COLEMAN ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

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Solutions Not Suspensions:

Two Major Victories in our Campaign to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Earlier this year, Coleman reached two major milestones in our multi-year Solutions Not Suspensions Campaign. The San Francisco Board of Education:

- ***Passed the landmark Safe and Supportive Schools Resolution that will transform the district's approach to school discipline, and***
- ***Approved a new MOU between the school district and the police department that is designed to reduce student arrests and police presence on school campuses.***

The Safe and Supportive Schools Resolution - authored by Board of Ed Commissioner Haney with ammendments by President Fewer - bans willful defiance suspensions and mandates that out-of school-suspensions should only be used as the very last resort. The resolution requires all schools to pursue alternatives such as Restorative Practices and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). At schools that have a history of suspending high numbers of African American students, staff will be trained in the use of alternative discipline strategies and monitored by the Superintendent's Office.

Coleman partnered with Public Counsel to analyze district data, research best practices, and develop community education materials and a media outreach strategy for our campaign. Coleman staff and members met with Board of Ed Commissioners, testified at hearings, organized community engagement meetings, facilitated dozens of educational workshops in schools and CBOs, recruited hundreds of individual supporters to sign on to the campaign, and secured endorsements from 36 organizations, many of which played active roles in the campaign.

Passage of the resolution puts San Francisco on the cutting edge of a growing national movement of school districts abandoning exclusionary and harsh discipline methods for positive accountability systems that improve students' behavior, while keeping them in school and on track.

Similarly, the new SFUSD/SFPD MOU will serve as a national model for how schools and police departments can work together and redefine their roles to improve school environments and reduce student arrests. The agreement was the result of years of negotiation and organized community pressure in which Coleman played a central leadership role, together with Public Counsel, the San Francisco Youth Commission, CHALK, and other community groups.

Earlier this year, the Department of Justice and Department of Education released a Federal School Discipline Guidance report that affirmed the importance of our efforts. Like the Safe and Supportive Schools Resolution and the MOU, the Federal Guidance report provides legal guidelines for schools to address racial discrimination and encourages positive, research-based alternatives to harsh discipline. The guidelines are focused on reducing suspensions, expulsions, and student referrals to the juvenile justice system in schools everywhere.

The recent attention paid by the DOJ and DOE on these issues reflects years of diligent advocacy on the part of dozens of community organizations, including the members of the Dignity in Schools Campaign and the Alliance for Education Justice. Coleman continues to play a leadership role in both of these high-impact national initiatives to keep the spotlight on these issues and move forward local, state, and federal policy.

On the heels of our recent campaign wins, Coleman is moving forward hopeful but grounded in the experience and knowledge that – without comprehensive and timely implementation – a policy (or an MOU) is only words on a piece of paper. We are engaged in strategies to ensure the meaningful involvement of youth and community members in the implementation processes. And we are working with the district to develop strong community oversight, evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

We view the Resolution and the MOU as significant stepping-stones towards our long-term vision of closing the SFUSD racial achievement gap and ending the school-to-prison pipeline.

The "school-to-prison pipeline": some cold, hard facts.

* African-American and Latino students make up 77% of all SFUSD suspensions and 81% of all suspensions for "willful defiance," a vague category that includes a wide range of student behavior including coming late to class, talking back, wearing a hat, or failing to turn in homework.

* African American students alone are more than 50% of all SFUSD suspensions, despite the fact that they make up less than 10% of the total student population.

* Several nationally respected studies have shown that suspensions lead to extremely poor educational outcomes and a fast track to incarceration. One comprehensive study in Oakland found that students are 5 times more likely to drop out, 6 times more likely to repeat a grade, and 3 times more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system if suspended even once.

* The American Academy of Pediatrics has found that the adverse effects of out of school suspension are "profound," and that "out of school suspension and expulsion are counterproductive to the intended goals, rarely if ever are necessary, and should not be considered an appropriate discipline in any but the most extreme and dangerous circumstances."

