

**Education
Strategic Conversation Proceedings
November 7, 2007**

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This document summarizes key themes and discussion points shared during the Education strategic conversation held as part of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Community Input Project. This was the eighth of nine strategic conversations convened by the Community Foundation as part of this project. A total of 102 participants attended the convening, representing early care and education, public and private primary school systems, teachers, administrators, parents, advocates and others engaged in educational activities 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 these 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.

This 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). These small-group discussions are generative in nature, as participants respond to two key questions:

- What are the region's key issues in the area under examination for 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: As a large group, participants share "big ideas" and strategies to impact the region's most critical issues.

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

Keynote Presentation

Ellen Moir is the executive director of The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Moir began her distinguished career as a bilingual teacher in Santa Paula, California in 1972. She has been a teacher at the University of California for more than 20 years, 15 of which included leading the teacher education program. She recently addressed issues of new teacher support at the conferences of the National Governor's Association, National Board for Professional Teacher Standards, American Educational Research Association and National Staff Development Council. Moir has co-authored several books, book chapters, monographs and journal articles. She also has produced video documentaries on teacher induction and bilingual education. In 2003, she received the California Council on Teacher Education Distinguished Teacher Educator Award.

Moir began her presentation stating that education is the foundation of a democratic society and that it is the responsibility of adults to ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status and/or other barriers have equitable access to quality education. She identified several strategies critical to successful educational reform including:

1. Building a public voice within and between constituencies around the importance of quality teachers who are sufficiently trained and supported;
2. Recruiting and nurturing new administrators and educational leaders who are creative, thoughtful and energetic;
3. Continuing to provide ongoing professional development and training for teachers throughout the educational continuum; and

4. Moving past teaching to the “test” and focusing on how to support students in learning

Moir ended her comments by challenging the attendees to “rethink what matters most” with regard to educating children.

Issues for Discussion: Pressing Needs and Opportunities for Impact

The three issues for discussion that participants engaged with in the education conversation were:

1. Preschool through fifth grade
2. Sixth grade through 12th grade
3. 12th grade through college

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

Preschool through Fifth Grade

Pressing Needs

- Need to extend approaches to include early intervention services for children from birth to age 5, particularly for children with special needs
- Need to restructure the education finance system through policy changes at the district and state levels
- Need to incorporate professional development and training into the early care and education system
- Need more support for children with special needs and early childhood education (support children and families to be better engaged in the process)
- Need to address isolation among monolingual, non-English-speaking immigrant parents when dealing with the educational system
- Need more school-based interventions (such as after-school programs for children with special needs) through public-private partnerships
- Inadequate training among teachers placed in low-performing schools
- Low rates of compensation for early childhood educators

Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Engage parents in convening opportunities to discuss solutions
- Identify multi-generational opportunities to sustain change and advance learning
- Better connect early care and education to the K-12 system
- Study best practices in our region and beyond by working with local First 5 Commissions
- Engage community-based organizations, media, volunteers, etc., in a regional approach to addressing educational inequities
- Strengthen existing preschool-kindergarten transition programs by working with community colleges to provide professional development hours
- Increase kindergarten hours
- Partner with libraries to increase access to early care and education learning opportunities

- Increase availability and focus of family literacy efforts
- Improve cultural awareness and competency among teachers, administrators and administrative staff to increase accessibility

Sixth Grade through 12th Grade

Pressing Needs

- Fewer students meeting developmental benchmarks
- Inequality of opportunities among schools and districts
- Low performance expectations for both students and teachers
- Lack of understanding among parents about what educational supports their children need and how to interact with schools; as a consequence, they are not well-prepared to support their children in school
- Challenges and barriers resulting from the implementation of No Child Left Behind
- Lack of cultural competence
- Educational inequities between communities of color and their Asian and Anglo counterparts
- Lack of understanding among youth and families about the future impact of current inequities and under-achievement
- Need for more support and availability of wrap-around social and support services
- Lack of quality leadership among school administrators
- Lack of consistent and quality teacher training support
- Difficulty in the middle to high school transition for students and their families
- Need to address English Learner needs and low literacy

Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Identify existing best practice models in the region and disseminate findings
- Support educational research to inform and impact policy
- Support community organizing to make changes
- Engage parents as allies/partners
- Bring the youth voice to table
- Advocate at the state and federal level to affect systems-level change
- Expand concurrent enrollment program (early college high school model)
- Expand models of charter and new schools within school district and when possible replicate and bring to scale
- Support parents of special education, immigrant and English learner students and their families so that they can advocate for change
- Leverage technology to increase access to educational opportunities
- Advocate for enrichment programs (e.g., arts and music) during and after school
- Teach real world skills in the classroom
- Redefine and expand professional development for teachers
- Build capacity for community to advocate for financial and social justice

Pressing Needs

- Lack of accountability within the school system to increase family participation
- Lack of opportunity for conversation between high schools and community colleges about how they can work together to address the problems
- Need to address the continuing education and employment options for the youth who do not graduate from high school
- Lack of knowledge among schools about how to engage parents
- Low high school and college attainment levels for certain populations
- Need to develop a clearinghouse for workforce development information and opportunities

Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Engage parents in leadership development
- Provide education to families on how to navigate the system
- Increase messaging about higher education and importance across region
- Support counselors and other staff that help students achieve
- Promote public private/partnerships to expand opportunities for youth to work in the community
- Engage children and youth so they feel they are empowered and can make a change in their communities
- Identify promising and successful practices in the region and elsewhere and share learnings and findings
- Reinvent high school vocational intervention

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 previously 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 educational systems in the region.

Summary of Overarching Suggestions

- Make available more subsidized alternative funding for working parents who fall between the gap established by state systems that deny them access to quality, affordable child care for their children ages birth-12 years of age
- Create a cohort of community-based leaders to transform education
- Support expansion of teacher professional development and support programs such as the New Teacher Center to children 0-5. Expand these programs to teachers of all children, particularly English Learning and low-income children (need to ignite passion of teachers)

- Establish professional development centers for sustaining and retaining high quality teachers and principals
- Inform all students of educational opportunities at the elementary school level and create a high school system that aligns high school graduation requirements with college admission requirements so that all students have the opportunity to attend college if they so desire
- Support leadership development/parent education and rights training for limited English proficient families and special needs children so that they are able to become more effective advocates for their children, and these children can access the special education services and support they need for a free appropriate public education
- Fund a relationship-based job and life skills education training program with one-on-one mentoring for disconnected youth and young adults (14-24) with multiple challenges to employment (formerly incarcerated, undocumented, teen parents, high school drop outs in recovery, etc.)
- Invest in open source technology tools and content in the education space. Three focus areas of the tools can be infrastructure, administration and curriculum
- Spearhead an evaluation to study current, effective practices of local nonprofit, community-based and grassroots practices. Focus on studying practices that engage communities with linguistic and cultural barriers to accessing services.
- Increase financial support of after-school programs and partnerships that provide diversified programming for more holistic care of students in grades K-12
- Bring on campus more mental health and mediation support for students and parents
- Expand the Community Schools model to all schools with an emphasis on: integrated services for kids/families community members, family resource centers in schools, schools becoming community centers or nexus of community and parent involvement
- Convene groups to discuss and design a comprehensive plan to transition middle and high schools to have programs and classes all day for students
- Create multiple pathways for students and provide a rigorous A-G curriculum for all students in conjunction with career technical education courses
- Bring youth voices to the table in advocating and identifying solutions in their schools
- Build mass constituency base for educators that would advocate and organize for change, funding, services and technical assistance

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. You can also email questions, comments or suggestions to Charu Seth, administrative assistant, at cseth@siliconvalleycf.org.