



**Showing Up
While Everything
Is Shutting Down:
A Story of
Cooperation in
San Francisco**



WORDS DO HURT
CHOOSE WISELY!



Chalkboard with various papers and notes. Visible text includes names like 'Alison', 'Kevin', and 'Brian', and a note that says '1 code = 3T'.



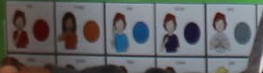
Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Foreword..... | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Acknowledgements | 6 |
| About The Authors..... | 7 |
| Part I: The Journey | 9 |
| March–June: Crisis & Collaboration | 11 |
| June–August: A Plan Comes Together | 19 |
| August–September: Resistance And Persistence..... | 23 |
| Part II: The Hub Model..... | 31 |
| Students..... | 32 |
| Enrollment | 33 |
| Locations | 34 |
| Facilities..... | 34 |
| Revenues and Expenses..... | 35 |
| Daily Experience | 36 |
| Hub Staff | 37 |
| Health Procedures | 37 |
| Part III: Analysis | 39 |
| Operational Challenges..... | 41 |
| System-Level Outcomes..... | 43 |
| Missed Opportunity: Deeper Collaboration With SFUSD | 45 |
| Lessons..... | 49 |
| Part IV: Post-Pandemic Possibilities | 55 |
| End The Turf Struggles | 56 |
| Create A Shared Vision | 58 |
| Repair Personal Relationships | 59 |
| Respect And Boost Investment In Youth Development..... | 60 |
| Refocus Values On Equity | 61 |
| Learn From The Hub Experience..... | 62 |
| Care For The Whole Child | 63 |
| Conclusion..... | 65 |
| Appendices..... | 67 |
| Hub Coalition Organizations..... | 68 |
| Interview Participants | 71 |
| Mid-Year Outcomes (Researched and Written by Social Policy Research Associates) | 74 |

| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Office Hours | Office Hours | Office Hours |
| Morning Meeting | Morning Meeting | Morning Meeting |
| Recess | Recess | PE with AOE (8:20-8:30am) |
| Recess | Recess | Recess |
| Math | Math | Math |
| Science/Social Emotional | Science/Social Emotional | Science/Social Emotional |
| Break | Break | Break |
| Writing | Writing | Writing |
| Asynchronous | Asynchronous | Asynchronous |
| Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| Asynchronous | Asynchronous | Asynchronous |



INTEGRITY
DOING THE
RIGHT THING,
EVEN WHEN
NO ONE IS
WATCHING



adidas

Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic caused tremendous destruction and loss, most notably among marginalized communities. Moreover, it exposed profound inadequacies at many institutions that support those communities, especially in public education and healthcare. The experience taught us that those systems, which should work together, too often don't.

Yet the pandemic also produced inspirational stories of people coming together to care for our most vulnerable children. One example, which this report describes, was the courageous, collaborative effort that created San Francisco's Community Hubs Initiative, which provided in-person support during the experience of "distance learning." From March 2020 to April 2021, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) closed its buildings and offered instruction remotely, and that lack of in-person school could have been devastating.¹ The Hubs Initiative supported 2,509 of the city's most vulnerable children, helping them access their school's remote instruction as well as providing physical recreation and peer interactions. For many of those children, the Hubs provided the only available source of academic and social-emotional support.

To succeed, the Hubs required a vast multi-stakeholder collaboration, and their story offers a case study of how systems *should* work together. The coalition included 119 organizations: San Francisco City departments, community-based organizations (CBOs), philanthropies, and businesses, all of which worked together under a shared vision. SFUSD also made essential contributions, from teachers who offered remote instruction (without which the Hubs couldn't exist) to staff who provided technology support.

Yet as this report demonstrates, the experience also taught important lessons about the challenges of collaboration. Notably, public conflicts with a small number of Board of Education Commissioners and leaders of the teacher's union limited the depth of the collaboration between SFUSD and the Hubs. While almost 3000 children participated in the Hubs, many others who needed this support could not participate due to the lack of available enrollment spots—a challenge that might have been addressed through a deeper collaboration. Ultimately, the report shows that, because San Francisco's multiple youth-serving systems were designed to achieve different objectives, they did not work together as well as they could have.

This case study thus shares the story of the Community Hubs Initiative for all its successes as well as its shortcomings and complexity. We believe this study offers far-reaching lessons for municipal government, public school districts, youth-serving nonprofits, and funders in their ongoing efforts to work for the benefit of our most vulnerable youth.

¹ All SFUSD elementary schools returned to in-person instruction in April 2021. Only prioritized students in middle schools and high schools were allowed to return during the 2020–2021 school year.



Executive Summary

This case study tells the story of San Francisco’s Community Hubs Initiative—an unconventional cross-sector partnership created during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020–21 school year, the Hubs supported 2,509 of San Francisco’s most vulnerable children: those who were underhoused or experiencing homelessness, in the foster care system, living in public housing, English Language Learners, or in families that were low-income. Once the public school district closed its doors to in-person learning in March 2020, those children had nowhere to go during the day, putting their academic and social-emotional well-being at risk. The 86 Hubs across San Francisco—housed at Rec and Parks facilities, libraries, and nonprofit organizations—gave these children a safe and sanitized place to do their distance learning, eat, play, and generally experience a sense of belonging and community that schools normally provide.

In addition to describing the Hubs themselves, this case study explores the local context that made this wide-ranging partnership possible. We discuss the barriers the initiative had to overcome, including evolving public health restrictions, political resistance, and the structural limitations of the government agencies involved. Testimony from officials, city workers, nonprofit youth development professionals, public school administrators, parents, and children illuminates the many levels of civil society that had to come together to make this happen. Pulling lessons from more than a year of collaboration, service, and striving against the odds, this case study offers the Community Hub Initiative as a model for how communities might rethink the traditional silos of governments, nonprofits, and schools to truly meet the needs of the families, in crisis and beyond.

The report includes four sections:

- **The Journey:** We chart the path that led to the Hubs. In spring 2020, families struggled without in-person school, and municipal government, nonprofits, and public education rallied to support students. In summer 2020, the coalition of Hub partner organizations came together to create a solution for the upcoming school year while facing fierce resistance. And finally, in September 2020, the Hubs launched across San Francisco.
- **The Hub Model:** We take readers inside the Hubs by sharing a typical daily schedule, information about how the Hubs were funded, details about the staff, their location, and more.
- **Analysis:** We analyze the Hubs’ challenges, initial outcomes, missed opportunities, and lessons.
- **Post-Pandemic Possibilities:** We share quotes from our interviewees describing how our systems and people must work together to serve the most vulnerable children.

This case study is one of three reports about the Hubs. Social Policy Research Associates’ (SPR) [Mid-Year Synthesis](#) analyzes the Hubs’ outcomes from September through December 2020 and details resources and processes needed to operate the Hubs. Numerous researchers analyzed the Hubs’ health outcomes in the report [Preventing COVID-19 Transmission in Education Settings](#), published in *Journal of Pediatrics*.²

In addition, we have produced five short videos that go in-depth on particular topics of interest and share commentary from Hub leaders, families, and children.

All reports and videos can be accessed [here](#)

² Authors represent University of California San Francisco, San Francisco Department of Public Health, and San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families.

Acknowledgements

This case study would not have been possible without our interviewees, including parents, children, and professionals from San Francisco City departments, CBOs, and the SFUSD. (See the Appendix for a full list of interviewees.)³ All these individuals work tirelessly on behalf of San Francisco's children, and we are all in their debt.

We also wish to thank Social Research Policy Associates (SPR) for allowing us to include portions of their report in this case study. The report's authors are Rachel Estrella, PhD, Heather Lewis-Charp, Mika Clark, and Juan Carlos Piña, with contributions from Sehej Singh.

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³ All family interviewees were paid an honorarium for their participation.

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Part I: The Journey

The Hubs opened to students in September 2020, but their story began six months before. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools around the world to close their doors. With school buildings shuttered, many students—especially the most vulnerable—suffered academically and emotionally. The Hubs were created to support those children.

This section—The Journey—recounts the pandemic’s early days and traces the Hubs’ evolution from March through September 2020.

The Hubs Journey

SPRING 2020

March 15-16
Shelter-in-place order
SFUSD closes schools
DCYF, RPD, & OECE
begin Emergency
Child & Youth Care

SUMMER 2020

July 15
SFUSD announces fall
semester will begin
with distance learning

June 15
DCYF & RPD lead
summer camps/programs
re-opening

August 17
First day of SFUSD
school year

September 14
Hubs launch first
day of programming
serving K-6

October 26
Hubs Phase II
begins serving
K-12

FALL 2020

January 25
SFUSD spring
semester begins

WINTER 2021

April 12
SFUSD begins
returning
in-person

June 2
Hubs continue
through last
day of school

SPRING 2021

MARCH-JUNE 2020

Crisis & Collaboration

The Pandemic Hits

In March 2020, the City of San Francisco effectively shut down because of the pandemic, throwing vulnerable families into crisis.

As spring 2020 neared, the unthinkable became real: COVID-19 had spread rapidly, scientists raced to understand the virus, and government officials at all levels made emergency declarations. On Sunday, March 15, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) announced that it would close its doors, and some 54,000 students found themselves without a place to go during the school day.⁴ The following day, San Francisco Mayor London Breed ordered all residents to stay at home except to provide for essential needs.⁵

While those with financial means made plans for what they—too optimistically, it turned out—thought would be a few inconvenient weeks, many low-income families and essential workers found themselves without a critical resource: a safe place to send their children while they worked. Options were limited for many of these families. Some quit their jobs. Others continued working to pay rent and put food on the table. “When I first heard schools were closing, it was just utter panic,” recalled Tarah Owens, a mother of a 1st and a 3rd grader. “I was trying to think about how I was still going to work full time with my kids since they didn’t have anywhere to go. My family is all out of state. March was just a month of panic.”

The Hubs Initiative unfolded amid historic circumstances, not only due to the COVID-19 pandemic but also tremendous social unrest, violence, and instability as the nation continued to grapple with its long history of racial injustice. Protests and counter-protests sparked by the murders of Ahmaud Arbery (February 23, 2020), Breonna Taylor (March 13, 2020), George Floyd (May 25, 2020), and others compounded the stresses of the pandemic and school closures. In addition, Asian American families faced the threats raised by a rise in hate crimes due to hateful ignorance surrounding COVID. Families of color experienced a swell of emotions, such as outrage, fear for themselves and their children, and deepened distrust of the police and other government institutions. These intersecting crises greatly worsened many families’ well-being.

Vulnerable families needed help.

⁴ SFUSD, “Facts At A Glance, 2020,” available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pwkg7tRp6X8_BffhusGdzeZOTPAWijxW/view. See also SFUSD, “Schools Will Close to Students for 3 Weeks,” available at <https://www.sfusd.edu/about/news/current-news/schools-will-close-students-3-weeks>.

⁵ Office of the Mayor, “San Francisco Issues New Public Health Order Requiring Residents Stay at Home Except for Essential Needs,” available at <https://sfmayor.org/article/san-francisco-issues-new-public-health-order-requiring-residents-stay-home-except-essential>.

Government, Schools, and Nonprofits Respond

Three of San Francisco's youth-serving sectors scrambled to respond to their constituents. A picture of the budding collaboration began to emerge.

The city's shelter-in-place order forced three systems—city government, community-based organizations (CBOs), and SFUSD—to respond rapidly to the pandemic's disproportionate effects on the city's most vulnerable families. The three systems also faced the challenge of supporting staff members who were themselves grappling with the fear and sense of upheaval caused by the pandemic. These early responses set the stage for the collaboration that led to the Hubs Initiative.

Government

With the possibility that hundreds of children of essential workers would be left without care and supervision, Mayor Breed tasked three department leaders—Dr. Maria Su (Department of Children, Youth, and their Families, or DCYF), Phil Ginsburg (Recreation and Parks), and Michael Lambert (Public Library) to find an immediate solution.

These three long-time colleagues convened in Su's office at 8 a.m. on Friday, March 13. Ninety minutes later, they emerged with a plan to host children of essential workers at recreation centers beginning on Monday, March 16. By noon, they gained approval from Mayor London Breed, and the Emergency Child & Youth Care program (ECYC) was born.⁶

DCYF, Rec and Parks, and the Public Library sprang into action. “We worked our butts off for three days to create the ECYC that Monday. It was absolutely bonkers,” Su explained. DCYF's Chief Financial Officer, Denise Payton, used her connections at San Francisco General Hospital to obtain access to their food contract so they could provide meals for the children. Sher-ric Dorsey-Smith, the Deputy Director of Programs and Grants at DCYF, enlisted volunteers to pack breakfasts, lunches, and snacks at the hospital—even family members of DCYF employees showed up to help—and eventually drove the food in a loaned box truck back to the DCYF office, which became a food distribution site.

From March through June, the ECYC served 715 school-aged children, most of whose parents were healthcare professionals, disaster service workers, and other first responders.⁷ The program united government offices and CBOs with clear effects: The Rec and Parks Department converted 37 recreation centers and reassigned staff members to provide supervision; the Office of Early Care and Education provided physical facilities for preschool-aged children; DCYF and Rec and Parks worked together to develop an enrollment system; DCYF and Library staff packaged and sorted food for the children; and the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other nonprofits offered their facilities and staff.⁸

As Maria Su reflected on the ECYC's early success in the midst of chaos, she explained the importance of relationships. “The key was partnerships—knowing whom to call,” she explained. “We didn't know what the heck we were doing, but we knew what we wanted: at 8 a.m. on Monday, all those kids had a place to go and food to eat.”

Public Schools

Across Van Ness Avenue, at SFUSD's central office, the District team was also scrambling. With 55 percent of its 54,000 students living in poverty, the District confronted a number of daunting tasks.⁹ In addition to delivering some form of virtual instruction to its students at a scale never before attempted, SFUSD set up food distribution sites at 25 locations throughout the city, serving 1.4 million meals from March to June. Since nearly 25 percent of SFUSD's students lacked access to a digital device at home, SFUSD worked throughout the spring to procure and distribute 13,000 Chromebooks, 3,500 hotspots, and more than 60,000 books and learning kits to its students.¹⁰

Nonprofit Community-Based Organizations

Across the city, community-based organizations (CBOs) also sprang into action. For many low-income families, CBOs provide a lifeline to childcare, food, and other means of support. Perhaps more importantly, CBOs offer a safe space for children in a world of uncertainty.

⁶ Office of the Mayor, “San Francisco Converts Public Libraries, Recreation Facilities to Emergency Child Care Centers, available at <https://sfmayor.org/article/san-francisco-converts-public-libraries-recreation-facilities-emergency-child-care-centers>.

⁷ For more information on the ECYC, see “SF Emergency Child & Youth Care Program,” available at <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/b8b313d9c04f473599719ba5edf33b0f/san-francisco-emergency-child-and-youth-care-program.pdf>.

⁸ ECYC eventually contracted with food service vendor Chefables.

⁹ 30,270 of SFUSD students live in poverty. See Spark, SF Public Schools, “The New School Year Starts Soon,” available at <https://www.sparksfpublicschools.org/sfunifiedaccess>.

¹⁰ Spark, SF Public Schools, “COVID-19 Response Fund Impact Report,” July 2020, available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ceecf16da9c50001079a59/t/5f162c2b2fbac51c3401d13f/1595288626531/Spark+-COVID-19+Response+Fund+Impact+Report_FINAL.pdf.

CBOs are nimble by nature, and they successfully adjusted their operations to fill gaps that others could not. According to Chris Tsukida, Chief Program Officer at The Richmond Neighborhood Center, this was familiar terrain: “CBOs worked how we always work: looking at existing structures and asking ‘what are the holes we can fill for families?’” Nelly Sapinski, Executive Director of the Jamestown Community Center, noted that her organization shifted quickly to support the community. “The type of services we provided looked different than pre-COVID. We delivered food and school supplies and virtual recreation programming. We also provided mental health assistance and connected families with other community supports.”

San Francisco’s Investment in Nonprofits

San Francisco’s robust nonprofit sector was particularly well-positioned to respond quickly to the COVID-19 crisis. In 1991, after years of grassroots organizing led by local nonprofit Coleman Advocates, San Franciscans voted to create a dedicated Children’s Fund (now the Children and Youth Fund). Renewed by voters in 2000 and 2014, the Fund guarantees allocations for children’s services within the city’s budget.¹¹ The 2014 legislation also created the Our Children Our Families Council, whose mission is to “align strategies across City agencies, the School District, and community partners to improve the lives of children, youth, and their families.”¹²

San Francisco was the first city in the country to guarantee such funding for children and youth services. The city’s Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF)—a grantmaking body under the Mayor’s purview and headed by Maria Su—allocates the Fund’s revenues. To ensure fair and needs-based grantmaking, DCYF conducts a community needs assessment every five years. As a result of the Fund, DCYF has invested \$1.06 billion in the City’s nonprofits and supporting infrastructure since fiscal year 2001–02, including \$107.8 million in fiscal year 2020–21.

Struggles Deepen for Families

The longer schools remained closed, the more dire families’ financial and emotional situations became. Below are some of the stories of those San Francisco families.

Student Mental and Physical Health

Many students suffered boredom and anxiety, as well as declines in their physical well-being. Sixth grader Elijah felt the loss of sports especially. “I had a basketball team in Oakland and we used to have practices every day and games on the weekends,” he explained. “When COVID started, we couldn’t go. Then I just started eating a lot and gained weight.”

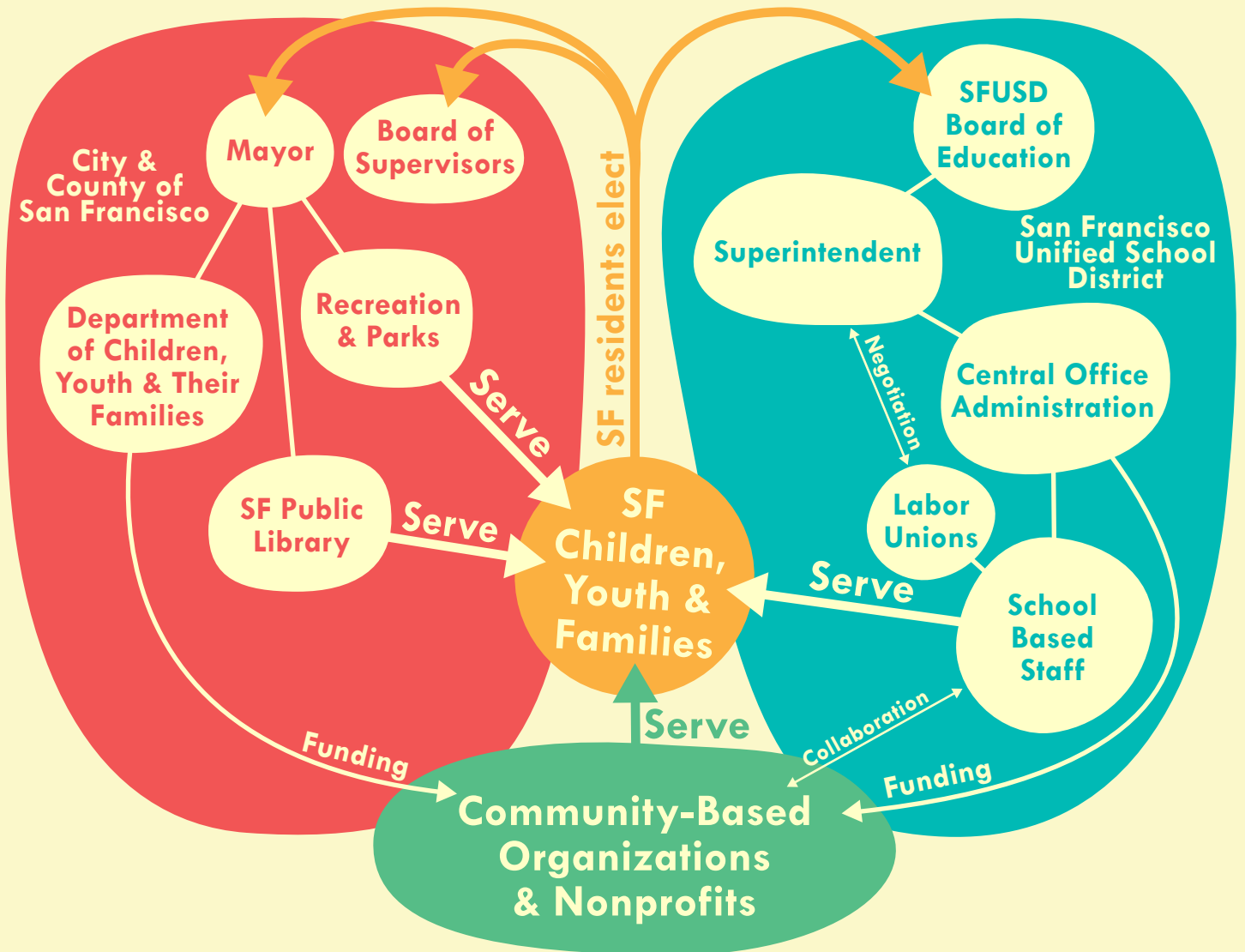
While the initial months of the pandemic were detrimental to many children, they were particularly difficult for children with disabilities. Jessica Huey, a Recreation Specialist who works with children with disabilities, observed: “One of our kids regressed so much during the spring that he was pooping himself every day—he was holding it in because of his anxiety.”