* Research shows that a first-time arrest doubles the chances that a student will drop out of high school, and a first-time court appearance quadruples those chances.

* The American Psychological Association, the Council of State of Governments, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention have all found that extreme discipline, including arrests, predicts grade retention, school dropout, and future involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

SOLUTION #1: SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS RESOLUTION

* Schools must utilize and document alternatives to suspension with support from a "matrix" that parents and students help create regarding what interventions must be used before suspension.

* All school-sites must avoid out-of-school suspension except under extreme circumstances and will have the support, training and knowledge to effectively implement alternatives.

* Regular and accurate data reporting, broken down by relevant demographics.

* Principals must connect with the Central Office to ensure all alternatives are exhausted and get extra help before suspending African American students

* Faculty and staff will receive training on on racial bias, cultural competency, and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports.

* An end to "willful defiance" and "off-the-books" suspensions.

* PBIS and restorative practices will be implemented at every school; Development and implementation of practices will involve input from parents and students in addition to school staff, so that everyone understands the expectations.

* Increased funding for school supports, including restorative practices coaches and class assistants, trauma informed counseling, and tutoring.

* Implementation of a complaint process if parents and students do not have access to PBIS or restorative practices.

* A new requirement that all parents and students be informed by the school, of their right to appeal, if a suspension happens.

* Development of an implementation plan by the Superintendent, within 4 months of the passage of the Resolution, including a comprehensive plan to fund the above resources.

SOLUTION #2: A NEW SFUSD/SFPD MOU

* Strict limits on police involvement in student discipline that can and should be handled at school.

* Clear direction for school administrators to handle discipline-related problems at the school-site.

* A new system of graduated responses for police, starting with a warning, for low-level offenses, so that they can be handled with prevention and intervention and not a trip to juvenile court or jail.

* A new process for students and parents to provide feedback and address issues related to conduct of police on campus to ensure positive engagement.

* Measures to protect the privacy and dignity of students who are interviewed by school police as witnesses, victims, or potential offenders.

* Mandates to ensure parents are contacted and can be present if a police officer is interviewing a student.

YMAC (Youth Making A Change) Leader Spotlight: Francisco and Rosie

YMAC Youth Leader: Francisco Craig

School: Downtown High Grade: Senior

Justice looks like: everybody being treated equally.

I lead because: I want to be an example for younger youth.

My proudest moment as a youth leader: was when I testified at the Board of Education Solutions Not Suspensions hearing.

One dream I have for myself is: to have a steady job and to be successful.

One dream I have for my community is: for everyone to be more unified so we can all work together to make the community better.

YMAC Youth Leader: Rosie Balbaron

School: Balboa High Grade: Sophomore

Justice looks like: youth coming together to fight for the rights they deserve.

I lead because: I want to help create a powerful youth voice.

My proudest moments as a youth leader: were the times when I travelled with Coleman to other cities and states to lead workshops at conferences and build with and learn from other youth leaders.

One dream I have for myself is: to travel and wherever I go to be able to help the people around me.

One dream I have for my community is: for more of us to connect with each other so we can grow our movement to fight for justice.

Coleman Advocates would like to recognize and thank our Board of Directors for their leadership, commitment and support.

2014 Officers: Maria Luz Torre, President • Rosario Cervantes, Vice President • Steve Bingham, Treasurer • Greg Tanaka, Secretary
Members: Dr. Prudence Carter • Curtis Chan, M.D. • Rick Jud • Ianthia Mack • Giuliana Milanese

THE CHILDREN'S FUNDING COMMUNITY COALITION

Two landmark funding set-asides, the Children's Amendment and the Public Education and Enrichment Fund (PEEF), are both up for re-authorization this November and must be approved by voters once again. The Children's Funding Community Coalition includes more than 50 community-based organizations and service providers that have come together to ensure community-driven reauthorization of both funds and to strategize improvements to the system of services for children, youth and their families in San Francisco.

