

Consent Decree Balance Sheet

We begin this report with a Consent Decree balance sheet, showing both the achievements under its mandates and the problems that must still be addressed. We have found in recent years that a consensus has begun to emerge in the community with regard to all these items.

I. Key SFUSD Achievements Pursuant to the Requirements & Mandates of the Consent Decree

This list of school district achievements reflects the emerging consensus within the community. Most would agree that SFUSD has achieved the following under the decree:

1. Innovative mandates and strategies for education reform that have since been adopted nationwide. These include not only the explicit focus on both desegregation and academic achievement, but also the formulas for turning around low performing schools.
2. School-by-school desegregation throughout the district.
3. Concrete improvements in targeted and low performing schools under Phase One (1983-1985) & the CSIP process (1993-1997).
4. The establishment of two quality high schools in the Bayview-Hunters Point area that continue to draw a diverse student population from neighborhoods across the City.
5. Changes in the district culture generally, rooted in the philosophical tenets and leading to higher standards throughout SFUSD. These changes have resulted in greater expectations for all students in many of the district's schools.
6. A focus on academic achievement in general, particularly after 1992, that has benefited students of every race and ethnicity throughout the district.
7. A more diverse faculty and staff in many of the district's schools.
8. State-of-the art use of technology, pursuant to Consent Decree requirements, in many of the district's schools by the mid-1990's.
9. The development of a state-of-the-art system for monitoring student achievement, fueled by the requirements of the Consent Decree, by the mid-1990's.

10. One of the finest systems of public school choice in the country, with parents now having the option of sending their children to a large number of top quality schools throughout the City.

All of these achievements have been concrete, although the top quality system of monitoring student progress (#9) has not been maintained...due to the breakdown in the district's technical management structure over the past two years. In addition, the current state of school-by-school desegregation (#2) and district technology programs (#8) has been the subject of considerable debate, with most people agreeing that there has been some level of backtracking in these areas. Overall, however -- for all the other items -- it can be stated with a great degree of certainty that the specified achievements have been real, palpable, and lasting.

II. Key Unresolved Problems Identified in Recent Reports of the Monitoring Team

In our July 2000 annual report and our February 2001 supplemental report, we highlighted key Consent Decree problems that remain unresolved. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Low academic achievement at chronically low performing schools, including but not limited to Golden Gate, Starr King, Gloria R. Davis Middle School, Potrero Hill Middle School, Balboa HS, McAteer HS, Mission HS, and O'Connell HS.
2. Inequitable/inappropriate allocation of Consent Decree money.
3. A different, lower quality curriculum for students in certain racially identifiable and socioeconomic-status-identifiable schools and classrooms.
4. Substantially different approaches to school discipline from school site to school site.
5. Blatant attendance disparities – particularly at the high school level – that are clearly linked to differences in academic achievement.
6. Lack of a systematic assessment plan for measuring language acquisition progress and determining the academic achievement of limited-English proficient students.

Also, lack of consistent and viable procedures for redesignating students once they become fluent in English.

7. The severe resegregation that has emerged in the incoming classes at 20-25 of the district's schools.
8. Environmental health concerns raised by educators in the Bayview-Hunters Point area, and particularly at Malcolm X.
9. Professional development for teachers that fails to address the basic requirements of Paragraph 36 and fails to convey basic Consent Decree principles and philosophical tenets.
10. Lack of a viable training plan for new principals, as well as the lack of a systematic and effective system of professional development for principals at both the district level and at the local school site level.

The findings and discussions in the remainder of this report should be viewed within the context of the above balance sheet. The district has shown that it is capable of great progress under the Consent Decree, but everyone agrees that more work still needs to be done in certain key areas. In addition, particularly in light of the anticipated transition to the end of the decree, attention must be paid to areas where gains may be dissipated and progress may be eroded. It is clear from national trends over the past 50 years that it is never sufficient to achieve a certain degree of progress in a desegregation and academic achievement context if the gains cannot be sustained. The Consent Decree has always pointed toward both immediate change and the adoption of patterns and principles that will lead to sustained growth over time.