¹¹Funding the Next Generation, “San Francisco’s Landmark Children and Youth Fund, Fact Sheet,” available at <http://fundingthenext-generation.org/nextgenwp/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Revised-fact-sheet-on-SF-Childrens-Fund.pdf>. See also City and County of San Francisco, California, “Proposed Five-Year Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26,” available at <https://sfcontrol-ler.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Budget/Five%20Year%20Financial%20Plan%20FY21-22%20through%20FY%2025-26.pdf>.

¹²<https://www.ourchildrenourfamilies.org/prop-c>

Separate Systems Serving the Same Children

Like many other cities, San Francisco’s municipal governance and public school governance are separate. SFUSD is governed by an elected seven-member Board of Education, while the City is governed by an elected Mayor and an elected eleven-member Board of Supervisors. Consequently, any collaboration between the City and SFUSD requires a negotiated partnership. Past efforts to compel the systems to work together have had only limited effects, so partnerships often depend on personal relationships.¹³ Understanding this system of separate governance is essential for analyzing the power and accountability dynamics at play in San Francisco.



¹³Examples of collaborations include the Our Children Our Families Council (<https://www.ourchildrenourfamilies.org/our-council>) and the Joint City, School District, and City College Select Committee (<https://sfbos.org/joint-city-school-district-and-city-college-select-committee>).

Family Caretaker Well-Being

Parents faced a range of struggles. Many had to quit their jobs, especially if they had no nearby family to help. Many felt insecure and ashamed that they couldn't help their children with schoolwork. And many parents—already stretched to the limit—suffered deaths in the family and yet still had to provide and be strong for their children. On top of those challenges, they endured ambient anxiety that they or a family member would contract COVID.

Erika Fouts was a full-time student at San Francisco State University, mom of three, and caretaker of two additional children. Juggling those multiple commitments was a tremendous challenge. “It was very stressful with me being in school and having to log in to my own class at certain times,” she reported. “I was taking 12 credit hours and then helping with the kids’ math or science. It was a lot.”

For many parents, the pandemic created a sense of extreme isolation, as the support systems they had relied upon vanished overnight.

Corazon Lozano, a mother of a 6-year-old and 2-year-old, recalled: “I was struggling because I have a son with special needs. I didn't have enough space in my house. We live in one small room. I really needed space for my kids. I'm alone here in San Francisco. All of my family is in the Philippines, so I didn't have anybody.”

Parents across the city, like Genie Savaii, a mother of three, noted how exhausting and frustrating it was to provide academic support. “It was hard because I would tell myself, ‘Dang, I'm not a teacher!’ All the schoolwork overwhelmed me. Especially trying to teach little ones while making lunch and doing everything else.” Genie's stress was compounded by the tragedies she and others experienced due to the pandemic, which disproportionately hit low-income communities and people of color. “It was hard on me,” she said, “losing family members back-to-back and then just trying to help my kids.”



Technology and Internet Access

Prior to the pandemic, about one in eight San Francisco residents lacked high-speed home Internet service and nearly a quarter of SFUSD's students lacked access to a digital device at home. When the pandemic hit, SFUSD offered free Chromebooks to students who needed them, but other problems—such as lack of adequate WiFi—prevented access to online learning.

Elvia Licon, a mother of two, quit her job in March because she didn't have any childcare options. Without a computer or home Internet, her family relied on a single cell phone and a limited data plan to access the distance learning available through the children's school. "In the spring, we were sharing my phone, switching from one child to another depending on whichever classes were most important."

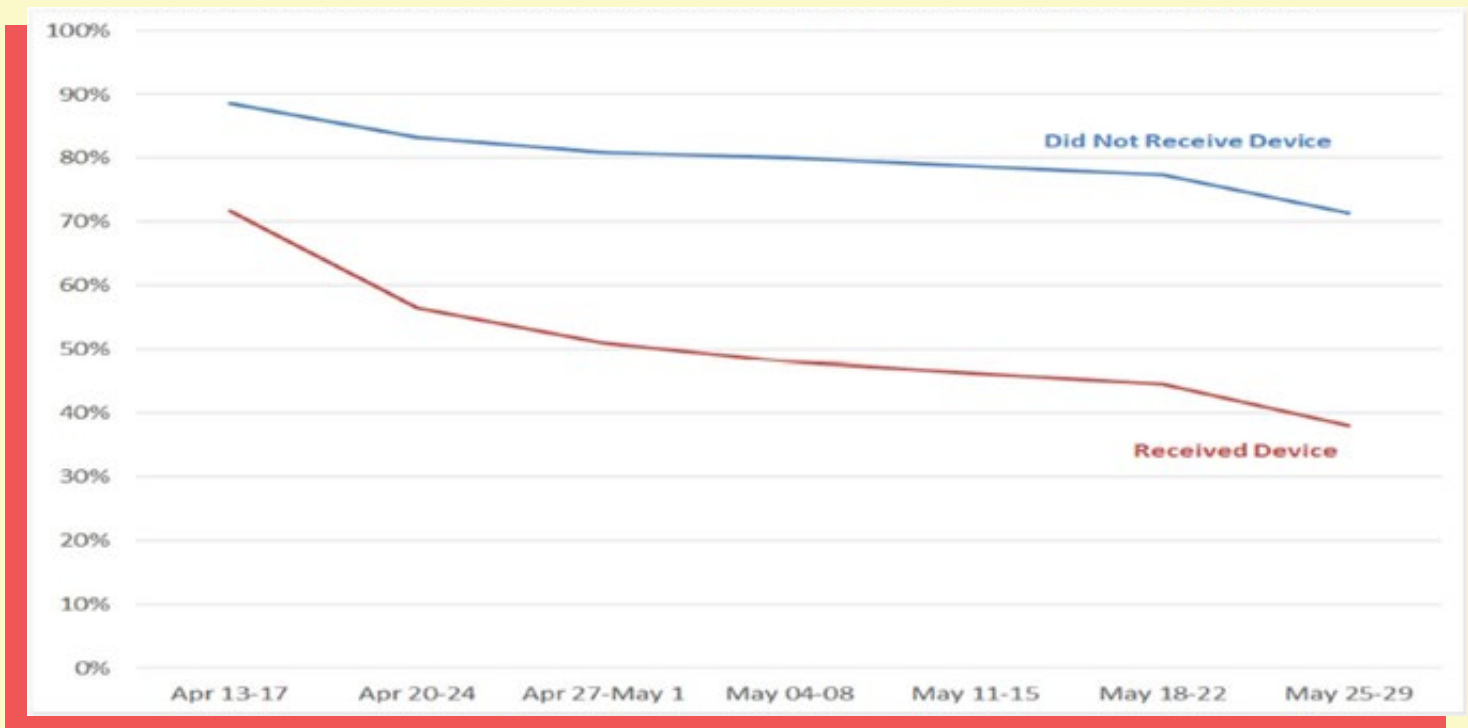
Patricia Alexander also dealt with unreliable home Internet. "Sometimes we got service, sometimes we didn't," she explained. "My son couldn't go to his room. He had to sit at a certain place at the dining table to get service."

Student Learning

The abrupt shift to remote instruction, with which very few teachers had prior experience, created severe impediments to student learning. Children from vulnerable families faced the brunt of these challenges.

According to a survey of more than 650 California teachers and administrators, 40 percent of teachers reported offering between zero and one hour of live instruction per week during the spring.¹⁴ SFUSD data show that student engagement steadily decreased throughout the spring, including by students who received laptops from the district.¹⁵ The graphs below, which track SFUSD student engagement levels from April 13 to May 29, 2020, demonstrate that this disengagement was disproportionately worse for vulnerable students.¹⁶

Student Engagement based on whether they received a device from SFUSD

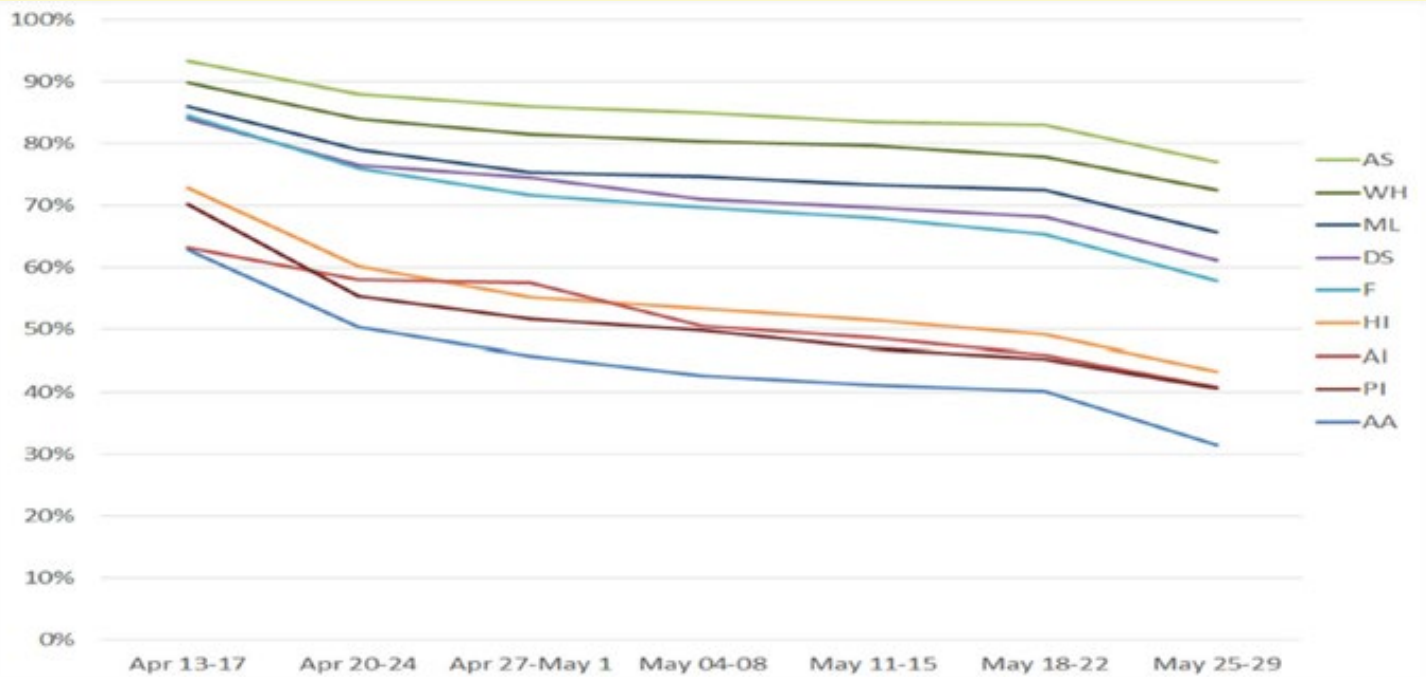


¹⁴EdSource, "California schools must provide daily live interaction, access to technology this fall," available at <https://edsources.org/2020/california-schools-must-provide-daily-live-interaction-access-to-technology-this-fall/634452>.

¹⁵Student engagement measures the percent of students who logged in at least 2 days during a given week.

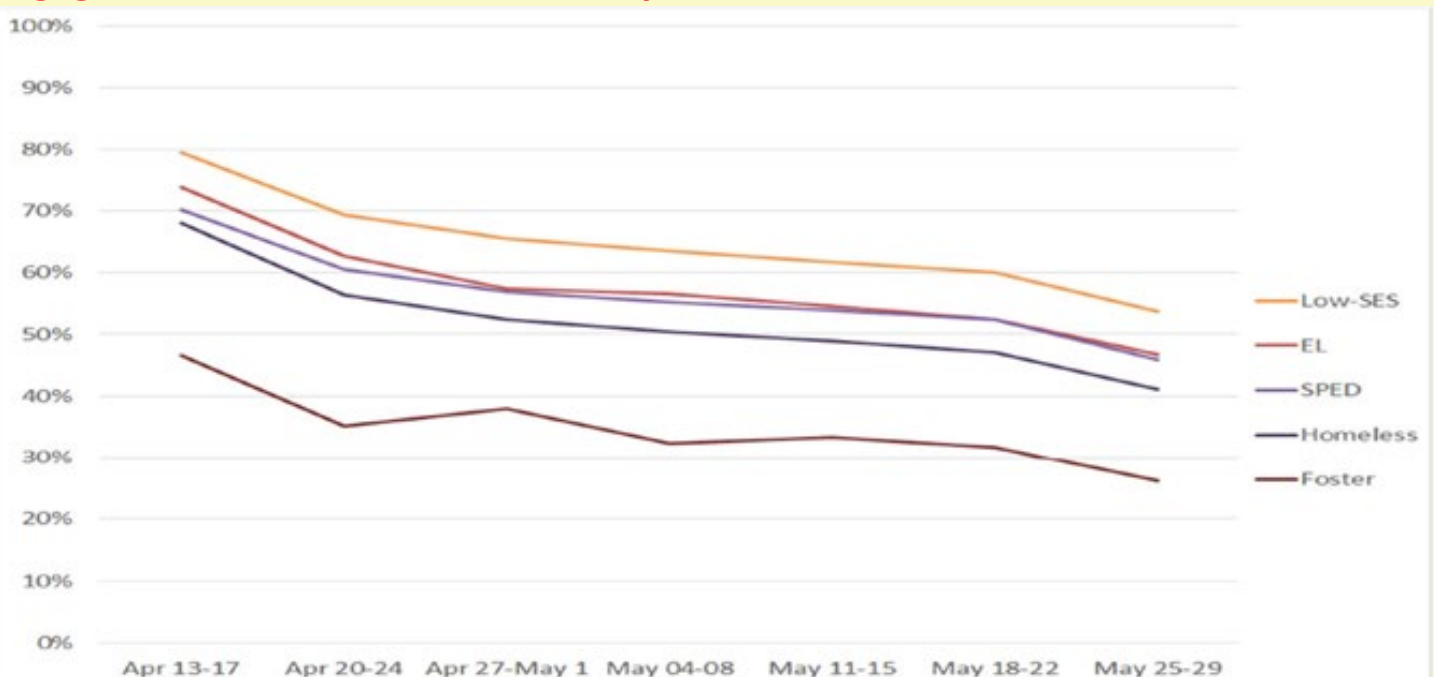
¹⁶SFUSD Department of Technology. Data pulled from attendance tracking system (Innive). These data were shared in multiple presentations among mixed stakeholder groups to inform SFUSD's planning in summer 2020.

Engagement by Student Race



AA = African American, AI = American Indian, AS = Asian, DS = Declines to State, F = Filipino, HI = Hispanic/Latinx, ML = Multi-Racial, PI = Pacific Islander, WH = White.

Engagement for Vulnerable Student Groups



Despite their teachers' best efforts, students' learning experiences were woefully inadequate even when they were able to log in.

Without access to adequate WiFi, some families had to rely on printed learning packets, which did not substitute for interacting with a teacher and placed additional burdens on parents. "Honestly, Elsie wasn't learning at home because all we had were the packets," said Deena Tobin, the mother of a 5th grader. "It became more stressful to try to do her packets because neither of us understood the material. It would just say 'solve,' and I thought, 'Whoa, I haven't done this in so many years.'"



JUNE-AUGUST 2020

A Plan Comes Together

SFUSD's Announcement

During the summer, city leaders and CBOs began to envision a robust partnership to serve more children, yet numerous factors prevented negotiating a deeper partnership with SFUSD. SFUSD announced that school would return in the fall with distance learning.

As summer hit, small glimmers of hope began to penetrate the despair of the pandemic spring. In June, limited numbers of San Francisco's summer camps were allowed to open, operating under strict health guidelines.¹⁷ Children who hadn't been around peers since March began to show sparks of their old selves.

Beneath the surface, however, anxiety about the fall grew. Would children go back to in-person school on August 17? If not, what would happen to them?

All eyes were on the school district as it grappled with these questions amid fluctuating infection rates, shifting public health orders, and an increasingly politicized pandemic response. Throughout June and July, SFUSD leaders conducted a listening campaign and created three working groups that included representatives from organized labor, students and families, and CBOs as they struggled to chart a course for the fall.

Meanwhile, the City convened a Children and Families Working Group, part of its COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force, to address critical issues such as emergency childcare, food distribution, and other essential services to support families.¹⁸ Maria Su co-chaired the Working Group, alongside Supervisor Matt Haney.

On July 15, SFUSD announced that the school year would begin in a fully remote, distance learning format.¹⁹ Like leaders of school districts around the country, SFUSD Superintendent Dr. Vincent Matthews had to make difficult decisions, balancing competing perspectives and desires among families, staff, elected officials, and the broader community.

Although many parents understood the dangers of in-person encounters as the deadly pandemic continued, the prospect of continued distance learning nonetheless fueled anxiety. One parent reflected, "I started to get really scared that my daughter's progress from summer camp was going to come full stop in the fall if there was no plan for the schools to reopen."

Stepping Up

Like many other school districts across the country, SFUSD kept its buildings closed to students. As evidence mounted that remote instruction had detrimental effects on children and families, the Mayor called on the City of San Francisco and CBOs to step in and help.

The district's announcement prompted concern across the city, from working parents in the Bayview district to its uppermost echelons of power. Mayor London Breed knew that the city needed to step up once again and use its limited resources to fill gaps for the vulnerable children. As she had in the spring, Breed directed Maria Su to collaborate with the city's various departments and CBOs to weave a safety net for the city's most vulnerable students and families.

Describing Breed's leadership, Su reflected: "Mayor Breed sees things through the lens of children and prioritizes families in her decisions. It was a difficult decision to close schools and businesses—they both painfully impact people's lives. But the Mayor recognized that children would suffer long-term trauma if they did not return to in-person school with their teachers and friends."

¹⁷SF Rec and Parks Department typically enrolls approximately 7000 youth in summer camps. In 2020 it enrolled about 2400.

¹⁸OneSF, "Economic Recovery Task Force," available at <https://www.onesanfrancisco.org/covid-19-recovery>.

¹⁹SFUSD, "Fall Semester Will Begin With Distance Learning," available at <https://www.sfusd.edu/announcements/2020-07-15-fall-semester-will-begin-distance-learning>.

