

## **Child and Youth Development Strategic Conversation Proceedings**

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Peninsula Conference Center  
1700 South El Camino Real, Suite 100  
San Mateo, California 94402

This document summarizes key themes and discussion points shared during the Child and Youth Development strategic conversation held as part of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Community Input Project. This was the ninth of nine strategic conversations convened by the community foundation as part of this project. A total of 107 participants attended the convening representing early childhood educators, youth development specialists, schools, advocates, public agencies, foundations and individual donors, parents and young people in the region. In addition, various representatives of the community foundation's board of directors and leadership team attended this convening, including CEO and President, Emmett Carson, Chief of Donor Engagement and Giving, Eleanor Clement Glass, Vice President, Community Initiatives, Convening and Research, Erica Wood and Vice President, Grantmaking, Ellen Clear.

### **Overview of the Community Input Project**

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is committed to the best ideas and most effective solutions— at the local and the regional levels. With those goals in mind, the community foundation has initiated the Community Input Project, a series of strategic conversations, data review, and community surveying around needs and issues that matter most. The issues were selected based on a review of local data, the many excellent assessments available about the health, social and environmental concerns in the region, and issues community members and leaders have raised.

The community foundation anticipates this process will spur a greater interest in regional partnerships as well as strategic solutions for meaningful, lasting and transformative change. The community foundation's board of directors will take the results of the community input process into consideration when making decisions about future directions and strategies.

The project focuses on the following nine issue areas:

- Arts and Culture
- Child and Youth Development
- Civic Engagement
- Community Economic Development
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Housing and Basic Needs
- Immigration

## Structure of the Strategic Conversations

Each strategic conversation follows a similar model, designed to provide participants with a common context and framing for productive discussion. Community foundation staff opens the session with a welcome and overview, and then introduces a keynote speaker who delivers an inspirational presentation with the goal of creating a sense of energy and purpose for the group's conversations to follow.

Participants engage in direct conversation with each other and the community foundation through facilitated small-group discussions organized around the key issues identified in the issue briefs prepared in advance of the conversation. Issue briefs are available for download at [www.siliconvalleycf.org](http://www.siliconvalleycf.org). These small-group discussions are generative in nature, as participants respond to two key questions:

- What are the key issues in the region in the area under examination in today's conversation?
- What opportunities are ripe and have the potential for significant impact?

Participants reconvene as a large group following the small-group discussions to engage in integrative thinking: What "big ideas" do participants wish to offer to the community foundation to address the most critical issues in the region through strategies that have the greatest promise for impact?

All aspects of the conversations are recorded and synthesized for the community foundation to take under consideration.

## Keynote Presentation and Subject Matter Experts

**Hedy Chang** is a consultant focused on helping people and organizations promote social and economic justice by adopting effective strategies for strengthening families, increasing school readiness among young children and improving neighborhoods. An experienced researcher, writer and facilitator, she pays special attention to increasing the capacity of people and agencies to promote equity and draw strength from racial and linguistic diversity.

As a senior program officer for Strengthening Families at the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, she oversaw its grantmaking focused on helping families succeed economically and prepare their children for school through investments in low-income neighborhoods combined with local and state policy work. She is also the former co-director of California Tomorrow, a nonprofit that uses research, technical assistance, coalition-building and advocacy to advance policies and practices that promote equal opportunity and healthy development of children and families in a diverse society.

Chang received a master's of public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and a bachelor of arts degree from Occidental College in psychology and political science. She has had the privilege of being selected as an Emerging Leaders Fellow, Thomas Watson Fellow, Alfred P. Sloan Fellow and Harry S. Truman Scholar.

