

## **Supporting Evaluation and Reauthorization of the Public Education Enrichment Fund**

*San Francisco Alliance for Arts Education*

In 2004, San Francisco voters overwhelmingly approved the Public Education Enrichment Fund. The measure, known as PEEF, established a set-aside in the city's general fund designed to support programs that historically have been vulnerable to budget reduction or elimination in difficult economic times. These program areas are outlined in PEEF's preamble: "This measure may be referred to as 'The Arts, Music, Sports, and Pre-School for Every Child Amendment of 2003.'" PEEF was conceived at the end of an economic downturn, with the goal of investing in San Francisco's children, and staving off budget cuts during future economic crises.

Arts education opportunities for California public school children have declined drastically during nearly three decades of decreased school funding starting with the passage of California's Proposition 13 in 1978<sup>1</sup>. However, arts education fares a little better in San Francisco than in surrounding counties, largely due to PEEF. In 2006, the San Francisco Unified School District formally adopted the Arts Education Master Plan (AEMP); a landmark document providing a blueprint for rebuilding arts education in San Francisco public schools<sup>2</sup>. The Public Education Enrichment Fund makes the Arts Education Master Plan possible by providing a crucial local funding source toward the stated goal of arts education in every school, for every child, every day.

Extremely popular since its passage, PEEF supports art and music education, sports, libraries, early childhood education, health and wellness services for thousands of San Francisco youth. The PEEF currently consists of three components, two of which go directly to the San Francisco Unified School District: SLAM (Sports, Libraries, Art and Music – to SFUSD); Universal Preschool (to the First Five Commission); and the "Third Third" (a component intended to remain flexible – to SFUSD).

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<sup>1</sup> *An Unfinished Canvas*. 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The SFUSD's Arts Education Master Plan was officially approved by the Board of Education in 2007.

At the end of the 2014-2015 academic year, PEEF will sunset and require reauthorization by San Francisco voters in order to preserve these crucial programs. This reauthorization presents an excellent opportunity to review the effectiveness of PEEF since 2003 and recommend improvements to the current legislation. As advocates for a high quality education for all youth in San Francisco, we encourage the city and school district to examine the original intentions and current outcomes of PEEF funding, with the goal of making necessary changes and ensuring the reauthorization of this essential funding stream for public schools in San Francisco. In light of our special interest in arts education for all children, we offer specific suggestions for strengthening PEEF's support of the Arts Education Master Plan through the SLAM component of the measure, as well as recommendations for adapting and strengthening PEEF overall.

High quality *arts* education is a key component to a high quality education. Consistent and long-term arts education is quantitatively and qualitatively linked to student engagement in school, improved attendance and graduation rates, and skill development in areas such as problem solving, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning<sup>3</sup>. PEEF has allowed San Francisco to maintain access to arts education for all SFUSD students through a remarkably difficult economic period, ensuring that each child receives the benefit of quality arts education. At the same time, the SFUSD is implementing Common Core State Standards and a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiative, each of which offer opportunities for arts integration in San Francisco classrooms. Arts education advocates are strongly in support of these initiatives, as well as the AEMP and PEEF and offer our recommendations in a spirit of support and positive intent to make a good thing better for the children of San Francisco.

### **Recommendations for Changes to Overall PEEF Legislation**

PEEF's original intent was to ensure stability for vulnerable programs during times of financial downturn. However, structural elements of the measure create an environment of

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<sup>3</sup> *Critical Links*. 2002.

instability that hinders thoughtful, long-term planning for both SFUSD and city government. In addition, while PEEF has preserved vulnerable programs, state education cuts have eroded other funding streams for the SFUSD, particularly those supporting the Visual and Performing Arts Department. We recommend the following changes to the overall legislation with the goal of moving closer to PEEF's original intent and ensuring equity of access to critical educational programs for all students in San Francisco.

