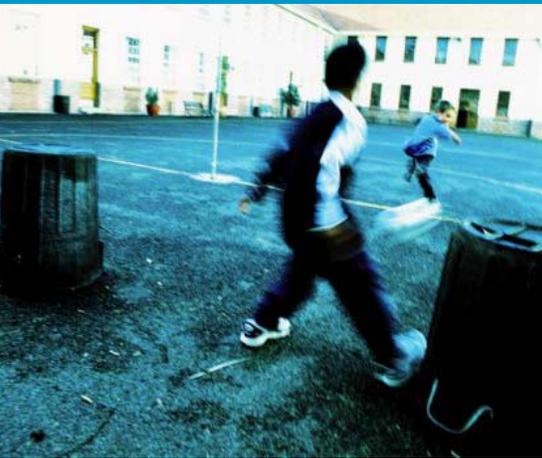


# San Francisco's Public School Facilities as Public Assets:

## A Shared Understanding and Policy Recommendations for the Community Use of Schools

*Prepared for*  
San Francisco Unified School District and  
San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families

### *Executive Summary*



<http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/>

SFUSD has a unique opportunity to both fully utilize one of its greatest assets – the facilities and grounds – while simultaneously helping to realize the goals of the district’s strategic plan and coordinate with city agencies, other public entities, and community organizations that provide programs/services to children and families. The Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF) and San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) commissioned UC Berkeley’s Center for Cities & Schools (CC&S) to inform their ongoing joint efforts to improve policy and procedures relating to community use of SFUSD school facilities. This report presents research findings and policy recommendations from a yearlong investigation to establish a more effective “joint use” strategy in SFUSD. Additionally, CC&S has an ongoing collaboration with 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund (21CSF) in Washington, DC and its national BEST collaborative, to provide resources and tools to support community use of schools; 21CSF/BEST contributed greatly to this project. Report made possible through funding support from SFUSD.

## Project Scope

Engaging a diverse set of local stakeholders, CC&S worked with DCYF and SFUSD leadership to:

- a. Develop a shared understanding among school, city, and community partners of how public school facilities are a public asset; and
- b. Recommend the policy changes needed to implement this shared understanding.

## Research Findings

Through quantitative and qualitative data analysis, we come to the following findings, related to Utilization, Management, Policy, and Budget. Additionally, detailed descriptions and diagrams of current SFUSD policies and processes were created to provide clarity among stakeholders (see the Appendices for more information).

## Utilization Findings

- 1) **Many SFUSD school buildings and grounds are underutilized during the instructional day according to California Department of Education standards.** Focusing just on SFUSD’s educational buildings and grounds that have immediate community use potential, there are 134 schools with about 7.5 million square feet of indoor space and about 5.5 million outdoor square feet (approximately 127 acres of outdoor space). With current enrollment at more than 55,000 students from Kindergarten through 12th grade, this means there is on average about 134 indoor square feet per student and 100 outdoor square feet per student in SFUSD during the instructional day. The California Department of Education’s (CDE) recommended indoor space per student ranges from 63 square feet (ES) to 95 square feet (HS).
- 2) **Demand exists for school spaces by CBOs and other members of the San Francisco community.** Analysis of available SFUSD data on facilities use by non-school district users do show what appear to be high (and steady) levels of use. The Real Estate Office issues about 1,200 Facility Use Permits per year and the Student Support Services Department coordinates with more than 450 CBOs providing services/programs for SFUSD students.
- 3) **Use varies among schools and neighborhoods.** Permitted community use of public school facilities is widely distributed across San Francisco; schools in the central and eastern neighborhoods of the city tend to experience less permitted community use than those in the western and northern areas.
- 4) **Community users and uses vary across the district.** A wide variety of users and uses occur in SFUSD school facilities, from CBO program/service provision to before- and after-school care, to sports leagues, city department activities, and private individuals or entities renting space for single-use activities or multiple days. Nearly 40 percent of CBOs using school space report to address “Academic Enrichment.”

