and makes him or her tired and stressed."

Diego seemed to do fine at first, but he started falling behind in 2nd grade.

The first principal left, and Norma said that took a toll on the school as well.



“The new teachers just want to do one year here, then apply to go somewhere else. The salary is very low for them. The teachers are making a 30 minute commute or an hour on the train. I see their stress.”

Both of the Valenzuelas were active in the school, with Faustino serving on the parent council. To make sure Diego was getting help, Norma started going to his classes.

“I went to the classroom, and the teacher was helpful. With me in the room, they put more attention. I tried to do everything for my kid. I know he’s intelligent,” she said. “But I can’t sit there all the days to make sure my child gets what he needs.”

She started looking for spots at other schools, but they were all full. Through other parents, she heard about KIPP Bayview Academy Charter School and went on a school visit. She liked what she saw. Then she went back on her own, unannounced, and

the school still impressed her. So she signed up, and Diego started there in January 2017.

After a few days, Diego’s first reaction was, “It’s a lot of homework!”

“But he did it. He was enthusiastic, doing homework till 10 at night,” Norma said. “By February, he was already more advanced.”

“It’s a huge difference – from one school to another. It’s not the fault of the teachers. It’s the fault of the system.”

“It’s a huge difference – from one school to another. It’s not the fault of the teachers. It’s the fault of the system.”

– Norma Valenzuela





# Choice Without Opportunity





*The San Francisco Unified School District's choice system aims to offer access to good schools for all students. But for low-income African American and Latino families, few of the choices are good.*

For more than 35 years, San Francisco has been working to figure out a system to desegregate public schools.

Those efforts have been motivated by legal actions, political pressure, and good intentions. But despite the decades of work, the “choice” system is not solving the problem it is designed to solve. In fact, it may be making the problem worse.

Efforts to fix segregation and isolation in San Francisco date back to 1978 when the NAACP sued the city, resulting in a series of settlements and consent decrees and plans.<sup>12</sup> The current student assignment system, which dates to 2011, was a new attempt to fix a longstanding problem: balancing racial and economic isolation with most families' preference to attend a school near where they live.

<sup>12</sup>Tucker, J. (2010, February 9). Revamp simplifies S.F. school choice. SF Gate. Retrieved from <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Revamp-simplifies-S-F-school-choice-3200054.php>

# Do Latino and African American Students Benefit From School Choice in San Francisco?

Right now, in San Francisco, the majority of African American and Latino students have few quality public school options - period. This is true whether they attend a school in the Mission, Bayview, or Tenderloin neighborhoods, or if they attend a school in a more affluent area across town.

In order to understand opportunities for disadvantaged families within San Francisco's choice system, we looked at public data from the California Department of Education. This information is easy to access on GreatSchools.org, a website that provides school quality data for parents. GreatSchools includes data on academics, college-readiness, teachers, access to advanced courses, attendance, discipline and more - all broken out by student subgroup. GreatSchools' "Test Scores" rating rolls up student scores on state English, math, and science exams.

Each of the following maps provides a picture of the quality of schools across the city. The map on the opposite page (Figure A) shows school performance when looking at scores for all students together. The four maps on the next pages show the same scores for each student racial group at the school (Figures B through E).

These maps paint a clear picture: schools with better academic outcomes for students are located in San Francisco's higher-income neighborhoods, far from where the majority of low-income African American and Latino families live (See Figures D and E). But the story does not end there. If an African American or Latino family navigates the choice system to send their child to what appears to be a higher-quality school across town, they still may not get the education they

are seeking. Schools with high overall test scores for most of their students are frequently achieving much lower results for their African American and Latino students.

African American students fare the worst in San Francisco. Only one school, Lowell High School, achieves a strong GreatSchools rating of more than 8 out of 10 for African American students. That's the only green dot on the African American students' map. And this school exclusively enrolls students who already have high grades and pass a test to get into the school.

Latino students' options across the city are also limited, with many schools who have a green (or "good") rating for all students combined dropping to orange ("average") and red ("poor") ratings for Latinos within the same school.

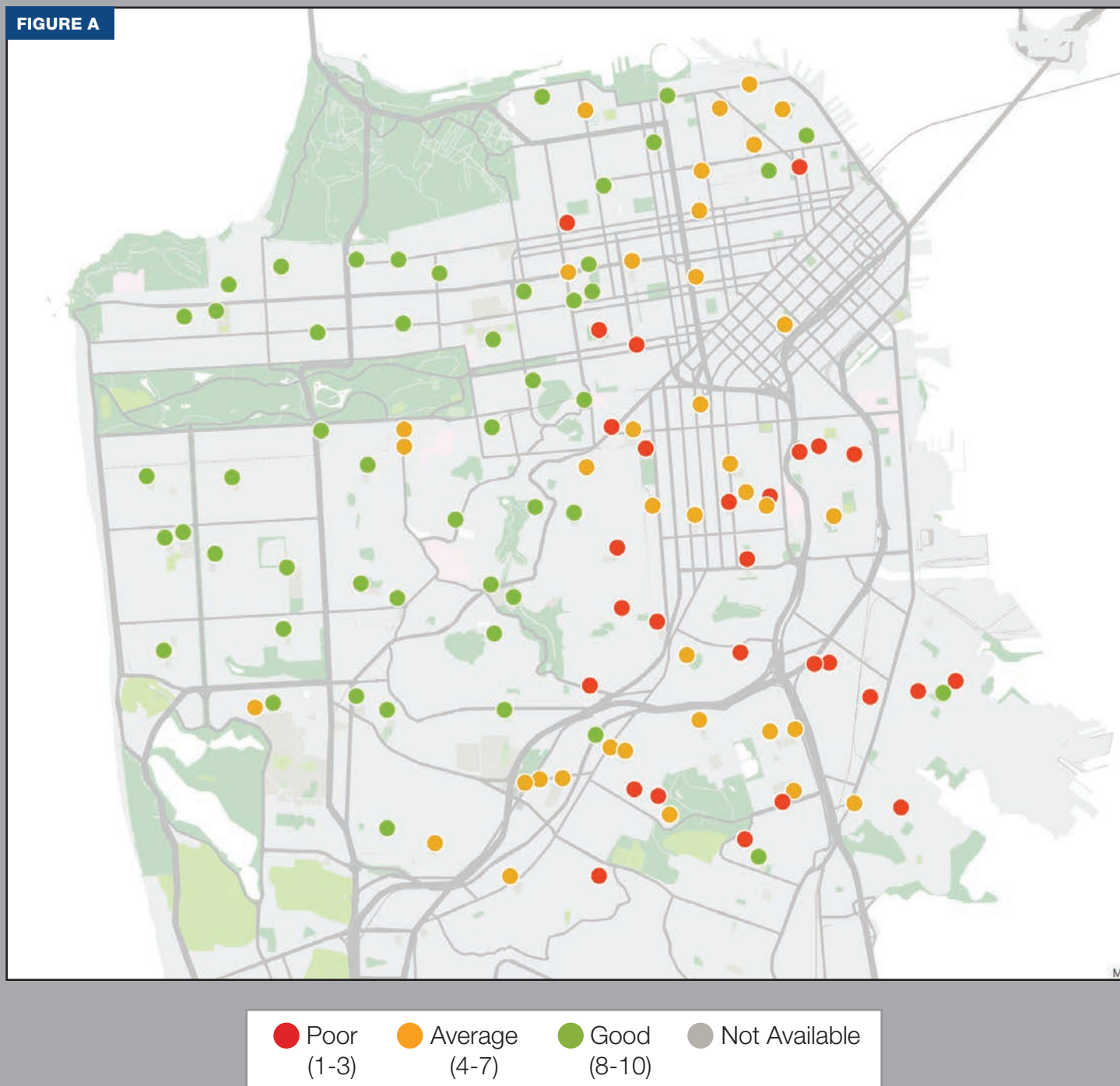
**African American  
students  
fare the worst  
in San Francisco.**

Academic results for African American students in particular are much worse in San Francisco than in many other parts of the state. In the recent study “Searching for Opportunity: Examining Racial Gaps in Access to Quality Schools in California and a List of Spotlight Schools,” GreatSchools found that over 41 schools in California achieved great results for African

American students—showing that it is possible for this student population to achieve at high levels. But not one of these high-achieving schools is located in San Francisco.

## GreatSchools Rating for All Students in San Francisco 2015-16

FIGURE A

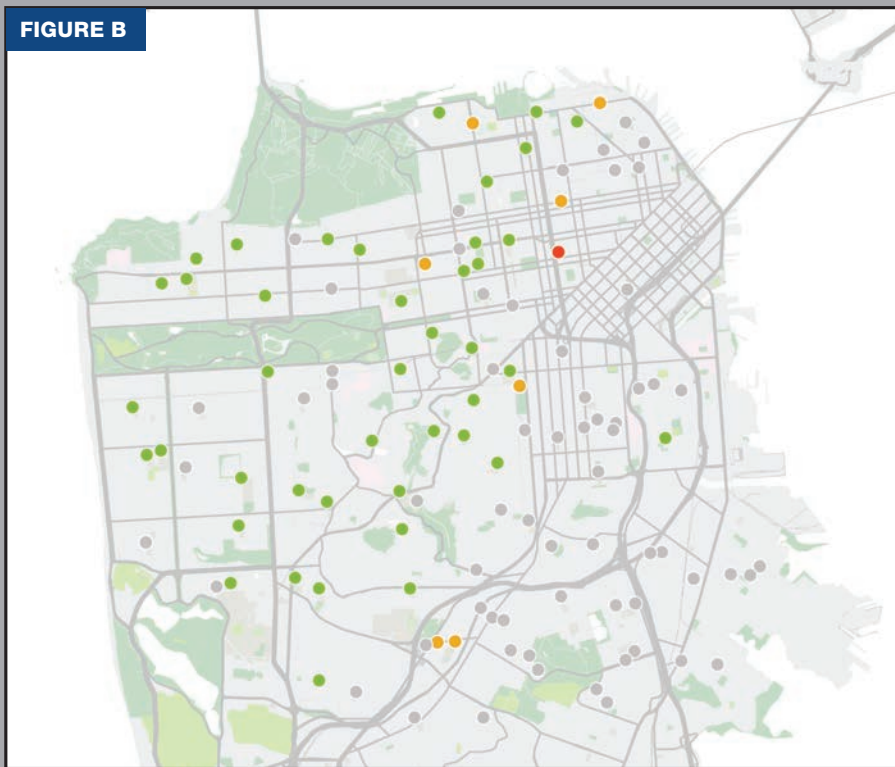


Source: GreatSchools' test score rating for all students in San Francisco using California Department of Education English, math, and science proficiency rates by grade level in 2015-16. See the methodology for more details on how GreatSchools calculates their school rating.

# African American and Latino Students' School Options Are Limited in San Francisco

GreatSchools Rating By Racial Subgroup in San Francisco 2015-16

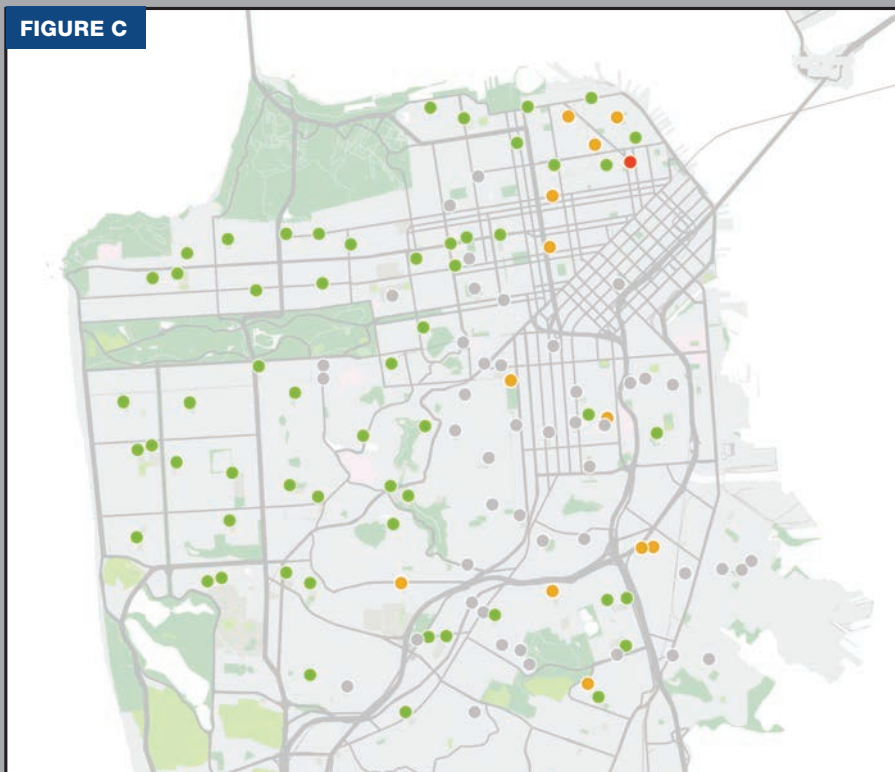
FIGURE B



## White Students

Only one school in the entire city has a “poor” rating for White students. In fact, four out of five schools in San Francisco achieve a “good” rating for White students. That means that wherever White students attend school in San Francisco, they are likely to receive an education that enables them to academically achieve at high levels. This is not the case for African American and Latino students.

