



COLEMAN ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

Why We Support the Superintendent's Proposal to Graduate all Students with A thru G Coursework

Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth is a member-led, multi-racial community organization in San Francisco, working to create a city of hope, justice and opportunity for all children and all families.

We have hundreds of parent and youth members – primarily African American, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander – who identified “A thru G for all” as their advocacy priority almost one year ago. We believe:

- All students have a right to a quality education and a secure future in San Francisco, regardless of race or income.
- A quality education for students of color is key to ending the cycle of poverty, violence and incarceration in our communities.
- Higher expectations for all students is the key to closing the racial achievement gap and ensuring equal opportunity for Black, Latino and Pacific Islander students who are currently being left behind.

1. What is A thru G?

“A-G” Courses are the classes required for eligibility to the University of California and California State University systems. It's a list of required classes:

1. History/Social Science- 2 years required; 3 years required by state.
2. English- 4 years required
3. Mathematics- 3 years required, 4 years recommended
4. Laboratory Science- 2 years required, 3 years recommended
5. Language Other Than English- 2 years required, 3 years recommended
6. Visual and Performing Arts- 1 year required
7. College-Preparatory Electives- 1 year required

We support a new district wide policy setting these A-G classes as the core academic curriculum for high school students and part of the graduation requirement, starting with the class of 2014. With this requirement, high school students will need to take one more year of language and math than is currently required for graduation.

2. How will A thru G help close the racial “achievement gap”?

An “A thru G” for all policy will play a key role in transforming SFUSD into a school district that provides equal educational opportunities to all students, regardless of race, income, language, or neighborhood.

Right now, the racial achievement gap in SFUSD is getting worse, most Black, Latino and Pacific Islander students are not graduating with A-G (or dropout even before graduation), and student access to A-G classes varies dramatically from school to school.

*** Institutionalizing high expectations for all.** Requiring “A thru G” for all will make *college, a living wage job or a union trade* the expectation for all students, not dependent on the personal judgment of individual school staff, teachers or students. It ensures that all students will have *the option* of college, even if they choose another path.

*** Providing support systems for all students to succeed.** The question the district should ask once this policy is passed should be “What support do we need to support this student to succeed in A-G courses?” There will be new, creative ways to support struggling students.

*** Reform that starts in Kindergarten.** This policy will require the district to prepare all students, from kindergarten to 8th grade, for these higher expectations. For example, it will no longer be ok to prepare only some children in middle school with the math they need to be successful in 9th or 10th grade algebra.

*** More rigorous courses can mean more engaging and relevant classes.** Ed Trust West has found that many low-income students and students of color are *more engaged* with more rigorous teaching and with teachers who expect them to succeed. Coleman parents and students support a new professional development plan that supports teachers' abilities to educate the most struggling students.

3. How will A thru G help students get to college, a living wage job or trade?

Graduating with a passing grade in the A thru G classes means San Francisco students will at least be eligible for a CSU or UC state college or university, and going to college will put them on a path to a good job and economic security. Even union apprenticeship exams require college-prep level math (like Algebra) that many of our students cannot currently pass. Also, students can take “Career Technical Education” classes in areas like Health Careers, Industry Tech, Business, and Arts/Media that qualify as A-G courses. Because algebra coursework and skills are required for the ‘new economy’, civil rights leaders like Bob Moses now consider access to algebra a civil rights issue for the 21st century.

4. Will A thru G increase the dropout rate?

No. Support systems must be in place, as is recommended in the A-G Study Team, so that students of color are not pushed out of the system. It will take a citywide commitment to equity to hold the district accountable to providing these supports. In San Jose, the number of Black and Latino students graduating with A-G has doubled since it began an “A-g for all” policy, without any increase in the dropout rate.

5. Will the needs of special education students, newcomers and others be addressed?

Yes. The A-G Study Team recommendations make clear that new supports will be needed, including:

- Graduation plans for special education students that address a student’s IEP
- Graduation plans for newcomers that take into account their previous coursework and specific language needs;
- Individualized support services for students who are far behind and who need intensive and accelerated literacy support – through a combination of school staff and community-based resources.

6. Why are Coleman parent and student members calling for an A-G Implementation Taskforce to be included in the A-G Policy?

Implementing A-G will be a complex process and it should be a transparent one in true partnership with community and district stakeholders (including teachers, administrators, etc.) Coleman’s “A thru G Equity Plan” calls not only for a new A-G policy but also for a public Implementation Plan and an Implementation Taskforce with both community stakeholders and staff, and a timeline for annual reporting of implementation’s progress. The parents and students who are most impacted by this new policy must be at the table to ensure that it is being implemented with equity in mind.

7. What does JROTC have to do with A-G?

Coleman parent and student members have not taken a Coleman position on JROTC. Our priority is changing school district policies to achieve racial equity and close the racial achievement/opportunity gap.

WHO SUPPORTS THIS PLAN?

- **3000 individual postcard and online petition supporters from across San Francisco!**
- **All 7 Members of the Board of Education have committed to support a new A-G policy.** In addition, we are calling on members to support our amendment to the Superintendent’s proposal that calls for an Implementation Taskforce to meet at least quarterly.
- **10 of 11 Members of the Board of Supervisors:** Supervisors Eric Mar*, David Chiu*, Carmen Chu*, Ross Mirkarimi*, Chris Daly*, Sean Elsbernd*, Bevan Dufty, David Campos*, Sophie Maxwell, John Avalos*. ** Supervisors with an asterisk have sent formal letters of support to Coleman’s Equity Plan by 5.26.09.*
- **The City College of San Francisco Board of Trustees**
- **Community-based Organizations and Advocates:** Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth * The SF Youth Commission * NAACP- San Francisco chapter * SF Democratic Central Committee * 100% College Prep/Bayview Association for Youth * POWER * BMAGIC * Honoring Emancipated Youth * San Francisco Family Support Network * Huckleberry Youth Programs * LYRIC * Our Family Coalition * SOMCAN * Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center * Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights * Justice Matters * PODER * Filipino Community Center * Oasis for Girls * Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center * Chinese For Affirmative Action – VisValley parents * Children’s Council