Chang opened by stating that her comments are primarily informed by the experience of motherhood as well as learning about and interacting with the educational system. She stated “It has made me much more realistic about what it takes to help families.” With this as context, Chang identified three main ideas to shape thoughts and actions around assisting families in their attainment of the “American Dream:”

- ▶ Focus on transitions. Key points of transition include: the birth of a child; starting elementary school; starting middle school and starting high school. Research and experience tell us how to make these transitions successful. For example, early access to quality prenatal care affects birth outcomes. High quality development programs and mentors are needed for middle school age children to help them be independent. Children and youth live in a context. As part of that context, access to health insurance, sustainable wage employment and debt reduction and management are important strategies to support a healthy family.
- ▶ Develop a multi-generational approach to moving families out of poverty. The economic burdens that many families face can create a barrier to parents/guardians actively participating in child development activities and programs that could increase their children’s educational success. It also means that change takes time. What if parenting classes included information on financial planning? Could economic and financial literacy information be integrated into family literacy and educational programming?
- ▶ Tailoring strategies to the unique realities of particular communities. The solution that will work with one kind of family/community is not the same for another. There is no one-size-fits-all. We have to find ways to build on strengths, acknowledge the discrimination different groups have faced, as well as identify linkages across communities to create integrated and sustainable change.

## **Issues for Discussion: Pressing Needs and Opportunities for Impact**

The three issues for discussion that participants engaged with in the child and youth development conversation were:

1. Early Childhood
2. School Age Youth
3. Transition Age Youth

The following summarizes the top-level themes from small-group discussions on these topics.

### *Early Childhood*

#### Pressing Needs

- ▶ Lack of affordable quality child care
- ▶ Underinvestment in quality parenting
- ▶ Need for earlier assessments for special needs
- ▶ Lack of mental health services and supports for both children and parents/guardians
- ▶ Need for more intentional workforce development within the early care and education field

- Need for greater cultural competency within organizational settings, including language capacity and more diverse staff
- Need to address the unique needs of special populations, including homeless children and families, children with social, emotional and/or cognitive developmental issues
- Need to make a closer connection between early childhood education and parent support/involvement
- Need to address staff turnover and structural problems in the fee structures of child care
- Need for greater public understanding of the importance of an investment in early care and education
- Lack of reference materials for parents/grandparents
- Lack of formalized transition strategy between preschool and the K-12 system

### Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Improve quality of non-center based child care
- Build upon the prenatal-to-three efforts underway in San Mateo County
- Research successful and promising strategies nationwide in areas, such as family connectedness, inter-generational approaches, micro- financing, promotores, community learning centers, etc.
- Bring to scale successful, early childhood mental health services models
- Implement Preschool for All
- Identify and support families at risk earlier and across systems and link to resources
- Develop more peer-to-peer support models
- Link child care to community economic development

### *School Age Youth*

#### Pressing Needs

- Need for children to have varied experiences (arts, etc.)
- Lack of authentic partner system with families (and schools)
- Presence of significant accessibility barriers to parks and recreation (and other programs)
- Need for more experiential learning
- Lack of meaningful and culturally appropriate opportunities for youth to connect with community and for parent engagement regarding youth issues
- Need for early occupational opportunities for youth and financial education
- Alienation problem for families due to staffing issues. Need for a caring adult in school site (emotional health, physical health, financial counseling, coaching)
- Need for effective strategies to support low-performing students
- Need for mental health services and supports for children
- Limited structural activities after school for high school students
- Need for stronger advocacy efforts and focus among student and families with regard to the educational system
- Need for safe and effective mentors
- Need to close achievement gap for all, and in particular those with low incomes, English as second language and first generation immigrant students and families
- Need for structured and quality transition strategies for youth and families around middle school

## Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Identify and build on current working loan program models
- Provide students and parents with more objective information regarding educational financing
- Partner with school districts on teacher coaching/mentoring, especially where districts are not equally funded
- Challenge early learning students to speak/learn English more quickly by providing extra support
- Link school day learning to after school (better alignment)
- Research factors contributing to chronic student absenteeism and successful strategies to address
- Engage youth voice in decision-making in schools and cities
- Encourage business to mentor youth and to increase their knowledge of range of jobs and needed skills
- Provide transportation (a free, clean, shuttle) for children and families to services/programs
- Strengthen neighborhoods and build organizational capacity in culturally competent way
- Broaden strategies to connect public institutions to nonprofits, etc.
- Educate parents, drawing on their cultures to identify parenting techniques
- Use ethnic media to discuss issues (e.g., radio)
- Provide special and focused support to new teachers
- Partner with universities where teachers earn credentials to fill gaps (in research, curriculum, etc.)

