



SAN FRANCISCO'S KIDS CAN'T WAIT

SF Parents Expect Literacy and Math Proficiency for All

We're concerned with how students are faring.

Research and data show many SFUSD students are being grossly underserved. In response, SF Parents has issued a call-to-action for parents, educators, students, and community members.

Join us in advocating for the changes we need from San Francisco education leaders to ensure all students can thrive



**SAN FRANCISCO
PARENT COALITION**

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SF Parents Expect Literacy and Math Proficiency for All

A community call-to-action to address persistent equity gaps and take action for SF students

As a parent-run advocacy organization, San Francisco Parent Coalition (SF Parents) puts a spotlight on San Francisco's public school district, with the goal of having a thriving, equitable school system. This report highlights how our students are doing, what our district is doing well, and where we need to focus more attention. The bottom line is that, while there are bright spots, there is a long way to go before every child in the city can access an excellent public education. *SF Parents believes our city can do better for our students, and we're calling on parents, educators, and community members to join us in advocating for the changes our students need and deserve.*

Background

San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) enrolls 48,785 students, of whom 52% are low-income and 28% are English Learners (ELs). By race/ethnicity, the largest groups are Asian (33%) and Latino/x (31%). The remainder of students are White (14%), Two or More Races (8%), and Black (6%).

Every year, California gives standardized tests that measure student performance primarily in two subjects: math and reading. This snapshot focuses on student "proficiency," which means the percentage of students meeting academic standards set by the state. While test scores don't capture everything families value in a school, it is the best indicator to predict whether students are learning and on track to college or success in their lives' next steps.

The Good News

Students within SFUSD have much higher test scores than the state average. Proficiency in reading last year was 55% compared to 47% for the state, while math proficiency was 46% versus 33%. These are solid numbers for an urban school district, higher than Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego, Long Beach, and San Jose. Out of the 200 largest school districts in California, SFUSD ranks 67th in reading and 54th in math.

The Bad News

Unfortunately, SFUSD's proficiency rates for Black and Latino/x students are a sharp reminder of how unequally opportunity is distributed in our city. All students—regardless of race or income—can achieve at high levels, and in San Francisco, we need to give them real opportunities to do better. We have to ask: Is SFUSD doing everything it can to set all our students on track for college and future success in their lives?

Compared to Other Districts, SFUSD Is Not Serving Black Children Well

District-wide scores hide some deeply troubling issues, particularly around how we are serving our Black students. Only 18% of Black SFUSD students scored proficient in reading, compared to 30% of California's Black students. Only 9% of Black SFUSD students were proficient in math versus 16% across the state. Drilling down even further on math scores, only 5% of Black SFUSD middle schoolers are proficient in math,

Sources

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP): <https://www.caaspp.org/>

California Department of Education's Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (CDE/SBAC):

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/>

SFUSD data tables by Paul Gardiner, <https://sfeducation.substack.com/>



which—alarmingly—is only a fraction of the state’s 14% for Black students and 31% for all students. The numbers are also very concerning when we zero in on Black students from low-income families: 7% of SFUSD low-income Black students meet statewide math standards, versus 12% of low-income Black students statewide. Out of the 200 largest school districts across California, SFUSD ranks 173rd in math and 186th in reading. The rankings are similar for Black students, regardless of income.

Concerning Results for Latino/x Students Across San Francisco

Latino/x students in SFUSD also don’t score as well as Latino/x students in the rest of California. Last year, 29% of SFUSD Latino/x students were proficient in reading compared to 36% for Latino/x students statewide. In math, it was 18% versus 21%. These scores rank SFUSD 135th in math and 168th in reading, again out of 200 school districts. When looking just at low-income Latino/x students, the numbers are even worse: 169th in math and 188th in reading.

Other Groups Also Struggle

While these focal groups are a smaller percentage of the district, low-income Pacific Islanders and American Indians in SFUSD significantly underperform their statewide peers in math and reading, and also deserve more attention and targeted supports from SFUSD.

It Doesn’t Have to Be This Way

These are terrible, inequitable outcomes, and there is no excuse for them—especially in such a wealthy, innovative city. Hundreds of schools across the state are serving these focal populations of students better than SFUSD. We should seek to learn from the schools that are doing this best. We know that all students can achieve excellence and we believe in the importance of highlighting equity gaps where they exist, so that our school system can continue to develop solutions to better serve its students.

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COVID-19 Impact

Both California and SFUSD saw their scores in 2022 decline significantly from 2019 levels as a result of the prolonged school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SFUSD’s reading proficiency declined from 57% to 55% and math dropped from 51% to 46%. Yet, even though SFUSD was one of the last districts to reopen, the district’s declines were not as large as the state’s.

Glimmers of Hope

There are a handful of elementary schools within SFUSD—schools with large populations of economically disadvantaged students—where students are exceeding district averages. Here are some findings of SFUSD schools that are beating the odds. Identifying what is working well can help us lift up students in all schools.

- At **Sherman** and **Cobb**, Black student proficiency rates are 10% points higher than the district average for Black students in reading and math. **Cobb’s** student population is 30%+ Black and 25%+ Latino/x and is overcoming some of the equity gaps facing other SFUSD elementary schools. **John Muir**, where nearly 75% of the student population is Black or Latino/x, is exceeding the state average in math.

- Of schools that serve a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, **Redding** (64% low-income) has a 20% Latino/x student population that is beating the overall district averages in both math and reading, and **Mission Preparatory School** (78% low-income) has a 81% Latino/x population that is beating the overall state averages in both math and reading. (Note: Mission Prep is an SFUSD Charter School.)
- **John Y. Chin, Sutro, Gordon Lau, and Ulloa**—where student populations all exceed 50% low-income—are beating SFUSD averages in both math and reading.
- **Cobb** made impressive gains (20%+ between 2019 and 2022) in both reading and math, and serves over 50% economically disadvantaged students.

Take Action With Us

The data we've described here reflects the need to support what is working at SFUSD schools, innovate to keep students engaged in their learning, and invest in additional support for students who are not yet meeting academic expectations. Post-pandemic, we hope to encourage SFUSD students and their parents to continue to expect excellence in our schools.

But we should also be sounding the alarm about the students who are not getting what they need from their schools. Together, we must keep the district's focus on student outcomes, and hold district leaders accountable for steady improvement in students' academic performances, especially for the students who the district is not yet serving well.

Our work is driven by parents like you. With our parent network, we have lobbied the district to redesign its reading curriculum by replacing outdated and discredited materials. Now that district leaders have begun to make progress on literacy, we're doing the same for math. Please take action today and:

- 1 Download this report and share with a friend**
- 2 Email the SFUSD Superintendent & Board of Education**
- 3 Get involved and volunteer with the #SFKidsCantWait campaign**

San Francisco Parent Coalition centers the needs of children and youth in San Francisco public schools by bringing together a diverse network of parents and caregivers to advocate for a thriving, equitable school system. Learn more about us by visiting sfparents.org.

You can download this report at: sfparents.org/sfkidscantwait

