

# Our Children, Our City Stakeholder Engagement Process

## Findings from the Youth Town Hall

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**January 2014**

**Prepared For**

Our Children, Our City Stakeholder Council

**Prepared By**

Learning for Action



Learning for Action enhances the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations through highly customized research, strategy development, and evaluation services.

## About Learning for Action (LFA)

Established in 2000 and with offices in San Francisco and Seattle, LFA provides highly customized research, strategy, and evaluation services that enhance the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations across the U.S. and beyond. LFA's technical expertise and community-based experience ensure that the insights and information we deliver to nonprofits, foundations, and public agencies can be put directly into action. In the consulting process, we build organizational capacity, not dependence. We engage deeply with organizations as partners, facilitating processes to draw on strengths, while also providing expert guidance. Our high quality services are accessible to the full spectrum of social sector organizations, from grassroots community-based efforts to large-scale national and international foundations and initiatives.

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## Acknowledgements

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# I. Introduction and Overview of Data Collection Processes

## Introduction

In May 2013, the Superintendent and Mayor, working with the support of private funders who regularly support child and youth development in the City, engaged an independent facilitator, *Learning for Action*, to plan and oversee a robust stakeholder education and input process.

As a part of this process, LFA, with input and guidance from a 17 member Stakeholder Council representing the community, planned and facilitated an eight month-long input process.<sup>1</sup> The first step in this process was to collect data about the strengths, challenges, and desired state of education and related support services for children and youth in San Francisco through a series of focus groups with community stakeholders. Findings from the focus groups were later used to design as the five community input sessions that were held across various neighborhoods in San Francisco. In addition to the focus group and input sessions, the process concluded with a youth town hall intended to capture the youth voice as it relates to the system of supports for children and their families.

This report presents findings from the youth town hall that took place in December 2013. The data in this report is intended to reflect what over 60 participants in the town hall identified as the most pressing needs, as well as their ideas for the most promising solutions to address these needs. The findings from the town hall will inform a policy development process for renewal of the Children's Fund and PEEF in 2014 to be conducted by the Offices of the Mayor and Superintendent.

## About the Youth Town Hall

The town hall design was informed by the findings from the community input sessions that took place in November 2013 as well as a youth focus group that took place in October 2013.<sup>2</sup> Please note that the community input sessions were open to the public and youth were also in attendance across all five of the input sessions.

Youth facilitators, with support from the San Francisco Youth Commission, developed the agenda and led the youth town hall. LFA was responsible for organizing the logistics, acquiring the space, and providing the food. Partner organizations provided outreach to youth program participants, schools, and others in the community, to maximize attendance and ensure adequate participation. Partnering organizations like the Youth Commission and Transitional Age Youth SF reached out to community based organizations for the town hall. A diverse group of 60 youth attended the town hall from many neighborhoods throughout the City. Adult allies and staff served as small group discussion facilitators and/or note takers.

## Data Collection Methods

The youth town hall was a structured meeting open to the public. The town hall began with an introduction to the Stakeholder Engagement process, an overview of the timeline, as well as an overview of PEEF and the Children's Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> The Stakeholder Council is an advisory group of 17 representatives including community based organizations, parents, youth, school district staff, teachers, business, higher education, and other members of the community.

<sup>2</sup> <http://ourchildren-ourcity.wikispaces.com/Reports+from+the+OCOC+Stakeholder+Engagement>

The town hall was designed to maximize participant input by using as its format two rounds of small group discussions. Youth facilitators reworded the findings from the community input sessions into youth-friendly terms for the small group discussions. These areas were pressing needs and promising solutions distilled from over 500 participants in the first four community input sessions (the findings from the fifth community input session had not been compiled at the time the youth town hall was being designed). Based on interest, youth chose their top two small group topics they were most interested in discussing. In both rounds, the youth read over the contributions and findings from the previous town halls, and frequently added their own points to their respective topics. After each group had a chance to discuss the points, they were given three dot stickers to vote for their top three pressing needs or solutions.