FIGURE C



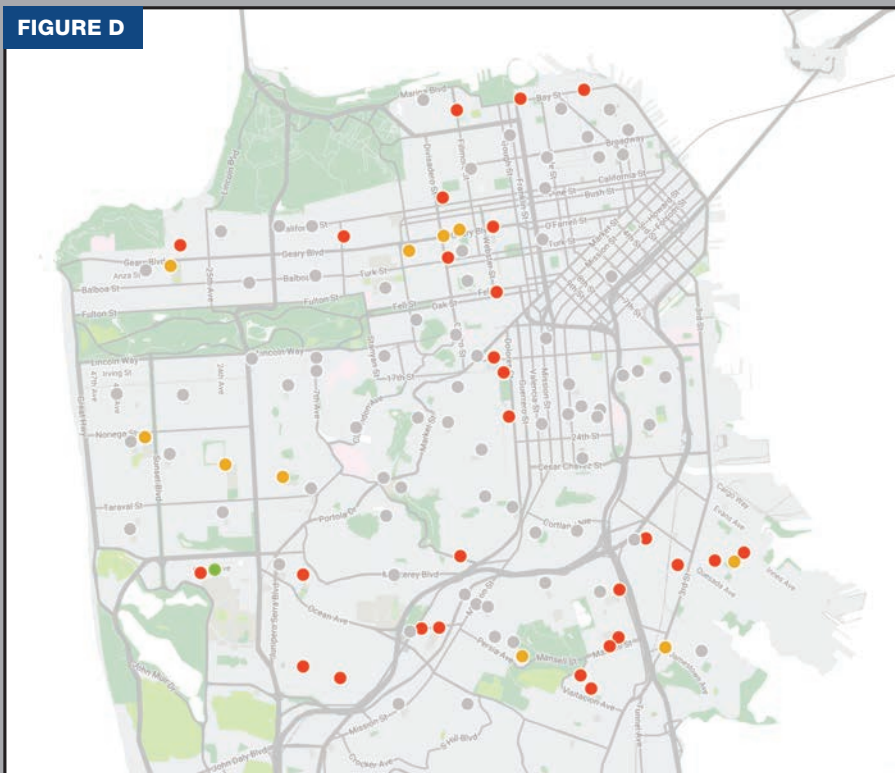
## Asian Students

Asian students also have many quality educational options throughout the city. Similar to White students, four out of five schools in San Francisco achieve a “good” rating for their Asian students.





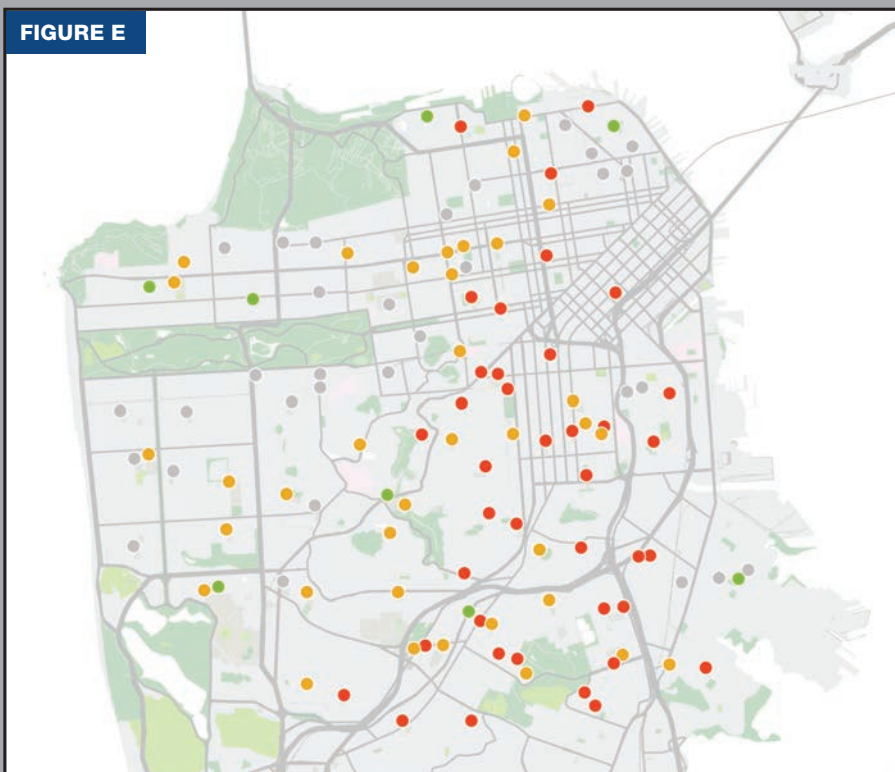
**FIGURE D**



## African American Students

African American students have the most limited options in the city. No schools achieve an eight, nine or a 10 rating for this subgroup other than Lowell, which requires students to test in for admission. In fact, many schools with high scores for admission for other student subgroups do poorly in serving African Americans. Seven out of every 10 schools in San Francisco have a “poor” rating for African American students.

**FIGURE E**



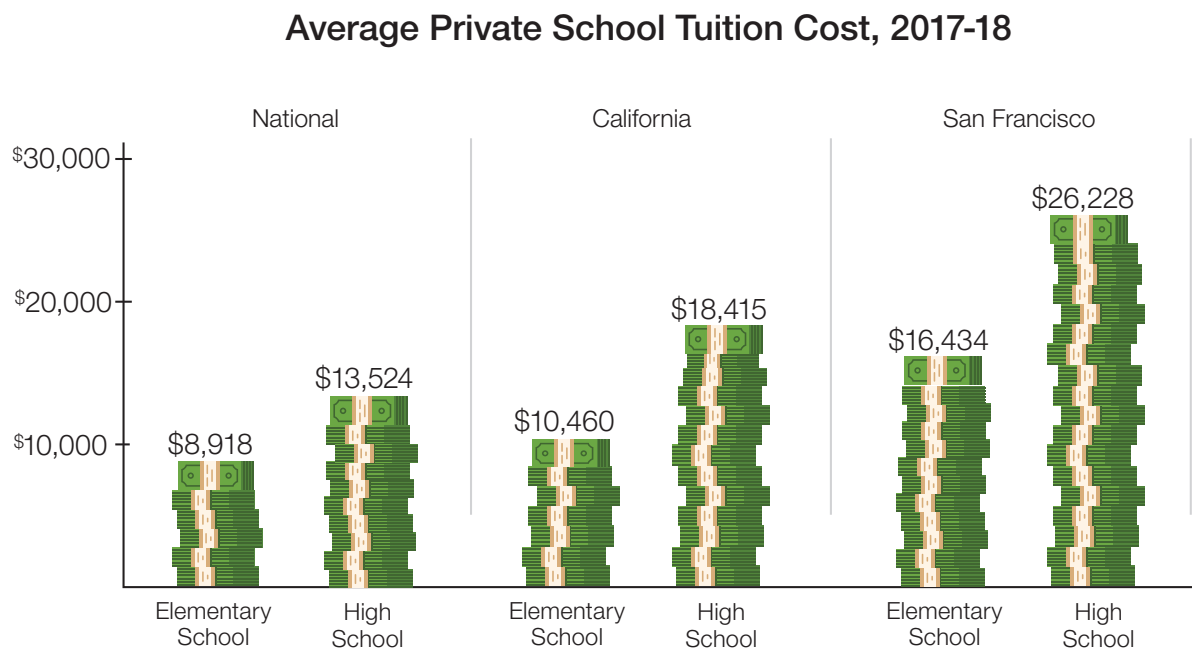
## Latino Students

About half of all schools in San Francisco have a “poor” rating for Latino students. Very few schools that achieve great results for their White and Asian students maintain those results for their Latino students, but there are some schools in San Francisco that show that far better is possible. Lafayette Elementary, just a few blocks away from the heart of Golden Gate Park, achieves the highest rating for all students overall and maintains a rating of a nine for both Latino and low-income students. Another school with exceptionally strong results for their Latino students is Mission Preparatory, a charter school in the Excelsior neighborhood.



While low-income families struggle to find secure, high-quality schools for their children, San Francisco's wealthy families have abandoned the public schools at a higher rate than anywhere else in California.<sup>13</sup> In San Francisco, about one in four students enroll in private schools, according to the district's most recent enrollment analysis from 2014.<sup>14</sup> This rate is significantly higher than the California state average of about one in 10 students. SFUSD found that higher-income families and White families are far more likely to enroll their children in private school. White children represent 29% of the under-18 population in San Francisco<sup>15</sup>, but only 14% of students in district schools.<sup>16</sup> That's an expensive choice in a city where private school tuition cost, on average, more than \$26,000 per year.

**FIGURE 7**



Source: Private School Review. (n.d.). Average Private School Tuition Cost (2017-2018). Retrieved September 15, 2017, from <http://www.privateschoolreview.com/tuition-stats/private-school-cost-by-state>

The 2011 plan didn't fix the problem. In fact, it made school segregation worse.

The plan allows families to choose any public school in the district, if the school has space, but creates preferences.

<sup>13, 14</sup>San Francisco Unified School District. (2015, November 23). Demographic Analyses and Enrollment Forecasts for the San Francisco Unified School District. Prepared by Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc. Retrieved October 12, 2017, from <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/demographic-analyses-enrollment-forecast.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Children Characteristics. Retrieved from the American Fact Finder on October 7, 2017

<sup>16</sup>California Department of Education, Data Reporting Office. (2016). 2015-16 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade. Retrieved from DataQuest on October 7, 2017

For example, San Francisco's choice system tries to make schools more diverse by giving preference to students who live in areas of the city where student test performance is lower than average.

Despite these good intentions, it's not working. Choice systems tend to benefit affluent and resource-rich parents who can navigate complicated options and applications, generally live closer to good options, and can find transportation for more distant choices.

**“The concern is that the city is becoming a model of 19th century England, where the upper class attends well-appointed private schools and the lower class is stuck in racially unbalanced public schools.”**

– C.W. Nevius,  
“School-choice system flunks the test,”  
San Francisco Chronicle, 2016<sup>18</sup>

Working-class and resource-poor families are at a marked disadvantage in comparison, and often end up at low-performing schools. This results in more segregated schools.

When this plan was rolled out, the district laid out key objectives. The first was to “reverse the trend of racial isolation and the concentration of underserved students in the same school.” But according to the district’s own data, since 2011, the number of “racially isolated” SFUSD schools — those where at least 60% of students are of a single race — grew from 24 to 30.<sup>17</sup>

It’s worth taking a look at the system from the point of view of a low-income family living in the southeast section of the city.

The problems start with a complicated application process. Families with few resources are asked to take on a five-page application document, and to consider points such as, “If your child speaks a language other than English and lists a dual language pathway or bi-literacy as one of her/his choices, she/he may be assessed for her/his current language skills. The language assessments evaluate a child’s proficiency in the pathway language (if assessment is available).”

