



July 28, 2008

Email sent to:

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Dear District leaders:

As the Executive Director of Parents for Public Schools, I am writing to you on behalf of the many parents we have heard from this past week regarding the recent decision to reassign English speakers to Daniel Webster, as well as on behalf of all the parents in San Francisco who require and expect an equitable, transparent and reliable process for assigning students to schools.

I know that you are aware that there are a gamut of emotions parents in these programs are feeling due to the reassignment, from grave disappointment, worry and stress to relief that the Spanish Immersion programs remain balanced.

We spent the past few days listening to parents with varied and opposing opinions. In addition, we are convening parents on Monday at our office (The Women's Building) at 6PM in a respectful and open forum for ALL parents to meet each other and share their viewpoints around this issue. PPS is compiling and summarizing notes from the forum, phone calls, and emails and we'd like to present the feedback to you, with the hopes that you will address these specific concerns at the meeting on Tuesday at Daniel Webster.

In the meantime, I urge you to consider the following suggestions for Tuesday's meeting at Daniel Webster:

1. Ensure every parent is heard by the decision makers. District leadership and senior staff need to understand the serious impact such a decision has on all families, especially at this extremely late stage.
2. Analyze the problem surrounding the decision-making process. A detailed analysis of when the problem was first brought to light and how a solution was developed must be conducted and made public. This analysis should also include other solutions that were rejected and why. This step must be taken to decrease the likelihood of similar problems in the future and to begin what will now be a

- very long and difficult process of rebuilding trust among parents and the community.
3. Take the burden off the parents to navigate the next steps in this process. Proactively work with all parents in affected schools to ensure that he or she is aware of all options and is choosing amongst them from an informed position. If they choose to participate in the waitpool process, give them a greater degree of certainty than "high priority" status in an already impacted school enrollment process. Assign someone to be their personal contact at the district, so they can follow up with questions.
 4. Ensure that a quality immersion program will exist at Daniel Webster, and share with parents how the district will make that happen in the next three weeks and throughout the school year.

As you know, the SERR survey of parents that was conducted a year and a half ago clearly states that parents want a district they can trust. The current strategic plan also references this strategy as one of the themes they are building upon. Actions like this diminish trust among some parents and how the district handles communication and next steps with regard to this issue will further influence parents' feelings of trust, affecting these families, families currently in the district, and families applying to public schools in San Francisco this fall.

Parents for Public Schools is first and foremost concerned with ensuring that parent voices and concerns are part of the decision making process regarding public schools. Equitable approaches to assignment, program placement and program development are key areas where those voices must be heard. We are deeply concerned that parents representing all viewpoints were not a part of the discussion regarding this situation and want to request that when making decisions that directly affect parents in the future, PPS and other parent groups from schools and the community be brought in as central stakeholders.

Thank you for considering my recommendations. I strongly urge all decision makers associated with the recent reassignment to attend the meeting on Tuesday, so parents can hear directly from you and reestablish feelings of trust. I look forward to seeing you at Daniel Webster this week.

Sincerely,

Ellie Rossiter
Interim Executive Director
Parents for Public Schools -- San Francisco