Notes from the town hall were recorded on flip charts which were later transcribed for analysis. The full list of pressing needs and promising solutions can be found on the notes section of the Wiki page for the Stakeholder Engagement process.<sup>3</sup> This report presents youth interpretation and reaction to data from the community input sessions, as well as a ranked priority list of pressing needs. The final section of the report summarizes the small group discussions across various topic/content areas, while providing promising solutions.

## Interpreting the Data

The findings reflect a broad range of perspectives and it is worth noting that some perspectives may be better represented than others. Qualitative data collection processes engage respondents in a more in-depth way than a survey, utilizing open-ended questions. The purpose of qualitative data is to explore and explain the nature and meaning of opinions. For this report, qualitative responses to questions around pressing needs have been quantified to help prioritize the most salient needs.

### **A Note on the Presentation of Results**

Coverage of individual themes throughout the report is reflective of the frequency with which these sentiments were expressed.

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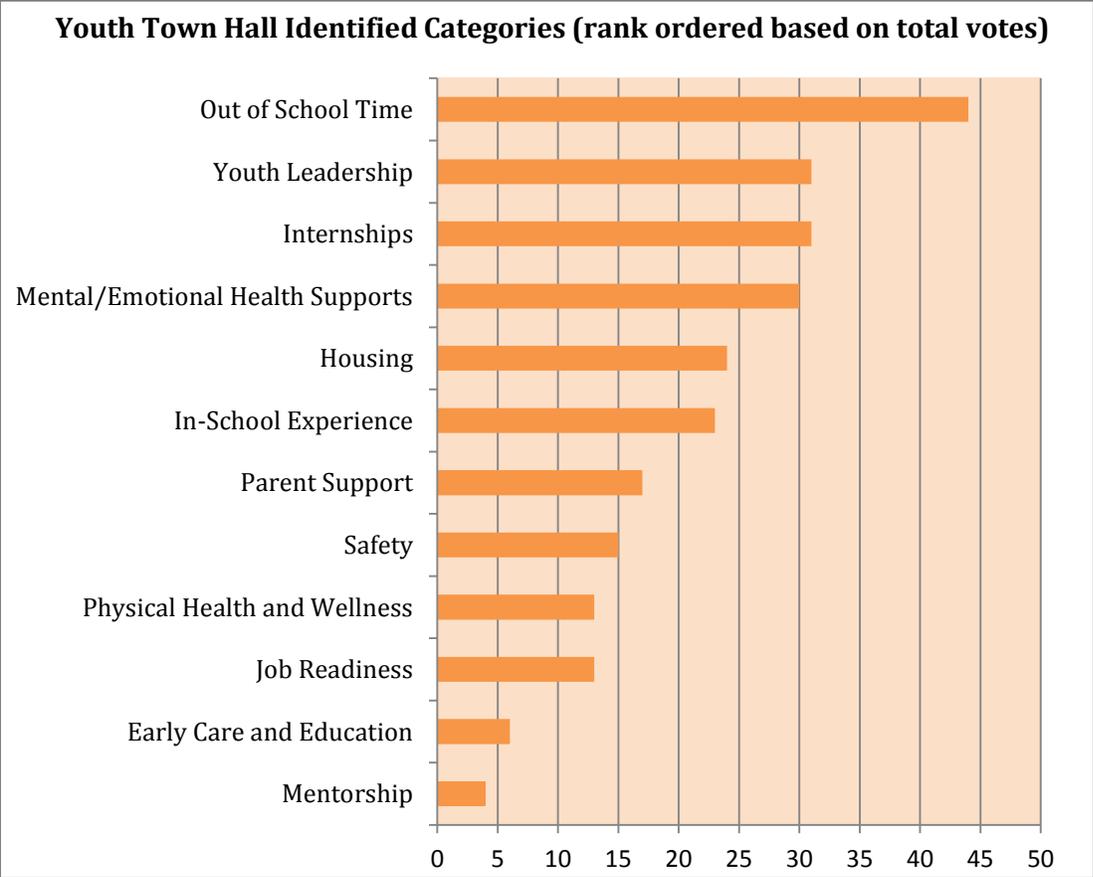
<sup>3</sup> (<http://ourchildren-ourcity.wikispaces.com/Reports+from+the+OCOC+Stakeholder+Engagement>).

