

# GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

The Lived Experiences of Girls of Color in  
San Francisco Unified School District





## Acknowledgements

### Alliance for Girls (AFG)

Alliance for Girls is a membership association of over 100 organizations and independent practitioners serving more than 300,000 girls and young women annually in the San Francisco Bay Area. AFG commissioned the *Girls Leading Change* report by Applied Survey Research, a social research firm dedicated to using data to improve communities, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of girls of color within the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD).

*Girls Leading Change* is modelled on a previous study, *Valuing Girls Voices*, conducted within the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Both research reports are a key part of the Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative (MGNI) spearheaded by AFG. MGNI starts with a research and design process led by women and girls of color. The aim of MGNI is to increase the coordination and collaboration between organizations, districts, and girls to advance policy, practice, and programs that improve school climate and connectedness for girls of color. This report is intended to provide the community with the data and youth advocates needed to create policies, practices, and programs that are informed by the lived experiences of girls and by gender-responsive, culturally relevant, trauma-informed, strength-based, and developmentally appropriate approaches.

### The Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative (MGNI)

The Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative is led by an exceptional group of student researchers, AFG, SFUSD staff, and community partners, including:

Livier Gutiérrez, Director of Programs, Alliance for Girls

Linda Martley-Jordan, Post-Secondary Pathways Manager, African American Achievement & Leadership, Superintendent's Office

Susana Rojas, Mission Girls

Wendy Calimag, OASIS for Girls

Courtney Macavinta, The Respect Institute

Kia Wallace, Westside Community Health

Dr. Monique LeSarre, Rafiki Coalition

Kimberlynn Acevedo, UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women's Health

Larissa Chacon, Mission High School Sophomore

Marisa Kim, Lowell High School Senior

Zarianna Reeves, Mission High School Junior

Aamiyah Shabazz, Mission High School Sophomore

Geovanna Veloz, Mission High School Sophomore

## Report Facilitation and Production

This report would not have been possible without the students who participated in the focus groups, the school sites, staff that hosted the focus groups after school, and SFUSD leadership, including Kevin Truitt and Landon Dickey.

We would also like to thank the Research, Planning & Accountability (RPA) Data Center for providing the secondary data used in this report.

Production of this publication was managed and supervised by Emma Mayerson, Alliance for Girls Executive Director.

## Report Artwork

Tanya Linn Albrigtsen-Frable (Mensen) is a muralist, photographer, illustrator, activist, and youth educator. She designed the artwork for the report with input from the peer researchers.

## About the Researchers:

Founded in 1980, Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm whose mission is to help people build better communities. Our team of social scientists focuses on issues that impact the wellness and future of our state, such as school readiness, youth development, juvenile justice, domestic violence, child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and health care. ASR works to identify meaningful and measurable outcomes, and to develop procedures, tools, and methods to improve the quality and utility of data. Participatory research is at the core of our mission and we work to include those with lived experience into our work whenever possible. The project team is extremely honored to have been a part of the *Girls Leading Change* effort.

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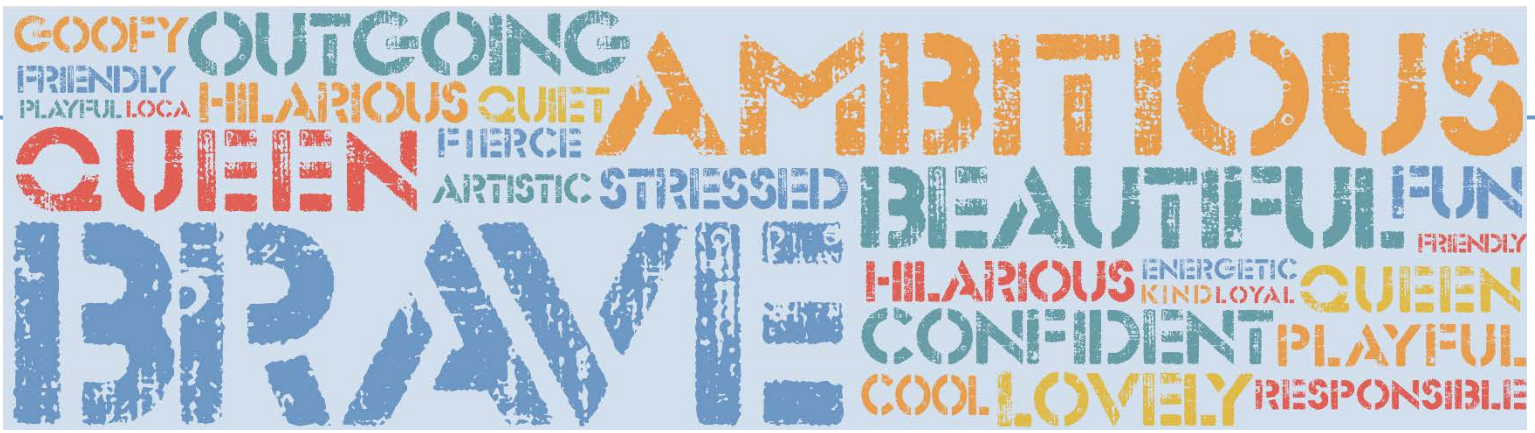


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## Introduction

Alliance for Girls (AFG) commissioned a community assessment to learn more about the lived experiences of girls of color within San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). While this project was modelled on the *Valuing Girls' Voices* report conducted in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the project in SFUSD was innovated by working with girls of color to define the research questions, conduct peer-led focus groups, and to determine the themes and patterns of the findings. The project is grounded in the belief that the solutions to gender and racial inequity will come from those with direct lived experience.

