

# Demographic Analyses and Enrollment Forecasts

## San Francisco Unified School District

Report  
July 2002

### Executive Summary

#### Enrollment Forecasts

San Francisco public school enrollments<sup>1</sup> have been remarkably stable over the past two decades, unlike patterns in the rest of the state.<sup>2</sup> However, during the last two years, elementary enrollments declined as a result of a reduction in the numbers of births to San Francisco residents during the early 1990s. Continued elementary enrollment decline is anticipated through 2004 as a result of this birth trend. Eventually, these smaller elementary cohorts will reach middle and high school, resulting in enrollment declines at those levels as well. Forecast simulations show that there is an 80 percent probability that by 2011 total public school enrollments will be between 53,000 and 55,300 students, down from their current low of 60,900 students, an overall reduction of enrollment of 9 to 13 percent. (See Chart 1 on page v for school-level forecasts.)

Two events could produce even lower enrollments than those modeled within the next 10 years. The first would be if San Francisco births continued to decline as predicted by state demographers, which would affect kindergarten enrollments between 2007 and 2011. We have chosen not to model this decline for our forecasts. The state demographers have not been able to predict births accurately in the past, and we decided to keep kindergarten enrollments constant after 2006. If the state demographers' birth

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, public school enrollments mean both enrollments in SFUSD (San Francisco Unified School District) and SFCC (San Francisco City/County programs). Unless otherwise specified, "enrollments" refer to the combined students.

<sup>2</sup> California enrollments increased by 52 percent between 1981 and 2001 (from 4.0 million to 6.1 million students).

predictions are correct, San Francisco elementary enrollments would be about 1,300 students less than projected.

A second factor that could reduce San Francisco public school enrollments would be an increase in the private school attendance rate. Overall, about 25 percent of San Francisco's school-aged residents attend private schools. This compares to a California average of about ten percent, and to 11.3 percent nation-wide.<sup>3</sup> Private schools have long been popular in the city, and as the number of children falls during the next 10 years, spaces will open in private schools. Thus, if the *number* of students in private schools remains constant, the *share* of students attending private schools will increase. This potential effect is not modeled in the forecasts. Strong recruitment policies by the District could offset this effect.

Although the above factors could produce a greater reduction in enrollments than modeled, we have taken a conservative approach in the forecast. These forecasts are intended to guide facilities usage and it is prudent to make sure there are sufficient facilities to house students. Thus we have erred on the side of being cautious in forecasting the enrollment decline.

### **Migration Trends**

One-fourth of the children born to San Francisco residents leave the city before entering kindergarten, one-fourth attend private schools, and one-half attend public schools.<sup>4</sup> Of those who enroll in public kindergarten, 13 percent exit the public school system by the time they reach the eighth grade. These patterns have been fairly constant over time, and our forecasts assume they will continue in the future.

### **Housing Growth**

Significant housing growth is planned for San Francisco. Most relevant for forecasting school enrollments is affordable housing construction, because the number of children enrolled per housing unit is much greater in subsidized or affordable housing compared to market rate housing. During the next 10 years, approximately 1,000 additional students are expected to enroll in District schools from newly constructed affordable housing in Bayview/Hunters Point, Hunters Point Shipyard, and Mission Bay, and are accounted for explicitly in the forecasts. Although there will be other children from new construction in non-subsidized housing and in other new affordable units throughout the city, these are already accounted for in the normal forecast method, which assumes past rates of housing growth will continue in the future. (San Francisco has experienced moderate housing growth; the housing stock grew by four percent during the 1990s.)

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<sup>3</sup> Sources: CBEDS for California; U.S. Department of Education for national average.

<sup>4</sup> These are "net" figures – we compare total number of births to total kindergarten enrollments in public and private schools. Some children who leave the city are replaced by others moving in.