A Broad Coalition Designs the Hubs

To create the Hubs program, DCYF coordinated a growing number of partners in a collaborative design process, uncompromisingly prioritized students with the greatest needs, and quickly reallocated funding while removing strings.

With a mandate from the Mayor, Su and the DCYF team, in partnership with CBO leaders, drafted a plan to support students who would not return to in-person instruction. Their initial idea was to provide the city's most vulnerable children with "community learning hubs" where adults would supervise and provide enrichment for students participating in SFUSD's distance learning program.

Building on the Emergency Child and Youth Care (ECYC) effort from the spring, the plan called for all Hubs to provide neighborhood-based full-day care, academic support, and reliable Internet access—all in a COVID-safe environment. In short order, DCYF had to create a program delivery model, recruit partners, identify funding sources, and enroll students.

Creating the Model

Instead of designing the Hubs from the top down, more than 50 CBOs worked together to design and launch the Hubs, all within two months. DCYF served as the organizing force.

DCYF staff didn't have all the answers, but they did have access to CBO grantees who intimately understood families' needs and how to meet them. Rather than direct affairs from the top, DCYF played an intermediary role, enabling each organization to focus on what it did best. Sherrice Dorsey-Smith led the program design with the CBOs, while Maria Su managed the Department of Public Health and other high-level relationships.

To plan the Hubs, DCYF gathered a group of 10 to 15 CBOs to provide initial feedback. After making refinements to the plan, they invited any organization providing "Out of School Time" services to join the effort.²⁰ This group, composed of more than 50 CBOs and 70 to 90 individuals, participated in twice-weekly two-hour Zoom meetings. At DCYF's request, representatives from the San Francisco Beacon Initiative facilitated the meetings, drawing on their experience convening different organizations for a shared purpose.

Dorsey-Smith recalled telling the CBOs: "We're building this plane together. DCYF has some initial ideas, but we need your help to fill in the details—to reconcile our vision with the reality on the ground."

Hub Design & Implementation Process (Illustrative)



²⁰"Out of School Time" includes afterschool programming that offers learning opportunities, physical activity, social-emotional programming, and food. For more information, see <https://www.dcyf.org/out-of-school-time>.

The Hubs model grew from the plans that many CBOs had already been making. “It was serendipitous,” recalled Chris Tsukida, Chief Program Officer at The Richmond Neighborhood Center. “Before the pandemic, nonprofits were asking ‘What does a one-stop-shop look like?’ Like a community school that offers all things young people need. We approached DCYF and they said: ‘Funny you say that, because the Mayor is actually thinking the same thing!’”

To create safe and yet workable health guidance, DCYF served as an intermediary between CBOs and San Francisco’s Department of Public Health (SFPDH). “It was important to standardize the minimum health and safety protocols,” said Su. “We had to make sure that the CBOs had the right information and were following the guidelines. Watching them do that gave DPH confidence that the CBOs were up to the task.”

DCYF successfully mediated relationships among different systems. Rob Connolly, President of the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco, noted: “Through Maria Su and DPH, we were able to advise and shape the public health orders pertaining to childcare. The willingness of SFPDH and DCYF to listen to the people working on the ground—those dealing first-hand with the challenges of implementing the guidance—was critical to developing smart guidance that properly balanced risk mitigation against service goals.”

Recruiting Partners

Hub coalition partners were driven by a shared mission: to serve San Francisco’s most vulnerable children.

As a grant maker, DCYF traditionally held significant sway over CBOs, but amid the pandemic, its leaders did not try to compel any CBOs to operate an in-person Hub. Instead, they appealed to the CBOs’ deep commitment to families. Some CBOs and their staff opted out due to legitimate fears, but many others enthusiastically joined the opportunity.

Misha Olivas, Director of Community and Family Engagement at United Playaz, was adamant: “We told DCYF, ‘When school starts, we’re going to do something. We can’t stay closed when we know that our kids need us.’”

Michael Lambert of the Public Library likewise jumped at the chance. “If we can positively impact the lives of almost 3,000 youth, we’re in,” he said. “This is lifesaving work. It’s a unifying mission for all of us. We all understand the importance of healthy youth and families.”

Reflecting on the coalition’s collective spirit, DCYF’s Dorsey-Smith recalled, “I’ve worked for the city for 13 years and I’ve never seen people rally so quickly to support an initiative as quickly as our partners did. They said, ‘Just tell me what you need’ and made stuff happen. It was amazing to see the city come together in that way.”

Identifying Resources

The Hubs were an expensive endeavor. The coalition pooled monetary and in-kind contributions from government agencies as well as private funders. Importantly, DCYF removed funding restrictions, providing the CBOs with much-needed flexibility.

In the spring, DCYF made a vital promise to CBOs: even though they were no longer offering the same services as they did before the pandemic began, their funding would not decrease. That financial commitment represented not only DCYF’s desire to protect staff jobs, but also its focus on maintaining the strength of the CBO sector, which it would call upon in the months ahead.

Funding the Hubs required additional financial maneuvering, however. Hubs required significant resources, and CBOs sometimes began hosting Hubs in addition to providing their regular programming. Many CBOs also raised wages, offered health insurance (if they hadn’t previously), and increased staff hours.

To make money available, DCYF removed funding restrictions on the \$45 million that it had planned to give to CBOs for the 2020–21 school year. This allowed CBOs to maintain their budget level and reallocate resources as they saw fit.

Multiple city departments, CBOs, philanthropies, and other organizations made essential monetary and in-kind contributions to the Hubs. See page 29 for these organizations’ contributions, and page 35 for the Hubs’ budget.



AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2020

Resistance & Persistence

The Hubs coalition faced resistance from a small number of vocal individuals, including some labor union leaders, a minority of Board of Education Commissioners, and, at times, members of the general public. Nevertheless, the coalition persisted.

While the creation of the Hubs drew widespread interest, praise, and support, the initiative also faced fierce resistance—sometimes vitriolic and personal in tone—in public forums such as Joint Select Committee meetings, Board of Education meetings, and Public Library Commission meetings.²¹ Some opponents charged that the Hub program should be halted altogether.

The most substantial opposition came from leaders of the city’s teachers’ union, United Educators of San Francisco (UESF), as well as a minority of Board of Education Commissioners. A range of arguments emerged on all sides of the debate, and most pushback focused on four areas: health, process, labor, and equity.

Health and Safety

Across the country, passionate debates developed about the safety of in-person gatherings. In San Francisco, opponents of the Hubs often cited COVID safety concerns. Proponents argued that the Hubs were safe, that they would follow the Department of Public Health’s guidance, and that the physical and mental health concerns of the City’s most vulnerable youth—many of whom lived in cramped conditions that could not support a safe learning environment—outweighed the minimal risks posed by in-person gatherings. Simply leaving families on their own to support the needs of their children, they argued, would leave far too many children behind.

Process

Other detractors registered more procedural objections. For example, one Board of Education Commissioner argued that the Hub planners had not performed sufficient community engagement, especially with the families the Hubs would serve.²² Hub leaders countered that they believed doing so was not feasible given the crisis situation and thus relied on CBO’s knowledge of their communities.

²¹Video archives and notes from Joint City, School District and City College Select Committee are available at https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=203. Community Hubs were discussed at every meeting from July 24 to December 11, 2020. To get a sense of the complexity of DCYF’s decisions, pushback against the Hubs (primarily by Board Commissioner Alison Collins), and responses from Maria Su and Sherrice Dorsey-Smith, we recommend viewing the August 14 recording from 3:27 to 4:30. Video archives and notes from SFUSD Board of Education meetings are available at https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=47. Community Hubs were discussed at meetings on July 28, August 25 (starting at 3:23:00), September 22, and October 20. Meeting materials are available at <https://sfpl.org/about-us/library-commission/library-commission-agendas-minutes/agendas#2020>. Community Hubs were discussed at the August 20 meeting.

²²SFPS Mom, “The Disconnect with DCYF Community Learning Hubs,” available at <https://sfpsmom.com/disconnect-with-dcyf-community-learning-hubs/>.

Labor

Some critics also raised concerns about labor protections, reflecting persistent and complex political tensions that exist not only in San Francisco but throughout the country. SFUSD teachers were represented by the teacher's union, but the Hubs employed unionized Parks and Rec staff, SF Public Library staff (represented by different unions), and non-unionized CBO staff. Some observers worried that too great a focus on non-unionized CBO staff would elevate CBO staff to the detriment of teachers and that the Hubs would therefore provide fodder for anti-labor arguments.

Kevine Boggess—a current SFUSD board member and supporter of the Hubs—characterized the problem aptly: “We live in a world where CBOs and nonprofit workers are often used to undercut union wages and labor, especially at school sites. Cities and school districts can quickly hire CBO staff rather than additional teachers.”

Debates Over Equity

The Hubs coalition was clearly united in a definition of equity focused on the city's most vulnerable children and youth.²³ Some critics, however, had different conceptions of what equity meant.

In some instances, families with very real needs could not enroll their children due to limited space, and many felt left behind by the Hubs Initiative. Maria Su recalled: “Sherrice Dorsey-Smith and I left many public meetings with a lot of tears. We heard families' stories and wanted to help every child.” Although denying any eligible students a spot was emotionally wrenching, Hub leaders held firm to the principle that the most vulnerable children would first receive spots.

In other instances, opponents appeared to resent the Hubs, which they perceived as taking away services that other members of the community felt entitled to. For example, many members of the public objected after Su shared the plan to use Library facilities. One commenter said: “What this plan appears to do is to grab—commandeer—a number of library facilities.... We consider the Library to be essential... and not [a place] that can be dropped at the drop of a hat.” Another commentor concurred, saying “It seems rather perverse that you are in effect pushing off the general public and people... who don't have Internet in their homes and preferring children to these patrons. In fact, my first gut reaction was to say... ‘Is this a publicity stunt? An attempt to gain headlines?’”²⁴

Even in the face of such criticism, Su and her fellow coalition leaders remained steadfast in their conception of equity, which centered on the needs of the most vulnerable students.

The Hub Coalition Persists

Hub leadership banded together in the face of public criticism.

Maria Su found herself the target of much of the criticism levied at the Hubs. These attacks personally affected her, and the easiest path would have been to relent. “It was really easy to get wounded by the criticism,” Su said. “It would have been much easier to say ‘yes, fine,’ rather than stick to our focus.”

Yet Su and DCYF persisted. “We did not have the luxury of time,” she explained. “In the Joint Select Committee meetings, we were skewered by SFUSD and the school board. Every single week, everywhere we went, we were being skewered. But because I had a great project manager in Sherrice, we were laser focused.”

Interviewees praised Su's steadfast leadership. As San Francisco Supervisor Hillary Ronen summed up: “I'll say this a million times: Maria is one of my absolute heroes of the pandemic because she just shut out the noise and set up an extraordinary program.”

For her part, Su believed she only succeeded by relying on the strength of others, including her team and their many partners. “I was surprised at the number of CBOs who emailed or texted me to say, ‘I have your back,’” she recalled. “I have never had that before! Some of our CBOs actually spoke during public comment in the meetings and said ‘You can't say stuff like that—DCYF has been helping us!’”

Perhaps most importantly, Su had Mayor Breed's support. “It was critical to have full support from the Mayor, especially given all the political pushback we've received. The Mayor has shouldered a lot of that,” she explained.

²³Hub priority populations included youth who were: underhoused or experiencing homelessness, in the foster care system, living in public housing, English Language Learners, or in families that were low-income.

²⁴Audio archives and minutes from SF Public Library Commission meetings are available at [https://sfpl.org/about-us/library-commission-library-commission-meetings-2021](https://sfpl.org/about-us/library-commission/library-commission-meetings-2021). The quoted material is from the August 20, 2020 meeting (starting at 00:38:52).

The Hubs Launch

The Hubs launched in September for 1,473 of the city's most marginalized students. For the 2020–21 school year, they served 2,509 students.

After a two-month planning sprint and significant resistance, 53 Hubs staffed by 406 individuals opened their doors on September 14, 2020. Core components of the program included:

- Hubs were held at neighborhood-based facilities (e.g., rec centers, public libraries, CBO facilities, cultural centers, and other city-owned buildings) and managed and operated by CBOs or Rec and Parks staff.
- Hubs provided children with access to technology devices to aid in distance learning, as well as social-emotional supports.
- In accordance with health guidelines, Hubs put no more than 14 students and 2 adults in each “pod.”
- Round 1 Hubs included students in grades K–8. Round 2, added students in grades 9–12.

The size of the Initiative grew steadily to eventually reach 2,509 students across 86 Hub locations.

The Hubs Coalition

119 organizations—each playing a unique role—came together to form an extraordinary collaboration.

Numerous organizations across multiple sectors banded together to a degree rarely seen. In all, 119 organizations and city departments played a role in the Hubs. Driven by a shared mission, these organizations supported almost 3,000 children, many of whom had no other options. The graphic on the following page outlines the organizations involved and the roles they played.

Program

Hub programming was delivered by youth development professionals employed by CBOs and San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department.

Community Based Organizations

- 51 different CBOs delivered programming
- 436 youth development professionals worked at these Hubs

*See Appendix for a list of all CBOs.

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD)

- RPD delivered programming at 13 different recreation centers
- 127 youth development professionals worked at these Hubs

Space

Most Hubs were located at CBO sites, Recreation and Parks Department sites, or Public Library sites. In some cases, organizations borrowed facilities to operate Hub programs.

Community Based Organizations

- 4 different CBOs donated space to other organizations (This is in addition to the 37 CBOs who operated hubs at their own sites)

*See Appendix for full list of CBOs.

San Francisco Public Library (SFPL)

- SFPL donated 10 sites

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD)

- RPD donated 11 sites to other organizations

HOPE SF

- HOPE SF donated space at the following public housing sites: Alice Griffith, Hunters View, and The Willie Brown Center

Calvary Hill Church

- Calvary Hill Church donated its space

Marriott Hotel at Union Square

- Marriott donated space for one Hub and provided free meals from its hotel kitchen

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA)

- YBCA, an art museum, donated its space while it remained closed to the public

Department of Children, Youth & Their Families

San Francisco Unified School District

Beacon Initiative

California Child Care Licensing Department

Human Services Agency

Philanthropies & Businesses

Private Citizens

Mayor's Office of Housing & Community Development

Department of Public Health

Department of Homelessness & Supportive Housing

Department of Technology

San Francisco Education Fund

SF311

Technical Assistance

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
Marriott Hotel
Calvary Hill Community Church
HOPE SF

Community-Based Organizations

SF Public Library

Recreation & Parks Department

Children & Families

Program

Space

Planning & Coordination

Support

Outreach

Philanthropy

Planning and Coordination

Mayor London Breed tasked three city departments with planning, designing, and coordinating the Hubs: Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF), Recreation and Parks Department (RPD), and the Public Library (SFPL). These departments not only planned the Hubs, but also provided funding, staffing, in-kind support, and overall leadership.

Department of Children, Youth and their Families (DCYF)

- 47 staff worked on the Hubs Initiative (equivalent to 10.5 full-time equivalents), playing multiple roles. Salaries and benefits for those staff was \$1.06 million.²⁵
- Repurposed and distributed \$45 million grants to CBOs.
- Facilitated three meetings per week with RPD, SFPL, and SF311.
- Communicated weekly project updates via a data dashboard and email newsletter, hosted Hub site visits with elected officials.
- Tracked data.
- Designed and coordinated process for student recruitment and enrollment, including distributing enrollment forms in multiple languages and providing literature to Hub operators.

- Provided technical assistance to Hubs.
- Liaised with Department of Public Health to create and implement public health guidance.
- Coordinated janitorial services.
- Procured and distributed PPE.
- Coordinated technology support with SFUSD and San Francisco Department of Technology.
- Advocated with elected officials and the general public.

San Francisco Public Library (SFPL)

- In addition to donating 10 spaces, repurposed staff to support Hub sites, including janitorial staff.

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD)

- Repurposed \$8.8 million toward Hub personnel and non-personnel costs.

Support

Numerous organizations played key support roles.

SF311

- Fielded enrollment requests from families, provided information about the Hubs, and connected families with DCYF.

San Francisco Department of Technology (DT)

- Donated 2,000 Chromebooks as backups at Hub sites.
- Assessed and upgraded Internet capabilities at Hub sites.
- Troubleshoot technology issues

San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)

- Provided health directives for Hubs and connected Hubs with behavioral health resources.

San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)

- Delivered distance learning curriculum to Hub students.
- Set up and managed Google licenses.
- Allowed Hubs to use their technology contracts to receive discounts on other hardware and software.
- Trained Hub staff on SFUSD's technology systems.

San Francisco Beacon Initiative

- Provided facilitation support during the Hub planning phase.

San Francisco Education Fund

- Partnered with DCYF to recruit staff for the Hubs and identify program supports such as literacy tutors.

Technical Assistance Organizations

- Multiple CBOs provided technical assistance and capacity building for Hubs to ensure they were prepared to welcome students back to in-person settings. Support included training for CPR, trauma-informed care, and youth development best practices. CBOs also provided some academic support.
- Organizations included: Spark Decks, Edutainment for Equity, Be The Change, Flourish Agenda.
- Chefables provided food for the Hubs.

California Child Care Licensing Department

- Supported waivers for ECYC and Hubs, in addition to licensing staff.

²⁵For detailed information about how DCYF's staff supported the Hubs, see page 7 of Social Policy Research Associates, "San Francisco Community Hubs Initiative Mid-Year Synthesis," available at <https://www.dcyf.org/data-and-reports/2021/4/26/san-francisco-community-hubs-initiative-mid-year-synthesis>.

Outreach

San Francisco Department on Homelessness and Supportive Housing

- Conducted outreach to families who are experiencing homelessness.

San Francisco Human Services Agency-Child Welfare Division

- Conducted outreach to youth who are living in foster care.

San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)

- Helped identify Hub-eligible students in Round II.

Philanthropy

Comcast

- Provided technology assessments and ongoing support, Internet access or upgrades, and donations

Golden State Warriors

- Provided Golden State Warriors Swag Bags, exercise sessions facilitated by Warriors Basketball Academy Coaches, school supplies.

Philanthropies: Crankstart, Silver Giving Foundation, Tipping Point Community, anonymous foundation.

- Donated money.

San Francisco Human Services Agency-Child Welfare Division

- Outreached to foster youth

Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development

- Conducted outreach to families in public housing.