<sup>17</sup>San Francisco Unified School District. (2015, April 8). School Assignment, 4th Annual Report: 2014-15 School Year. Retrieved September 15, 2017 from <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/enroll/files/2015-16/4th-annual-report-april-8-2015.pdf>

<sup>18</sup>Nevius, C. (n.d.). Turning around a struggling school. San Francisco Chronicle. Retrieved from <http://www.sfchronicle.com/schools-desegregation-system/>

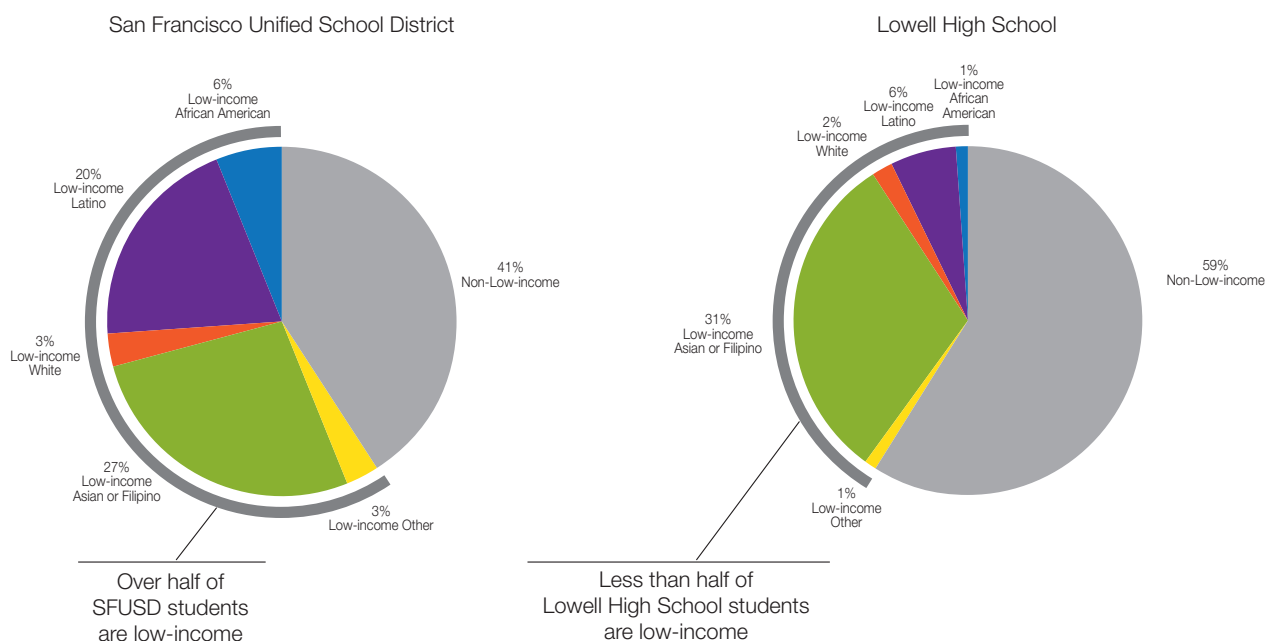
Those two sentences are not easy to understand. And that doesn't even include all the work parents need to do to figure out which schools should be their top choices.

Even when families manage to navigate the school choice system and determine the best options for their children, they face another challenge: actually securing a spot at one of those schools. In 2015, SFUSD published a list of the 15 most-requested schools among kindergarten applicants.<sup>19</sup> Every one of them had at least 16 applicants per seat available.

**FIGURE 8**

### Lowell High School serves fewer low-income Latino and African American students than San Francisco Unified

Student enrollment, 2015-16



Source: Enrollment data used for this analysis is 2015-16 socioeconomically disadvantaged enrollment disaggregated by race which is not publicly available for the 2016-17 school year. See methodology for more details.

<sup>19</sup>San Francisco Unified School District. (2015, March 16). Highlights March 13, 2015 Assignment Run, 2015-2016 School Year. Retrieved on September 15, 2017, from [http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/enroll/files/2015-16/2015-16\\_march\\_enrollment\\_highlights.pdf](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/enroll/files/2015-16/2015-16_march_enrollment_highlights.pdf)

<sup>20</sup>Robinson, R. (2015, January 29). Transportation Challenges Complicate School Choice for S.F. Students. San Francisco Public Press. Retrieved from <http://sfpublicpress.org/news/2015-01/transportation-challenges-complicate-school-choice-for-sf-students>

Simple geography poses another barrier. Most schools with high overall student performance are on San Francisco's west side, far away from the city's most historically underserved communities. That's a big hurdle even for students old enough to travel by themselves (a recent article that described the story of a ninth-grader is a case in point: his six-mile commute to school takes at least 75 minutes in each direction with two bus transfers).<sup>20</sup>

Lowell High School, the city's test-in school, only magnifies the problem. For example, African American and Latino students make up 34% of the district. But at Lowell, they represent only 13% of the student body (See Figure 8).

**But the biggest problem with the choice system is more basic: even when low-income African American and Latino students manage to enroll in schools with high overall performance, those schools often don't serve them well either.**

There are a number of schools in San Francisco with huge achievement gaps between different student subgroups - more than 40 percentage points (see Figure 9 and 10). Some of these schools have very high performance overall, but are actually underperforming the district average for low-income Latino and African American students.

At the end of the day, for all its good intentions, San Francisco's choice system hasn't solved the problem it was designed to address — access to a strong education for low-income African American and Latino students. Desegregation is a worthy goal, but one that is achieved on a much longer timeline than the current students in SFUSD schools can afford to wait. The fact is that most of San Francisco's schools aren't delivering for underserved students, including many schools with high results for White and Asian students.

As a result, San Francisco offers a system of choice that functions quite well for one group: the wealthy. Families with plenty of money can look for a spot in a nearby school that is high-performing for White and Asian students. If they don't find one or don't get lucky in the school lottery, they can choose an expensive private school. For low-income families of color, that choice doesn't exist.

FIGURE 9

# San Francisco schools with large achievement gaps\* between non-low-income White and low-income African American students in English

Using performance data from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years

## English

■ Non-low-income (Non-LI) White ■ Low-income (LI) African American

School % Subgroup enrolled**	Grades	Two-Year Average Performance in English (% met or above standards)	Two-year Average Gap in % Points***
Thomas Starr King Elementary Non-LI White 15% LI African American 14%	K-5	90% 4%	85
Rosa Parks Elementary Non-LI White 12% LI African American 22%	K-5	93% 9%	84
Everett Middle Non-LI White 19% LI African American 5%	6-8	88% 16%	72
Roosevelt Middle Non-LI White 14% LI African American 5%	6-8	87% 16%	71
Aptos Middle Non-LI White 11% LI African American 7%	6-8	85% 15%	70
Rooftop Elementary Non-LI White 31% LI African American 8%	K-8	78% 9%	69
James Denman Middle Non-LI White 6% LI African American 6%	6-8	73% 9%	64
Marina Middle Non-LI White 4% LI African American 7%	6-8	76% 12%	63
Presidio Middle Non-LI White 18% LI African American 4%	6-8	86% 23%	62
A. P. Giannini Middle Non-LI White 13% LI African American 3%	6-8	89% 30%	59

Source: California Department of Education (CDE), California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

\*This chart includes all public schools in San Francisco with gaps in proficiency of more than 40 percentage points. Schools are ordered by the size of the gap in proficiency between the two groups. Those with larger gaps are at the top and those with smaller gaps are at the bottom.

\*\*Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status for school year 2015-16 from the CDE. This data is not publicly reported and not available for the 2016-17 school year. See methodology for further details.

"LI" is defined in this context as "low-income". See the detailed methodology for more information on this term.

\*\*\*Weighted average of 2015-16 and 2016-17 data.



# San Francisco schools with large achievement gaps\* between non-low-income White and low-income African American students in math

Using performance data from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years

## Math

■ Non-low-income (Non-LI) White ■ Low-income (LI) African American

School % Subgroup enrolled**	Grades	Two-Year Average Performance in Math (% met or above standards)	Two-year Average Gap in % Points***
Thomas Starr King Elementary Non-LI White 15% LI African American 14%	K-5	93% 5%	88
Claire Lilienthal Elementary Non-LI White 28% LI African American 5%	K-8	86% 12%	74
Rosa Parks Elementary Non-LI White 12% LI African American 22%	K-5	76% 6%	70
Roosevelt Middle Non-LI White 14% LI African American 5%	6-8	78% 8%	70
Aptos Middle Non-LI White 11% LI African American 7%	6-8	77% 9%	68
Everett Middle Non-LI White 19% LI African American 5%	6-8	79% 11%	68
Rooftop Elementary Non-LI White 31% LI African American 8%	K-8	79% 15%	64
Gateway Middle (Charter) Non-LI White 21% LI African American 7%	6-8	72% 9%	63
Marina Middle Non-LI White 4% LI African American 7%	6-8	71% 8%	63
A. P. Giannini Middle Non-LI White 13% LI African American 3%	6-8	76% 14%	62
James Lick Middle Non-LI White 10% LI African American 6%	6-8	68% 7%	61
James Denman Middle Non-LI White 6% LI African American 6%	6-8	63% 5%	58
Harvey Milk Civil Rights Elementary Non-LI White 35% LI African American 16%	K-5	62% 5%	56
Presidio Middle Non-LI White 18% LI African American 4%	6-8	78% 24%	54

Source: California Department of Education (CDE), California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

\*This chart includes all public schools in San Francisco with gaps in proficiency of more than 40 percentage points. Schools are ordered by the size of the gap in proficiency between the two groups. Those with larger gaps are at the top and those with smaller gaps are at the bottom.

\*\*Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status for school year 2015-16 from the CDE. This data is not publicly reported and not available for the 2016-17 school year. See methodology for further details.

"LI" is defined in this context as "low-income". See the detailed methodology for more information on this term.

\*\*\*Weighted average of 2015-16 and 2016-17 data.

FIGURE 10

## San Francisco schools with large achievement gaps\* between non-low-income White and low-income Latino students in English

Using performance data from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years

### English

■ Non-low-income (Non-LI) White ■ Low-income (LI) Latino

School % Subgroup enrolled**	Grades	Two-Year Average Performance in English (% met or above standards)	Two-year Average Gap in % Points***
Thomas Starr King Elementary Non-LI White 15% LI Latino 12%	K-5	90% 7%	82
Buena Vista / Horace Mann Non-LI White 13% LI Latino 58%	K-8	85% 12%	73
Everett Middle Non-LI White 19% LI Latino 44%	6-8	88% 17%	71
Rosa Parks Elementary Non-LI White 12% LI Latino 13%	K-5	93% 26%	67
Herbert Hoover Middle Non-LI White 7% LI Latino 21%	6-8	90% 25%	65
Alvarado Elementary Non-LI White 36% LI Latino 30%	K-5	88% 24%	64
James Lick Middle Non-LI White 10% LI Latino 62%	6-8	76% 13%	64
Rooftop Elementary Non-LI White 31% LI Latino 11%	K-8	78% 18%	60
Fairmount Elementary Non-LI White 12% LI Latino 58%	K-5	69% 9%	60
Roosevelt Middle Non-LI White 14% LI Latino 11%	6-8	87% 30%	57
James Denman Middle Non-LI White 6% LI Latino 36%	6-8	73% 18%	55
Aptos Middle Non-LI White 11% LI Latino 20%	6-8	85% 29%	55
Presidio Middle Non-LI White 18% LI Latino 6%	6-8	86% 32%	54
A. P. Giannini Middle Non-LI White 13% LI Latino 5%	6-8	89% 36%	53
Marina Middle Non-LI White 4% LI Latino 14%	6-8	76% 25%	51
Sunnyside Elementary Non-LI White 41% LI Latino 13%	K-5	71% 26%	45
Gateway Middle (Charter) Non-LI White 21% LI Latino 22%	6-8	86% 44%	42

Source: California Department of Education (CDE), California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

\*This chart includes all public schools in San Francisco with gaps in proficiency of more than 40 percentage points. Schools are ordered by the size of the gap in proficiency between the two groups. Those with larger gaps are at the top and those with smaller gaps are at the bottom.

\*\*Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status for school year 2015-16 from the CDE. This data is not publicly reported and not available for the 2016-17 school year. See methodology for further details.

"LI" is defined in this context as "low-income". See the detailed methodology for more information on this term.

\*\*\*Weighted average of 2015-16 and 2016-17 data.