# II. Discussion of Findings

## Quantitative Analysis of Voting Process

The town hall gave youth the opportunity to weigh in on a set of pressing needs identified through the community input sessions and to provide their input on what they believe to be the most pressing needs faced by youth in San Francisco.

At the conclusion of the small group activity, each participant was given three sticky dots and asked to ‘vote’ for the three pressing needs (of all the needs identified through the community input sessions and additional needs brainstormed by youth). The graph and table below depicts how those votes were apportioned based on thematic categories.



The table below represents the source data for the above bar graph, and provides more details regarding the specific needs expressed and ultimately ‘rolled up’ into each category, as well as the relative weight given to subcategories of specific need.

Issue/Need (ranked by # of total Youth Town Hall votes)	Break down of votes by subcategory
<b>Out of School Time (44)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it safe? Being out of school until we get home (neighborhood safety) <b>(8)</b></li> <li>• Extending youth programs to include transitional age (18-24) <b>(8)</b></li> <li>• A building (one place) for youth (drop in) for development tutoring, safe place, mentoring , clinic, teen girls, gym, more facilities <b>(6)</b></li> <li>• Getting parents more involved <b>(4)</b></li> <li>• More bus lines <b>(4)</b></li> <li>• Programs after school with more workshops and community service opportunities <b>(4)</b></li> <li>• More interested adults during out of school time <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• More hands on activities to make programs more clear <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Raising awareness about opportunities for youth in the community <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Not enough outreach to programs outside of schools i.e. CBOs <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Our time should be productive <b>(2)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Internships (31)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and businesses partner together <b>(8)</b></li> <li>• College and career readiness courses in the junior and senior year <b>(6)</b></li> <li>• More jobs for youth- 16 <b>(5)</b></li> <li>• Internship Opportunities <b>(3)</b></li> <li>• More mentors in the college and career courses <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Internship opportunities for future experience <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Internship opportunities for work-based learned <b>(1)</b></li> <li>• Freedom to choose your career <b>(1)</b></li> <li>• Career class <b>(1)</b></li> <li>• Adding real life skills to college career class <b>(1)</b></li> <li>• Medical internship <b>(1)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Youth Leadership (31)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs should have more community project based learning approach where youth can help serve and create change in their communities – for example kids can learn the history of their community by interviewing elders in the community or if there is an issue of paper they are writing about, connect with local organizations who know <b>(16)</b></li> <li>• We need more programs in the community that teach us the skills we need outside of the classroom people skills, community leadership skills, working in diverse situations <b>(7)</b></li> <li>• These programs should also consider the cultural context and diversity of SF families for example, there should be programs in diverse languages <b>(5)</b></li> <li>• Career workshops <b>(3)</b></li> </ul>

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**Mental/Emotional Health and Wellness (30)**

- More support for students with behavior issues at school and at home **(9)**
- Support groups for students – with easy access and well-rounded services **(8)**
- Train counselors to work with diverse groups like immigrant families **(6)**
- Exercising programs to provide for youth -distress **(4)**
- Make people aware of a neighborhood of community code of conduct **(2)**
- Make schools open and community oriented **(1)**

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**Housing (24)**

- Building awareness of tenants right is important – relevant curriculum in high school that teaches rights (re-rent control) **(8)**
- Centralization of info for available rentals for people to access since units being snapped up quick- simplify app process especially for immigrants and non-English speakers **(5)**
- Stable jobs and housing **(5)**
- Propose legislation for families with kids to have a lower rate of permitted rent increase/year in SF **(4)**
- Disbandment of RDA impacted upcoming development (Schlage) **(2)**

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**In-school Experience (23)**

- More workshops for teachers to learn how to teach curriculum in ways that address multiple intelligences **(4)**
- More culturally diverse staff, especially teachers **(4)**
- More schools with equal opportunities to learn/experience number of career pathways/equal number of classes **(4)**
- Encouragement **(3)**
- Communication and patience **(3)**
- No need for longer school year since curriculum is already covered **(2)**
- Less homework and if not less homework, homework that makes sense to what's taught in class and does not conflict with other work **(2)**
- Learning opportunities **(1)**