### **Recommendation 1: SET A NEW BASELINE**

Funding for PEEF was originally set at \$40 million, with the goal that it would increase to a baseline of \$60 million over time. Budget crises in five of the last ten years resulted in the underfunding of PEEF until FY 13-14. We recommend establishing a new baseline for PEEF at the FY13-14 level of \$77 million. This baseline will increase annually, as the General Fund increases. Current PEEF funding for arts education is a start; but it is inadequate to provide broad and deep arts education programming in all four subject area disciplines (visual art, music, dance, theater, as well as the media and literary arts) in SFUSD schools. To reach all students with the kind of rich, sequential learning experiences established by the California Visual and Performing Arts Standards and called for in the SFUSD Arts Education Master Plan, we must provide additional funding for our public school students.

### **Recommendation 2: ELIMINATE THE SUNSET**

The original measure, drafted in 2003 and approved in 2004, states, "The provisions of this measure shall expire in eleven years, at the end of FY 2014-2015, unless extended by the voters." We recommend that a reauthorization of PEEF eliminate the requirement of a sunset and re-approval by voters. Using the past eleven years as a guide, volatility - not stability - is the trend for public school revenues. Including a sunset in this measure increases, rather than mitigates that volatility. Requiring renewal by the voters opens the possibility that decades of city and district investment could be wiped out in one election cycle. We suggest eliminating the sunset and instead requiring *review* of the measure's impact and appropriate funding level every 10 years, with the requirement of a public comment process.

### **Recommendation 3: ELIMINATE THE "TRIGGER"**

Originally, the PEEF legislation called for an annual budget of \$60 million, following an initial scale-up period. However, due to a budgetary trigger written into the measure, the allocation has been reduced on several occasions. As the measure currently stands, when the preceding year's city budget Joint Report predicts a shortfall of at least \$100 million, the Mayor can elect to "pull the trigger" – reducing the city's contribution to PEEF by up to 25%.<sup>4</sup> Since FY08-09, the City and County of San Francisco has borrowed \$74 million from funds that were originally intended for the school district and First Five Commission through PEEF. The "trigger" undermines the original intent and promise of PEEF – to stabilize funding for a historically vulnerable set of educational programs. As a result, since FY08-09 school district personnel have planned annual budgets without knowing whether the city would "pull" the trigger for that year, destabilizing the budget planning process in a time of scarcity. The Mayor has pledged not to pull the trigger during FY13-14 and FY14-15, and this promise has produced the opposite problem. After years of pulled triggers and trimming departments, the SFUSD has become deluged with PEEF funds to spend. With the reauthorization of PEEF, we recommend eliminating the trigger, fully funding PEEF each year and allowing the school district to plan and carry out its mission in service to San Francisco's youth.

#### **Recommendation 4: ELIMINATE THE IN-KIND AGREEMENT**

Current legislation allows that the city's contribution to PEEF need not be entirely in cash. A portion of PEEF funds can be received by virtue of in-kind services from the city to the school district. Over time, this stipulation has allowed for confusion in the allocation of resources from city to school district. In some cases, there has been disagreement between the two regarding "eligible" in-kind services – those that the city might not otherwise provide, but for PEEF. This confusion has also added to the instability of budget planning for the school district, without knowing what cash resources they will receive through PEEF and what might be added in as "in-kind". The "in-kind" agreement between city and school district has also remained largely informal and opaque to community members. In

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<sup>4</sup> San Francisco Controller's website.

order for PEEF to provide its full impact, we recommend that the city's in-kind contributions be eliminated.

#### **Recommendation 5: CLARIFY RELATIONSHIP TO CITY RAINY DAY FUND**

In the event of state education cuts, SFUSD is entitled to access the city's Rainy Day Fund. At times the city has considered the Rainy Day Fund allocation to SFUSD as its PEEF allocation to the SFUSD, rather than making a second allocation from the General Fund. Each of these funds was created with a specific purpose. The SFUSD's access to the Rainy Day Fund was intended to prevent teacher layoffs, in the event of significant state education cuts. We recommend that we protect the integrity of each of these funds in the future by ensuring that they remain separate, as intended by the voters of San Francisco.