### **Subarea Forecasts**

As mentioned above, enrollment declines are expected during the next 10 years. However, within San Francisco, some neighborhoods are expected to decline more than others. Children living in northern and western areas have declined more than in the east, in general, and this is projected to continue. Housing growth in the eastern areas of Bayview/Hunters Point, Hunters Point Shipyard, and Mission Bay contribute to enrollment growth, offsetting some of the decline that otherwise would occur in those areas.

Section 3 presents school-specific forecasts. Students are allocated to schools based on two factors:

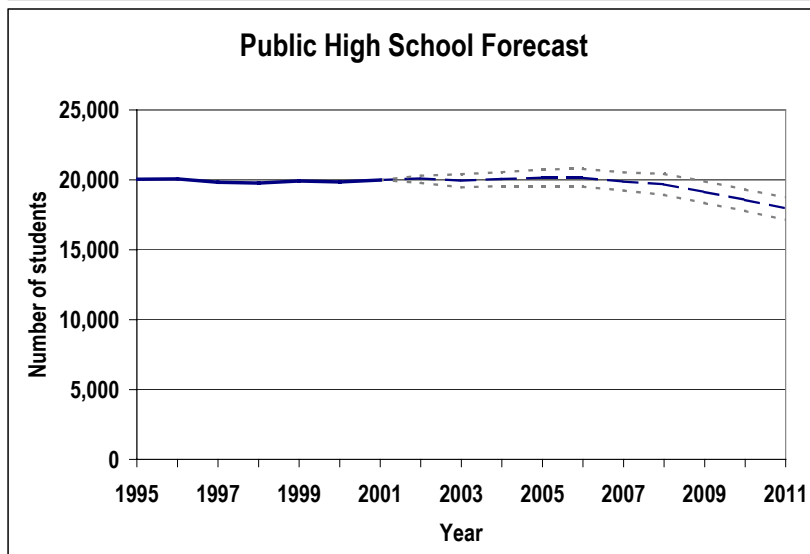
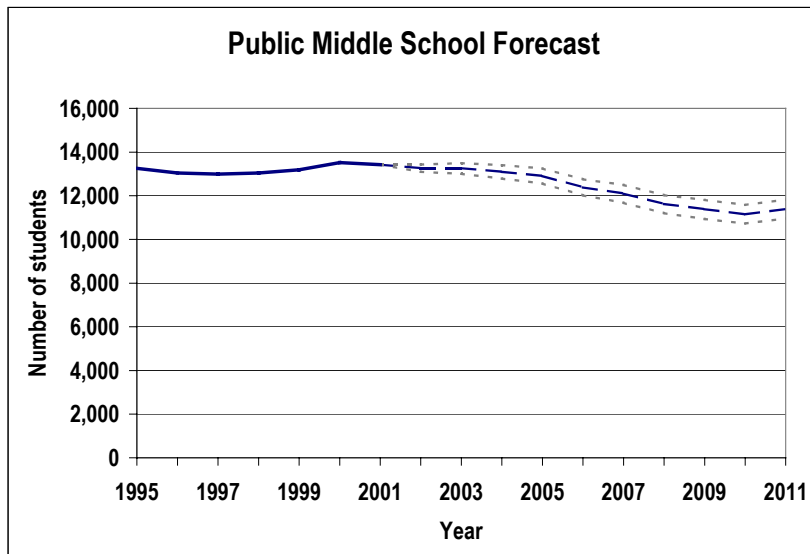
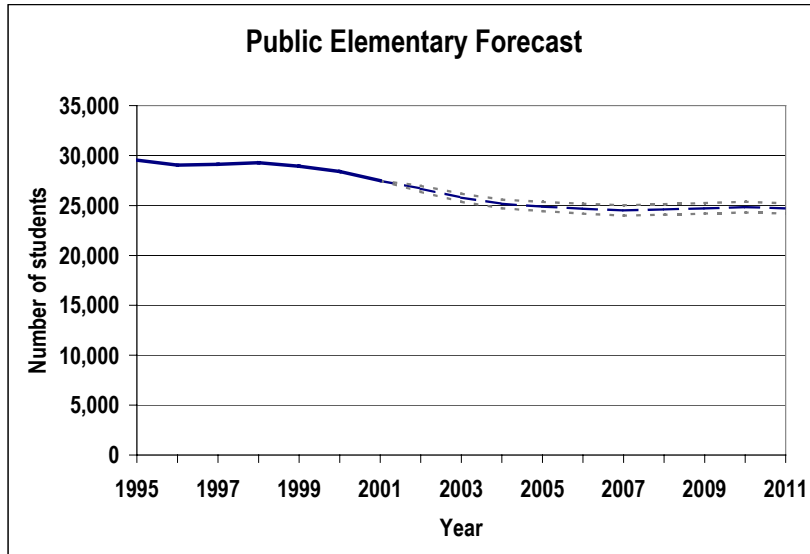
1. Where students will live in the future,
2. Where students will attend school from each area.