This report provides a summary of key findings from both quantitative data from standardized tests and school district data, and qualitative data from focus groups with girls of color in SFUSD. It also includes recommendations from the girls who participated in this project for achieving equity in education and lifelong success for girls of color in San Francisco.



“

AFG's gender and racial equity work is grounded in the belief that those closest to the problems are closest to the solutions: girls.

”

## Research Question

A robust body of literature demonstrates systematic gender disparities in students' experiences throughout their academic careers. Gender biases in teachers' practices, peer interactions, and even in curricular content continue to send boys and girls down disparate paths.<sup>1</sup>

Existing data from SFUSD show disparities in academic achievement across race and gender in the district. In 2016, 17% of students did not graduate from high school. However, further analysis revealed that 25% of Latino students and 29% of Black or African American students did not graduate, compared to 5% of Asian students and 16% of White students. Moreover, the annual adjusted grade 9-12 dropout rates for the 2016-17 school year were 3.8% for Native American girls, 3.7% for Multiracial girls, 3.2% for Black or African American girls, 1.8% for Latina girls, 1.3% for White girls, 1.0% for Pacific Islander girls, 0.8% for Filipino girls, and 0.2% for Asian girls, demonstrating clear disparities by race.

In light of these findings, this study asks the following research questions:

- What are the experiences of girls of color in SFUSD at school?
- What challenges do they face during school hours?
- What supports are needed to improve outcomes for these young women?

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<sup>1</sup>See for example, Sadker, D and KR Zittleman. 1994. *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It*. Simon & Schuster; Shmurak, CB and TM Ratliff. 1994. "Gender equity and gender bias: Issues for the middle school teacher". *Middle School Journal*; Spencer, R., Porche, MV, Tolman, DL. 2003. "We've come a long way – maybe: New challenges for gender equity in education. *Teachers' College Record*, 105(9): 1774-1807.



## Methodology

To better understand the lived experiences of girls of color in SFUSD, quantitative and qualitative data were obtained and analyzed. As part of the overarching project methodology, a group of student researchers were recruited to help shape the research design and interpret findings.

Beginning in late Fall 2017, five girls of color were recruited from SFUSD high schools by AFG member organizations and SFUSD Post-Secondary Pathways Manager Linda Martley-Jordan. Girls were nominated to become student researchers by school staff and AFG members based on their interest in advocacy and social justice, as well as on their respect towards fellow students and commitment to upholding confidentiality.

In February 2018, the student researchers were trained in qualitative data collection. Over the course of three training sessions, the young women learned methods for scholarly research, including methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, research question design, focus group protocol development, and group facilitation techniques. In addition to these trainings, all student researchers completed The Protecting Human Research Participants (PHRP) course from the National Institutes of Health.

A brief description of the youth research team is provided in the following section.



“

I got to hear different stories and I could relate to a lot of them. It made me feel like I was not alone.

”



## About the Researchers

### Larissa Chacon

Sophomore at Mission High School

**Age:** 16

**Hobbies:** Dance & Art

**Aspirations:** Becoming a lawyer

Larissa is a dynamic community leader and artist at Mission High School. She was nominated to participate in the Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative by staff at Mission High School because of her engagement in advocacy at school. Larissa is passionate about improving schools for girls, art, and dance. She shared that a highlight of this project was bringing to light "the power inside all of us 'girls.'" Through this project, she shared that she had the opportunity to learn more about youth participatory action research and felt motivated to conduct research. She also said she felt encouraged to learn more about herself and others to make a change. She shared that "I am passionate to be and change the future of our community."

### Marisa Kim

Senior at Lowell High School

**Age:** 18

**Hobbies:** Activism & Learning

Marisa Kim is an award-winning activist. About-Face, an organization committed to arming girls with the knowledge and tools they need to fight back against a culture that diminishes and disempowers them that is also a member of Alliance for Girls, awarded Marisa its first ever Young Activist Award and nominated her to participate in the Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative. Marisa is passionate about learning and community activism. She viewed the Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative as an opportunity to lead research that could result in change. Marisa shared that a highlight of the project was that she "had the opportunity to hear the experiences of a diverse set of people she normally wouldn't cross paths with." Marisa will be attending college in the fall of 2018.