## Management Findings

- 1) **SFUSD has not fully developed its capacity to support community use, compared to other school districts.** Compared to nine case study school districts, SFUSD has a less robust set of policies, procedures, and guidelines on community use of facilities.
- 2) **SFUSD has three formal programs managing community use of facilities; the main two lack procedural alignment.** The Real Estate Office's Facilities Use Permit Process and the Student Support Services Department's Community Based Organization Program lack alignment in policy and procedures to maximize community use and assessment. The third program, the "Schools as Community Hubs Pilot Project" is a partnership between the City and County of San Francisco and SFUSD, whereby 10-12 school playground gates are open for community use on the weekends.
- 3) **SFUSD lacks adequate information collection tools to fully understand facility use and demand.** As a result, SFUSD does not have solid information on: the different types of users, the amount of space each user utilizes, the purposes of the uses, or who is denied use and why. Not having this information adds difficulty to establishing policies and procedures to meet the variety of user needs. In particular, the lack of information inhibits SFUSD's ability to conduct community use revenue/cost recovery projections or understand untapped demand found in the Use Permit denials.

## Policy Findings

- 1) **Little community use policy and procedural guidance is provided by the State of California and/or the SFUSD School Board.** California's Civic Center Act requires school boards to establish rules and regulations to encourage community use, but provides little policy guidance. SFUSD's School Board policies provide vague direction on community use.
- 2) **Lack of formalized vision exists for SFUSD schools to serve as public assets.** Stakeholders in San Francisco have not yet established a shared philosophical vision for schools as public assets, that acknowledges both the costs and the benefits of community use of school spaces and the role these facilities play in supporting programs and services for students and communities.
- 3) **Lack of overarching strategic policies and/or procedures exist to fully support SFUSD schools as public assets.** While community and CBO use of school facilities occurs frequently, the district currently does not have a single, overarching joint use policy framework that is structured to coordinate and maximize efficiencies among the variety of uses, users, and programs/services being offered.

## Budget Findings

- 1) **SFUSD's revenue from facilities use permits appears low.** Recent years of Use Permit revenues have ranged between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, with the district only generating about \$0.20 per indoor square foot from community use. Given that SFUSD is paying \$28.74 per square foot per year to operate and maintain its facilities, SFUSD is recouping less than one percent of its facilities costs (.7 percent) through community use revenues. As a result, SFUSD significantly subsidizes the community use of its facilities.
- 2) **While significantly subsidizing community uses, SFUSD has limited capital funds for facilities renovation and repair.** Intensifying the utilization of school buildings and grounds (no matter who the user) incurs costs to the district, including increased custodial needs and additional wear and tear on facilities. SFUSD's current capital program totals about \$850 million, focused mainly on repair and renovation of existing buildings and replacement of existing modular buildings with permanent classroom structures. There is an additional \$690 million dollars in identified facilities needs over the coming decade.

## Recommendations

- 1) **Formally adopt a vision statement for SFUSD school facilities to serve as public assets that support the District's Strategic Plan and community needs.** The adoption of a vision statement by the SFUSD Board of Education and the SF Board of Supervisors will set a clear direction on district and municipal philosophy and intent. The vision statement will set the framework for the development of policy by encouraging a “culture” of community use within the district, from top leadership to the school sites, and with buy-in from stakeholders who have a vested interest in more intensive community use.
- 2) **Establish defined policies and procedures for community use with guiding principles as the foundation.** SFUSD should formally adopt a set of *Guiding Principles* for Community Use of School Facilities: a) community use policies will be clearly defined and communicated; b) community use policies will prioritize partnerships with organizations that provide programs and services inside schools to SFUSD students, and that are aligned with the District's goals and strategies; c) costs associated with community use will be shared by SFUSD and users; and d) community use policies, procedures, and outcomes will be consistently evaluated to ensure accountability and improvement. Three inter-related policies are recommended to align community use to the strategic plan: 1) adopt a multi-tiered fee structure for community use; 2) establish a method to assign users to the cost tiers; and 3) establish a procedure for CBO outcome assessment. Implementing such a fee structure should enable SFUSD to charge less to CBOs, while simultaneously increasing facilities use revenues..
- 3) **Expand management capacity and support for community use of SFUSD buildings and grounds.** To address the challenges identified in this report, the SFUSD must develop a comprehensive space management infrastructure that efficiently and appropriately facilitates community use. There are two key components of the management infrastructure: staffing and implementation tools.
- 4) **Establish budget and revenue support for public school buildings and grounds that are healthy, safe, well maintained and designed for optimal education and community use.** Three key steps are recommend: 1) To secure adequate revenue to support more intensive community use, SFUSD needs to know the full cost of operating and maintaining its facilities; 2) SFUSD should model different tiered fee structure approaches on revenues and test the feasibility among stakeholders; and 3) SFUSD and the City should develop operating and capital budgets to adequately support maintenance, repair, and capital projects to enable high quality public school infrastructure for optimal education and intensive community use.