## *Transition Age Youth*

### Pressing Needs

- Frayed safety net system
- Lack of transitional and life skills training and support for families
- Lack of collaboration between agencies
- Lack of access to information and resources for youth, especially around alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Need for continued support and resources after age 18
- Lack of opportunities for meaningful and culturally appropriate engagement for youth
- Lack of career training and opportunities
- Need for a transitional housing approach
- Lack of financial education
- Lack of transition planning
- Need for a strength-based approach to working with transition age youth

## Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Develop a common language that is strength-based
- Expand successful mentoring programs
- Integrate financial items into teachers curriculum
- Develop and launch a community campaign on how to be a caring adult
- Redefine youth as leaders (i.e., alternative and supervision programs)
- Increase access to independent living skills programs
- Clarify goals of juvenile justice system
- Increase access to high quality mental health

## **Participants' Overarching Suggestions**

Building on the ideas and discussions generated during the facilitated small group rotations, participants shared their overarching suggestions that are at the intersection of critical issues, ripe opportunities and potential for meaningful impact. The following provides a summary overview of these suggestions. Please note that there may be overlap with ideas generated in the small-group discussions summarized and some ideas may have been subsumed or categorized with others to reduce redundancies. It is also important to bear in mind that these overarching suggestions are not only for Silicon Valley Community Foundation's consideration, but also for all those who are interested in and support child and youth development in the region.

### *Summary of Overarching Suggestions*

- Support community education and alternative education programs to counteract dropout rates (e.g., alternative education, middle college, community day schools, continuation schools)
- Prepare younger generation to collaborate and value “non-economy valued” skills and tasks
- Funds for in-home care providers to increase access to affordable child care
- Integrate in-school and out-of-school time with strong partnerships between business, parents and service providers
- Invest in Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Education Standards (CARES) program in both counties so that they can publish a database of education resources for early childhood educator teachers
- Join with ongoing efforts to expand improve and mobilize funding and advocacy for universal access to high quality preschool for all children in Silicon Valley
- Build (with communities) a “ladder” for youth engagement and leadership opportunities that begins in upper elementary grades and continues through community colleges
- Adopt a strategic priority to invest in integrated services and make a long-term (15-20 year) commitment to convene county, First 5, foundations, funders, educators, businesses and community organizations to “preventively” address the needs of young children through young adult and keep them out of public systems
- Knock down the silos between organizations and systems that make us “divvy up” youth and families and close the door on them. Make it so that families can get help to maneuver through systems (regardless of funding streams) whether it is school or child welfare
- Invest in child and youth development in an integrated and comprehensive way that bridges silos and builds development assets
- Help create a youth resource center in the community that house resources and/or transition services for middle school to young adults in at risk communities such as East Palo Alto.

Model is Youth Uprising in Oakland where city/county nonprofit agencies and funders work together to provide an on-site solution

- ▶ Fund professional development initiative for preschool teachers who work with bilingual children
- ▶ Invest in strategies that focus immigrant families on early childhood development as families' portal for successful integration into a new society
- ▶ Look across counties at juvenile detention reform efforts and alternatives. A serious focus on rehabilitative model could benefit the region in a very effective and holistic way

## **Next Steps**

Silicon Valley Community Foundation staff is reviewing and analyzing the content from all nine strategic conversations, alongside results from a community survey and comprehensive review of local studies, to provide input and recommendations for the board of directors to consider in determining future directions and strategies. These recommendations will encompass the variety of ways in which the community foundation can achieve impact, including grantmaking, initiatives, convening, research, donor engagement and policy/advocacy efforts.

For more information or to download the issue brief for the conversation, please visit our website at [www.siliconvalleycf.org](http://www.siliconvalleycf.org). You can also email questions, comments or suggestions to Charu Seth, administrative assistant, at [cseth@siliconvalleycf.org](mailto:cseth@siliconvalleycf.org).