# San Francisco schools with large achievement gaps\* between non-low-income White and low-income Latino students in math

Using performance data from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years

## Math

■ Non-low-income (Non-LI) White ■ Low-income (LI) Latino

School % Subgroup enrolled**	Grades	Two-Year Average Performance in Math (% met or above standards)	Two-year Average Gap in % Points***
Thomas Starr King Elementary Non-LI White 15% LI Latino 12%	K-5	93% 15%	78
Alvarado Elementary Non-LI White 36% LI Latino 30%	K-5	89% 23%	67
Fairmount Elementary Non-LI White 12% LI Latino 58%	K-5	76% 10%	66
Everett Middle Non-LI White 19% LI Latino 44%	6-8	79% 13%	66
Rooftop Elementary Non-LI White 31% LI Latino 11%	K-8	79% 14%	65
Buena Vista / Horace Mann Non-LI White 13% LI Latino 58%	K-8	75% 13%	62
James Lick Middle Non-LI White 10% LI Latino 62%	6-8	68% 8%	60
Roosevelt Middle Non-LI White 14% LI Latino 11%	6-8	78% 19%	59
Aptos Middle Non-LI White 11% LI Latino 20%	6-8	77% 19%	58
Marina Middle Non-LI White 4% LI Latino 14%	6-8	71% 15%	57
Herbert Hoover Middle Non-LI White 7% LI Latino 21%	6-8	77% 21%	56
Presidio Middle Non-LI White 18% LI Latino 6%	6-8	78% 23%	55
Gateway Middle (Charter) Non-LI White 21% LI Latino 22%	6-8	72% 17%	55
A. P. Giannini Middle Non-LI White 13% LI Latino 5%	6-8	76% 22%	54
Rosa Parks Elementary Non-LI White 12% LI Latino 13%	K-5	76% 22%	54
James Denman Middle Non-LI White 6% LI Latino 36%	6-8	63% 11%	53
Francisco Middle Non-LI White 3% LI Latino 9%	6-8	53% 11%	42

Source: California Department of Education (CDE), California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

\*This chart includes all public schools in San Francisco with gaps in proficiency of more than 40 percentage points. Schools are ordered by the size of the gap in proficiency between the two groups. Those with larger gaps are at the top and those with smaller gaps are at the bottom.

\*\*Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status for school year 2015-16 from the CDE. This data is not publicly reported and not available for the 2016-17 school year. See methodology for further details.

"LI" is defined in this context as "low-income". See the detailed methodology for more information on this term.

\*\*\*Weighted average of 2015-16 and 2016-17 data.

JESSICA FONTENOT

# In Search of a Better School

*One goal of San Francisco's school choice system is to open up options for all families regardless of where they live. However, it can be difficult to get into many of the most popular and high-performing schools in the first place, and it often means a long commute across town and being one of very few students of color.*

"If I had a choice, I'd rather [my kids] go to school right here in our community," said Jessica Fontenot, who lives in San Francisco with her three school-age children.

But when her daughter was about to enter kindergarten, she didn't like the performance of nearby schools. John Muir Elementary is rated a two on GreatSchools (out of a possible 10) and has just 35% of all students proficient in math.<sup>21</sup> Rosa Parks Elementary has higher ratings, but low proficiency rates for African American students.<sup>22</sup>

She applied through the district's school choice lottery, but didn't get any of her choices.

"I wanted my daughter, Shuri, to go to a better school, so I filed a grievance," she said. "I fought for her to get into Rooftop School in the Twin Peaks area, because they had a good reputation and it was a better option. Since I couldn't afford a private school, I went that route."

Jessica ended up getting her daughter into Rooftop, which is among the top 15 most requested elementary schools in San Francisco Unified as measured by

requests for kindergarten seats.<sup>23</sup> In fall 2017, it had 22 applicants for every open kindergarten seat.<sup>24</sup> Jessica liked that it had the feel of a small school and was willing to rush back and forth from work each day to get her kids to and from school. Many working families can't pull off transportation across town — either because of inflexible work hours, not having a car, or because their children are too young to take public transportation.

"The teachers there are great...they're really supportive," she said. "They have an open door policy. I can contact them anytime, and my daughter can be an advocate for herself, because she has a positive relationship with her teacher."

But it wasn't always smooth sailing.

"In the beginning it wasn't so good," she said. "The school is predominantly White, and each year my daughter would be one of [only a few] African American students of 22 or so kids in her class. So while it was a better school, it wasn't a better school for us. After [a racially insensitive incident] involving a teacher, I had to reach out to the superintendent. The teacher apologized, and now there are a couple of African

<sup>21</sup>Muir (John) Elementary School. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2017, from <http://www.greatschools.org/california/san-francisco/6414-Muir-John-Elementary-School/>

<sup>22</sup>Parks (Rosa) Elementary School. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2017, from <http://www.greatschools.org/california/san-francisco/6420-Parks-Rosa-Elementary-School/>

<sup>23</sup>Educational Placement Center. (2017, April 4). School Year 2017-2018 Total Request by School/Grade/ Program with Choice Ranking: Summary of Total Requests [PDF]. San Francisco Unified School District. Retrieved on September 15, 2017

<sup>24</sup>Based on school-level and kindergarten applicant numbers in 2017-18. Same reference as footnote above.

<sup>25</sup>Rooftop Elementary School. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2017, from <http://www.greatschools.org/california/san-francisco/6426-Rooftop-Elementary-School/>





American teachers at the school.”

“I have to deal with the social-emotional part a lot,” she said. “My kids ask why they have to go to school with all White kids. I tell them to focus on their education. I want them to be well-rounded, but I have concerns about them being one of just a few Black kids. My biggest concern is bullying. Two kids approached my daughter and asked her if she and her friends wanted watermelon. The principal set an example and suspended them.”

Like many high-performing San Francisco schools, Rooftop doesn’t deliver the same results for all students.<sup>25</sup> While 70% of White students and 72% of Asian students are proficient in math, only 13% of African American students at the school are at grade level in math.

Not feeling totally welcome at first, Jessica decided to be proactive. She and a few other parents got together and formed the African American Parents Advisory Council (AAPAC). Since then, things have improved. The school has also become more diverse, with students being bussed in from the Bayview.

“We’ve got a right to a better education. We have a right to be here. Why can’t schools in our neighborhoods get that same support, energy, and community?”

— Jessica Fontenot

“We started a group so our culture could be recognized and so we could get more support for our children and to build community,” Fontenot said. “We meet every month. We have some events coming up in Black History Month. And, we have family night where all families are invited to come.”

“I’m proud to say that I’ve been a part of making the school better,” Jessica said. “We’ve got a right to a better education. We have a right to be here. Why can’t schools in our neighborhoods get that same support, energy, and community?”





LEWIS STRINGER

# Why Do Families Opt Out of SFUSD?

*In San Francisco, around 25% of all school-age children are enrolled in private schools, much higher than the California average of 9%.<sup>26</sup> One family's experience sheds light on some of the factors that can lead families to make that decision.*

When Lewis and Alana Stringer were getting ready to send their daughter, Dahlia, to kindergarten, they thought they'd send her to a public school. Both had attended public schools and felt they received a good education. But in the end, they chose a private school for Dahlia.

Like most San Franciscans, what the Stringers care about most are “the community, locality relative to where we live and work, and the educational stuff — how strong is the school,” Lewis said. “We base that on the rankings we see online and what other parents say.”

The Stringers participated in SFUSD's lottery and Dahlia was admitted to New Traditions, a highly-ranked public elementary school (rated nine out of 10, according to GreatSchools) near their home in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood.<sup>27</sup> They were satisfied with their choice, but they soon began hearing chatter about the school losing its principal and that it was going downhill.

Concerned, they decided to opt out of the public school system and chose the private Presidio Hill

School, because they felt it was a sure thing.

“Our decision is like a lot of San Franciscans who are middle-class, have some kind of resources backing us up, and a desire to have a great school,” Lewis said. “This was a big debate between my wife and me. My only regret is that all of us, collectively, have made that decision, because we think opting out is worth it. But, whatever the reason, there is a culture here that allows people to go to private school. It allows so many people to bail out.”

About 25% of students who live in San Francisco Unified School District attend private schools, one of the highest rates in the country.<sup>28</sup>

Enrolling Dahlia in Presidio Hill School wasn't an easy decision for Lewis and Alana, and it came with a hefty price tag: \$23,000 per year.

“We like her school,” Lewis said. “It's relatively small with a great community, and it's been great for Dahlia for the most part.”

Lewis knows many parents who made the same

<sup>26</sup>San Francisco Unified School District. (2015, November 23). Demographic Analyses and Enrollment Forecasts for the San Francisco Unified School District. Prepared by Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc. Retrieved October 12, 2017, from <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/demographic-analyses-enrollment-forecast.pdf>

<sup>27</sup>New Traditions Elementary School. (n.d.). Retrieved February 21, 2017, from <http://www.greatschools.org/california/san-francisco/6415-New-Traditions-Elementary-School/>

<sup>28</sup>San Francisco Unified School District. (2015, November 23). Demographic Analyses and Enrollment Forecasts for the San Francisco Unified School District. Prepared by Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc. Retrieved October 12, 2017, from <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/about-SFUSD/files/demographic-analyses-enrollment-forecast.pdf>

decision. Unfortunately, the Stringers are now left with a nagging feeling about having opted out.

“Personally, I do have a certain amount of guilt around the fact that we’re participating in something that isn’t possible for other people,” Lewis said. “It’s part of the nature of the circumstances in San Francisco, where the majority of people we know are relatively affluent, they have quite a bit of choice in where they send their kids, and are generally happy where their kids are going to school. While Presidio Hill School is a great school, and we enjoy the community, there’s a very distinct difference: it’s still culturally a private school in that it’s a community driven by people who can afford to have their kids go there.”

When it comes time for Dahlia to attend high school, the Stringers plan to explore a district option. “The most likely scenario is we’ll continue to have her go to this school until eighth grade, and then we’ll look for other schools in the public system,” Lewis said. “I’m totally up for that.”

One hurdle they’re up against when

they opt back in is San Francisco’s lottery system.

“It’s complicated and takes a lot of effort to understand and to participate in if you want a school that works for you,” Lewis said. “I understand what SFUSD was attempting to do, as far as balancing a lot of priorities: neighborhoods with bad schools and kids who want to be able to go to schools in their neighborhoods. It attempts to blend a lot of goals, so that lends to the complexity and challenge that I think ultimately makes it a hard system, but I honestly wouldn’t know how to make it better.”

“All of us, collectively, have made that decision, because we think opting out is worth it. There is a culture here that allows people to go to private school. It allows so many people to bail out.”

— Lewis Stringer



# Great Jobs, Out of Reach





*San Francisco's booming economy and high-paying jobs draw people from across the world. But those jobs are far out of reach for Latino and African American students who grow up here.*

San Francisco's job market is the best in the country. Unless you grew up and went to school here, and happen to be African American or Latino.

Forbes named San Francisco the "No. 1 City for Jobs in America" for three years running. Since 2010, jobs grew 23.8% overall, and 62% in the information sector.<sup>29</sup> San Francisco ranks second in the country among cities with the highest-earning jobs.<sup>30</sup> Unemployment is extremely low at only 3%.

However, it's not a great job market for everybody. Nearly 8% of African Americans over the age of 16 in San Francisco are unemployed.<sup>31</sup> African Americans hold only 2% of the city's tech jobs — and occupy 56% of its jail cells.<sup>32</sup> They represent 36% of San Francisco's homeless population, in a city with the second highest rate of homelessness in the country.<sup>33, 34</sup>

In fact, San Francisco is among the worst major cities for African Americans to look for a job (tied for 48th place out of 50 major American cities in a study by New Geography of best places for African Americans to succeed).<sup>35</sup>

Among the crucial reasons: education.

<sup>29</sup>Kotkin, J., & Shires, M. (2016, May 10). The Best Cities For Jobs 2016. Forbes. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2016/05/10/the-best-cities-for-jobs-2016/#3b017f486e40>

<sup>30</sup>Martin, E., Loudenback, T., & Morrell, A. (2016, March 07). The 20 best places to live in America if you want to make a lot of money. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/best-places-to-live-in-america-for-a-high-salary-2016-3/#3-washington-dc-18>

<sup>31</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics Data. (n.d.). Retrieved February 21, 2017, from <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000006>

<sup>32</sup>Rodriguez, S. (2015, April 9). As Tech Giants Push For Diversity, Blacks And Latinos Are Fleeing Once-Diverse San Francisco. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/tech-giants-push-diversity-blacks-latinos-are-fleeing-once-diverse-san-francisco-1872760>

<sup>33</sup>Homeless Point-In-Time Count & Survey Comprehensive Report 2015 [PDF]. (n.d.). Applied Survey Research.