For over a year and a half, Coleman Advocates has been convening the Children's Funding Coalition that includes managers, workshop facilitators, youth workers, teachers, parents, executive directors, transitional age youth, and program staff, among others. Some of us are new to the field, and others have been serving children, youth and families for decades. We are ALL committed to the next generation of San Francisco. And it is with the next generation in mind, that we have spent over eighteen months developing our policy recommendations.

The Children's Amendment was passed by the voters for the first time in 1991, thanks to a Coleman-led grassroots community campaign. It was re-authorized by voters in 2000. The Children's Amendment mandates that the City set aside approximately 3% of the city's property tax revenue (held by the city in the "Children's Fund"), to be spent on services for children, youth and their families. The Children's Fund earmarks include Early Care and Education; Out of School Time; Family Support; Youth Leadership, Empowerment and Development; Violence Prevention and Intervention; and more.

PEEF was created as a result of a ballot measure passed by SF voters in 2004, during a time of diminishing resources for education due to state and federal funding cuts. The intention for the Fund was to bolster existing resources and provide greater financial support for critical programs.

As a Coalition, we have now engaged hundreds of community providers, young people and parents through town halls and conferences, regular coalition meetings, and online surveys. We have worked diligently to create what we believe to be a compelling set of policy recommendations for both the Children's Amendment and PEEF. Using these recommendations, we look forward to working with the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor and the Superintendent to draft the strongest legislation possible, in the best interests of the children, youth and families we serve.

Priority Recommendations for the Reauthorization of Children's Fund and PEEF

- ✔ Strengthen Citywide Coordination and Alignment for Services for Children, Youth and Families.
- ✔ Eliminate the Sunset Dates for both the Children's Amendment and the Public Education and Enrichment Fund
- ✔ Increase the Children's Fund to Address Unmet Need
- ✔ Include Services for Disconnected Transitional Age Youth (TAY) in the Children's Fund
- ✔ Create a Commission to Oversee the Department of Children, Youth and their Families
- ✔ Remove the "Trigger" and "In-Kind" Contributions from the Public Education and Enrichment Fund

Add your voice! *Let your district Board of Supervisor know that you support these recommendations to protect and strengthen funding for children in San Francisco. Sign our campaign supporter card at* ***www.colemanadvocates.org***

Ed Budget Reform Creates Parent Engagement Opportunities

For years, with our partners in the Campaign for Quality Education (CQE), Coleman has been advocating for the need-based allocation of education budget funds. When Governor Brown responded to statewide advocacy by creating the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) last year, Coleman celebrated this as an education equity victory with community groups around the state.

In addition to the prospect of a more equitable distribution of district resources, the passage of LCFF also presents an opportunity to expand parent engagement at the local and statewide levels. The law makes parent engagement one of eight state-wide priorities and holds districts to a higher standard and requires a greater level of commitment to parent engagement than ever before.

A critical component of LCFF is the Local Control and Accountability PLAN (LCAP). School districts now are required to describe the school district's overall vision for its students, create annual goals and specific actions that the district will take to achieve the vision and goals. The LCAPs must describe how school districts will address parent engagement and the other seven state-wide priorities. The plans also must describe how the district's budget will help achieve the goals. And every year, the school district must systematically assess the effectiveness of their plan's strategies .

Coleman is currently supporting SFUSD in meeting its family engagement commitments and ensuring that it does so in the most effective and culturally competent way possible - reaching and engaging communities who have historically been left out of these processes and decision-making. Coleman has been conducting regular multi-lingual LCFF/LCAP workshops for parents in schools throughout the city and organized a city-wide forum with partners in the Close the Gap Coalition, a coalition of teachers, parents, and students.

We are hopeful that LCFF and the LCAP development processes will serve as catalysts for an increased public investment in parent engagement strategies locally and statewide. Family engagement is essential to build a more participatory public school system, a healthier and more vibrant multi-ethnic democracy, and a broad network of individual family advocates who are effectively engaged in their own children's education and also influencing school, district and city-level policies to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students.