#### **Recommendation 6: ACCOUNTABILITY**

Since PEEF's beginning, several elements of its implementation have remained opaque to the broader public. These elements highlight the need for greater accountability for PEEF dollars. For example, as state education funds have retreated and thus depleted the SFUSD's own general fund, PEEF funds have gradually become the sole source of funding for the SFUSD's Visual and Performing Arts Department – something explicitly warned against in the measure's language. The PEEF Citizen's Advisory Council (CAC) is currently the only body in a position to hold the district and city accountable for PEEF funds.

However, the CAC is never named in the city charter. We propose formalizing the PEEF CAC to oversee the SFUSD portion of the fund, and furthermore that CAC members must include the following: 1 appointee from each member of the board of education; 3 appointees from the Arts Commission; 1 appointee from the Library Commission. The PEEF CAC's goal is and shall be to keep the SFUSD accountable to its goals, which include the Arts Education Master Plan, as well as the promise of PEEF. This includes ensuring that PEEF funds are supporting, rather than supplanting, school district general fund dollars. To this end, we also recommend that the CAC prepare for the budget process in plenty of time to allow for public comment and review: the CAC should submit ideas for annual spending plans to the Board of Education by December 1 each year; the Board of Education should approve a preliminary spending plan by January 1. The CAC should then allow for public comment

and review before Feb 1, when the Board of Education must submit the spending plan to the city.

## **Recommendations Specific to SLAM Funding**

Compared to other school districts in California, PEEF's SLAM component has functioned as intended: maintaining historically vulnerable programs during a time of shrinking budgets. Schools are equipped with additional librarians and updated print and media resources. Every school has access to credentialed art and/or music teachers. These accomplishments would not have been possible without annual funding from PEEF.

However, while PEEF has provided access to crucial programs and services, the depth and breadth of programming varies. Current funding levels limit the amount of instructional time per student in any one art form, as well as access to multiple arts disciplines. Even with PEEF's support, students require more contact time with arts specialists in order to have access to the sequential, long-term arts instruction once universal in California's public schools and still required in the California Department of Education's content standards for Visual and Performing Arts and the SFUSD Arts Education Master Plan. As state funding for credentialed teachers has retreated, arts and arts education organizations have stepped up to fill the gap in arts education access, in partnership with the district's Visual and Performing Arts Department. This collaboration between credentialed art teachers and San Francisco-based arts organizations has afforded SFUSD students what many in California do not have – access to high-quality arts education. And at the same time, these services require mapping and coordination to ensure that that access is sequential, equitable, and ongoing for all students.

### **Recommendation 7: REALLOCATE SFUSD'S 2/3 SHARE OF PEEF**

We recommend adjusting the current allocation of funds within the SFUSD's portion of PEEF. Currently, the SFUSD portion of PEEF is split evenly between Sports, Libraries, Art and Music (SLAM) and the "Third Third" (a flexible allocation of funds for SFUSD) – each constitute a third of the total PEEF. We recommend instead the following split: 40% for

SLAM, and 27% for the “Third” Third. The voters approved PEEF largely on the merits of what SLAM could offer to students in SFUSD. This new split would be representative of that approval, and would ensure an increase in total dollars for each piece of SLAM.

**Recommendation 8: 50% ALLOCATION OF SLAM FOR “THE ARTS”**

SLAM funds comprise one-third of the total allocations in the PEEF legislation. In practice, the splitting of SLAM among sports, libraries, art and music, as changed over time. For most of PEEF’s existence, it was split into thirds - combining art and music together into one third, and the remaining two thirds to sports and libraries, respectively. However, in the most recent fiscal year (FY13-14), that split has been modified to allow a larger share of the SLAM allocation to “art and music”. It is our position that this split is appropriate, given that “art and music” in practice currently encompasses the four main artistic disciplines – visual art, music, dance and theater arts. We recommend that the reauthorization of PEEF ensure that the SLAM budget is divided as follows:  $\frac{1}{4}$  for sports;  $\frac{1}{4}$  for libraries, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  for “the arts”, which will include visual art, music, dance, theater. If Recommendation #7 (above) is adopted, and SLAM’s allocation from PEEF rises to 40% from the current 33%, then this proposed split within SLAM will lead to increased, total funding for each of sports, libraries, and “the arts.”