Private Citizens

- In addition to philanthropic foundations, more than 3,500 individuals donated more than \$32 million to Give2SF. Almost \$400,000 of this was distributed to the Hubs.²⁶

²⁶Office of the Controller, City and County of San Francisco, "Give2SF COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund: Quarterly Update," available at <https://sfcontroller.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Auditing/Give2SF%20Quarterly%20Update%20Memorandum%2004.12.21.pdf>

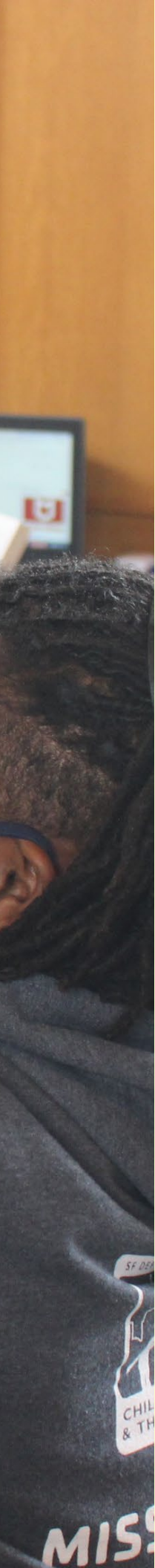


Schedule

8:30
8:40 - 8:50
9:00 - 12:15
12:20 - 12:30: WASH
12:30 - 1:00: LUNCH
1:00 - 1:30: RECESS
1:35 - 1:45: WASH H
1:50 - 2:50: ACADEMIC
2:55 - 3:05: COMMUNITY CIRCLE
3:10 - 3:25: RECESS
3:30 - 3:45: WASH HANDS / SNACK
3:50 - 4:50: ACTIVITY OF THE DAY
4:50 - 5:00: ORGANIZE / SANITIZE
5:00 - 5:30: CLOSER / GROUP ACTIVITY
5:30: DOORS CLOSED

Birthday

we love you



Part II: The Hub Model

Students

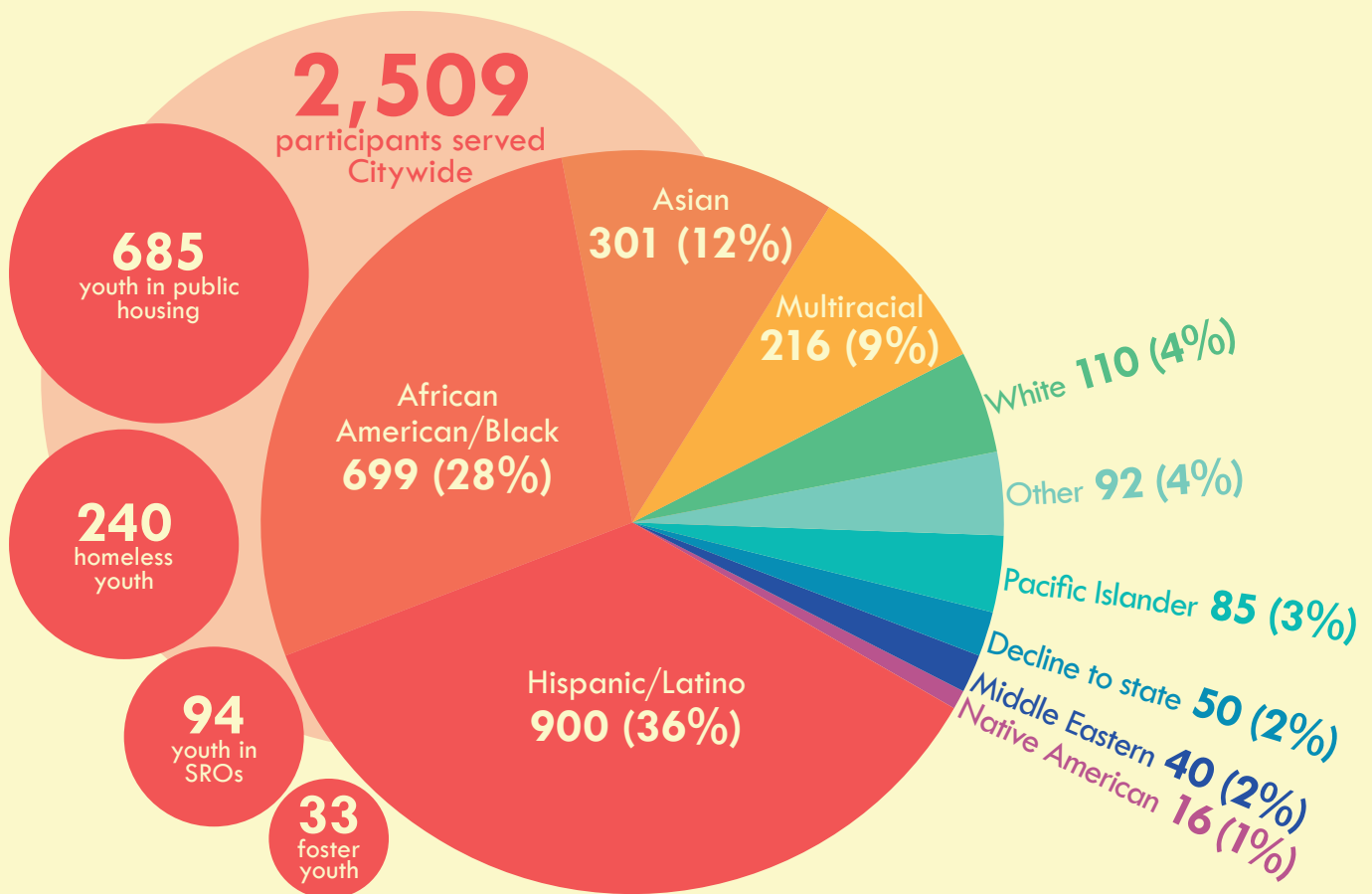
The Hubs prioritized very specific student groups, and leaders unapologetically drew a line in the sand on their order of priorities. “It’s always those youth that get left behind,” noted Sherrice Dorsey-Smith. This determination was unusual. Among comparable programs around the country, only 12 percent limited enrollment to specific groups.²⁷

As the table below demonstrates, the Hubs successfully enrolled students who fit DCYF’s priority criteria. These priority populations had previously been identified through DCYF’s Community Needs Assessment in 2018.²⁸

Alignment with Priority Criteria

| Priority Populations | Number of SFUSD Students (TK–12) ²⁹ | Enrolled Hub Students |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| Students living in public housing | 2,247 | 685 |
| Students experiencing homelessness | 1,442 | 240 |
| Students living in SROs | Unknown | 94 |
| Children in the foster care system | 223 ³⁰ | 33 |
| English language learners | 16,764 | N/A |
| Students from low-income families, with a focus on historically impacted communities, including people who identify as African American, Latino/a/x, Pacific Islander, and/or Asian. | 23,934 | N/A |

The graphics below display additional demographic information about Hub participants.



²⁷CRPE, “It Takes a Village: The Pandemic Learning Pod Movement, One Year In,” available at <https://www.crpe.org/thelens/it-takes-village-pandemic-learning-pod-movement-one-year>

²⁸San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families, “Community Needs Assessment (CNA), available at <https://www.dcyf.org/cna>. San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families, “Community Needs Assessment Plan, 2019–2021,” April/May 2019, available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c01d13ab98a7a0cfd93/t/5d126528fba9fe0001e5c264/1561486644639/06252019_CNAPlan2019-2021.pdf.

²⁹Data from SFUSD presentation: Teaching and Learning & Logistics Working Group meeting, July 10, 2020.

³⁰According to the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, there were 332 foster youth in San Francisco as of October 1, 2020. See “California Child Welfare Indicators Project,” available at <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>.

| Language Supports | | Home Neighborhoods (Top 10) | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Language | Youth | Neighborhood | Youth |
| Spanish | 313 (12%) | Bayview Hunters Point | 494 (20%) |
| Chinese | 91 (4%) | Tenderloin | 252 (10%) |
| Other | 54 (2%) | Mission | 234 (9%) |
| Arabic | 16 (1%) | Visitacion Valley | 156 (6%) |
| Vietnamese | 11 (0.4%) | South of Market | 119 (5%) |
| Filipino | 4 (0.2%) | Excelsior | 105 (4%) |
| Russian | 1 (0.04%) | Western Addition | 103 (4%) |
| TOTAL | 490 (20%) | Chinatown | 72 (3%) |
| | | Potrero Hill | 70 (3%) |
| | | Bernal Heights | 69 (3%) |

Enrollment

Based on an assessment of available facilities and funding, DCYF initially hoped to serve 6000 students. This model assumed a staff-to-student ratio of 1 to 20 for K–5 and a ratio of 1 to 24 for grades 6–12. In August, however, public health guidance became more stringent, essentially cutting in half the number of students that could convene in one room. This decision meant that sticking to the original plan would have doubled the Hubs’ cost, so instead they reduced the total forecasted Hub capacity from 6,000 to 3,000 students.

As the previous section explained, the number of eligible students significantly exceeded the space and resources available, and many more students applied than could be enrolled. This was due to numerous factors such as limited space in their neighborhood’s Hubs and inability to travel to other Hubs.

Social Policy Research’s (SPR) Mid-Year Synthesis provides a detailed description of the Hubs’ enrollment process, including how DCYF’s staff supported it. In summary: Enrollment happened in two rounds. Round I launched on September 14 and included grades K–6; Round II began on October 26 and included grades K–12.

The enrollment process had four goals:

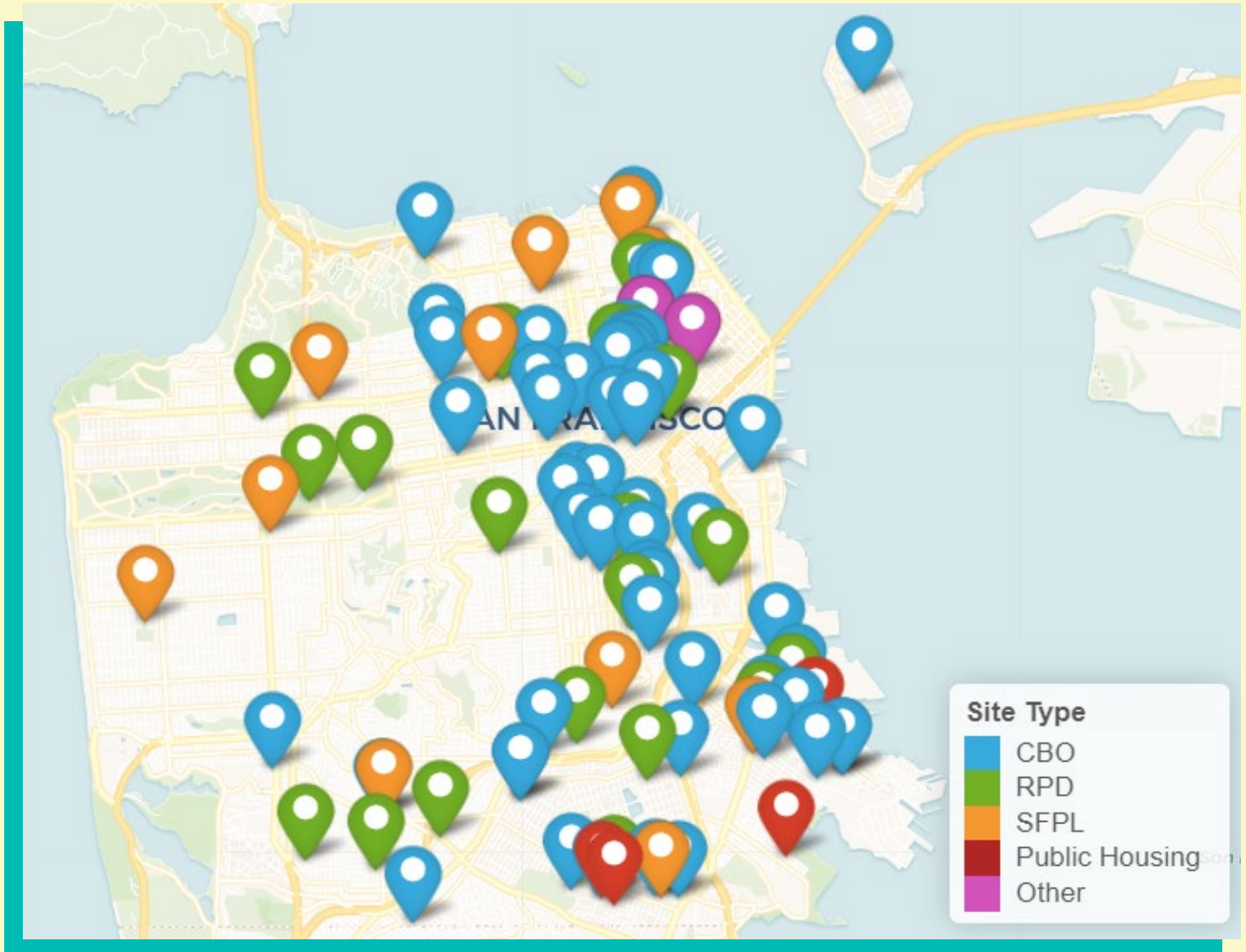
1. Ensure that the highest-need students, not only the students already served by anchor agencies, had an opportunity to participate.
2. Lessen the burden for anchor agencies to manage outreach and enrollment so that they could focus on Hub design and implementation.
3. Guarantee that Hubs did not exceed the mandated staff-to-student ratios.
4. Avoid inviting families to apply if there were no available slots for them by pacing the distribution of applications with the number of slots available.³¹

In Round I, due to data-sharing limitations, SFUSD did not share the names of students who met the priority criteria. Instead, DCYF identified the highest priority students by using data from DCYF-funded agencies. DCYF also worked with the Human Services Agency-Child Welfare Division, HOPE SF (an initiative that supports public housing residents), and the Department on Homelessness and Supportive Housing to conduct direct outreach to high need families. In Round II, DCYF and SFUSD negotiated a process whereby DCYF reserved Hub spots for which SFUSD would recruit students. This allowed the Hubs to reach more eligible families. The decentralized Round II process, however, also caused some confusion for Hub hosts and families. Please see SPR’s *Mid-Year Synthesis* for more details.

³¹Social Policy Research Associates, “San Francisco Community Hubs Initiative Mid-Year Synthesis,” available at <https://www.dcyf.org/data-and-reports/2021/4/26/san-francisco-community-hubs-initiative-mid-year-synthesis>.

Locations

Although Hubs were located throughout the city, they were concentrated in the highest-needs neighborhoods: more than half of all Hubs (45) were in the neighborhoods of Bayview-Hunters Point (13), the Mission (11), the Tenderloin (7), South of Market (SOMA) (5), Visitacion Valley (4), Oceanview / Merced / Ingleside (3), Excelsior (2), and Outer Mission (2).



Facilities

Most Hubs were located at CBO sites, Recreation and Parks Department sites, or Public Library sites. In some cases, organizations borrowed facilities to operate Hub programs. For example, all Hubs that used Public Library facilities were operated by other organizations, such as the YMCA.

| Hub Locations and Staff | Number of Sites ³² |
|---|-------------------------------|
| CBO sites run by CBO staff | 47 |
| Public Library sites run by CBO staff | 10 |
| Rec and Parks sites run by Rec and Parks staff (including one site jointly operated with a CBO) | 13 |
| Rec and Parks sites run by CBO staff | 11 |
| Other ³³ | 6 |
| Total | 86 |

³²See Appendix for a full list of organizations.

³³This category includes HOPE SF (3), Marriott (1), Calvary Hill Church (1), and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (1).

Hub operators made use of whatever space was available. For example, the YMCA-hosted Hub at Bernal Heights Library used the upstairs library, downstairs library, and a community room to host three pods. The site has two girls' bathrooms, two boys' bathrooms, and a playground. United Playaz and West Bay co-hosted five pods at the Gene Friend Recreation Center (a Rec and Parks site). There, two pods met in a gym, separated by a large plastic barrier. The site also had an outdoor basketball court, playground, and lawn where kids could play.

One of the most unusual Hub sites was run by Mission Graduates at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—an art museum that donated its space while it remained closed to the public. The museum hosted two pods in spacious high-ceiling gallery spaces, complete with artwork.

Private companies also participated. Marriott Hotels, for example, donated a site and provided free meals (from their own kitchen) for students.

Only one Hub used an SFUSD-owned space: a former elementary school that the district used to store science supplies and hold workshops. SFUSD had been leasing the property to the Samoan Community Development Center, which in turn hosted a Hub.

Revenues and Expenses

DCYF's goal was to secure enough revenue to operate Hubs throughout the 2020–21 school year. After repurposing funding from the San Francisco City Government, the Hubs faced a \$6 million shortfall. To close the gap, DCYF spearheaded a fund-raising drive from private sources, and individual CBOs raised additional funds.

From September 14 through June 2, the typical Hub operated from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., five days per week, at a total budgeted cost, not including DCYF's and the Public Library's overhead, of \$61.2 million.

Across all Hub sites, the cost per student per month was \$2,709.

Below is a breakdown of the Hubs' revenues and expenses. These are budgeted figures, not actuals. Final data will be available after July 2021.³⁴

| FY2021 SCHOOL YEAR HUBS | DCYF Operating | RPD Operating | DT Operating | BOS Addback | USDA Reimbursement | Give2SF | SOURCES TOTAL | USES TOTAL |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| CBO | \$ 44.5 | | | \$ 3.4 | | | \$ 47.9 | \$ 47.9 |
| City County SF Staff | | \$ 8.8 | | | | | \$ 8.8 | \$ 8.8 |
| Food | \$ 0.5 | | | \$ 1.0 | \$ 1.0 | | \$ 2.5 | \$ 2.5 |
| Technology | | | \$ 0.5 | | | \$ 0.3 | \$ 0.8 | \$ 0.8 |
| PPE & Supplies | | | | | | \$ 0.1 | \$ 0.1 | \$ 0.1 |
| DPH Testing | | | | \$ 1.0 | | | \$ 1.0 | \$ 1.0 |
| Total | \$ 45.0 | \$ 8.8 | \$ 0.5 | \$ 5.4 | \$ 1.0 | \$ 0.4 | \$ 61.2 | \$ 61.2 |

³⁴Notes related to the Hub budget:

- DCYF repurposed grants from its Out of School Time, Education Supports & Enrichment, and Leadership & Skill Building categories.
- RPD and DT costs include overhead:
 - RPD's personnel cost was \$8.5 million. Non-personnel costs were \$0.3 million.
 - The Department of Technology figure reflected costs of 2,000 Chromebook donations, staffing, wiring at public housing sites, and hotspots.
- DCYF costs do not include overhead.
- USDA covered \$1 million in food costs. Two USDA Programs, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) & Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), allowed flexibility in response to COVID-19.
- The additional food costs were covered by DCYF and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.
- PPE & Supplies reflects child-specific PPE, food grade thermometers, and cleaning supplies not supplied by the San Francisco COVID Command Center.

Daily Experience

While all Hubs shared certain features in common (e.g., COVID health protocols), each one reflected the unique culture of the specific organization that operated it. For example, Hubs run by large nonprofits such as the YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs tended to have more resources, their own facilities, and more administrative staff. Hubs hosted by smaller organizations sometimes relied more on donated materials and used other organizations' facilities.

Generally, Hubs were quiet places. Each room typically had a table with supplies, such as markers, tape, and paper. Students usually sat separately, often at desks, on beanbags, or at the ends of large tables.

Hub classrooms often included colorful placemats with each student's name, student drawings, and a daily schedule.³⁵ Some Hubs, such as the one hosted by the Samoan Community Development Center, chose fun names for each pod such as Hubba Bubba and Big Dogs.

A typical Hub schedule looked like this:

8:00 – 8:30 am

Staff arrived, set up laptops, earphones, and breakfast, and wiped down tables and equipment.

8:30 – 9:00 am

Students arrived. All students completed a COVID symptom screening either at home or upon arrival. As students trickled in, they sat quietly at desks and ate breakfast.

9:00 am – Noon

Students attended class via a personal computing device with headphones. Since Hub students were typically not in the same class, each student had an individual schedule. Hub staff observed students and provided support as needed. Staff logged attendance, completed paperwork, and corresponded via email with students' teachers.

Noon – 12:45 pm

Each Hub provided a hot or cold lunch. During lunch, students ate, went outside for exercise, or interacted with staff and one another.

12:45 – 2:00 pm

Most students participated in some synchronous learning during the afternoon, but end times varied.

2:00 – 5:30 pm

Some Hubs operated until 5:30 p.m., while others ended around 4 p.m. Afternoon programming included homework support, physical activity, art, and drama. Some creative partnerships emerged, such as when teaching artists led sessions at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Some Hubs provided dinner for students.

³⁵During distance learning, each SFUSD teacher was allowed to create their own daily schedule, within certain parameters.

Hub Staff

CBOs and the Recreation and Parks Department drew from different talent pools, but staff shared many commonalities.