In most districts, where students live is by far the dominant factor in determining school enrollments. Not so in SFUSD. Student assignment policies greatly influence school enrollments. For example, 25 percent of students attend alternative schools and another 31 percent attend a regular school not in their attendance area. The lack of consistency between where students live and where they attend school makes it difficult to accurately forecast enrollments at the school level, particularly when school assignment policies are changing. Unfortunately we know that the Diversity Index, the closing of McAteer (and corresponding increase in SOTA), and general program placement changes will affect future school assignments, yet without historical experience on which to base our forecasts, we are unable to take their probable new changes into account. Instead, school forecasts were based on the historical pattern of school assignments. The value of these school forecasts is that they show how neighborhood demographic changes can translate into changes in enrollment patterns.

### **Report Components**

This report contains the following sections: an executive summary, a detailed district-wide analysis, a district-wide forecast, school-specific forecasts (including residence area-specific forecasts), and an Appendix with detailed data.

**Chart 1**



## **List of Key Findings**

- ❑ *The recent decline in total District enrollment was due to a decline in births resulting in a decline in elementary school enrollments.*
- ❑ *As the current elementary student cohort progresses through school, its smaller size indicates middle and high school enrollment declines in the near future.*
- ❑ *About one-fourth of all private school students come from outside the city.*
- ❑ *Private school enrollments have been relatively stable over the last two decades, currently enrolling about one-quarter of San Francisco's K-12 residents.*
- ❑ *Private schools have some potential to absorb more students, if they keep enrollments relatively stable over time while public enrollments fall.*
- ❑ *The construction rate of affordable housing during the next five years will resemble recent levels.*
- ❑ *The construction rate of affordable housing beyond 2006 is expected to be significant in Hunters Point, the Naval Shipyard, and Mission Bay.*
- ❑ *San Francisco public student yields (the number of students per housing unit) tend to be low, but are much higher in affordable units.*
- ❑ *An additional 1,037 students are incorporated into the forecast, to account for increasing levels of affordable family housing in San Francisco in the forecast period.*
- ❑ *There is an 80 percent probability that in fall 2011, total K-12 public school enrollments will be between 53,000 and 55,300 students.*
- ❑ *Small changes in the ethnic distribution are anticipated over the next 10 years, with Asians and Pacific Islanders increasing from 44 percent to 47 percent of the student body, while African-American enrollment declines from 16 percent to 12 percent.*
- ❑ *Although enrollments are forecast to decline during the next 10 years, enrollments are likely to rise again in the very long run, once the post-WWII baby boom generation retires and/or dies, as more housing is built, and as Hispanics become a larger percentage of women in their child-bearing ages.*
- ❑ *Sub-area forecasts of student enrollments are more reliable than forecasts of where students will actually attend schools*
- ❑ *While district-wide enrollments are forecast to decrease by 2011, there is great variation by sub-area. Some areas are projected to show significant declines in school-age residents, others will decline mildly or show some increases, especially in areas with significant new affordable housing.*