<sup>34</sup>Sze, K. (2016, June 29). Data shows SF has 2nd highest homeless population in US. Retrieved from <http://abc7news.com/news/data-shows-sf-has-2nd-highest-homeless-population-in-us/1407123/>

<sup>35</sup>Kotkin, J. (2015, January 16). The Cities Where African-Americans Are Doing The Best Economically. Retrieved from <http://www.newgeography.com/content/004827-the-cities-where-african-americans-are-doing-the-best-economically>

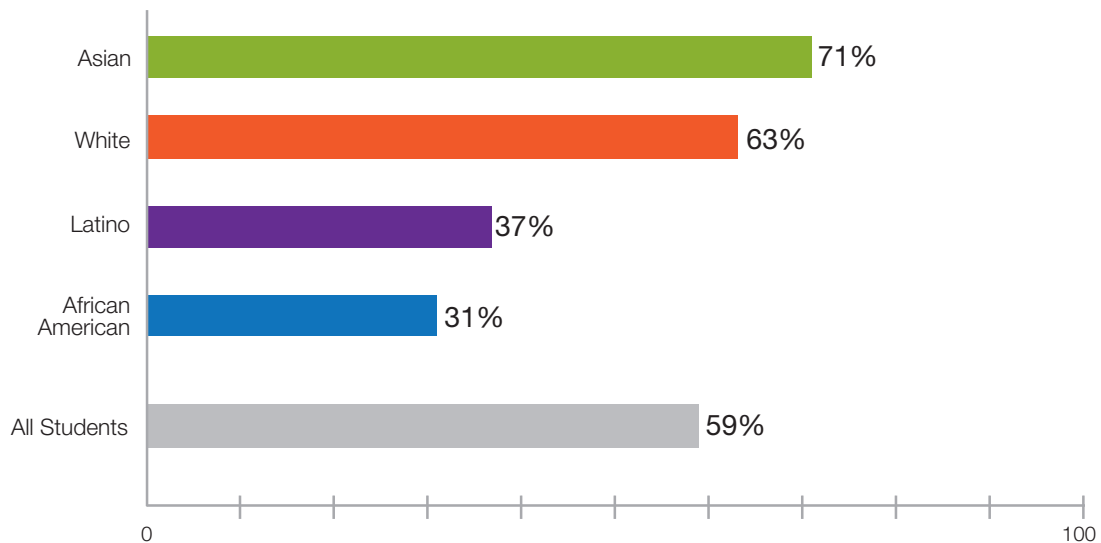


Most tech jobs require college degrees, and San Francisco has attracted a lot of people who have them from across the country and the world. But many children of color growing up in the city are not getting anything close to the education that would prepare them for those jobs. (See Figure 11 below.)

**FIGURE 11**

### Most Latino and African American students in San Francisco Unified School District don't graduate eligible for four-year state universities

Percentage of high school graduates\* with UC/CSU eligibility, 2015-16



Source: California Department of Education, University of California/California State University eligibility requirement files

\*Note that this only includes students who graduate in the given year. It doesn't account for students who drop out or don't graduate on time. School district results in this graphic exclude independent (direct-funded) charter schools.

There is a focus on college readiness in high school, but the reality is that students fall off the path to college and good jobs far before graduation. In SFUSD in 2016-17, only 19% of African American students are on grade level in English and 13% in math.<sup>36</sup>

When students are so far behind, it becomes almost impossible to catch up. In San Francisco, 16% of African American and 15% of Latino students don't make it to high school graduation,<sup>37</sup> and not all who do graduate eligible

<sup>36</sup>California Department of Education. (2017, September 27). California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2016-17 Results. Retrieved on September 27, 2017, from <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2017/default>

<sup>37</sup>California Department of Education, Data Reporting Office. (2017, August 5). Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2015-16: District Results for San Francisco Unified. Retrieved on September 15, 2017, from <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates/GradRates.aspx?Agg=D&Topic=Graduates&TheYear=2015-16&cds=38684780000000&RC=District&Sub-Group=Ethnic/Racial>

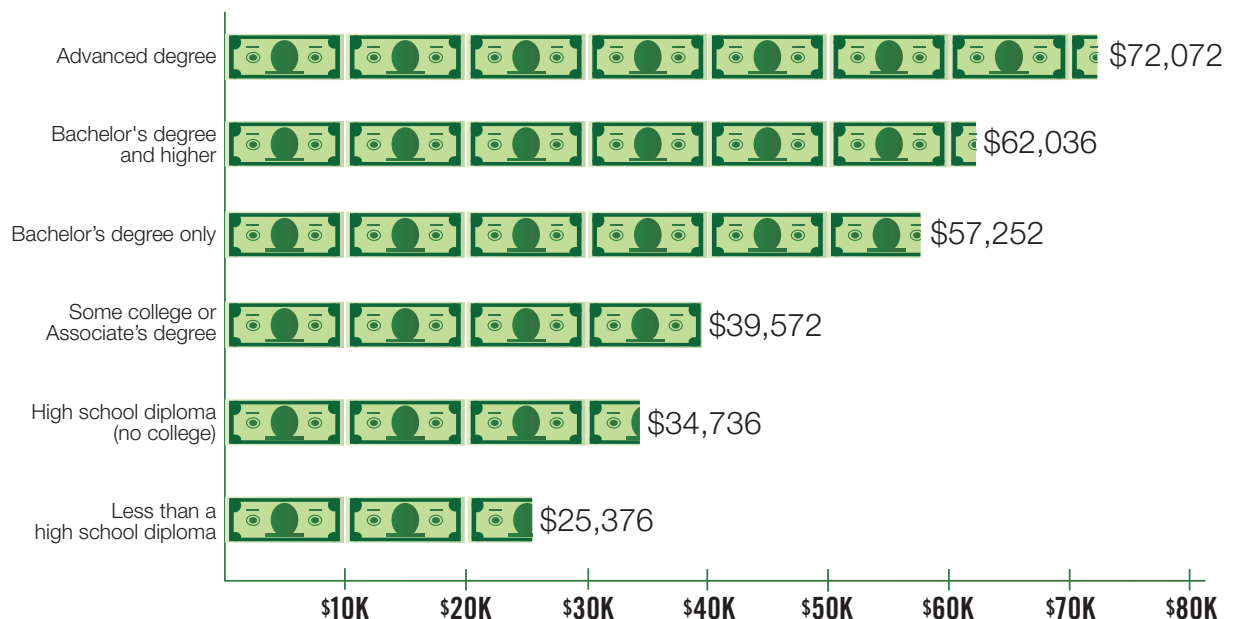
for college. Right now, only one out of three African American high school graduates in SFUSD is eligible to attend a state college or university.

And the challenge goes beyond hot tech jobs. More education equals more income across the board (see Figure 12 below). Almost all of the jobs created since the recession have gone to people with education beyond high school.<sup>38</sup>

**FIGURE 12**

## Workers with more education earn more

Median yearly earnings by educational attainment in the United States, 2014



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, Median weekly earnings by educational attainment in 2014 on the Internet at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/median-weekly-earnings-by-education-gender-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm> (visited February 22, 2017)

Taken together, this information raises deep questions about who we are as a city. The huge divides in wealth and education are making it harder and harder for working-class African American and Latino communities to survive here. That should trouble the conscience of every single San Franciscan.

But we don't have to wait or wonder what it will take to improve educational choices. The knowledge is there. We can change our reality. Let's join together.

<sup>38</sup>Carnevale, A.P.; Tamara, J., and Gulish, A. (2016), America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots. Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce. Retrieved on October 7, 2017, from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/americas-divided-recovery>

## PASTOR MERVIN REDMOND

# Living in San Francisco Across the Generations

*According to a recent article in the New York Times, one out of every seven San Francisco residents was Black in 1970. Today, that has dropped to nearly one out of 20.<sup>39</sup>*

“We’ve lost a significant number of congregants because of housing prices,” said Mervin Redmond, Pastor of St. John’s Missionary Baptist Church in Bayview-Hunter’s Point, who was born and raised in San Francisco. “Many have sold their homes and moved to Sacramento, Fairfield, Stockton and other areas. There’s no affordable space in San Francisco.”

Pastor Redmond is also the father of two children: Mervin Jr., 14, and Meya, 11.

“The population of African Americans in San Francisco has decreased tremendously since I was a kid,” said Pastor Redmond. “It’s shrunk so much that by the time our kids do go through school, they’re looking somewhere else [to live]. They’re not looking here. It’s more corporate, and San Francisco isn’t as family-friendly as it used to be. There’s just not as many families that you used to see.”

When his children entered school, he wanted them to go to private school, but he couldn’t afford it. They’ve since attended several schools over the years, including Commodore Sloat Elementary and Aptos Middle School, six miles across town near Oceanview.

He saw plenty of differences between the SFUSD schools across town and those near his home in the Bayview.

“You can be a half mile away from somewhere, but be a world apart,” said the pastor. “We just didn’t want to deal with the foolishness at the other schools in our neighborhood. I’m very concerned about public schools here in San Francisco.”

However, he also saw that even getting into a highly-rated and well-funded school didn’t guarantee a great education.

“I don’t think they care less, but they show less care for kids of color,” said Pastor Redmond. “I thank the Lord for the teachers my children have had. But, I think because there’s a cultural difference, they don’t know how to deal with our kids. Sometimes it’s a language and cultural barrier. They don’t understand the kids, and the kids don’t understand them. It takes a special and unique individual to take the steps required to learn and understand our kids. In most cases, they care, but not as much care is shown. Aptos is one of the better middle schools,

<sup>39</sup>Fuller, T. (2016, July 20). The Loneliness of Being Black in San Francisco. The New York Times. Retrieved from [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/black-exodus-from-san-francisco.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/black-exodus-from-san-francisco.html?_r=1)

so if we're wondering about it academically, how are things at other schools that are performing worse academically?"

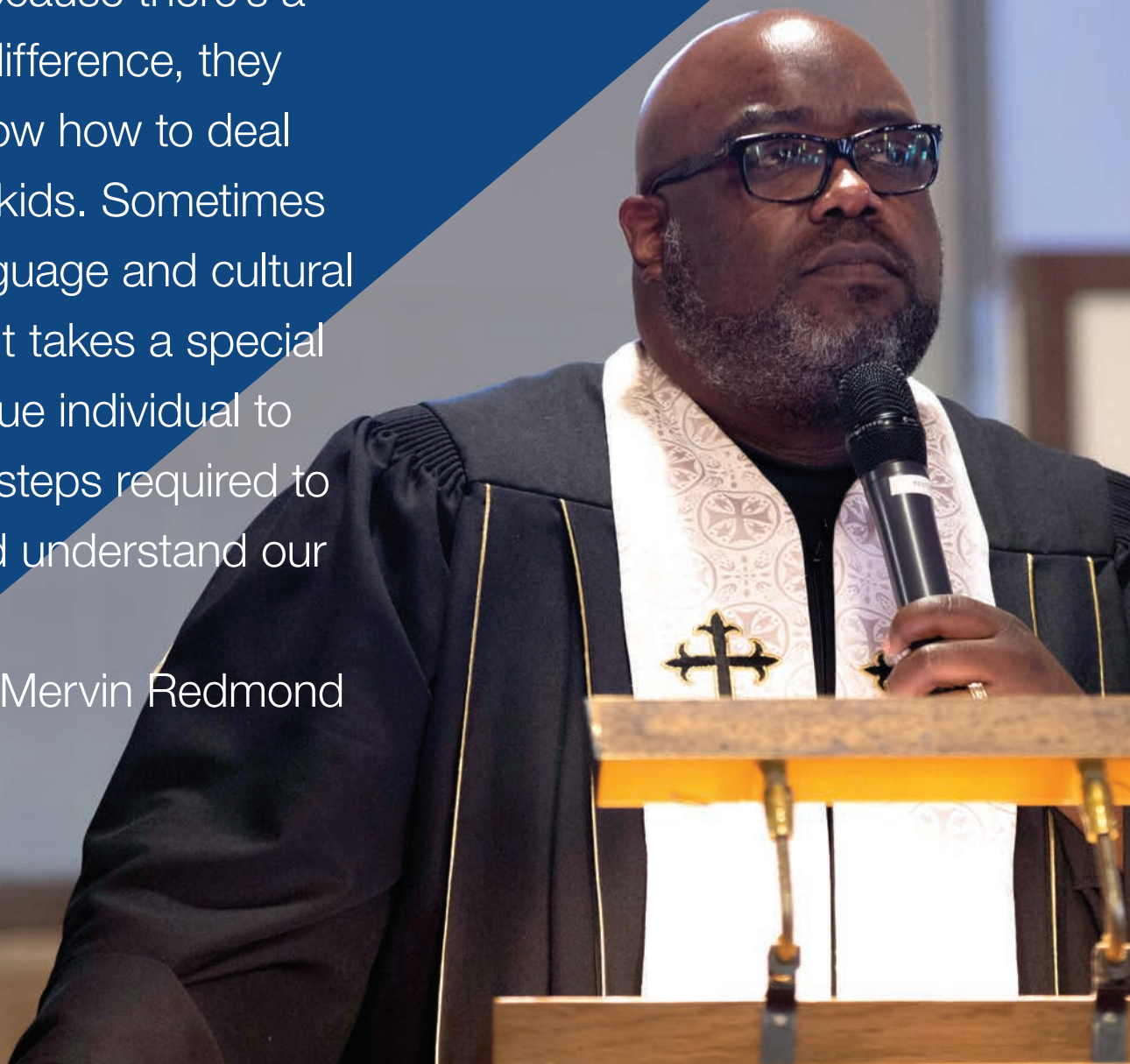
The answer is — not good. San Francisco is currently one of the worst districts in California for low-income African American students. Across all its schools, just 10% of low-income African American students are proficient in math. Pastor Redmond's son is currently attending KIPP College Prep, a public charter school, closer to home. He likes the strong parent