- Many had participated as youth in the programs they now led. For example, 100 percent of staff at the Samoan Community Development Center had participated in its youth programming.
- Many had job-relevant training. For example, at the Palega Recreation Center, we met a woman with a master’s degree in psychiatry who was a practicing therapist on the weekends.
- Some were recent local high school or college graduates. Hub leaders noted that these staff members could generally connect well with youth, since they knew what it was like to grow up in San Francisco.
- Some were reassigned during the pandemic. For example, Rec and Parks Department lifeguards and Public Library children services librarians were reassigned to work at Hubs.

Hub staff worked with children throughout the day, helping them stay on task, resolving technology problems, and offering individual attention as the students engaged in distance learning. Hub staff often corresponded with school staff and parents.

Health Procedures

DCYF helped Hub operators and the San Francisco Department of Public Health agree upon guidelines that balanced safety with practical application, while ensuring that all guidance was followed. Hub staff were able to receive regular COVID testing at the city’s mass testing site and at neighborhood test sites, at a time when consistent access to testing was limited.

As noted in the study [Preventing COVID-19 Transmission in Education Settings](#), “with promotion of multiple policies, there was minimal COVID-19 transmission [in the Hubs] (despite high community incidence).” In fact, there was only one case of Hub-based transmission—this was adult-to-adult.





Part III: Analysis



Operational Challenges

The Hubs were created during an unprecedented crisis in which health guidelines frequently changed, municipal governments cut budgets, and many people involved faced immense personal challenges. In this context, the Hub Initiative managed to design a program model, assemble a broad coalition of organizations, navigate forceful resistance, and host almost 3,000 vulnerable children, even while confronting numerous operational challenges.

Managing Supply and Demand

The Hubs served 2,509 students during the school year. While significant, that number is only a small portion (9 percent) of the 27,000 students who met DCYF's priority population criteria.

The low number of available enrollment spots was primarily due to limited adequate physical facilities and public health COVID mitigation directives.

Throughout the year, DCYF was careful not to overpromise to families and thus took a gradual approach to filling open seats at the Hubs. Rather than delegate enrollment to CBOs, DCYF kept tight control over the enrollment process. As Sherrice Dorsey-Smith noted, "We are only going to reach out to the number of families and youth [for whom] we have spaces [available]." While this approach gave DCYF time to identify the neediest students, it also created tension and confusion. For example, in the first couple months of their operation, some Hubs were under-enrolled, and a few only had a handful of students. CBOs, who had deep relationships with the community, often knew exactly which students could benefit, yet they were not allowed to simply add these students to their Hub rosters. Many parents grew frustrated that they could not enroll their children. As a result of the empty seats, a rumor began to spread that demand for the Hubs was low. That false rumor fueled the arguments of Hub skeptics and more generally caused confusion and consternation.³⁶

³⁶To better understand the complex challenges to creating an equitable enrollment process, see the Joint Select Committee video recording from August 14, 2020, from 00:03:46 to 00:04:03. The above quote from Sherrice Dorsey-Smith is found at 00:03:46. Available at https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=203.

Finding Adequate Buildings

Limited number of adequate facilities was the Hubs' primary constraint to serving more students. Although the coalition would have preferred to establish Hubs in school district buildings, SFUSD could not accommodate their requests due to other commitments, priorities, and safety considerations. Hubs therefore made use of Rec and Parks centers, public libraries, and CBO buildings. While some of these facilities were adequate, many were not designed to host students in the manner Hubs needed. Jessica Huey, a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, helped lead the Eureka Valley Inclusive Community Hub (ICH), operated by Rec and Parks. Hers was the only Hub that intentionally served children with disabilities. As Huey noted, the site was "probably the most school-like building that Rec and Parks has." Nevertheless, that location also posed several challenges, including its many exits, an exposed elevator, and inadequate space for therapeutic services such as a sensory room.

Some corporations and nonprofits offered their spaces. Unfortunately, most of those spaces were not affordable (some spaces charged a fee) or adequate (bathrooms for children, dedicated entrance for children).³⁷

Coping with Insufficient Funding

Even though DCYF, Rec and Parks, the Public Library, and CBOs were able to reallocate existing funds to the Hubs, operating costs significantly limited the number of students the Hubs could serve. Additional funding would have allowed the Hubs to lease more physical spaces, hire and train more staff, offer higher pay and better insurance, and provide childcare for the children of Hub staff members.

Insufficient funding of SFUSD programming also limited the Hubs' reach. For example, SFUSD received After School Education and Safety (ASES) funding for afterschool programs that were operated by CBOs.³⁸ Ideally, that funding could have supported the expansion of the Hubs; however, CBOs were already utilizing those funds to support distance learning at the request of teachers and school administrators, and reallocating ASES funds to the Hubs would have taken away resources from other students.

In other cases, the Hubs were unable to access certain funding streams, such as Title I dollars, because of long-standing and complicated funding restrictions and procedures that were in place far before the pandemic began.

Data Sharing Limitations

Data sharing among youth-serving organizations, including public school districts, presented a persistent challenge. Data privacy laws, while well-intended, had the practical effect of making collaboration difficult.

For example, SFUSD was not permitted to share the names of students who fit DCYF's "priority population" criteria. Instead, DCYF relied on its own database of children who had previously participated in its programs. As a result, DCYF was unable to identify all priority youth at first, and many eligible students were not identified until weeks or even months after the Hubs launched.

Managing Student Schedules

When negotiating a labor agreement during the COVID period, SFUSD and the teacher's union agreed that teachers, even within the same school, could operate on different daily schedules.³⁹ This accommodation for teachers, which gave them flexibility to manage their own families' affairs, proved tremendously difficult for Hub staff who supervised pods with up to 14 students—all of whom could be logging in, taking breaks, and having meals on different schedules.

³⁷Some organizations wanted to charge rent (for which DCYF did not have resources). In other cases, organizations had strict facility use agreements that did not allow for non-commercial usage. The one exception was Marriott, which hosted two Hubs.

³⁸See California Department of Education, "Funding Opportunities," available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ex/fundingop.asp>.

³⁹"Memorandum of Understanding between San Francisco Unified School District and the United Educators of San Francisco Regarding Crisis Distance Learning Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic during the 2020–2021 School Year," available at [https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/sfusd/Board.nsf/files/BS9PH364A2A7/\\$file/Tentative%20Agreement%20-%20Distance%20Learning%20MOU%20between%20UESF%20and%20SFUSD%202020-2021%208-6-2020.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/sfusd/Board.nsf/files/BS9PH364A2A7/$file/Tentative%20Agreement%20-%20Distance%20Learning%20MOU%20between%20UESF%20and%20SFUSD%202020-2021%208-6-2020.pdf).

System-Level Outcomes

In this section, we describe system-level outcomes. Outcomes related to students and families were the focus of a *Mid-Year Synthesis* report authored by Social Policy Research Associates (SPR). With SPR's permission, we have published portions of their report in the Appendix.

Widespread Collaboration

Perhaps the most remarkable outcome of the Hubs Initiative was the scale of the collaboration. Creating, advocating for, and operating Hubs for almost 3,000 students was an all-consuming and exhausting effort. Yet our interviewees were overwhelmingly energetic and driven by a singular mission, which drew an impressively wide variety of organizations to the cause.

"I think this project reveals how much good we can do as a society if we put aside our egos, break free of our silos, and prioritize the welfare of our children," reflected Phil Ginsburg of Rec and Parks. "I loved working with the team at DCYF, and I loved how my own staff stepped up as heroes. In a crisis—when there is a true mission—we can work together."

Commenting on the unique nature of the Hubs collaboration, Maria Su said: "Too often we say that we need to coordinate, but we don't know how to overcome the barriers. This time, we tore down enough barriers to make something amazing happen."

See page 25 for various organizations' contributions.

Relationships

Although formal structures are important, deep collaboration often hinges on personal relationships. In San Francisco, lingering tensions contributed to poor collaborative relationships among the City, the District, and the CBOs. According to our interviewees, relationships between some senior city leaders and SFUSD had been frosty for years, and CBO leaders felt similar tensions in their interactions with city officials and the school district, as well as within their own sector. In spite of this history, the Hubs Initiative strengthened many relationships across organizations and sectors.

“Before the pandemic, CBOs were knocking on school doors, saying, ‘Let me in, we want to help the schools,’” explained Sherrice Dorsey-Smith of DCYF. “Now we have principals blowing up the CBOs’ phones saying, ‘How can we work together?’”

Dorsey-Smith continued: “We are starting to see the wall crumble. Schools are starting to see the added value that CBOs bring to their schools. And CBOs see all the drama and dynamics that schools have to deal with. People are now more willing to trust and build with one another.”

Awareness of Other Groups

Before the Hubs Initiative, many organizations operated in silos, often unaware that other organizations even existed. Even when they knew about other groups, they either did not understand the potential contributions they could make or else they underestimated others’ willingness to partner with them. While the silo effect still exists, a greater number of organizations can now see “outside their lane” and have come to appreciate the roles and assets of other groups.

For example, Linda Gerull, Executive Director at the City’s Department of Technology (DT), reported: “I don’t think DCYF ever realized we were here as a resource. Now we’re helping them with other projects like service tickets and other technology needs. Also, we’ve been working with SFUSD on cyber security. After the Hubs, there’s more of a recognition of how we can all partner and where to go for help.”

Maria Su likewise praised the partnership with the Department of Technology. “What started as a limited request to the Department of Technology has become part of DT’s commitment to wire everything! They have taken it upon themselves to go out and lay wiring for community spaces. They often came to us and said, ‘We just wired this place; you should open it as a Hub!’”

Shared Mission

The shared mission of serving San Francisco’s most vulnerable children defined the Hubs coalition. In the past, other groups in San Francisco had tried to create broad coalitions around common goals, with mixed results. For many, the Hub experience felt different because it involved more than a theoretical commitment to a cause—it involved real action.

Momentum

Creating momentum is important for making sure changes become permanent, and the Hubs created such momentum.

Kevine Boggess, a Board of Education Commissioner and Policy Director at Coleman Advocates, observed: “The pandemic and the Hubs collaboration created new energy. Hopefully, we can seize that momentum and to push forward something that’s more permanent—part of our new normal.”

Missed Opportunity: Deeper Collaboration with SFUSD

As individuals, many SFUSD teachers and administrators made significant contributions to the Hubs. For example, teachers confronted the monumental task of adapting to distance learning and delivering their curricula to all students, including students who attended the Hubs. Indeed, the Hubs would not exist if there were not teachers to provide instruction.

SFUSD administrators also made significant contributions. For example, SFUSD set up and managed Google licenses and allowed Hubs to use their technology contracts to receive discounts on other hardware and software. SFUSD also trained Hub staff on SFUSD's technology systems and helped identify Hub-eligible students in Round II of the program.

Yet active resistance from a minority of Board of Education Commissioners and leaders of the teacher's union generated significant frustration among city leaders, Hub leaders, Hub staff, and even SFUSD employees.

This section explores two overarching challenges to collaboration: structure and politics.

Structural Challenges

In our interviews, many SFUSD staff expressed enthusiasm for working with the Hubs, but noted structural challenges—concerning logistics, capacity, authority, and funding—that impeded full collaboration.

Logistical Constraints

The Hubs' biggest request was access to SFUSD buildings. During the spring, SFUSD could not accommodate ECYC's request to use SFUSD buildings—understandably, according to our interviewees, given the chaos and competing priorities at the time. Dawn Kamalanathan, SFUSD's Chief Facilities Officer noted: "During the pandemic, SFUSD had to go through a complicated sorting of priorities and resource trade-offs before we could get to a place of agreement with DCYF."

In July and August, DCYF again requested that SFUSD share its school buildings so that the Hubs could serve more students. Many CBO and Rec and Parks buildings were not designed to host children, and city and CBO leaders were frustrated that schools remained empty or only partially used while students learned from home. Once again, the Hubs and SFUSD could not reach an agreement.

Two logistical factors made sharing facilities complicated. First, SFUSD did not have an accurate accounting of the number or condition of available classrooms—an essential datapoint as the District weighed the best use of those facilities. Noting the effort involved, Kamalanathan explained: “My team spent weeks going through every single elementary classroom site plan visually and putting information into a database so we could understand our buildings’ capacity.” Second, SFUSD buildings housed other programs and activities. Some, for example, hosted laptop distribution efforts, which required a great deal of space. Other schools, coordinating with community partners, distributed food to families, which had complex logistical and safety requirements. Noting that SFUSD’s internal logistics may seem simple from the outside, Kamalanathan explained that they were in fact complex: “You might say, ‘I see the empty classrooms, so why can’t we use them?’ But you couldn’t see the iceberg under the water, which made a seemingly simple decision so much more complex.”

Capacity Constraints

The constant uncertainty and shifting conditions that marked life during the pandemic led to confusion and exhaustion. As Melissa Dodd, SFUSD’s Chief Technology Officer, explained: “We were supporting and upholding distance learning at the same time as we were trying to re-open in person. It was like running two school systems at the same time. There was only so much we could do.” Dawn Kamalanathan noted that capacity constraints were exacerbated by changing priorities: “The non-stop decentralized decision making process among multiple agencies made it difficult to land on a clear path of action.”

Decentralized Authority

According to our interviewees, SFUSD operated in a very decentralized manner. In a crisis situation, that structure can slow down district-wide initiatives. According to Kamalanathan: “SFUSD is not used to operating in a top-down way. Instead, you can think of SFUSD as more than 120 school sites that are joined together in a network with aligned values and a shared regulatory framework.”

Different Funding Streams, Limited Funding

The Hubs requested funding from several SFUSD funding streams, but a variety of barriers prevented SFUSD from honoring those requests. For example, the Hubs asked SFUSD to reallocate money from its after-school budget and to direct fund from existing state and federal sources, such as Title I, to support the vulnerable students at the Hubs. The district’s funding, however, was already allocated to support the implementation of distance learning. The Hubs were also not eligible for the federal CARES Act, which was only available to Local Education Agencies (and not City governments or community-based organizations). If the Hubs had been eligible, the federal government would have covered between 75 and 100 percent of the costs.⁴⁰

Political and Relational Challenges

Despite the shared commitment to vulnerable children across the many systems involved, political tensions—some longstanding and deeply woven into the city’s culture—presented significant barriers.

Labor Politics

UESF, which represents teachers and paraprofessionals, wields significant political power in San Francisco. In fact, all seven current Board of Education commissioners were endorsed by UESF. Historically, UESF—like many unions—resisted efforts to hire non-union staff at school sites, leading to tense confrontations. This dynamic extended to debates about the Hubs, which were staffed by non-unionized CBO staff as well as Rec and Parks workers, whose union is regarded as less influential than UESF. To some UESF supporters, the fact that people outside their union were providing in-person services to students, while their own members were not, represented a threat. Finding ways around the union, in their view, amounted to carrying water for anti-union politicians. For example, UESF President Susan Solomon, speaking generally about criticism lodged at public schools, said: “[Critics of public schools] could just as easily turn into a way for Betsy DeVos to get her way and say public school is not working, now let’s privatize and have vouchers,” invoking the then-Secretary of Education who strongly supported charter schools and opposed teachers’ unions.⁴¹

Several additional issues made the dynamic even more fraught. On one hand, critics wondered why SFUSD teachers and paraprofessionals were prevented from offering in-person services to students when CBO and Rec and Parks workers could.

⁴⁰According to the City & County of San Francisco’s (CCSF) Controller’s Office, DCYF did not receive separate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding for the Hubs. Through the Emergency Operations Center/COVID Command Center’s Finance & Admin Section, the CCSF Controller’s Office continued to lead San Francisco’s cost recovery efforts to ensure that the City received the maximum reimbursement possible from the Federal government. CCSF applies for FEMA funding as a city entity, not department-by-department, based on the eligibility criteria FEMA provided.

⁴¹Joint City, School District, and City College Select Committee, August 14, 2020, at 00:03:08. Available at https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=203.

On the other, some worried that CBO and Rec and Parks workers were in fact being exploited during the pandemic. The fact that CBO and Rec and Parks workers included more people of color and were paid less, compared to SFUSD employees, only exacerbated these concerns.⁴² Attempting to at least partially address these inequities, DCYF acknowledged these issues and secured almost \$4 million from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to augment CBO budgets and raise wages.

These complex debates regarding society's expectations of public-school teachers and youth development professionals attracted national attention.⁴³

Labor Negotiations

Ongoing labor negotiations and the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 complicated the collaboration, especially concerning the Hubs' request to use SFUSD buildings. According to Gentle Blythe, SFUSD's Deputy Superintendent of Strategic Partnerships and Communications: "Early in the fall, we created a memo of understanding with our teachers' union that allowed teachers to do remote teaching from a school site if they needed to. From a facilities perspective, we needed to be flexible to accommodate teachers who wanted a remote worksite and to have the possibility of reopening schools. This made it hard to imagine hosting Hubs at schools."

Labor agreements also prevented the district from addressing a main pain point for Hub staff—students' operating on different daily schedules. According to SFUSD's agreement with UESF, teachers were not required to follow a common daily schedule, even within a given school.⁴⁴ That accommodation, while it provided flexibility for teachers, made the Hubs' work more difficult.

Strained Relationships, Public Discourse

Initially, DCYF leaders proposed calling the program "Community Learning Hubs." While the word "learning" may seem innocuous to describe the Hubs' mission, UESF leaders and some Board of Education Commissioners quickly made clear that they objected to its use. Our interviewees believe that those objections were consistent with broader turf battles in public education, in which the union defends the interests of its teachers against all possible challenges.

This conflict damaged relationships. For the CBO staff we spoke with, objections to using the word "learning" were demeaning, since they implied that Hubs either could not or should not facilitate student learning. Our interviewees believed that, at a time when SFUSD and the CBOs should have been working together, the semantic debate needlessly drove a wedge between them.

"It was very frustrating," explained Nelly Sapinski, Executive Director of The Jamestown Community Center. "It takes us back to the us-versus-them thing, but we're serving the same children."

Misha Olivas, Director of Community and Family Engagement of United Playaz, said: "Just because I don't have a teacher's degree or a credential doesn't mean I'm not an educator. We're working with kids one-on-one to help them navigate the worst experience of their lives. And we're helping those who are having difficulties with their education even when they're in person."

Simultaneously, public messaging from the City caused many SFUSD staff to feel unfairly attacked. For much of the pandemic, public pressure mounted on school districts across the country, rightly or wrongly. For some SFUSD teachers and administrators, such criticism was often difficult to not take personally. Melissa Dodd, SFUSD's Chief Technology Officer, noted the emotional toll of being constantly criticized: "Along with many members of my team, I was at the office every day since the pandemic began. My team was on the frontlines handing out devices. Yet the initial press releases about the Hubs implied that the City had to step in because the district wasn't doing anything. That was painful for the people who were trying hard to meet kids' educational and social-emotional needs."

⁴²Citywide CBO demographics are not available. As a proxy, we gathered staff demographics from the YMCA of San Francisco and compared them to SFUSD teacher demographics from 2016–17, available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/594addf4e3df28c2d6be15db/t/5c4299f5c2241ba6b9316898/1547868662749/SFUSD+PAR.pdf>. The following are the percentage of each workforce by ethnicity; the first percentage is SFUSD, the second percentage is San Francisco YMCA: American Indian / Alaska Native: 0.5% / 0.3%, Asian: 18.5% / 28.8%, Black or African American: 5% / 12.5%, Filipino: 3.2% / N/A, Hispanic or Latino: 13.8% / 28.5%, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.2% / 1.4%, Not Specified: 9.9% / 0.5%, Two or More Races: 0.6% / 9.2%, White: 47.9%, 18.8%.

⁴³Eliza Shapiro, "Why Child Care Staff Had to Show Up While Teachers Worked Remotely," New York Times, March 19, 2021, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/nyregion/child-care-teachers-schools-covid.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pg-type=Homepage>.