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**Parent Support (17)**

- Better resources for parents to provide better for their kids **(9)**
- Make parents aware of what we go through as kids **(2)**
- Language barrier with parents/cultural barrier **(2)**
- Awareness/access to resources due to barriers only specific **(1)**
- Need for the entire family **(1)**
- Parents grandparents and family members will be encouraged and involved in the learning of their children **(1)**
- Help parents get their GED and include parent supports **(1)**

<b>Safety (15)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train teachers to help both bully and victim <b>(5)</b></li> <li>• Need students with self-confidence. Resources like new bodies, nutrition, students with growth mindset and belief in self, students with motivation <b>(5)</b></li> <li>• Respectful teachers who are trained to be constructive and not put students down <b>(3)</b></li> <li>• Ways to prevent and stop school fights <b>(2)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Job Readiness (13)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase slots for YWD programs, be inclusive of youth not low income and LGBTQ and make more opportunities for undocumented people <b>(8)</b></li> <li>• More youth jobs with stipends <b>(4)</b></li> <li>• SJ + expansion <b>(1)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Physical Health and Wellness (13)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better/more lunch free <b>(4)</b></li> <li>• Make McDonald healthier <b>(3)</b></li> <li>• No muni police – free muni for 18yr or younger in high school <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• More outdoor activities/education <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Have more (free) exercise options outside of school (bicycle, yoga, dancing etc.) – <b>(2)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Early Care and Education (6)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully selected teachers who are patient and trained for this jobs <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• More low-income supports – pre-school <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Family should be offered on site care <b>(1)</b></li> <li>• Access to quality TV programming <b>(1)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Mentorship (4)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationships <b>(2)</b></li> <li>• Genuine concern <b>(1)</b></li> <li>• Mentors- college matriculated, give advice and mentorship <b>(1)</b></li> </ul>

## Detailed Discussion of the Findings

Below is a summary of the discussion for each of the identified areas. This summary includes youth discussion of the identified needs/solutions from the community input sessions, as well as youth-generated needs and solutions.

### Out of School Time

The strong general theme emerging from the youth town hall was around out of school time and particularly, improving the quality and quantity of programs. Many youth provided specific ideas about what OST programs should emphasize; suggestions included jobs, extracurricular activities, tutoring, physical activities, and mentoring opportunities. Beyond the suggestion for the specific types of activities, youth were particularly vocal about the environment for out of school activities. Youth indicated that out of school time should be productive, in a safe environment, and an opportunity to engage with other peers. Youth desired more support from adults through hands on activities and parental involvement. Finally, youth suggested employment, workshops, and community service opportunities as a way to enrich the out of school time. Addressing the access

to out of school activities, youth expressed a desire for more transportation options (Muni) and access to affordable one-stop community-based OST programs located in the community.

### **Youth Leadership**

Town hall attendees shared a number of existing resources and organizations providing youth leadership opportunities. These programs are critical for including more youth voices and informing youth of their rights. However, youth pointed to a need for more of these programs within the communities, as an opportunity to develop important community leadership and soft skills. These programs are particularly important for working with diverse populations. Youth share that leadership programs need to be culturally responsive and sensitive to the diverse needs and contexts within San Francisco. This diversity includes different language groups and immigrant populations. As an example of the types of programs needed for youth leadership development, youth provided community project-based learning opportunities where youth learn the history of their community and neighborhood through hands on opportunities. Youth add that these learning opportunities are also successful ways of engaging the broader community and parents. Finally, youth add that leadership opportunities are particularly helpful in high school, as they increase self-confidence and prepare youth for life beyond high school.

### **Internships**

As described above in the quantitative section, internships were cited as a major need for youth, and youth took the opportunity to make a range of suggestions for how these needs could be met. Youth generally expressed desire for more internship opportunities to explore, learn, and network. These opportunities should be geared towards providing youth with the experience needed for future jobs and need to be career-focused. Youth suggested work-based learning opportunities and career classes and long-term opportunities lasting more than a year. One way to accomplish this would be to add real life skills training to existing college career classes/curriculum and incorporate college and career readiness courses in the last two years of high school. Finally, youth suggested ways in which internships could be maximized suggesting unique partnerships among schools and businesses and more career fairs.