involvement at the school, though it's demanding with kids taking home lots of homework after school and on weekends.

"The problem we have with [SFUSD schools] is they don't push them as hard as KIPP does. At KIPP, all they talk about is college, and I like that. But, I don't see that same goal when it comes to Aptos. I don't see them pushing kids the same way."

“ I think because there's a cultural difference, they don't know how to deal with our kids. Sometimes it's a language and cultural barrier... It takes a special and unique individual to take the steps required to learn and understand our kids.”

— Pastor Mervin Redmond





A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, spanning the water with hills in the background under a blue sky with light clouds.

# The Path to Better

*With a strong vision and the will to implement it, San Francisco can offer low-income families and families of color the schools they deserve. Around the Bay Area and the nation, other communities have demonstrated that very significant progress can be made.*

San Francisco's low-income African American and Latino students don't have the schools they deserve. Education is meant to offer a path to opportunity, but for far too many people in this amazingly rich city, there are a few good options.

That's not an unchangeable fact of life.

In a city that is an international symbol of bold thinking and innovation, thanks to the vibrant tech sector and public policies like free community college and universal healthcare. Yet the response to the deep problems in our public school system has been cautious thinking and traditional approaches. Had we taken the same approach in the technology world, this report would have been written on an electric typewriter and delivered by postal mail.

What are the results of San Francisco's limited ambition for its students? The result is that our city is falling short of its vision of itself — as a place that welcomes and nurtures the vulnerable and takes care of its own. The result is a “choice” system that hasn't provided better choices for low-income Black and Latino families. The result is that young people of color who attended San Francisco's schools go jobless in the hottest job market in the country.

The unfairness is all the more glaring because better is so clearly possible.

What makes that clear? The fact that across our state and nation, there are many examples of communities that have done it. They have decided to take action on the knowledge that with hard work and vision, they could provide schools that gave kids a better future, even in the toughest neighborhoods, with significantly better results than San Francisco.

Fundamentally, what successful efforts have done is adopt a sense of urgency to provide students and families with better schools — through changes to struggling schools, through creating new schools that embody a spirit of innovation, and through real commitment to whole-district improvement.



**What we  
need now**



# Urgency to fix the schools that exist today and to create new ones

We must move urgently to pursue solutions for the thousands of students in SFUSD schools right now, as well as for the next generation.

## Turnaround

One of the hardest tasks in education is turning around struggling schools, because it requires not only doing things in completely new ways, but dramatically changing expectations. There are many disappointing turnaround efforts. But there are also some genuine successes that point clearly at what works. It's not about just renaming a school, simply bringing in a new principal, or perhaps organizing the school around a new theme. It's about giving the principal, staff, families and community the ability to create something genuinely new in the same place, with the same children but a different school culture and very high expectations. There's no single path to successful turnaround, but research has found several key elements that are common, including a highly capable school leader and staff, a culture of high expectations for both students and adults, using data to find what works, and the school having significant instructional and operational autonomy.

From Chicago's Academy for Urban School Leadership to Philadelphia's Mastery schools to Boston's UP Academy Dorchester and Trotter School, it's clear that with the right leadership, strong supports, and autonomy — including giving the principals who are leading the turnaround the authority to select their staff — ***dramatic improvement can come quickly.***<sup>40, 41, 42, 43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>De la Torre, M., Allensworth, E., Jagesic, S., Sebastian, J., Salmonowicz, M., Meyers, C., & Gerdeman, D. R. (n.d.). Turning Around Low-Performing Schools in Chicago: Summary Report(Rep.). Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <http://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/turning-around-low-performing-schools-chicago-summary-report>

<sup>41</sup>Mastery Charter Case Study [PDF]. (2013, March 14) Retrieved August 18, 2017 from [https://www.erstrategies.org/library/turnaround\\_case\\_studies](https://www.erstrategies.org/library/turnaround_case_studies)

<sup>42</sup>Newberry, L. (2015, March 29). At UP charter schools, longer school days, atmosphere of joy yields results. Retrieved July 20, 2017, from [http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2015/03/post\\_600.html](http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2015/03/post_600.html)

<sup>43</sup>Vaznis, J. (2013, December 02). After years of decline, Trotter School rebounds - The Boston Globe. Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/12/02/after-years-decline-trotter-school-rebounds/CfbmFYEGXYE4LDMiid7fO/story.html>



## New schools

Another strategy is opening new schools (often within existing school facilities), which provides a unique opportunity to design the schools around the essential elements of high-performing schools and staff them with teams committed to those strategies.<sup>44</sup> When executed well, this allows new schools to implement with great fidelity best practices and pilot new, innovative programs, which is very difficult to do in existing schools with a low-performing culture and little drive to change. A number of new, innovative schools have sharply narrowed achievement gaps and sent low-income students to college at rates much higher than is typical for the neighborhood, in the Bay Area and elsewhere. Some of these are new district schools; others are public charter schools. All have benefited from higher levels of autonomy to customize their academic program to meet the needs of their students. Like turnarounds, the fact of a school being new doesn't guarantee its success -- that requires a sound plan and a strong team who can execute the plan.

Here in the Bay Area, families, teachers and advocates have come together to demand and successfully establish such promising schools.

Some examples are just 45 minutes south in San Jose. The first is Renaissance Academy, a district school with a teacher-led approach and a family feel, as well as strong, consistent performance for low-income Latino students.<sup>45</sup> A second is Voices Academy, a bilingual charter school whose attention to data on student progress and commitment to parent involvement have helped to place it on Innovate's list of top schools for underserved students.<sup>46, 47</sup> Elsewhere in the country, the Brooklyn East Collegiate Charter School in New York has demonstrated how a deep commitment to college readiness has helped to close gaps between students of low- and higher-income brackets.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup>World Class Schools Report. (n.d.). Retrieved August 18, 2017 from <https://reports.innovateschools.org/world-class-schools-report/>

<sup>45</sup>Renaissance Academy: Cultivating a Culture of Joyful Learning. (2015, October 8). Retrieved from <https://innovateschools.org/school-profiles/renaissance-academy-cultivating-a-culture-of-joyful-learning/>

<sup>46</sup>Learning in Two Languages at Voices College-Bound Language Academy. (2015, August 26). Retrieved August 18, 2017 from <https://innovateschools.org/school-profiles/learning-in-two-languages-at-voices-college-bound-language-academy/>

<sup>47</sup>Top Bay Area Public Schools for Underserved Students 2016 Report. (2016, November). Retrieved February 21, 2017, from <https://reports.innovateschools.org/2016-top-schools/>

<sup>48</sup>Uncommon Collegiate Charter High School: Offering Rigorous Academics for ALL Students. (2016, June 20). Retrieved from <https://innovateschools.org/school-profiles/uncommon-collegiate-charter-high-school-offering-rigorous-academics-for-all-students/>

# The long term



## Whole-district change

Dramatic improvements are not limited to single-school examples. While the district and larger community embarks on turning around failing schools and launching new schools based on proven models, the district must go about aligning all of its vast resources toward becoming a high-functioning organization focused on the key levers to improve the quality of their schools.

Doing this will require an open-mindedness to new approaches to solve this problem. We must move swiftly from inquiry to action. Across the country, there are examples of entire districts making steady and eventually dramatic improvement in student outcomes — examples from which San Francisco can learn.

There are several common characteristics among high-performing school districts. High-performing districts have strong and effective leaders who work to reach all children, create and pursue shared goals around student performance, and hold all adults and students to high standards. In high-performing districts, there are clear expectations about instructional and learning outcomes, and district and school leaders are held accountable when those outcomes are not met.

Great school districts create a shared vision for what “good instruction” looks like, support teachers intensively to reach that vision, and use data to continuously improve and refine this vision. They create and maintain an environment of mutual respect and collaboration, allowing for leaders to constantly build on their skills through professional development opportunities and engagement in professional learning communities. They encourage partnerships with and support from families and the surrounding community.

Take for example Long Beach, where the school district built partnerships with colleges and universities in the area and established a strategic plan around hiring and retaining great teachers and school leaders, resulting in marked

<sup>49</sup>Mahoney, J., Mitchell, B., VanVoorhis, J., Battelle for Kids, & Lasley, T. (2012). Six Drivers of Student Success [PDF]. Battelle for Kids. Retrieve August 18, 2017, from [https://www.battelleforkids.org/docs/default-source/publications/six-drivers-of-student-success\\_a-look-inside-five-of-the-world-39-s-highest-performing-school-systems.pdf?sfvrsn=2](https://www.battelleforkids.org/docs/default-source/publications/six-drivers-of-student-success_a-look-inside-five-of-the-world-39-s-highest-performing-school-systems.pdf?sfvrsn=2)

<sup>50</sup>Knudson, J. (2013). You'll Never Be Better Than Your Teachers[PDF]. American Institutes for Research. Retrieved August 18, 2017, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED557950.pdf>

gains in the district's proficiency rates, graduation rates, and teacher retention rates.<sup>49</sup> Another large California school district with strong results for low-income students of color is Garden Grove, which has made consistent improvement over several years through a focus on hiring the best teachers, improving their current teachers, and strengthening their central office culture to be entirely focused on supporting high-performing schools and teachers.<sup>50</sup> Or we can look to Union City, NJ, where a strong focus on student learning, parent involvement, and teacher development led to notable and sustained improvement in students' academic performance and graduation rates, particularly for students of color, low-income students, and English learners.<sup>51</sup>

## The common elements behind successful schools

Whether in turnarounds, new schools, or whole-district improvement efforts, the elements of success are the same, and they're not mysterious. They are what educators, families and communities do when they have the vision and the will. The elements, which Innovate Public Schools' World-Class Schools framework explores in detail, are:<sup>52</sup>

- A deep and relentless focus on the mission of serving all students
- Commitment to build and develop a great team of educators
- Rigorous academic offerings for all students
- A culture of joyful learning
- A focus on data to inform decision-making
- Commitment to engaging parents as co-educators and leaders

The fact is, these things have happened in places with far fewer advantages than San Francisco. The city's wealth, intellectual resources, passion for social justice, and can-do spirit of innovation make it exactly the kind of place where better should be possible.