PMAC Leader Spotlight: Gaby

Gaby Baez leading an LCAP parent engagement workshop at Cleveland Elementary School

Gaby Baez has been a parent leader for two years with Parents Making a Change (PMAC), Coleman's parent organizing project. Gaby's oldest child attends Cleveland Elementary School, which is right around the corner from the Coleman community center and has a large and active PMAC membership.

Gaby got involved in PMAC because she believes there is nothing more important to her children's futures than the quality of their education. Growing up as an orphan raised by extended family members in Mexico City, Gaby didn't have the opportunity to graduate from high school. She is determined to make sure that her children are able not only to graduate from high school, but also to attend college.

Since moving to the United States 11 years ago, Gaby has worked cleaning houses. Her years of working long hours in labor-intensive jobs for low pay and always struggling to make ends meet have given Gaby a personal understanding for the need for a new, higher minimum wage in San Francisco - a fight she is actively committed to.

Among other PMAC leadership roles, Gaby is currently helping to educate other parents about LCFF and LCAP. After participating in multiple PMAC workshops, she is now co-facilitating the workshops herself.

Gaby has also been active in Coleman's Solutions Not Suspensions campaign, participating in meetings with Board of Ed Commissioners and testifying at hearings.

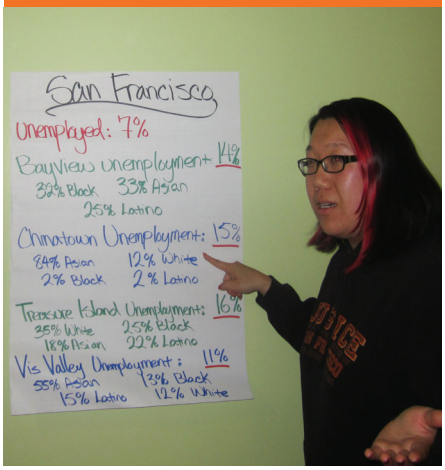
Improving the quality of education at her child's school is a active priority in Gaby's life. Among other contributions, she has helped organize fundraising efforts and she helped run a successful campaign to expand tutoring and literacy resources at the school. .

Gabby says that while she has always cared deeply about education issues, it wasn't until she became a PMAC leader that she found the courage to take action.

"At Coleman I learned about my rights and about how to express myself", Gaby explained. *"The training and support I got at Coleman helped me to let go of my fear and helped me to be able to speak out about what I believe in."*

When asked about what makes Gaby an effective leader, Coleman Parent Organizer Ligia Montano shared, *"She will always go out of her way to help out in any way she can for anyone who needs it. At parent meetings she always brings food to share with the other parents and whenever any parent doesn't come to a meeting she checks in about them and their children to make sure they are ok. She is one of the most generous and compassionate people I've ever met and this makes her a powerful organizer because others trust her right away and are willing to take her lead."*

Coalition Spotlight: CUHJ



Lily Wong, CUHJ Coordinator and Coleman Jobs Justice Associate breaking down the facts.

Communities United for Health and Justice (CUHJ) is a coalition of community-based organizations, founded in 2008, to develop and advance comprehensive, people powered solutions for creating neighborhood jobs and strengthening the local economy. Organizational members include Coleman Advocates, Chinese for Affirmative Action, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center, Filipino Community Center, and People Organized to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Our efforts are focused on San Francisco's District 11, the district that, historically, has received the least amount of city support for workforce development resources.

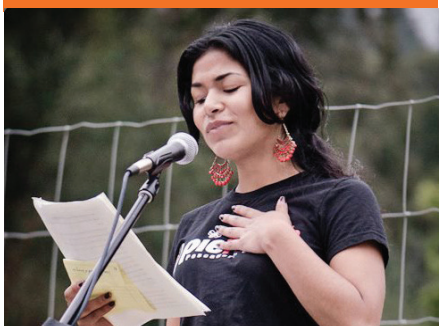
As a Coalition, we've carried out several community-action research projects and produced reports on both workforce development and affordable housing issues in District 11. For these efforts, we combined analysis of city and district data, along with insights gleaned from focus groups and other grassroots engagement efforts with our membership bases, to create recommendations addressing the unique needs of District 11 residents.