### **Mental and Emotional Health and Wellness**

Session participants were emphatic about the need for mental health and wellness for success. Youth suggested that more counselors be prepared to work with diverse groups. These groups included immigrant families, students with behavioral issues, and youth faced with extreme stress and challenges. To support a nurturing environment, youth indicated that there's a need for more workshops and awareness at the City college level as well as a need for increased cultural competence. Moreover, youth suggested that the practices to address mental and emotional health be trauma-informed and community driven efforts that focus on the unique contexts of the community. Youth stressed the importance of solutions, citing the Coleman Advocates' *Solutions not Suspensions*, as one approach to the mental and emotional health of youth. Additionally, youth provided the excessive caseload of counselors as a barrier to supporting youth with behavioral issues. Youth also expressed a desire for more space for programs and activities and an increase in the number of Wellness Centers and Beacon Centers.

### **Housing**

Similar to the community input sessions, youth focused on housing indicating that some of the most basic needs are not being met. Disruption in the consistency of housing in particular, can be devastating and long-lasting in consequence for a young person. San Francisco residents in particular are faced with increasing housing costs and unfavorable housing legislation. Youth strongly recommended that California push to amend or repeal the Ellis Act in addition to launching

relevant campaigns and curriculum to educate renters (parents of youth and youth), about their rights to housing.

### **In-school Experience**

Town hall participants also shared ways in which the in-school experience can be enhanced. The general themes related to the in-school experience had to do with cultural competence among staff (diverse workforce), teacher training to support different learning styles, particularly among students with varying needs. Youth also spoke to the equity of schools citing that the in-school experience should include more schools with equal opportunities in terms of the types of resources and classes offered. Youth offered suggestions to improve the in-school experience including hiring more culturally diverse school staff (and teachers), equity in the types and numbers of classes offered across all SFUSD schools, and enhanced relationships between schools and CBOs to support learning. Finally, youth suggest that schools should be given more flexibility on how to spend PEEF funds.

### **Parent/Family Supports**

Youth also echoed concerns from the community input session as it relates to family and parent support. In addition to making family support services such as GED programs available, youth emphasized the importance of the environment in which these services are provided. They stressed a need for patient, communicative, and informative providers to help parents obtain stable jobs and housing. Additionally, youth also expressed a desire for more information about the available services suggesting better outreach and advertising of programs at schools. These suggestions are critical for parent engagement and student success.

### **Safety**

The overarching theme was addressing safety in order to improve the in-school and community experience. Youth identified safety as a key factor for success. Youth also shared that it is critical to feel safe among peers and cited the prevalence of racial discrimination and fear of isolation as some of their concerns related to safety.

Suggested solutions included more resources and ways to prevent and address in school safety concerns including preventing in school fights and adequate training for teachers to help address both bully and victim. Youth added the presence of constructive teachers and a positive learning environment, as a critical factor for safety. Youth suggested several ideas to ensure physical safety including improved/expanded crossing guards and police presence on school campuses. Finally, youth underscored the importance of supportive factors within the community, including resources such as community centers and improved school bus/muni options to ensure safe places for youth and safe transportation options to get to these spaces.

### **Physical Health & Wellness**

Youth initially reviewed the various needs and solutions in physical health and wellness identified during the community input sessions. Youth indicated that while the suggestion to include more nutrition and physical education is important, it is also something that is currently being addressed. In order to help youth be more involved in these physical health and wellness activities, youth felt it critical to create more free opportunities in and outside of school. Some of the suggested ideas include various fitness classes, community gardens in-schools, and unique partnerships with local markets, restaurants, and businesses to provide better school lunches and nutrition learning opportunities. Additionally youth also desired expanded free lunch programs, an improvement in the quality of lunches available, and better nutrition outside of school.