<sup>49</sup>Kirp, D. L. (2016, January 09). How to Fix the Country's Failing Schools. And How Not To. The New York Times. Retrieved August 18, 2017 from [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/opinion/sunday/how-to-fix-the-countrys-failing-schools-and-how-not-to.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fdauid-l-kirp&action=click&contentCollection=opinion@ion=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/opinion/sunday/how-to-fix-the-countrys-failing-schools-and-how-not-to.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fdauid-l-kirp&action=click&contentCollection=opinion@ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=collection)

<sup>52</sup>World Class Schools Report. (n.d.). Retrieved August 18, 2017 from <https://reports.innovateschools.org/world-class-schools-report/>



Some schools in San Francisco are making progress. For example, our 2016 Top Schools report highlights 54 Bay Area schools, including seven in San Francisco, that have enrolled more than the state's percentage of low-income African American students (4.3%) and low-income Latino students (43.3%), and where these students' proficiency rates are higher than the state's average for all students.<sup>53</sup> These schools are showing that even under current circumstances, schools can make progress towards closing gaps if they have the will and commitment to do it.

## The way forward

It's easy to dismiss the experiences of other communities as a different context. It's harder, but much more valuable, to figure out what we can put to use from the successes of others.

This calls San Francisco's leaders at every level and across multiple sectors to act with new urgency for the education of our underserved children. That means listening, changing policy, reconsidering past answers that have amounted to "no" — no to new schools, no to bolder forms of school turnaround, and no to new effective ideas.

And this calls parents, advocates and the community to keep pushing, to be loud, to take risks, to refuse to take "no" for an answer. Deep-set problems have rarely been solved quietly, in San Francisco or anywhere.

Today, San Francisco is an astonishingly rich city that offers its low-income African American and Latino families some of the poorest educational choices in the state.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Let's find the will to change.

<sup>53</sup>Top Bay Area Public Schools for Underserved Students 2016 Report. (2016, November). Retrieved February 21, 2017, from <https://reports.innovateschools.org/2016-top-schools/>







# Methodology

## Data Sources

- 2015-16 and 2014-15 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (English) and mathematics results (data retrieved on March 28, 2017). 2016-17 CAASPP data was retrieved on September 27, 2017.
- California Department of Education (CDE) cohort graduation rate data files, class of 2015-16, 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13 California Standards Test (CST) English and mathematics results (data retrieved in 2014). Test data was not publicly available in 2013-14.
- The CDE's Public School Directory database.
- Student enrollment in school years 2016-17, 2015-16 and 2014-15 through the CDE's website.
- Student enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status for school year 2015-16. This information was obtained through a data request to the CDE. This data is not publicly reported and therefore not available for the 2016-17 school year. The entire report uses the most recent year of data (enrollment breakdown by racial/ethnic group and economic status data) available to us: 2015-16.
- 2017-18 Average private school tuition cost from the Private School Review (data retrieved on September 15, 2017).
- 2014 Median Yearly Earnings by Educational Attainment in the United States from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily (data retrieved on February 22, 2017).

## Low-income Student Subgroup Definition

"Low-income" in the context of this report is defined by whether students are classified as "economically disadvantaged" according to the CDE. Economically disadvantaged students include students who are eligible for the free- or reduced-price lunch program, foster youth, homeless students, migrant students, and students for whom neither parent is a high school graduate. This is a strong proxy variable for low-income students in the state, as it mostly consists of students who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch at school. However, the variable also includes foster youth, homeless students, migrant

students, and students for whom neither parent is a high school graduate who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch.

### **Similar Unified Districts Ranking and District-level Analysis**

School districts were selected based on having similar student enrollment as San Francisco Unified based on: total enrollment, percent of economically disadvantaged students, and percent of African American or Latino students. A total of 945 unified, elementary, and high school districts with enrollment during the 2016-17 school year were included in the sample from which districts comparable to San Francisco Unified were identified. Elementary and high school districts were excluded from all district-level analysis. Students attending all schools in a given district, excluding direct-funded charter schools, were included in the district enrollment.

To be considered comparable to San Francisco Unified, districts needed to meet the enrollment, percent economically disadvantaged and percent ethnicity enrollment criteria detailed below. All districts in the sample needed to have at least 30 or more students tested for the specific subgroup included in the analysis for each year the analysis was run (the California state legislature set this subgroup size as the minimum cut off for accountability purposes in 2013 under the Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control and Accountability plans). In 2016-17, for the African American subgroup, 16 school districts met the criteria outlined in this section and had CAASPP results available. In the same year, for the Latino subgroup, 15 comparable school districts met the criteria outlined in this section and had CAASPP results available.

### ***Inclusion Criteria Details***

Districts met the total enrollment criteria if their enrollment was within one standard deviation of San Francisco Unified's total student enrollment in 2016-17, which is at least 26,533 students or no more than 79,598 students compared to SFUSD's total enrollment of 53,065. Thirty one districts met this total enrollment criterion.

The percent economically disadvantaged cut-off criterion was within one standard deviation of San Francisco Unified's percentage of 59.114%



socioeconomically disadvantaged students in 2015-16. We used 2015-16 socioeconomically disadvantaged enrollment data because it is publicly available and consistent with the data used for the low-income African American and low-income Latino subgroups. Six hundred seven districts met the criteria with economically disadvantaged enrollment between 32.7848% and 85.4287%.

Districts with a similar percentage of African American enrollment had to be within one standard deviation of San Francisco Unified's 7.421% African American enrollment. Five hundred fifty three districts met the criterion with African American enrollment between 0.674% and 14.106%.

Districts with similar percent Latino enrollment had to be within one standard deviation of San Francisco Unified's 27.039% Latino enrollment. Six hundred fifty districts met the criterion with Latino enrollment between 0% and 60.439%.

### ***Analysis***

The following analysis was applied to school districts that met the inclusion criteria above and had CAASPP performance data available for low-income African American and low-income Latino students. English and math proficiency levels were calculated with CAASPP data in 2016-17, 2015-16 and 2014-15. The number of students who met or were above the English or math standard and the number of students with test scores were summed for each district. The percentage of students who met or were above the standard was then calculated, called percent proficient or proficiency rates throughout the report.

### ***Ranking***

All districts were ranked based on their percent proficiency for each of the two subgroups, with those districts with highest proficiency levels at the top and those with the lowest proficiency levels at the bottom. District rates were rounded to one decimal point. In 2016-17, no districts across all four ranked lists had the same proficiency rate as another district out to two decimals. Two decimal points is what is provided by the CDE for percent proficiency in English and math. Given that no two districts had the same unrounded proficiency rates, no tie-breaking policies are needed.

Tie breaking was needed for all other years (see appendix for all the years in the analysis). If districts had the same proficiency rate rounded to the nearest whole number, all districts with the same rate are given the same ranking. Subsequent districts on the ranked list are given their absolute ranking out of the total number of districts on each list.

### ***All California Unified District Analyses***

To evaluate how San Francisco Unified compared to all unified districts serving low-income African American and low-income Latino students throughout the state, we also compared SFUSD to all California school districts (regardless of total enrollment and total size of low-income student population). English and math proficiency levels were calculated with CAASPP data in 2016-17, 2015-16 and 2014-15, and with data from the CST from 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13, incorporating all available data from 2010-11 through 2016-17 school years. The number of students who met or were above the English or math standard and the number of students with test scores were summed for each district. Percent proficiency levels and percentile ranks based on this information were calculated. All of those results are included in the Appendix and throughout the report.

### **All School-Level Analyses**

#### ***Inclusion Criteria***

All schools whose school-level, individual data is presented in the report needed to have at least 20 or more students tested for the specific subgroup highlighted. Only traditional district and charter schools are included in the report. That includes the following school types located within the San Francisco Unified/ County: 1) non-charter schools and locally-funded charter schools, and 2) direct-funded charter schools. Traditional schools included elementary, intermediate/middle, junior, high or K-12 schools offering a traditional educational option. Within San Francisco Unified/ County, there were 95 non-charter schools, one locally funded charter, and 10 direct-funded charters (with publicly available test data for at least one subgroup). All schools with 11 or more students tested and with scores have publicly available performance data and are included in any aggregate analysis in the report (e.g., charter school versus San Francisco Unified graphic).

### ***Analysis***

Performance on the 2015-16 and 2016-17 CAASPP in English and math across all ethnicities and for African American, Asian, Latino, and White students, overall and by economically disadvantaged status, were calculated. The number of students who met or were above the English or math standard and the number of students with test scores were summed across all schools in each school group. The percentage of students who met or were above the standard (i.e., proficiency rate) was then calculated for each school.

### **Charter School v. District Performance Analysis**

All the specifications in the “All School-Level Analysis” apply to the charter school analysis. Charter school proficiency levels in English and math were calculated using 2015-16 data and compared to the district proficiency level for low-income African American and low-income Latino students.

### **School Achievement Gap Analysis**

All the specifications in the “All School-Level Analysis” apply to this analysis as well. The goal of this analysis is to highlight the gaps in performance in English and math between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged subgroups in San Francisco Unified. The highest-performing subgroup in San Francisco Unified is White students who are not economically disadvantaged, called non-low-income White throughout the report. The lowest-performing subgroups in the district are African American and Latino students who are economically disadvantaged, called low-income African American and low-income Latino throughout the report.

The differences in the percentage of non-low-income White students and low-income African American students and Latino students meeting or exceeding standards in ELA and math the 2016-17 and 2015-16 CAASPP were calculated. Differences were only calculated for traditional schools, defined as elementary, intermediate/middle, junior, high or K-12 public schools offering a traditional educational option. All traditional schools in San Francisco with performance data for non-low-income White students and African American students or Latino students were averaged (with a weight assigned to number of student scores in each year) across the two years, 2015-16 and 2016-17; and then

ranked from the largest to smallest difference in students meeting or exceeding standards. Only schools with two-year averaged percent proficiency gaps of 40 points or larger were included in the report.

### **GreatSchools Test Score Rating<sup>1</sup>**

GreatSchools Test Score ratings were used for the following student groups in maps and in searchable data sets on our website: all students, White, African American, Latino, and Asian students. This GreatSchools subrating is composed of test score data. Test score data include the percent of students who have reached proficiency by grade and subject, including all tested grades across English, math, and science. These scores reflect rates of student grade-level proficiency, but they are limited in their ability to hone in on school quality. Subgroup ratings, which are ratings for a specific subgroup, are composed the same way. A noted limitation is that test score proficiency is strongly correlated with non-school factors, such as poverty levels and demographics. A school serving disadvantaged students could be doing a great job helping students learn, but if they start at a low level, that improvement might not show up on proficiency measures. In California, the GreatSchools Test Score Rating is calculated using student performance data from the CAASPP and the CSTs. Proficiency standards are set for each subject and grade level, and students are assessed by comparing their performance to proficiency standards. The 2015-16 test score data used in this report is available publicly on the CDE website.

<sup>1</sup>All information in this category is gathered from the GreatSchools website and "Searching for Opportunity: Examining Racial Gaps in Access to Quality Schools in California and a List of Spotlight Schools."



# Acknowledgments

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# Appendix

## Similar California Unified School Districts Ranking Results for Low-income African American Students

Results in English and math standards tests from 2010-11 through 2016-17\*

### English

YEAR	RANK	NUMBER OF COMPARABLE DISTRICTS WITH A RANK	% PROFICIENT LOW-INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS
2016-17	15	16	14%
2015-16	17	17	14%
2014-15	15	18	15%
2013-14	*No data available		*No data available
2012-13	18	18	28%
2011-12	15	20	32%
2010-11	18	20	28%

### Math

YEAR	RANK	NUMBER OF COMPARABLE DISTRICTS WITH A RANK	% PROFICIENT LOW-INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS
2016-17	14	16	10%
2015-16	17	17	8%
2014-15	13	18	9%
2013-14	*No data available		*No data available
2012-13	16	18	33%
2011-12	14	20	37%
2010-11	18	20	32%

Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and California Standards Test (CST)  
 \*Performance data was not available in 2013-14 due to the change from the CST to the CAASPP.  
 See methodology for full details on the analytical approach used for these rankings.