⁴⁴[https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/sfusd/Board.nsf/files/BS9PH364A2A7/\\$file/Tentative%20Agreement%20-%20Distance%20Learning%20MOU%20between%20UESF%20and%20SFUSD%202020-2021%208-6-2020.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/sfusd/Board.nsf/files/BS9PH364A2A7/$file/Tentative%20Agreement%20-%20Distance%20Learning%20MOU%20between%20UESF%20and%20SFUSD%202020-2021%208-6-2020.pdf)

As Dodd’s comment makes clear, SFUSD staff put in tremendous effort and were feeling exhausted, as were CBO and City staff. She also stressed a basic tenet of partnerships: the importance of empathy and the ability for partners to put themselves in the others’ shoes. City staff may have been frustrated by SFUSD decisions, but they might have done more to better understand how their own actions and language exacerbated challenges for SFUSD. For example, the City’s press releases could have acknowledged SFUSD’s efforts in the face of tremendous obstacles.

Board of Education Conflict

Many issues noted above—debates over equity, concerns about safety, capacity constraints, labor politics, strained relationships, and more—boiled over at Board of Education meetings. As SFUSD’s governing body, the Board often set the tone as either collaborative or combative. Many interviewees noted that one specific Board member was particularly combative, resulting in more distance between SFUSD and the City. Interviewees also noted that this member’s behavior often went unchecked by others on the Board.

It is difficult to pinpoint how the Hubs Initiative would have unfolded differently if that political conflict had been replaced by a collaborative, less-political spirit among Board members. SFUSD’s Melissa Dodd offered: “Without the tension, I think we all probably could have moved faster and more efficiently to figure out what supports we could offer given our limitations. We could have saved some time by avoiding all the grandstanding and back and forth.”

Summary: The Collaboration that Could Have Been

How would the Hubs experience have been different if the City, CBOs, and SFUSD had been able to collaborate more? More poignantly, what possibilities might have emerged with less political fighting and more public statements of support?

As this report demonstrates, the experience taught important lessons about the challenges of collaboration. Notably, public conflicts with members of the Board of Education and leaders of the teacher’s union limited the depth of collaboration between SFUSD and the Hubs.

The examples above show how San Francisco’s multiple youth-serving systems—the City, CBOs, and SFUSD—were, at heart, designed to achieve different objectives. Over time, those systems fortified themselves with public policies, regulations, and political coalitions, and they even developed their own set of beliefs about what was best for children and the right way to achieve their goals. The systems built walls around themselves, and personal relationships among system leaders deteriorated. Ultimately, working across systems became the exception instead of the norm.

Given these dynamics, the Hubs’ success is actually quite remarkable. The experience was an exception—an example of how individuals went out of their own lanes to do what was best for kids, despite strong incentives to maintain the status quo.

In our research, we interviewed people who moved among the systems. For example, SFUSD’s Karina Henriquez began her career at a youth development CBO. DCYF’s Sherrice Dorsey-Smith used to work in the CBO sector. We observed that these individuals empathized with other systems and understood their constraints. We believe this understanding influenced how they approached problems: instead of building walls, these individuals (and others) engaged in the messy work of reaching across the aisle. They didn’t grandstand or call names—they got to work.

The Community Hubs Initiative therefore serves as a model for how communities might rethink the traditional silos of governments, nonprofits, and schools to truly meet the needs of families. It is incumbent on system leaders, staff, and the broader community to break down silos, rebuild systems, and rebuild trust so that collaborations—like the Hubs Initiative—become the norm, not the exception.

Lessons

Youth Development Professionals: Skilled and Undervalued

Throughout the pandemic, teachers were often recognized for their extraordinary efforts. Far less public attention, however, was paid to the critical roles played by youth development professionals (such as those employed at Hubs by CBOs and Rec and Parks).⁴⁵ As DCYF’s Sherrice Dorsey-Smith noted: “Without youth development professionals, there would be no Hubs. No other group had the expertise, skills, and knowledge to pull this off.” These professionals gave 2,509 students a chance to avoid disastrous academic, physical, and mental declines. What’s more, staff enabled parents to keep their jobs and regain some emotional strength.

Youth development professionals were essential in a number of ways.

First, they showed up when they were needed most. At the beginning of the pandemic, Americans in almost every profession expressed anxiety about returning to in-person work—youth development professionals were no different. Nevertheless, almost immediately after schools shut their doors in March 2020, these professionals provided in-person support through the ECYC. As more information about ways to mitigate COVID transmission became known, their ranks gradually increased. Eventually, 563 youth development professionals worked at the Hubs.

⁴⁵National Afterschool Association, “Professional Development,” available at <https://naaweb.org/professional-development/item/1342-skilled-professionals-not-superheroes>.

Marissa Cowan, Vice President of Child & Youth Development at the YMCA, praised her staff: “The number of people who have been here from the outset is mind-blowing. About 75 percent of our furloughed staff came back and wanted to work in-person. I was blown away by the number of people showing up with smiles on their faces, making things better for youth in our communities.”

Second, youth development professionals’ unique skills met the moment.⁴⁶ Without in-person school, many children’s emotional and physical health suffered. These children needed more than just a teacher: they needed a counselor, a coach, a friend, and a playmate. Children needed someone to look them in the eye, recognize their pain, and offer an individualized human touch.

Compared to San Francisco’s teachers, Hub staff were more racially diverse and more likely to reflect the demographics of the students they served, with long-standing roots and relationships in those communities. The Hubs experience helped them create personal connections with children and their families—connections that were essential in a traumatic period. Families we interviewed spoke emotionally about the personal care that staff showed for them and their children.

Although some public critics diminished the value of youth development professionals, many San Francisco teachers and principals recognized these workers’ value as *partners* in supporting children’s well-being.

It Takes a Village

When the pandemic began, no single organization (or sector) had sufficient financial resources, expertise, community knowledge and trust, or facility space to create Hubs that could serve so many students. The crisis demanded a collaborative response—one that built on different organizations’ assets in a coordinated manner.

DCYF couldn’t rely on a traditional “command and control” or “push” approach, whereby a central authority made plans, identified resources, and influenced others. Such an approach might have attracted individuals and organizations motivated by funding or compliance, but forming the collaboration needed a “pull” approach. A deeply felt shared mission attracted volunteers to the cause and compelled organizations to work with one another for the benefit of children.

See page 25 for a description of various organizations’ contributions to the Hubs.

Foundation for Collaboration: Built over Many Years but Forged in the Crisis

In crises, organizations risk making strategically unsound and inequitable decisions. To avoid this trap, a strong, pre-existing foundation is key. The Hubs—a very strategic response—relied on three preconditions that were years in the making: relationships of trust across organizations, a shared set of values, and a strong CBO sector.

Personal Relationships and Trust

Relationships mattered when creating the Hubs. Maria Su’s long and trusting relationship with Phil Ginsberg and Michael Lambert enabled them to hatch a plan to create the ECYC. Sherrice Dorsey-Smith’s long-standing relationships with CBO leaders drew CBOs into the “Zoom room” over the summer of 2020 to design a new educational delivery system. And strong relationships among CBO leaders allowed them to work together instead of competing with one another.

Relationships between funders (e.g., DCYF) and grantees (e.g., CBOs), which are often fraught with power dynamics, also proved vital. DCYF could have taken a traditional route by designing a grant program and then inviting proposals for funding. Instead, its leaders convened their CBOs, designed the program together, and provided unrestricted funding for the Hubs.

Misha Olivas of United Playaz noted the importance of relationships. “One of the preconditions was having relationships with DCYF,” she said. “People there knew our work enough to say, ‘We trust you—do what you need to do.’”

Melissa Dodd, SFUSD’s Chief Technology Officer, described how she and Linda Gerull, the City’s Chief Information Officer, found common ground: “Linda and I have strong personalities, but we didn’t let that get in the way of the work that needed to be done. I had only met her a couple times prior to the pandemic. But she approached us saying, ‘What can we do to help?’ Approaching the district with a genuine stance of ‘we’re in this together’ and bringing resources to the table helped to quickly forge a partnership.”

Conversely, the lack of strong relationships between the youth development sector and the school district, particularly at the senior leadership and Board levels, hindered a strong collaborative effort. How might the experiences of students have improved if a collaborative relationship had existed between the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, and the Board of Education?

⁴⁶ National Afterschool Association, “Resources,” available at <https://naaweb.org/resources/core-competencies>.

Values and Vision Alignment

In San Francisco, community organizers worked for decades to focus attention and resources on children and families. Neva Walker, Executive Director at Coleman Advocates, observed: “There has been a lot of work to make sure that San Francisco is really valuing our children, youth, and families, and putting their money behind it—to make sure families are always at the center of decision-making.”

One community organizer noted that values are embedded in some of San Francisco’s policies. “In the last reauthorization of the Children and Youth Fund and Public Education Enrichment Fund, we made sure that a ‘community needs assessment’ was part of the legislation. Now, DCYF goes through a process of determining the community’s needs before giving out grants. And we made sure that special attention was put on racial equity.”

Between the City and CBOs, this community needs assessment articulated the shared values and vision for distributing public funding. As the Hubs coalition expanded, other partners such as Rec and Parks, Public Library, Department of Technology, and private funders bought into those values and that vision.

Financial Investment in the CBO Sector

One manifestation of this growing alignment of values was the creation of the Children and Youth Fund. As noted earlier in this case study, years of hard-fought grassroots organizing led by local nonprofit Coleman Advocates resulted, in 1991, in San Franciscans’ vote to create a dedicated Children’s Fund (now the Children and Youth Fund). Since fiscal year 2001–02, DCYF has invested \$1.06 billion in the City’s nonprofits and supporting infrastructure—including \$107.8 million in fiscal year 2020–21.

Intermediary Organizations Are Essential for Large-Scale Collaboration

“Intermediary organizations” facilitate cooperation among other groups. Since they neither provide direct services (like the Boys and Girls Club) nor make policy (like the Department of Health during a pandemic), their role often goes unnoticed and their contributions remain misunderstood or undervalued. In fact, many intermediary organizations prefer it this way—leading from behind and elevating others’ work.

In the Hubs’ story, DCYF served as the intermediary organization. Below are just four roles DCYF played that, in our view, no other organization could have played.

Bring People Together around a Shared Vision

DCYF convened Hub partners around a shared vision, tapping into each organization’s purpose and values, and helping to ease concerns over who got credit and funding.

Reflecting on how a shared vision brought organizations together, Maria Su said: “At the end of the day, the CBOs heard our vision loud and clear and saw themselves in that vision. That was a huge win because we couldn’t mandate that they join us.”

Michael Lambert of the SF Public Library noted: “Our participation in the initiative has been the best experience during the pandemic. There is no greater need or use of our resources—we are supporting the most vulnerable families in the city.”

Ultimately, leading with a shared vision led to more partners, more commitment, more meaning, and more bureaucracy-breaking behavior. Sherrice Dorsey-Smith noted: “The walls of ‘I’m gonna stay in my lane and do my thing’ were broken down. Before, people might have said, ‘Oh, if it’s children and youth, that’s DCYF’s responsibility.’ Now, people say ‘it’s *all* of our children—what do you need from me?’”

Facilitate Communication Across Systems

A significant obstacle for collaborating across systems is that each system has its own ways of working, beliefs, and jargon. Maria Su describes this dynamic: “Systems often have difficulty collaborating because they don’t know the language and nuances needed to communicate with one another. Those communications sometimes end up crossing wires and you end up with lots of confusion.”

With patience and care, DCYF served as a translator of sorts—ensuring that each system understood its role and how to work with the other systems.

Frame the Problem, Influence the Solution

Throughout July, Maria Su pitched the Hubs idea to potential partners, including SFUSD leadership, other City departments, and CBOs. Her presentation unapologetically framed the problem as student- and equity-centered.

Su might have framed the problem differently, asking “How can schools open safely?” or “How can we get enough funding to make CBOs whole?” But by framing the issue in terms of what the most vulnerable students needed, she offered a laser-focused solution, turning the conversation from “we can’t” to “we must.”

Provide Flexibility and Capacity that Other Organizations Cannot

Because intermediary organizations typically do not run programs, they can pivot quickly. For example, Su, Dorsey-Smith, and others quickly shifted away from their normal, pre-pandemic roles to take charge of the Hubs strategic planning, connecting organizations with each other and engaging in public advocacy. They created and staffed an enrollment system (along with Rec and Parks), created recruiting materials, served as translators between the Department of Public Health and CBOs over health guidelines, and shared information across the Hub partners through all-hands Zoom calls and a bi-weekly progress update.

By virtue of its flexible staff and funding, DCYF provided the connective tissue for the Hubs in a way that no other organization could have.

Equity-Centered Collaboratives Benefit from Specific Leadership Traits

Our interviews revealed three leadership traits that contributed to the Hubs’ outcomes.

Bold, Decisive Leadership

“Mayor Breed has no problem being bold,” said Maria Su. “Her lived experience guides her belief in the right thing to do. She’s gotten heat for a lot of things, but she is consistent and clear: whatever we do, we do it because it is in the best interest of our kids.”

Linda Gerull of the Department of Technology noted: “We understood that without the Hubs, underserved students wouldn’t have support. Failure wasn’t an option, and we made the Hubs a priority.”

Lane-Changing Leadership

The Hubs coalition involved multiple municipal government departments, CBOs, private funders, and individual schools—each of which had their own role and constituency, or “lane.” To participate in the coalition, leaders had to “change lanes”—to go beyond their political safe zones.

Su recalled a DCYF meeting in July to design the Community Hubs: “One of our managers said, ‘Wait a minute, Maria, you’re now walking into education territory and you’re going to be in hot water.’ That’s when I knew we were doing the right thing. Because it’s true—we were walking into something that was not our lane, but we knew it was very important.”

Leading with Shared Experiences

Many Hub leaders’ decisions were influenced by experiences they shared with others. For example, Mayor London Breed’s experience growing up in public housing gave her an understanding of how vulnerable low-income families are, a perspective that motivated her to prioritize those families during the COVID crisis. DCYF’s Maria Su and Sherrice Dorsey-Smith both started their careers at CBOs and understood the vital roles CBOs played, as well as their often-fraught relationship with funders. During the crisis, they removed funding restrictions and empowered the CBOs to take the lead in designing the Hubs. Many CBO staff grew up in the communities they came to serve, and they provided a personal touch that large institutions often could not.

In contrast, a lack of shared experiences could be a barrier to understanding. One interviewee noted: “Many policy makers and civic leaders are not public-school parents. When you look at the decision-makers and the pressures that they’re facing to offer solutions on how to open schools for in person instruction, there was an astonishing naiveté and lack of common understanding about how public schools actually operate on a day-to-day basis in San Francisco.”

Some Collaboration Can Happen Even Without Senior-Level Support

Throughout our research, we were struck by the cordiality and willingness to collaborate between line staff, middle managers, and senior employees at SFUSD, CBOs, and municipal government. Collaboration between SFUSD schools and Hubs occurred despite vocal opposition from UESF and some members of the Board of Education.

Describing how staff often felt in that situation, one SFUSD staff member remarked: “It’s kind of like when the parents are fighting. Kids find a way to build alliances and help each other out.” Numerous interviewees shared examples of meaningful staff-to-staff collaboration that occurred despite the absence of senior-level support.

The City and SFUSD Don't Collaborate Well—This Hurts Kids

Collaboration between the Hubs and the SFUSD was hampered by political tensions. However, many staff, driven by a desire to accomplish what was *practical*, were eager to collaborate.

Why couldn't San Francisco's public education and municipal government sectors work together more effectively? According to our interviewees, the system was at least partially to blame. Neva Walker, Executive Director at Coleman Advocates, posited: "We were dealing with two big bureaucracies that weren't necessarily designed to share the same mission."

To better understand these two sectors, it is helpful to consider differences in the two systems' accountability systems, funding streams, and constituencies.

Accountability systems. The City and SFUSD are both accountable to San Francisco's residents via public elections. The City is governed by an elected 11-member Board of Supervisors and an elected Mayor, while SFUSD is governed by an elected 7-member Board of Education. These two governing boards have no authority over the other.

Funding streams. Like most cities, San Francisco and its departments (e.g., DCYF) receive the majority of its funding from local taxes.⁴⁷ SFUSD on the other hand receives most of its funding from the State of California.⁴⁸ SFUSD also receives significant funding from the City and County of San Francisco for sports, libraries, arts, music, Wellness Centers, and other programs. Despite this funding transfer from the City to SFUSD, combining funding streams (also known as "braiding" funding) and collaboratively planning what to do with funds is notoriously difficult. For example, funding sources have different timelines, reporting requirements, and categorical restrictions—all of which limit the extent different youth-serving entities can combine funding or use funding for shared purposes.

Labor union constituencies. The two systems are very different. UESF traditionally wields significant influence over SFUSD, which is manifested through negotiated labor agreements. All seven current Board of Education members were endorsed by UESF. In contrast, the City negotiates with a broader set of labor unions.

Common "tables." There are two main entities through which the City and SFUSD talk with one another. The Joint Select Committee was a temporary committee composed of two Members of the Board of Supervisors, two Commissioners of the Board of Education, and two Trustees of the City College Board of Trustees.⁴⁹ Its charge was to "be referred requests for hearings concerning issues of mutual interest that impact the City, School District, City College, its employees, its students, the families of its students, and the public use of School District and City College facilities." This committee was recently disbanded in favor of the Youth, Young Adult and Families Committee.⁵⁰

The Our Children Our Families Council, created in 2014 via a voter-approved proposition, is an "Advisory Body Co-Chaired by the San Francisco Mayor and Superintendent of SFUSD."⁵¹ Its mission is to align and support "the systems of support [children, youth, and their families] need to thrive, particularly those with the greatest need." The 42-member Council is co-chaired by the Mayor and the Superintendent. According to our interviewees, the Council has the potential to align the two systems but has not yet done so. The Council last met in 2019.

⁴⁷City and County of San Francisco, "Expenditures and Revenue v. Budget," available at <https://sfgov.org/scorecards//finance/expen-ditures-and-revenues-vs-budget>.

⁴⁸SFUSD, "Budgeting to ensure students are prepared for college and careers," available at <https://www.sfusd.edu/budgeting-en-sure-students-are-prepared-college-and-careers>.

⁴⁹City and County of San Francisco, "Joint City, School District, and City College Select Committee," available at <https://sfbos.org/joint-city-school-district-and-city-college-select-committee>.

⁵⁰City and County of San Francisco, "Youth, Young Adult, and Families Committee," available at <https://sfbos.org/youth-young-adult-and-families-committee>.

⁵¹Our Children Our Families, "Council Members," available at <https://www.ourchildrenourfamilies.org/our-council>.



Gene Friend SOMA Rec Center
TCR 7863 QTY: 24
I Have, Who Has Social Studies
Game Grd 2
BOX # ____ OF ____

Gene Friend SOMA Rec Center
270 6th St, San Francisco
Ca 94103
BOX # ____ OF ____

Gene Friend SOMA Rec Center
TCR 7866 QTY: 24
I Have, Who Has Social Studies
Game Grd 2
BOX # ____ OF ____

DONATE
TCR - 8370
LITERACY POWER GRADE 1
PACKED BY: POKHAR
DATE: 1/28/16
JOB# 133008
TCR - 8370
LITERACY POWER GRADE 1
PACKED BY: POKHAR
DATE: 1/28/16
JOB# 133008
TCR - 8370
LITERACY POWER GRADE 1
PACKED BY: POKHAR
DATE: 1/28/16
JOB# 133008



Part IV: Post-Pandemic Possibilities

The Hubs, like the COVID-19 pandemic more broadly, created opportunities for change. “Going back to the way we operated before would do our young people a disservice,” said Chris Tsukida of The Richmond Neighborhood Center. Numerous interviewees noted that the COVID pandemic will not be the last crisis we face. Whatever the next one is, it is incumbent on us all to ensure that we are ready for it.