## Job Readiness

Session participants also shared the need to expand programs and resources that directly prepare youth to enter – and succeed in – the workforce. The major theme emerging from these groups was ‘direct experience’ – such as internships or work-based learning – that would allow youth to gain concrete workplace experiences to learn about the skills and habits that enable gainful employment. Youth highlighted successful programs such as MYEEP while offering suggestions for specific types of job readiness training. Examples offered include career related internships, selected job opportunities (polling), in-school job coaching services, free transit services for transitional age youth (TAY), and workshops on selected topic (money management, soft skills). Of the existing programs, youth wanted to see increased opportunities and spots for job training programs that are inclusive of diverse youth including middle income youth, low income youth, undocumented youth, and LGBTQ youth. Finally, youth suggested an A-G requirement for college career readiness and expansion of the pathways program (CTE) as a way to improve job readiness among youth in San Francisco.

## Early Care and Education

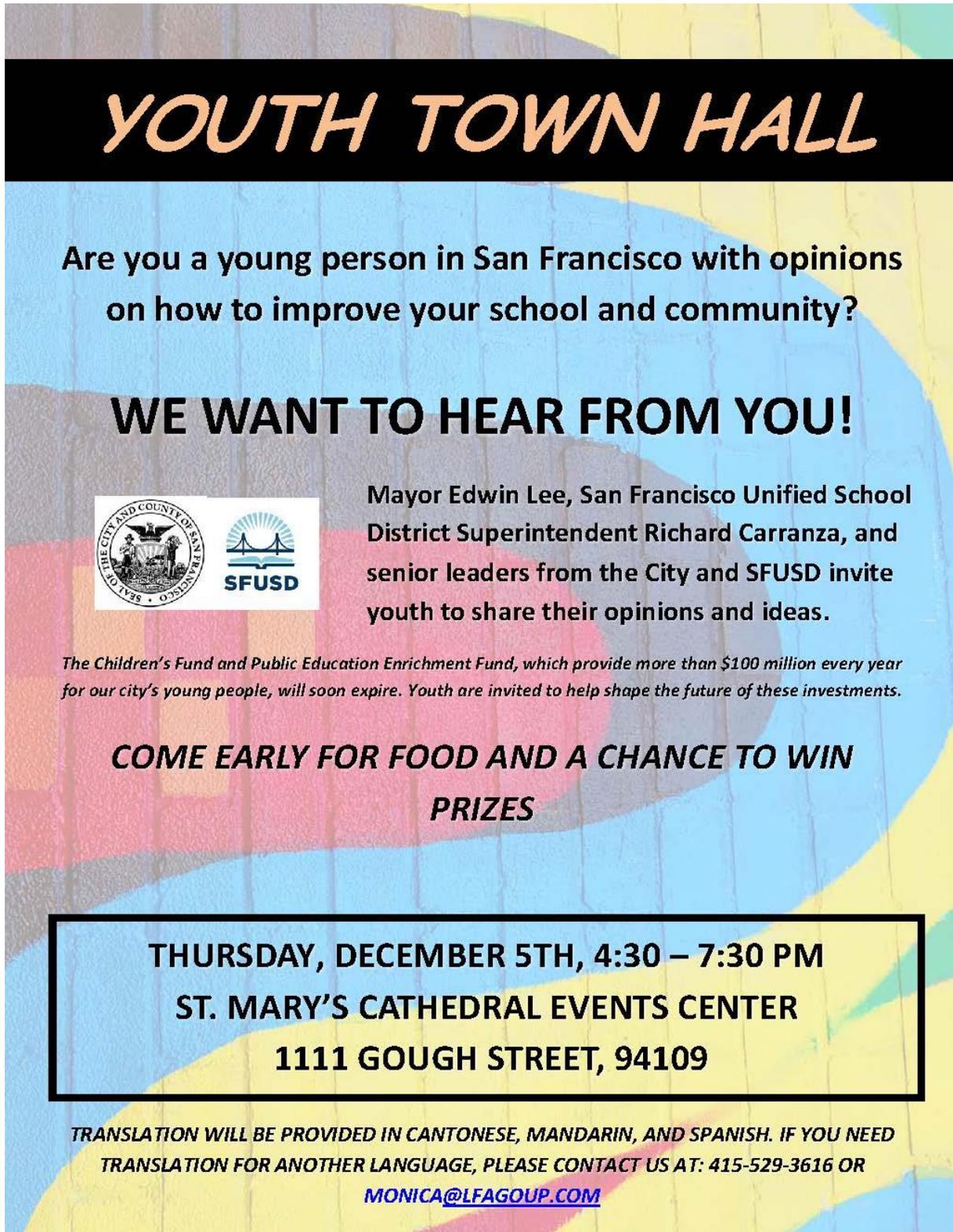
Some youth also discussed early care and education system at the town hall. Examples of solutions offered include on site care, youth-led ECE programs, expanding the hours offered for early care, improving the quality of teachers and providers, and more parent resources in general.

