

1 **[Urging SFUSD to reconsider current school assignment system]**

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3 **Resolution urging the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) to reconsider the**  
4 **current school assignment system for K-12 admissions and incorporate geographic**  
5 **considerations for school placement.**

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7 WHEREAS, The current school assignment system is the result of a series of court  
8 decisions aimed at creating a diverse learning atmosphere and improving academic  
9 performance for all students; and

10 WHEREAS, The 1983 Consent Decree, approved by the U.S. District Court, was the  
11 culmination of concerns that public schools maintained a system of segregation, with a  
12 tendency to be clustered by race or ethnicity; and,

13 WHEREAS, The Consent Decree capped enrollment of a single racial or ethnic group  
14 at 45 percent for Attendance Area schools, and 40 percent for Alternative Schools; and,

15 WHEREAS, In 1994, the Consent Decree process was challenged in a lawsuit, where  
16 a court-approved settlement was eventually reached in 1999 and allowed for a computerized  
17 process to be used in the school assignment process beginning in the 2001-02 school year;  
18 and,

19 WHEREAS, The 1999 settlement agreement terminated the automatic assignment of  
20 students to Attendance Area schools, abolished the use of race in admissions, and removed  
21 the 40 and 45 percent caps for student enrollment; and,

22 WHEREAS, A further settlement agreement in 2001 specified that a school assignment  
23 system based on a Diversity Index would be implemented for the duration of the settlement  
24 agreement, which expired on December 31, 2005;

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1           WHEREAS, The Diversity Index takes into consideration a student’s socioeconomic  
2 status, home language use, academic achievement score, extreme poverty level, and  
3 Academic Performance Index (API) rank of sending school for non-kindergarten applicants;  
4 and,

5           WHEREAS, There are seven primary steps of the Diversity Index process in SFUSD:  
6 (1) defining diversity statistically; (2) identifying the relevant diversity characteristics; (3)  
7 creating a student profile based on these characteristics; (4) identifying each school’s  
8 applicant pool; (5) calculating a composite initial diversity score for each school and grade  
9 level; (6) assessing the impact of each student’s individual profile on the composite score for  
10 each school and grade level in order to fill available seats through the lottery process, and (7)  
11 reconciling tentative assignments for applicants selected to fill multiple seats in order to give  
12 each applicant a single offer; and,

13           WHEREAS, Under the Diversity Index assignment process, parents select as many as  
14 seven schools for their children entering kindergarten, middle school and high school; and,

15           WHEREAS, According to a Civil Grand Jury Report, *San Francisco Kindergarten*  
16 *Admissions: Back to the Drawing Board* (June 2008), this Diversity Index system “has been  
17 perceived as cumbersome, ineffective, and unsatisfactory” since its inception; and,

18           WHEREAS, The SFUSD’s Educational Placement Center, which administers the  
19 Diversity Index and registers students, requires a staff of 29 to explain the complicated school  
20 assignment process at a cost of over \$2 million to the School District a year; and,

21           WHEREAS, The Civil Grand Jury also found that schools have not improved or  
22 become more diverse, even with the use of busing – which costs the School District over \$5  
23 million annually; and,

24           WHEREAS, The City and County of San Francisco has included in its FY2008-2009  
25 budget funding to SFUSD: \$22.5 million through the voter-passed proposition H for schools,

1 arts, libraries, music and other programs to support learning; \$19.3 million in Rainy Day  
2 Reserve funds; \$14.7 million in direct support and grant money through the Department of  
3 Children, Youth and Families; and,

4 WHEREAS, After the most recent school assignment notification in March 2008, about  
5 45 percent of kindergarten families discovered that they did not receive any of their first round  
6 choices; and,

7 WHEREAS, According to the Civil Grand Jury's June 2008 report, "The odds of getting  
8 into an elite university are better than getting into a popular San Francisco grade school," with  
9 an average of over 18 applicants for each space; and,

10 WHEREAS, A diverse learning environment for students fosters a greater sense of  
11 shared community and further stimulates intellectual and social growth; and,

12 WHEREAS, The Civil Grand Jury's June 2008 report reveals that the Diversity Index  
13 and school choice system are not succeeding at achieving diversity, and the most recently  
14 available School District data show that 30 of the 71 San Francisco elementary schools in  
15 2005 had classrooms containing 60 percent or more of students of the same race/ethnicity;  
16 and,

17 WHEREAS, A report from UCLA professor Stuart Biegel noted that by 2005, more than  
18 half of the SFUSD's schools were "severely segregated"; and,

19 WHEREAS, In 2005, a Community Advisory Committee on Student Assignment,  
20 appointed by the Board of Education, studied the issue of school assignment and  
21 recommended that assignments based on neighborhood proximity be coupled with a lottery  
22 for students who had good reason to wish another school, but the Board of Education never  
23 acted on the Committee's report; and,

24 WHEREAS, School District officials have stated an intention to reevaluate the school  
25 assignment system within the coming year; now, therefore, be it

1           RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco  
2           urges the San Francisco Unified School District and Board of Education to incorporate a  
3           geographic component in school assignments to facilitate a more comprehensive admissions  
4           process.

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