Shortly after publication of a CUHJ report on workforce development needs, the city developed a new fund, with the support of Supervisor Avalos' office, for innovative workforce development pilot programs and initiatives in District 11.

Since then, supported by Supervisor Avalos' office, CUHJ has coordinated numerous convenings bringing together representatives of diverse city agencies to talk about services, resources, training, and employment opportunities available to District 11 residents and to create opportunities for onsite application and registration. We've also successfully launched a District 11 Capacity Building Collaborative that includes a broad range of organizations that do effective workforce development work in low-income communities of color and agencies that have good working relationships with employers and track records of successfully placing program participants in long-term living wage jobs. We are working to bring together organizations from the entry-point to the end-point of the unemployment to job placement pipeline to strategize how service provision can be more integrated, efficient, and effective.

In the fall, Coleman will be launching its own workforce development program at our community center. We have partnered with the University of San Francisco to design a Vocational English pilot program that will initially focus on the custodial industry, the most common field in which our members seek employment. The pilot project will differ from traditional vocational ESL programs in that we are also working to develop formal referral relationships with potential employers so that we can help participants actually get secure jobs upon completion of the course. As an additional benefit, all program participants will be signed on as clients of the workforce services program at Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center.

SMAC Leader Spotlight: Reyna



When Reyna Maldonado was six years old, she moved with her family to San Francisco's Mission District from Guerrero, Mexico. She graduated from Mission High and has been a student at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) for the past three years.

Reyna is one of the newest student interns with Students Making a Change (SMAC), Coleman's community college student organizing program. She is active in SMAC's efforts to build statewide support for the expansion of community college accelerated curriculum opportunities to increase college completion rates, and has participated in hearings on this issue in Sacramento. Reyna is also helping to produce videos that provide clear and understandable explanations of CCSF's ongoing accreditation challenges and what the implications are for students.

Reyna credits SMAC with motivating her to get more involved in her school. She explains that she knew CCSF was facing serious challenges, but she didn't know how students like herself could play a role in meeting those challenges for the college's future. Now, Reyna says, through her involvement in SMAC, She understands that City College's future depends on student voices being heard and valued. Reyna especially appreciates the sense of community she experiences from being part of SMAC. And she values the opportunities her participation in SMAC provides for her to dialogue with and learn from a group of students who are similarly committed to building a better school and world.

Reyna brings to SMAC extensive immigrant rights organizing and advocacy experience. Much of Reyna's passion for and commitment to social change comes from her own life experiences as an undocumented immigrant and student.

"I speak out for immigrant rights because I am undocumented and my whole family is undocumented", Reyna explained. *"My mother sells tamales and my father works from 5:30 in the morning until 11 at night to pay the bills. I speak out for my rights and for their rights and for everyone who is unable or afraid to speak out. The current immigration policies are inhumane. They are tearing families apart - over 2 million deportations since Obama was elected. Every time I go out in to the streets and see my people hustle, I always remember how privileged I am to be able to pursue my education and because I have the English language and I have access to information about my rights and the policies that affect me. It's my responsibility to share what I've learned. I want to be that person that can get a good education and then come back to my neighborhood and use what I've learned to make a difference."*

Staff Member Spotlight: Kevine

A conversation with Kevine Boggess, Director of Civic Engagement.

How has your experience growing up in San Francisco informed your work and identity?