In this section, we share how our interviewees answered the question: “Given what we’ve learned from the Hubs, what is now possible and what must happen in a post-pandemic environment?”

End the Turf Struggles

If anything, this has proven that turf wars during a pandemic stifle innovation. What we've done is blurred the boundaries. We've said all the time: these are all *our children*; not yours, not mine. And since they're *our children*, we need to work together to serve them.

Maria Su, Executive Director at DCYF

Before the pandemic, we were starting to collaborate more. It was about breaking down “mine versus yours.” Some school sites were successful and saw serving kids as our shared responsibility. But for a lot of schools, it was “you are over here doing your thing, we are over here doing our thing, and never the twain shall meet.” This pandemic has caused that way of thinking to come crashing down.

Sherrice Dorsey-Smith, Deputy Director of Programs and Grants at DCYF

The Hubs' big lesson is that we can do so much more if we put aside our individual organizational interests and instead focus on our shared mission. Because, ultimately, we're serving the same kids. Our working together to provide cohesive services for kids is a necessity.

Stacey Wang, Chief Executive Officer at San Francisco Education Fund

Can we think about the care and education of kids as a full system and not divide it so much into the school day and afterschool? This could be a whole system that improves the connection with families, helps CBO staff be better compensated and honored, enriches the education system, and allows for smaller cohort sizes.

**Emily Garvie, Program Officer at
Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation**

It doesn't seem we have utilized Our Children Our Families as a space to come together around meeting the needs of our community at this time. I think we need to dissect why that isn't working and what gets in the way of even well-conceived systems and plans.

**Gentle Blythe, Deputy Superintendent, Strategic
Partnerships and Communications at SFUSD**

Create a Shared Vision

The real lost opportunity is that there wasn't collective visioning at the city level. Both powers—the City and SFUSD—were on parallel tracks, but they weren't talking about what could we accomplish together, and what that would look like. One thing I still have hope for: that there's a plan. It doesn't need to be the best plan, but it does need to be a plan we all agree on.

**Chris Tsukida, Chief Program Officer at
The Richmond Neighborhood Center**

One thing that would help is for the people who are doing the work to figure out how to come together. Similar to Our Children Our Families—can we have a common framework and some guiding principles and agreements of how we can work together?

Melissa Dodd, Chief Technology Officer at SFUSD

Repair Personal Relationships

I think that there was an inherent mistrust on both sides—the City and SFUSD. Sometimes leaders have to say, “Hey, I’m giving you my word and give me your word.” Just human to human—let’s look at the kids and figure out how can we create a plan together. And what can I do to make you feel that you have a voice and that you’re safe?”

In time of crises like that, people want leadership. This is your job. You can’t just talk trash about the other side publicly. You have to actually extend an olive branch.

Sandra Lee Fewer, Former Member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors

After the District sued the City about civil service, that relationship has never healed. There’s just a huge divide between the School District and the City and the relationship there. When those things are happening at that political level, everyone suffers. I think people need to put their egos aside and try to come together. There’s a lot of lip service right now going on about the restorative process, but that really does need to happen.

Anonymous

Respect and Boost Investment in Youth Development

I wonder if we're going to look at employees from all community-based organizations through a different lens. Before SFUSD, I worked in afterschool and we fought so hard to not be seen as a babysitter or a childcare center. We really wanted to be seen for what we brought to the students. We really should be looking into investing in afterschool program staff to provide them the training that they need so they could be seen as equal as someone in the classroom.

Karina Henriquez, Program Administrator of ExCEL After School Programs at SFUSD

I envision a relationship that is truly collaborative, where children would not be able to distinguish a CBO provider from a teacher—where all these adults are caring adults who are there to support children.

Maria Su, Executive Director at DCYF

The most disadvantaged students will need remedial help and that stuff is really expensive. But youth development workers can be really instrumental, because their support is more individualized. They can actually help to supplement—to help kids catch up with their peers.

Sandra Lee Fewer, Former Member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Refocus Values on Equity

We need to have a transformation of values in order to make equity possible. That is something we need to not just say in colorful language, but actually walk that walk. That means making children, youth, and families a priority in our budgets.

**Neva Walker, Executive Director
at Coleman Advocates**

People not having shelter and food—those things existed, but we were able to turn a blind eye because we felt poverty didn't impact us. We need leaders who say, "It DOES impact you, even though you don't feel it or see it." I do think we need to re-value what it means to be in service to others and understand that there's a bill to pay for those who aren't sacrificing. A lot of it comes down to "What is the leadership in this country going to be about—are you actually valuing people's lives?"

**Chris Tsukida, Chief Program Officer at
The Richmond Neighborhood Center**

Learn from the Hub Experience

We need an after-action debrief to talk about what worked, where there was conflict, and how can we continue working better together. We need this because I know that some amazing collaborations happened. Amazing relationships were built. Amazing services happened for kids and families. It has not just been a year of disaster. These personal connections add up to greater empathy and an actual working relationship, and they build confidence that we can make system changes. These discussions have to take place on a micro-level as well as among giant institutions.

SFUSD Employee

With COVID, we all had to pivot so quickly that there wasn't really time to memorialize what we had done. If we don't memorialize it, we're going to forget.

Sandra Lee Fewer, Former Member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Care for the Whole Child

I'm seeing how the CBOs use youth development best practices as they support distance learning. If it wasn't for the Hubs, some students wouldn't be showing up for class or keeping up their grades. *Something* that the Hubs are doing is working for the students who were previously not engaged in school in any kind of way.

Sherrice Dorsey-Smith, Deputy Director of Programs and Grants at DCYF

We're trying to wrap our brains around a new way of working with children through greater compassion and understanding. A lot of our young people have parents who are incarcerated or have other traumas, and you can't learn if other needs are not met. You can't learn if you're not loved. I would say that we have an excellent opportunity in this moment to re-imagine what school could be.

Misha Olivas, Director of Community and Family Engagement at United Playaz

Through the Community Hubs, we're doing things that we knew should happen, like having small groups of youth working and learning together. I hope that continues—having smaller groups and thinking about relationships and connections.

Nelly Sapinski, Executive Director of Jamestown Community Center

I hope that, as they go back to school, the school staff and teachers continue to understand that each child learns differently, and to individualize their teaching.

Tarah Owens, Parent

I know teachers work very hard and they have many kids. But each child is different, and they learn differently. We can work independently with a teacher or a social worker, anyone from the school about just our child's curriculum, I think that will help a lot.

Deena Tobin, Parent

Schools need to lean on some of the Community Hubs so they can learn some of the things and techniques we've done to help transition the kids back into a classroom setting. We have kids who were afraid to be around others and have emotional distress. There's going to be so much need for counseling after this.

Renard Monroe, Director at Youth 1st

Conclusion

To do what's best for children, everyone involved with the Hubs went out of their lanes—they collaborated even though it was difficult and politically fraught. Yet the systems that make such collaboration difficult still exist. Going forward, it is incumbent on San Franciscans to ask themselves, “Can we do better? Can we redesign our systems so that we make collaboration easier and not harder?”

Doing so will likely take imagination and courage. But, according to our interviewees, such change is necessary, and our children's well-being depends on it.





Appendices

Hub Coalition Organizations

Program

Recreation and Parks Department

The following Rec Centers hosted and operated Hubs at their own site.

- Betty Ann Ong Rec Center
- Eureka Valley Rec Center
- Garfield Clubhouse
- Golden Gate Park Tennis Center
- Hamilton Rec Center
- Herz Playground
- Joseph Lee Rec Center
- Minnie & Lovie Ward Rec Center
- Mission Arts and Rec
- Palega Rec Center
- Potrero Hill Rec Center
- Tenderloin Rec Center
- Youngblood Coleman Park

Community-Based Organizations

The following CBOs hosted and operated Hubs at their own site. CBOs with an asterisk (*) also operated a Hub at another organization's site.

- Asian Pacific American Community Center
- Booker T. Washington Community Service Center
- Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco
- Buena Vista Child Care
- Catholic Charities CYO of the Archdiocese of San Francisco
- City of Dreams
- Collective Impact
- Donaldina Cameron House
- FACES SF
- Felton Institute
- First Graduate
- Friendship House Association of American Indians
- Glide Foundation*
- Hamilton Families
- Indochinese Housing Development Corporation
- Ingleside Community Center
- Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
- Mission Neighborhood Centers
- Our Kids First
- Portola Family Connection Center
- Potrero Hill Neighborhood House
- The Salvation Army
- Samoan Community Development Center
- Success Center San Francisco
- Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center*
- Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation
- United Playaz*
- West Bay Pilipino Multi-Service Center*
- YMCA - Bayview Hunters Point*
- YMCA - Buchanan*
- YMCA - Chinatown
- YMCA - Embarcadero
- YMCA - Mission*
- YMCA - Presidio Community
- YMCA - Richmond District*
- YMCA - Stonestown Family

The following CBOs operated Hubs at another organization's site.

- Bay Area Community Resources (Hosted by RPD site St. Mary's Rec Center, SFPL sites Golden Gate Valley Branch and Ortega Branch, and HOPE SF site Alice Griffith)
- Community Youth Center of San Francisco (Hosted by RPD site Willie Woo Wong Playground and SFPL site Ingleside Branch)
- Good Samaritan Family Resource Center (Hosted by Calvary Hill Community Church)
- Jamestown Community Center (Hosted by San Francisco Community Music Center, 826 Valencia, and RPD site Geneva Car Barn)
- Mission Graduates (Hosted by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts)
- Peer Resources (Hosted by RPD site SF County Fair Building and SFPL site Bayview Branch)

- Real Options for City Kids (Hosted by SFPL site Visitacion Valley Branch)
- Richmond Neighborhood Center (Hosted by SFPL site Richmond Branch)
- Southeast Asian Development Center (Hosted by Marriott Hotel - Union Square)
- Up on Top (Hosted by RPD site Tenderloin Rec Center)
- Urban Ed Academy (Hosted by Safe & Sound)
- Wah Mei School (Hosted by SFPL site Sunset Branch)
- YMCA - Shih Yu-Lang Central (Hosted by RPD site Boeddeker Park)
- Young Community Developers (Hosted by 100% College Prep)
- Youth First (Hosted by RPD site Merced Heights Playground)

Space

San Francisco Public Library

The following SFPL branches donated their space for a Hub operated by a separate organization.

- Bayview Branch (Donated to Peer Resources)
- Bernal Branch (Donated to YMCA - Mission)
- Golden Gate Valley Branch (Donated to Bay Area Community Resources)
- Ingleside Branch (Donated to Community Youth Center of San Francisco)
- North Beach Branch (Donated to Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center)
- Ortega Branch (Donated to Bay Area Community Resources)
- Richmond Branch (Donated to Richmond Neighborhood Center)
- Sunset Branch (Donated to Wah Mei School)
- Visitacion Valley Branch (Donated to Real Options for City Kids)
- Western Addition Branch (Donated to YMCA - Buchanan)

Recreation and Parks Department

The following Rec Centers donated their space for a Hub operated by a separate organization.

- Argonne Playground (Donated to YMCA - Richmond District)
- Boeddeker Park (Donated to YMCA - Shih Yu-Lang Central)
- Gene Friend SOMA Rec Center (Donated to United Playaz and West Bay Pilipino Multi-Service Center)
- Geneva Car Barn (Donated to Mission YMCA and Jamestown Community Center)
- Hayes Valley Clubhouse (Donated to Collective Impact)
- Margaret Hayward Playground (Donated to YMCA - Buchanan)
- Merced Heights Playground (Donated to Youth First)
- San Francisco County Fair Building (Donated to Peer Resources)
- St. Mary's Rec Center (Donated to Bay Area Community Resources)
- Tenderloin Rec Center (Donated to Up on Top)
- Willie Woo Woo Wong Playground (Donated to Community Youth Center of San Francisco)

HOPE SF

HOPE SF donated the following sites.

- Alice Griffith (Donated to Bay Area Community Resources)
- Hunters View (Donated to YMCA - Bayview Hunters Point)
- The Willie Brown Center (Donated to Boys and Girls Clubs of San Francisco)

Community-Based Organizations

The following CBOs donated their site to organizations who operated Hubs.

- 100% College Prep (Donated to Young Community Developers)
- 826 Valencia (Donated to Jamestown Community Center)
- Safe & Sound (Donated to Urban Ed Academy)
- San Francisco Community Music Center (Donated to Jamestown Community Center)

Other

- Calvary Hill Community Church (Donated to Good Samaritan Resource Center)
- Marriott Hotel (Donated to Glide Foundation and Southeast Asian Development Center)
- Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (Donated to Mission Graduates)

Planning and Coordination

- Department of Children, Youth and Their Families
- San Francisco Public Library
- San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department

Support

- Be The Change
- California Child Care Licensing Department
- Chefables
- Edutainment for Equity
- Flourish Agenda
- San Francisco Beacon Initiative
- San Francisco Department of Public Health
- San Francisco Department of Technology
- San Francisco Education Fund
- San Francisco Unified School District
- SF311
- Spark Decks

Outreach

- Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
- San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing
- San Francisco Human Services Agency
- San Francisco Unified School District

Philanthropy

- Anonymous foundation
- Comcast
- Crankstart
- Golden State Warriors
- Private citizens
- Silver Giving Foundation
- Tipping Point Community

Interview Participants

Case Study Research Interviews

Community Hub Initiative Participant Interviews

Our deepest thanks go out to the parent/caregivers, students, and staff who shared their stories and experiences with us through our Community Hub Initiative Focus Groups.

Parent/Caregiver Focus Groups

| First | Last | Community Hub Child Attended |
|-------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Louis | Banks | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Lisa | Fazendin | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Ebie | Murillo Avila | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Kate | Sofis | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Erica Foots | Foots | FACES SF |
| Corazon | Lozano | Mission Graduates |
| Tarah | Owens | Mission Graduates |
| Deena | Tobin | Mission Graduates |
| Tiarah | Puni | Mission YMCA |
| Elvia | Ramos | Mission YMCA |
| Karen | Rivas | Mission YMCA |
| Michelle | Brezealle | Samoan Community Development Center |
| Sonya | Iosia | Samoan Community Development Center |
| Beke | Lepolo | Samoan Community Development Center |
| Genie | Savaii | Samoan Community Development Center |
| Patricia | Alexander | Youth 1st |
| Manwell | Howard | Youth 1st |
| Krayla | Lawson | Youth 1st |
| Lisa | Wiley | Youth 1st |

Staff Focus Groups

| First | Last | Title | Organization |
|-----------|-----------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Jessica | Huey | Recreation Specialist | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Lucas | Tobin | Supervisor for Therapeutic Recreation and Inclusion and ADA Coordinator | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Emily | Vasquez | Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator, Inclusion Services | Eureka Valley Recreation Center |
| Charlotte | Espanol | Staff Member | FACES SF |
| Natalie | Guandique | Chief Program Officer of Extended Day Programs | Mission Graduates |
| Alejandro | Pena | Program Director | Mission Graduates |
| Maricela | Rodriguez | Site Coordinator | Mission YMCA |
| Lynn | Peleseuma | Program Manager | Samoan Community Development Center |
| Edelweiss | Vaovasa | Project Coordinator | Samoan Community Development Center |
| Renard | Monroe | Executive Director | Youth 1st |

Research Interviews

We wish to thank the following individuals who were interviewed in order to help us understand the story and operation of the SF Community Hubs Initiative.

| First | Last | Title | Organization |
|------------|--------------|--|--|
| Alex | Bahn | Manager, Digital Equity | San Francisco Digital Equity Initiative, Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development |
| Gentle | Blythe | Deputy Superintendent, Strategic Partnerships and Communications | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Kevine | Boggess | Policy Director at Coleman Advocates; Commissioner | Coleman Advocates; San Francisco Unified School District Board of Education |
| Carolyn | Caldwell | Director of Operations | United Playaz |
| Jarae | Clark | Executive Director | City of Dreams |
| Cherease | Coats | Recreation Program Coordinator | City and County of San Francisco, Recreation & Parks Department |
| Rob | Connolly | President | Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco |
| Marissa | Cowan | Vice President of Child & Youth Development | YMCA of San Francisco |
| Rachel | Der | 2nd Grade Teacher | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Melissa | Dodd | Chief Technology Officer | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Sherrice | Dorsey-Smith | Deputy Director of Programs and Grants | City of San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families |
| Kristie | Dutton | Program Manager | Asian Pacific American Community Center |
| Sandra Lee | Fewer | Former Supervisor, District 1 | City and County of San Francisco, Board of Supervisors |
| Emily | Garvie | Program Officer | Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation |
| Linda | Gerull | City CIO, Executive Director | City and County of San Francisco, Department of Technology |
| Phil | Ginsburg | General Manager | City and County of San Francisco, Recreation & Parks Department |
| Ruth | Grabowski | Manager, Student & Family Services Division | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Phil | Halperin | President | Silver Giving Foundation |
| Mandi | Hand | Program Coordinator | United Playaz |
| Karina | Henriquez | Program Administrator, ExCEL After School Programs | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Jessica | Huey | Therapeutic Recreation Specialist | City and County of San Francisco, Recreation & Parks Department |
| Dawn | Kamalanathan | Chief Facilities Officer | San Francisco Unified School District |
| James | Kennedy | 2nd Grade Teacher | SFUSD |
| Julie | Kidd | Executive Director | Silver Giving Foundation |
| Jenny | Lam | Board of Education Commissioner, Education Advisor to Mayor London Breed | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Michael | Lambert | City Librarian at San Francisco Public Library | San Francisco Public Library |
| Mele | Lau-Smith | Chief, Student, Community, Family Support Division | San Francisco Unified School District |
| Misha | Olivas | Director of Community and Family Engagement | United Playaz |
| Frances | Phillips | Program Director, Arts and The Creative Work Fund | Walter & Elise Haas Fund |

| First | Last | Title | Organization |
|--------------|-------------|--|---|
| Hillary | Ronen | Supervisor, District 9 | City and County of San Francisco, Board of Supervisors |
| Nelly | Sapinski | Executive Director | Jamestown Community Center |
| Maria | Su | Executive Director | City of San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families |
| Kareem | Sykes | Program Director | City of Dreams |
| Pui Ling | Tam | Program Officer | Walter & Elise Haas Fund |
| José-Luis | Tekun Mejia | Special Projects Director | Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth |
| Chris | Tsukida | Chief Program Officer | The Richmond Neighborhood Center |
| Ana | Validzic | Team Lead for Schools and Child-care at SF COVID Command | Department of Public Health |
| Neva | Walker | Executive Director | Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth |

Background Research Interviews

Special thanks to the individuals who we met with to provide background information and advice that helped us to craft this case study.

| First | Last | Title | Organization |
|--------------|----------------|--|--|
| Thomas | Arnett | Senior Resercher | The Clayton Christensen Institute |
| Jill | Bourne | City Librarian | San Jose Public Library |
| Dori | Caminong | Communications and Engagement Lead | City and County of San Francisco, Department of Children, Youth and their Families |
| Sarah | Chandler | Independent Education Management Consultant | Los Angeles |
| Jasmine | Clemons | Sr. Policy Manager for Government Reform and Strategic Initiatives | Office of Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski, Jr. |
| Michael | DeSousa | Chief Program Officer | The Oakland REACH |
| Patrick | Donovan | Managing Partner | RootED Denver |
| Lauren | Hancock | Community Programs Administrator - School Partnerships and Expanded Learning | San Jose Public Library |
| Joe | Nieto | Executive Director, Early Care and Education | Riverside County Office of Education |
| Carol | Paine-McGovern | Executive Director | Kent School Services Network |
| Jeff | Raderstrong | Assistant Director | Living Cities |
| Sandra | Taylor | Director | Oakland Fund for Children & Youth |
| Ariel | Taylor Smith | Executive Director | Transform Education Now |
| Matthew | Van Zetten | Former Management Analyst | Kent County (Michigan) |
| Jason | Weeby | Independent Education Management Consultant | San Francisco Bay Area |
| Shannon | Williams | Senior Vice President of Community Engagement | The Mind Trust |

Mid-Year Outcomes (Researched and Written by Social Policy Research Associates)

In fall 2020, DCYF contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct a developmental evaluation of the Hubs. SPR's goal was not to determine whether the Hubs had succeeded, but rather to identify how they were working and suggest areas for improvement. SPR evaluated outcomes related to two focal areas: academic engagement and social emotional well-being.