## Similar California Unified School Districts Ranking Results for Low-income Latino Students

Results in English and math standards tests from 2010-11 through 2016-17\*

### English

YEAR	RANK	NUMBER OF COMPARABLE DISTRICTS WITH A RANK	% PROFICIENT LOW-INCOME LATINO STUDENTS
2016-17	14	15	22%
2015-16	12	15	23%
2014-15	10	14	23%
2013-14	*No data available		*No data available
2012-13	11	16	35%
2011-12	10	14	35%
2010-11	13	15	31%

### Math

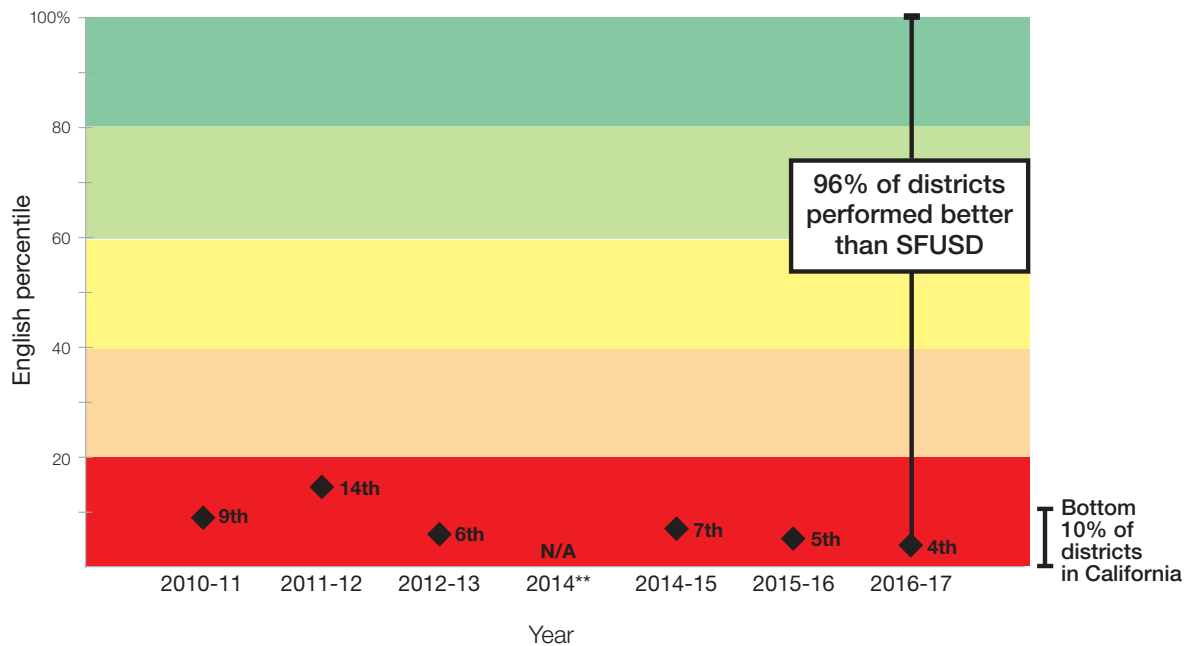
YEAR	RANK	NUMBER OF COMPARABLE DISTRICTS WITH A RANK	% PROFICIENT LOW-INCOME LATINO STUDENTS
2016-17	11	15	16%
2015-16	10	15	17%
2014-15	9	14	15%
2013-14	*No data available		*No data available
2012-13	12	16	44%
2011-12	13	14	43%
2010-11	14	15	42%

Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and California Standards Test (CST)  
 \*Performance data was not available in 2013-14 due to the change from the CST to the CAASPP.  
 See methodology for full details on the analytical approach used for these rankings.

Appendix continued

San Francisco Unified School District performance in English compared to all California unified school districts by percentile for low-income African American students

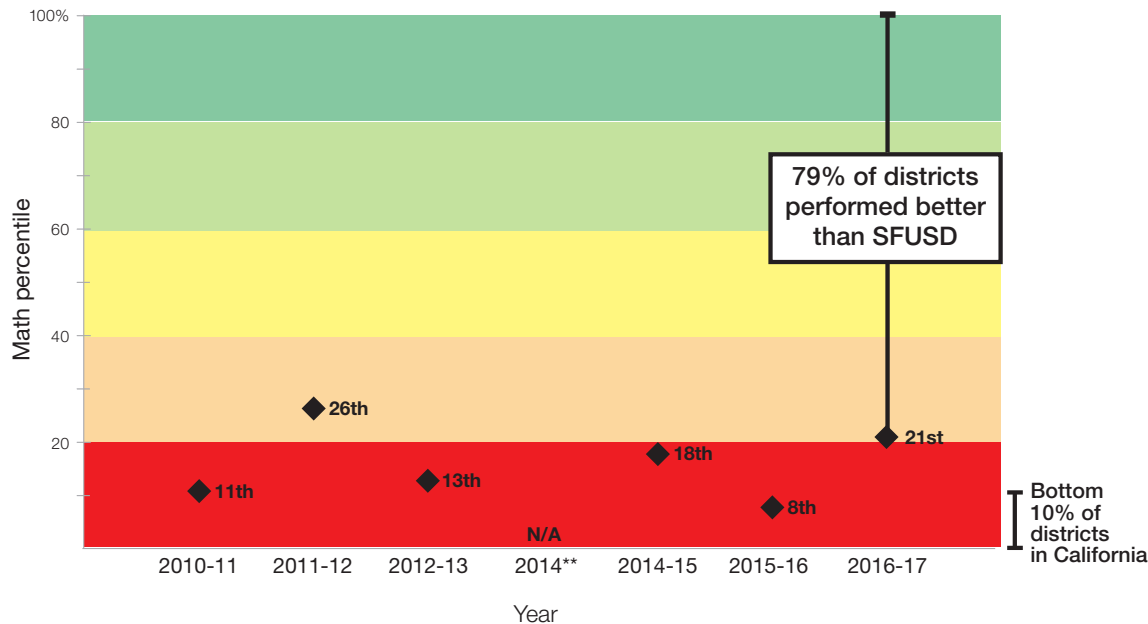
SFUSD percentiles of performance on state English tests\*, 2011 – 2017



Source: California Department of Education, California Standards Test (CST) and the California Assessment on Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)  
\*See the methodology for a detailed description of the analytical approach at <http://reports.innovateschools.org>.  
\*\*Performance data was not available in 2013-14 due to the change from the CST to the CAASPP.

San Francisco Unified School District performance in math compared to all California unified school districts by percentile for low-income African American students

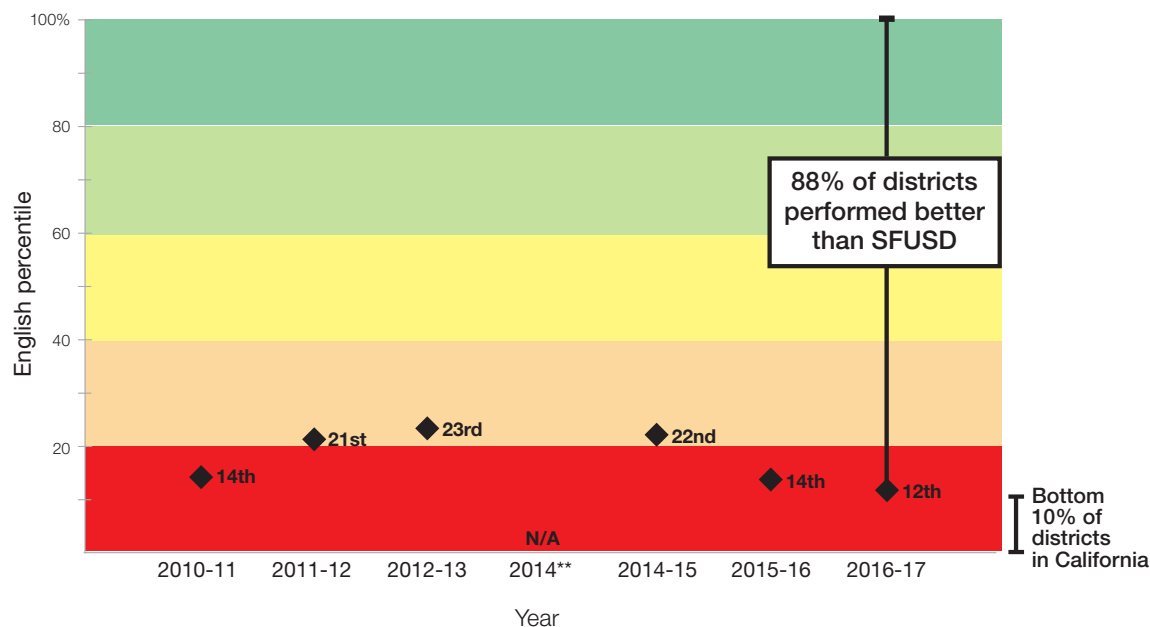
SFUSD percentiles of performance on state math tests\*, 2011 – 2017



Source: California Department of Education, California Standards Test (CST) and the California Assessment on Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)  
\*See the methodology for a detailed description of the analytical approach at <http://reports.innovateschools.org>.  
\*\*Performance data was not available in 2013-14 due to the change from the CST to the CAASPP.

## San Francisco Unified School District performance in English compared to all California unified school districts by percentile for low-income Latino students

SFUSD percentiles of performance on state English tests\*, 2011 – 2017



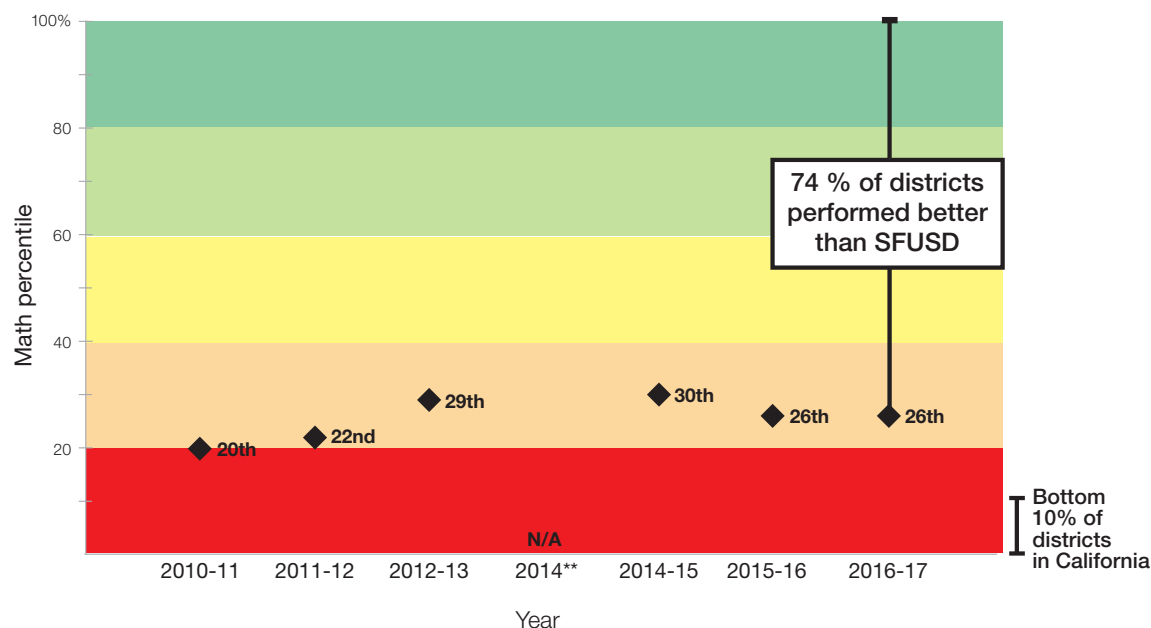
Source: California Department of Education, California Standards Test (CST) and the California Assessment on Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

\*See the methodology for a detailed description of the analytical approach at <http://reports.innovateschools.org>.

\*\*Performance data was not available in 2013-14 due to the change from the CST to the CAASPP.

## San Francisco Unified School District performance in math compared to all California unified school districts by percentile for low-income Latino students

SFUSD percentiles of performance on state math tests\*, 2011 – 2017



Source: California Department of Education, California Standards Test (CST) and the California Assessment on Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

\*See the methodology for a detailed description of the analytical approach at <http://reports.innovateschools.org>.

\*\*Performance data was not available in 2013-14 due to the change from the CST to the CAASPP.



# Notes

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# Take Action Now

As this report shows, there are schools and districts doing a much better job preparing low-income African American and Latino students for college and beyond. We can change outcomes in San Francisco.

But we must take action. Make sure your public officials read this report and, more importantly, ask them what they plan to do to change this reality -- not in five or 10 years, but immediately.

Send this report to your local elected officials in one click by going to:  
[www.innovateschools.org/sf](http://www.innovateschools.org/sf)







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October 2017

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