## Additional Needs Recorded from Youth Town Hall

During the course of the youth town hall conversation, many participants called attention to fundamental pressing needs for youth that currently fall outside the purview of the Children’s Fund and PEEF. Participants expressed a desire to include transitional aged youth (TAY) or youth up to the age of 24 who face barriers to success, as beneficiaries of critical programming and services, because many TAY grapple with equally challenging situations that their younger peers face. Youth also indicated their growing concerns about the negative consequences resulting from speculative abuse of the Ellis Act on their ability to have stable and affordable housing. To stem this issue, participants recommended California to modify the Ellis Act. Another viable solution offered by participants is to invest in building extensive opportunities such as relevant in-school curriculums and youth-driven campaigns to educate and bring awareness to students, youth, and their families about housing rights. Finally, participants voiced the need for affordable and safe transportation and more transit options. One suggestion from participants was to increase reliable bus services at certain times, particularly in weekday mornings, to ensure youth arrive to school or other destinations without being late. **These are items consistently mentioned throughout all of the community input sessions and youth town hall, and are items the City should address whether it is through the Children’s Fund/PEEF, or through other dedicated streams of funding.**

## III. Appendices

### Appendix A: Youth Town Hall Details/Flyer

The flyer features a background of colorful, abstract brushstrokes in shades of blue, yellow, pink, and grey. At the top, a black horizontal band contains the title 'YOUTH TOWN HALL' in a large, white, stylized font. Below this, the text 'Are you a young person in San Francisco with opinions on how to improve your school and community?' is centered. This is followed by the bold statement 'WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!'. To the left of the main text are two logos: the official seal of the City and County of San Francisco and the logo for SFUSD, which depicts a bridge over water. To the right of the logos, a paragraph of text introduces Mayor Edwin Lee, Superintendent Richard Carranza, and other leaders, inviting youth to share their ideas. Below this, a smaller line of text explains that the Children's Fund and Public Education Enrichment Fund are expiring and youth are invited to help shape their future. The flyer then encourages attendees to 'COME EARLY FOR FOOD AND A CHANCE TO WIN PRIZES'. A large black-bordered box in the lower half of the flyer contains the event details: 'THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5TH, 4:30 – 7:30 PM', 'ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL EVENTS CENTER', and '1111 GOUGH STREET, 94109'. At the bottom, a line of text states that translation will be provided in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish, and provides contact information for further assistance.

# YOUTH TOWN HALL

Are you a young person in San Francisco with opinions on how to improve your school and community?

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**



Mayor Edwin Lee, San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent Richard Carranza, and senior leaders from the City and SFUSD invite youth to share their opinions and ideas.

*The Children's Fund and Public Education Enrichment Fund, which provide more than \$100 million every year for our city's young people, will soon expire. Youth are invited to help shape the future of these investments.*

**COME EARLY FOR FOOD AND A CHANCE TO WIN PRIZES**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5TH, 4:30 – 7:30 PM  
ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL EVENTS CENTER  
1111 GOUGH STREET, 94109**

TRANSLATION WILL BE PROVIDED IN CANTONESE, MANDARIN, AND SPANISH. IF YOU NEED TRANSLATION FOR ANOTHER LANGUAGE, PLEASE CONTACT US AT: 415-529-3616 OR [MONICA@LFAGROUP.COM](mailto:MONICA@LFAGROUP.COM)