Kevine: I feel like growing up in this city has defined so much of who I am and the work that I do. The history of San Francisco is people struggling to get here and fighting to preserve their communities and cultures and to make a better life for their children. San Francisco is viewed as this progressive haven and the history of social movements in this city is definitely a source of inspiration for me but the truth is that there has also been this consistent history of disenfranchisement of low-income communities of color. San Francisco has the fastest growing gap between the rich and the poor in the country right now. And we've lost more than half of our Black families in the last decade. This city was built on the blood, sweat, and tears of communities who remain locked out of many of the opportunities associated with the city's economic "progress". Growing up, I saw this first hand. My dad was homeless for a while. Police brutality and racial profiling were not abstract concepts in my life as a young Black man walking or driving in this city. I understood at a very young age that the criminal justice system had very little to do with justice. Over the years, I've had a bunch of family members get pushed out of the city because they couldn't afford to live here any more. I grew up with this big family support network around me and daily interactions with all the people I love and trust most in the world. It's heartbreaking to watch your extended family little by little get pushed out of the city they consider home. The struggle of it and the distance - it changes the fabric of the family. But I am also grateful for how growing up here made me the open-minded person that I am. I know and appreciate so much about different cultures and experiences that I probably would never have had access to growing up in most other places.

What motivates you to work for social change in the face of so many obstacles?

Kevine: I truly believe that change is possible – that we can make things better and that we do not have to accept the status quo. History has shown us this and I've seen it first hand. When we are organized, we have the power to move mountains.

What is your favorite part of your job?

Kevine: I really love being able to take youth and parent members to convenings and learning exchanges, especially in others cities. I love getting to see them build relationships with others who have had similar experiences in different places and learn about different social change strategies and connect the dots between what is happening here and what is happening in other cities. It's amazing to be able to witness members in the process of having their minds and their horizons expanded.

Can you share a highlight from your work in recent years - a moment or experience that stands out?

Kevine: This might be on my mind because I was just talking about members travelling, but being able to get a scholarship for one of our youth leaders to participate in an international youth organizing learning exchange in South Africa was definitely a highlight for me. I remember prepping her for the experience and how excited I was for her. It felt almost like I was making the trip myself even though it was a different staff member who actually went with her. It is a profound thing for an African American young person – and especially one who would never otherwise have the opportunity to travel internationally – to be able to go to Africa. It was deep.

Your job isn't easy. Long hours, fast-paced campaigns, supporting members dealing with trauma. How do you take care of yourself?

Kevine: Whenever I have some free time, I drive to Ocean beach for silent reflection. The ocean relaxes me and gives me perspective and helps me to think more clearly.

Tell us something about you that might surprise us?

Kevine: Hmmm. I'm a secret crier? I tear up pretty easily when I'm moved. I'm really into modern art and photography. Oh, and I love watching cooking shows and reality TV, especially survival stuff.

If you could wave a magic wand and transform San Francisco overnight, what's one thing you'd change?

Kevine: Just one? There are so many things. Well, one thing for sure that I'd change is the public education system. Schools would have a lot more resources and education would be a much bigger priority for the city. The District would have the funds, the talent, and the will to make really big changes and implement proven innovations for closing the achievement gap and preparing students for success in the 21st century. Curriculum would be both more rigorous and more customized to the different learning styles and support needs of different students. And it would reflect and affirm the histories and cultures and experiences of the communities students come from. And we'd prioritize and support young people from the community to become teachers in the neighborhoods they grew up in. Students would have role models they can relate to and teachers would have had the experiences to be able to truly empathize with students and effectively meet them where they are at. Because of all of these changes, students would feel more respected and supported and have more of a sense of ownership over their schools. They'd be more engaged in their educations and more hopeful about and invested in their futures. Of course, a lot of other things in our society would have to change along-side the public education system for all this to be possible.

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WHO WE ARE

Coleman builds the leadership and power of low-income and working class youth and parents of color to advance education and economic justice in San Francisco. Through grassroots organizing, budget and policy advocacy, and voter engagement, we are building a city of hope, justice, and opportunity for all children and families. Together, with our allies, we are organizing for quality education, good jobs, family resources, and affordable housing so that all youth and families can thrive in San Francisco.

Visit our website at www.colemanadvocates.org
to learn more about who we are, what we are up to, and how you can get involved!

Just News for Families