**Recommendation 9: SITE-BASED PLANNING & DISTRICT-LEVEL MAPPING**

More arts education programming – both through district Visual and Performing Arts staff and community-based organizations – necessarily requires more coordination of those services, at both the school and district level. Much of this coordination is currently in place at the site level. We recommend that each school’s site-specific Arts Education Plan be made publicly available to teachers, parents, and students, to ensure that arts education programming is aligned, coordinated, measured and effective. In addition, all school site Arts Education plans should be tracked by the school district’s central office for the purpose of mapping arts education access throughout the district – a process that must include data on both school district arts teachers and community arts education programming. This district-wide level of data related to arts education access will help community partners and school district staff work together to ensure that all students have

access to a high quality, sequential arts education – as well as opportunities for arts-integrated learning.

These changes to the SLAM allocation and overall PEEF funding will increase funding for the arts district-wide, as well as an increase in the per pupil allocation for arts education from PEEF directly to schools. This proposal entails two direct benefits to students:

- Increased funding to the school district provides resources allows the Visual and Performing Arts Department (VAPA) to hire additional credentialed art and music teachers - thereby moving closer to the goal of arts education in every school, for every child, every day. It also allows for an increased stipend and preparation time for the school-based arts coordinators called for in the AEMP, to coordinate arts education programming and develop opportunities for integrated learning.
- Funding directly to schools starts at a baseline of \$10 per pupil for elementary schools, \$20 per pupil for middle schools, and \$20 per pupil for high schools, allowing principals and School Site Councils to align arts resources with the priorities in their school site plan. Schools can partner with arts organizations for artist-in-residence programs, purchase arts supplies, or provide field trips to arts institutions. This baseline restores a level of funding in place before the economic crisis began in 2009 (and is currently in practice for the 13-14 academic year).

## **Conclusion**

*“Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.”*

- Sir Ken Robinson

School district personnel, community advocates, and most importantly, the voters have created an opportunity for strong arts education opportunities through the development of the Arts Education Master Plan, supported by funding from the Public Education Enrichment Fund. PEEF funding has provided critically needed support during difficult



times. Our recommendations aim to support the original goals of PEEF, grow the fund, and provide additional, necessary stability for vulnerable programs.

Changes in education policy at the state and local level are well timed with the PEEF renewal to shift teaching and learning in SFUSD in a fundamental way. The SFUSD's new STEM initiative, funded partially through PEEF, presents unique opportunities for integration with the arts ("STEAM"). At the same time, the SFUSD is implementing Common Core State Standards-aligned curriculum that focuses on building critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The arts are uniquely positioned to help develop these skills, in integration with other academic disciplines. Finally, funding for education at the state level is changing. The Local Control Funding Formula will lead to additional, more flexible funding for the SFUSD than we have seen in recent years. How will the SFUSD capitalize on these opportunities to integrate curriculum and concentrate funding? How can the arts be a pivotal lever in achieving high quality teaching and learning for all youth in the district, in a world free of the curricular and budgetary restrictions of the past?

San Francisco voters have consistently shown strong support for both the arts and schools, voting time and again to tax themselves and set aside money from the city's General Fund to support our schools and specifically, to support the arts. The stewards of those public funds, city and district personnel, have an opportunity and an obligation to serve the will of the community by reviewing the goals and outcomes of PEEF and implementing changes to make the renewed measure as clear, strong, stable and supportive as possible. Increasing funding for Sports, Libraries, Arts and Music, bringing the budget to alignment with the original priorities for art and music, building in stronger accountability, and eliminating the "trigger" will make PEEF stronger and more likely to serve all stakeholders better – most importantly, the real stakeholders – the children of San Francisco.

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