With SPR's permission, below we include below a portion of their Mid-Year Synthesis. The report's authors are Rachel Estrella, PhD; Heather Lewis-Charp, Mika Clark, Juan Carlos Piña; with contributions from Sehej Singh.

[Click here](#) to access the full Mid-Year Synthesis. SPR will release a full-year report in summer 2021, which we will be posted [here](#).

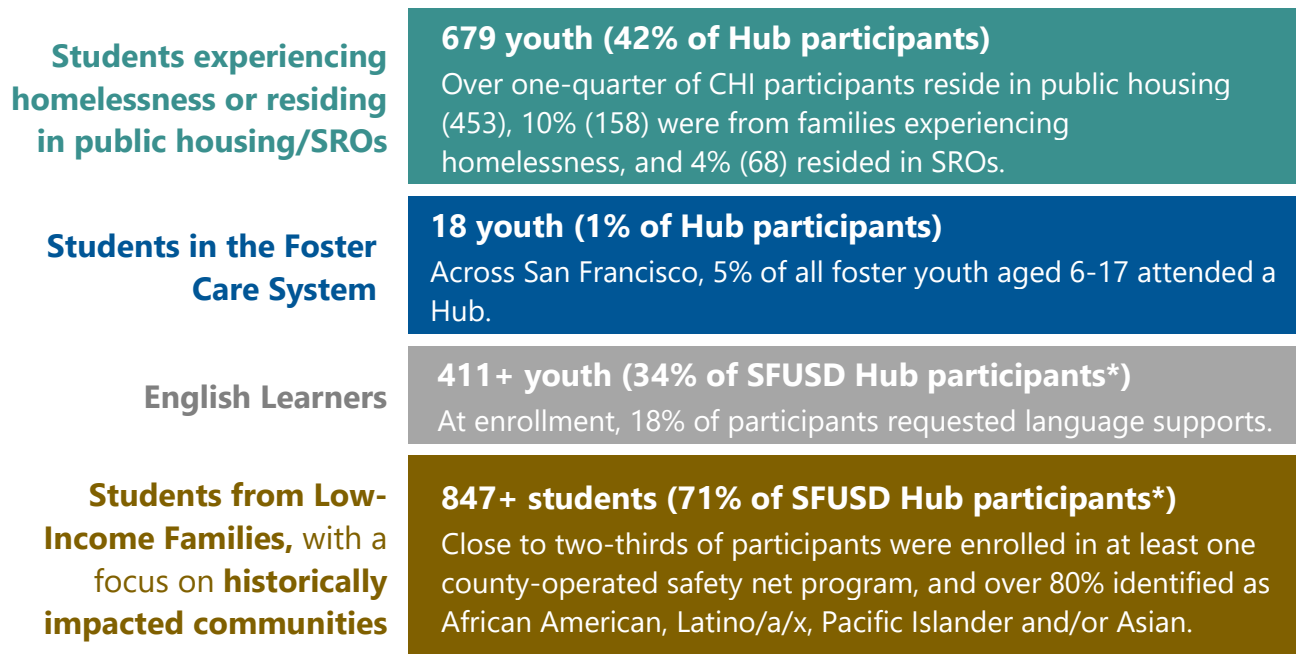
5 | Preliminary Outcomes

The most notable outcome emerging from the Community Hubs Initiative is that, despite the extremely compressed timeline, not having a clear blueprint for implementation at the onset, and the multiple challenges posed by the pandemic, the partners in this initiative were able to successfully open Hubs and start serving students within their estimated timeframe. Over the course of five months, the CHI successfully opened 78 Hub sites, serving over 1,600 high-needs students across over 30 neighborhoods, resulting in successful partnerships across city agencies and strengthened relationships across organizations that support youth throughout San Francisco. In this chapter, we share other emerging outcomes, primarily at the student level, but also at the family and school levels. While these outcomes offer insights into emerging areas of progress, since the Hubs had only been in operation for three months as of the drafting of this report, these outcomes are preliminary.

Student Characteristics

As of December 2020, a total of 1,605 students were enrolled in a Hub. As demonstrated in Figure 10 below, Hubs successfully enrolled students who fit DCYF’s priority criteria.⁸

Figure 10: Alignment with Priority Criteria (Number of Youth Falling into Priority Areas)

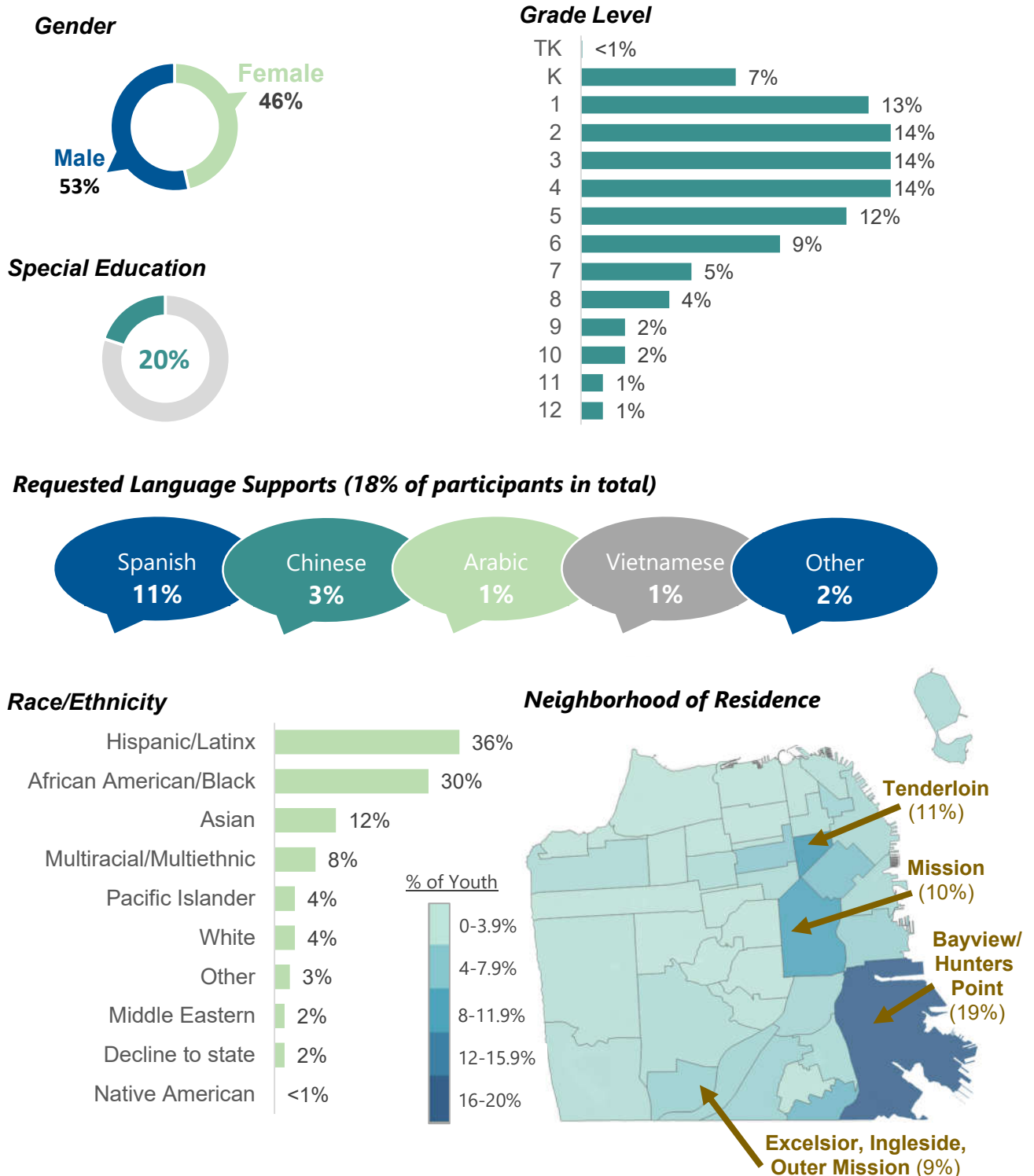


* Of the 1,200 SFUSD students who were enrolled in a Hub as of 11/20/2020. This data came from SFUSD records; it was only possible to calculate this percentage for SFUSD students.

⁸ According to the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, there were 332 foster youth in San Francisco as of 10/1/2020. *California Child Welfare Indicators Project*. Accessed 1/27/21 from <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>.

We provide more information related to CHI participant demographics below in Figure 11. Notably, while 12 percent of SFUSD students were enrolled in Special Education, 20 percent of SFUSD CHI participants were enrolled in Special Education. Because the first phase of enrollment focused on K-6 graders, it is not surprising that CHI participants were most likely to be in elementary school.

Figure 11: CHI Participant Demographics (1,605 students enrolled as of December 22, 2020)



Student Outcomes

As noted in Chapter 4, the Hubs were designed to support students who were least likely to succeed in a distance learning environment and under the added pressures introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section we highlight emerging student outcomes related to two key focal areas: academic engagement and social emotional wellbeing.

Academic Engagement

"I saw major improvements in my daughter's involvement in class, academics, and attitude when she began attending the program. Her teacher can attest to this as well." - Parent

Concerns about learning loss due to COVID-19 and the shift to distance learning has made supporting academic engagement one of the Hubs' most urgent priorities. Indeed, some Hub staff shared that several of the students in their programs were extremely behind in their assignments, and some had never even logged into a Zoom meeting. While some Hub staff thought that their support was perhaps most impactful for these extremely disengaged students, results from the parent survey from December 2020 indicate that the impact has been broader. The majority of parent survey respondents (87%) agreed that their child's participation in distance learning has increased, and they are better able to keep up with their schoolwork because of their participation in the Hub (88%). Parents expressed gratitude for the extra academic support the Hubs have provided to their children, noting that the successful implementation of the following program elements contributed to their child's engagement:

- **Conducive learning environment.** Many parent survey respondents shared that their children were better able to engage academically because the Hub environment is much more conducive to learning than their home environment. In addition to having the necessary equipment and internet access for students to effectively engage in distance learning, Hub staff shared that students often needed help with technical logistics and navigating the virtual classroom environment, noting that parents are often unable to provide this kind of support. Indeed, 62% of parent survey respondents reported that they enrolled their child in a Hub specifically because they needed this type of support in coordinating distance learning activities.



88%

of parents agreed that the Hub program supported their child in **keeping up with their schoolwork.**



87%

of parents agreed that their child is **participating in distance learning more** often because of their Hub program.

- **Individualized attention.** Hub staff noted that for a number of their students, simply having consistent, caring adults watching over them helped improve student academic engagement. This helped students complete their assignments, as Hub staff were able to make sure that students were actually attending their classes and could help keep the students “on task.” As one Hub staff member shared, “For a lot of these children, they’re getting the attention and the support that they really have needed for years, even to have someone just stand by your side while you’re trying to figure something out.”

“ My child is a very active and restless kid. Having remote classes at the community [Hub] is a very important issue for him. Thanks [for] the help of every teacher at the community center who has been so warm-hearted in helping with his study every day. As [a] parent, I am greatly indebted to every one of the teachers in the community [Hub]. Thank you!”

- Parent

- **Academic support.** Some parents shared that as a result of their children’s participation in the Hubs, their children were doing better academically, with a few noting that they were seeing an increase in reading ability and learning retention. They attributed this success to the academic tutoring provided by Hub staff as well as the staff’s efforts to support students in following better study habits. Some Hub staff have shared that the academic supports provided by the Hubs are not just appreciated by parents, but also by teachers and school administrators, with one Hub staff sharing that they “have all voiced their appreciation for the Hub, especially for the students with learning difficulties, with whom schools had previously struggled to find a place that could support them.” That said, multiple staff members have also shared concerns about their ability to adequately support students with special needs, given capacity and training constraints. Supporting students with special needs was, in fact, the area where programs rated themselves as least effective.

Social Emotional Wellbeing

“Personally, it has helped my child so much with his emotional state. His stress level has decreased, he is much calmer. My child always goes to the programs and has always enjoyed attending, and he likes to participate in the activities. For us, these programs are very essential, especially for our children.” – Parent

Responses to the survey of agency leads indicated that Hub staff felt they were most effective in their efforts to provide a safe space for students to come to regularly, which was critical to supporting their social emotional wellbeing. Staff added that many of the students they serve live in high-stress

environments and being able to go to the Hub on a daily basis has provided them some respite. As one Hub staff noticed, “[Students’] mental health and level of well-being has improved, just simply by being away from home and onsite at the program.” Another shared that the Hubs “are providing [students] with a stress-free, worry-free space outside of all the chaos between politics, family struggles, and the pandemic.”

Respondents to the parent survey acknowledged the stress their children have been feeling, with one parent noting that “while this pandemic has been hard for us all, I can only imagine how hard it’s been for the kids. So having [this] program is very important to me.” Many parents shared that they saw improvements in their children’s mental health and happiness as a result of Hub participation. In fact, 90 percent of parent survey respondents agreed that their child was doing better emotionally because of the Hub program. Parents and Hub staff connected improvements in overall mental health and wellbeing to the Hubs’ effectiveness in implementing the following strategies:

- **Creating a sense of “normalcy and consistency” for students.** Parents shared that the Hubs created a sense of “normalcy” and “consistency,” which helped students persist through the disruptions and stresses caused by the pandemic and are critical to their social emotional health. Hub staff agreed, with one sharing that “the Hub is sustaining an overall sense of normalcy amidst the pandemic. The routine and consistency is providing a sense of safety.”
- **Providing opportunities for healthy social engagement.** Parent survey responses indicated that a key benefit of the Hubs has been that they provide their children with opportunities to engage socially with peers, which they have otherwise been unable to do at home, and which parents feel is critical to their child’s emotional wellbeing. Ninety-



95%

parents/caregivers agreed that their child **feels safe** at their Hub program



97%

of parents agreed that their Hub program genuinely **cares** about their child.



91%

of parents agreed that their child has more **opportunities to make friends** because of the Hub program.

“*Being at home is very frustrating for my children. Having the ability to continue with their routine, leave home, and be in a different environment helps them emotionally and psychologically in order to forget about the situation and alleviate their stress.*”

- Parent

one percent of parents agreed that their child has more opportunities to make friends because of the Hub program. In addition to being able to socialize with other children, parents also appreciated the healthy and supportive relationships their children were forming with Hub staff, with 97 percent of parents agreeing that staff at their Hub program genuinely care about their child. Several parents also

connected the opportunities for social engagement with increased academic engagement, with one parent sharing, "It gives my child an opportunity to get out, connect with other children, and stay grounded so he can sustain distance learning."

- **Supporting physical wellbeing.** A key way in which Hubs have been able to support the social emotional wellbeing of students is by also attending to their physical wellbeing. While COVID-19 guidelines and space limitations created challenges for some Hubs to fully implement their physical activity/recreation activities, parents expressed gratitude for these opportunities when they were made available, noting how important physical activity was for the mental health of their children. Hub staff also supported students' physical wellbeing by providing them with meals and snacks. Some Hub staff expressed worry about the effects of economic insecurity on the students they serve, noting that through the Hubs they are able to ensure that students experiencing food insecurity are receiving meals on a consistent basis.

““ *Students have become more focused, less tired, read more, talk to each other, and there are definitely a lot more smiles and laughter.*”

- Hub Staff

Other Outcomes

While the Hubs' main priority was to support students through the pandemic, by doing so, they were ultimately also supporting others who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the wellbeing of these children and youth—namely, families and teachers, on whom we focus in this section.

Family Support

While the Hubs' main priorities are to support students, Hub staff were also keenly aware of the increased challenges faced by their families during the pandemic. On multiple occasions, Hub staff shared their concerns for families, suggesting that there should be community Hubs focused on supporting parents and caregivers through the pandemic as well. With capacity stretched thinly, the Hubs have done their best to support families by connecting them with supportive services, but this was an area where staff felt less effective compared to their ability to directly support students. At the same time, Hub staff also

““ *As a single mom, the program helps me so that my child does not stay alone at home. I am very thankful for the program because I can come to work without worrying. In these difficult times I do not have the luxury to stay home without employment.*”

- Parent

recognized that supporting students through the pandemic ultimately meant that they were supporting families. A strong majority (88%) of agency leads who responded to our survey rated their Hubs as being impactful in helping families to feel supported. Multiple Hub staff reported that parents and caregivers have expressed appreciation for the Hubs, sharing that having a safe place for their children to go allows parents to focus on their own responsibilities, thereby helping their own mental wellbeing. As one Hub staff shared, "Parents have expressed their gratitude for the program as most parents start going back to work find it difficult to support their child at home."

Support for Teachers and Schools

Program staff reported that the Hubs have increased coordination between educators, families, and program staff. This level of coordination has been invaluable for both teachers and parents, who have also felt challenged by the abrupt shift to distance learning. Hub staff shared that teachers have expressed appreciation for their support and are realizing the value of expanded learning providers and youth development professionals in supporting students' wellbeing and their academic progress. Program directors hoped that this enhanced appreciation of their role will allow them to deepen relationships with schools and teachers after the shelter-in-place ends.

“ Our staff have been actively in communication with teachers and parents to make sure children are doing their work and completing their daily tasks. Teachers reach out to us directly to give us updated schedules and we work with them for additional academic support options.”

– Hub Staff

Reflections on CHI Outcomes

Despite compressed timelines and extremely challenging circumstances, Hubs have done a remarkable job in helping students to engage academically, socialize safely, and participate in physical activities. They have helped parents and caregivers to feel reassured that their children are being safely cared for and supported, which has allowed them to focus on their jobs or other pressing needs. And Hubs have reduced the stress on parents, caregivers, and teachers whose capacities were being stretched so thinly in their efforts to support students through distance learning. While the supports they have been able to offer thus far have been invaluable, Hub staff also cautioned that there are key areas in which students would benefit from more support:

- **Additional SEL and mental health support.** Several programs reported that students still need more SEL and mental health support than they have the capacity to provide. Moreover, many staff members are not trained to support students with special needs or those with behavioral challenges. While DCYF now has a mental and behavioral health referral system in place with DPH, program staff suggested that trained professionals should conduct weekly

check-ins with students, stakeholders should provide additional trainings on behavioral management for staff, and students with special needs should have access to paraprofessionals for additional support.

- **Increased individualized support.** Many students would benefit from more individualized support than Hubs can offer, particularly considering limitations in staffing capacity and the fact that Hub staff support students in different grades, who go to different schools, and are working on different assignments that represent a range of content areas. Having additional tutors, including virtual tutors who can work one-on-one with youth, would help alleviate the strain on Hub staff and provide more targeted academic support for students.

With the end of the pandemic nowhere in sight, the need to support children and families during this stressful time remains high. The emerging outcomes shared in this chapter indicate that, in a short period of time, Hubs have made considerable progress in providing critical supports for children, youth, families with the highest needs. In the next chapter we offer overarching lessons emerging from the planning and initial implementation of the Community Hubs Initiative.

“ We knew this wasn't going to be easy, but it's just a reminder that we aren't trained in all of these things at the same time. It is important to remember that we are youth development professionals, but we are not professionally trained teachers and that's okay. We are helping teachers get access to kids. We are facilitating the teaching.”

– Hub Staff