### Aamiyah Shabazz

Sophomore at Mission High School

**Age:** 16

**Hobbies:** Writing Poetry

**Aspirations:** Becoming a Trauma Surgeon

Aamiyah Shabazz is a powerful poet and activist at Mission High School. Poems she has written include "Add Brown to the Rainbow," which addresses the black lives lost in America at the hands of police, as well as "Having Conversations With the Roots of My Hair," which speaks to how she embraced her natural hair. In reflecting on her experience working as a peer researcher in the Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative, she stated, "I liked working with everyone. I liked having the opportunity to collect data. I liked hearing a lot of the stories the girls told on their experiences on being students; I liked connecting with them." Aamiyah Shabazz will continue to engage in the Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative and work with other girls, including those that participated in the focus groups, to translate the report findings into a program, policy, or practice for SFUSD.

## Zarianna Emily Reeves

Senior at Mission High School

**Age:** 17

**Hobbies:** Dance, Poetry, & Creative Writing

**Aspirations:** Attending College at Whittier University to develop her own combined major in business management, finance, & psychology, with a minor in dance, human anatomy & medicine.

*"My experience working with the Alliance for Girls has been an amazing journey. The work we were doing exposed me to the reality of how hard it is for girls of color. The daily struggles females face and how normalized it has become to the point where most girls, when asked 'What would you advise the school district to change about schools?', were shocked and almost speechless, too. I loved being involved with this project because, being a young female of color, I am able to intimately connect and relate to a lot of the girls we've worked with, their struggles and challenges. Overall, this project was an amazingly emotional journey, but I'm excited to see some changes created for the support of my fellow girls of color."*

## Geovanna Veloz Rosales

Sophomore at Mission High School

**Age:** 16

**Hobbies:** Singing, Dancing, & Listening to Music

**Aspirations:** Event planner & working in the medical field

*"I wanted to participate in this project to help others like me. When I came to the U.S., I was having trouble fitting in. At school, I remember people were speaking English and I could not understand much. In middle school, not only was I still trying to understand them, but I was bullied a lot, especially by boys. That pushed my self-esteem down. I went through a depression. I did not want to do work or go to school or talk to my parents. It is important to listen to girls because you may not understand what they are going through or why they acting a certain way. In doing the project, I saw that not much has changed for some girls because a lot of the problems I had they are still dealing with. Unlike when I was young, I was able to provide girls with the opportunity to be heard by other girls, but also by the district. I learned skills that I can use in school, like note-taking. Turns out you don't have to write everything down, just the important points!*

*Through everything that I went through coming to the U.S., it pushed me to get involved with Alliance for Girls. I wish that I had something similar to it in middle school. A group of girls to share our experiences with. Now I am inspired and have the opportunity to do something in the future, to get girls involved and try to help each other. This summer, I will be working with Alliance for Girls and their members to help change my school system."*

## Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Secondary data were obtained from SFUSD on middle school and high school students for the 2016-17 school year. Individual-level data were provided on student demographics, standardized test scores, and attendance. Aggregate data from the Secondary Student Survey were also obtained from SFUSD on school connectedness, social awareness, and other asset-based measures. All data were analyzed by ASR, applying descriptive statistics and inferential tests of significance, including examining frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, Chi Square tests, T-tests, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to understand patterns of strengths, challenges, and disparities among the SFUSD student body.

## Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

While the researcher trainings were underway, AFG and SFUSD recruited middle and high school girls of color to participate in focus groups that would be conducted by the student researchers. Kevin Truitt, Chief of Student, Family and Community Support, sent out an email to all SFUSD middle and high schools inviting them to participate in the *Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative* focus groups. SFUSD Post-Secondary Pathways Manager Linda Martley-Jordan followed up with schools individually to gauge their interest and capacity to engage in the project.

By the end of this recruitment process, seven schools agreed to host focus groups. Each site designated a liaison, which often included principals and social workers, who were tasked with recruiting girls of color for the focus groups. With the exception of Mission High School, participating schools were asked to invite girls of color to a single focus group. At Mission High School, two focus groups were conducted, one comprised of girls of color who were English language learners (ELL) and a second comprised of Black or African American girls.

A total of eight focus groups with 97 students were held at seven different schools across the district after school hours. The table below identifies the site, the type of focus group, and the number of participants in each focus group.

Site	Focus Group	Number of Participants
Balboa High School	Girls of color	11
Denman Middle School	Girls of color	21
Mission High School	Girls of color + ELL	4
Mission High School	Black or African American girls	10
Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School	Girls of color	14
SF Community Middle School	Girls of color	8
Visitation Valley Middle School	Girls of color + ELL	15
Wallenberg High School	Girls of color	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>

Participation was voluntary and letters were sent to parents in advance of the focus group, informing them of the purpose and providing them with instructions for opting out. Food and beverages were provided at the start of each group and participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire as they ate.

The questionnaire collected basic demographic information and included a measure of life satisfaction (see Appendix 1). In addition, participants were asked to identify one word to describe themselves—their responses comprise the banners separating the sections of this report. All focus group participants were provided \$5 Jamba Juice gift card incentives.

The first focus group was facilitated by ASR staff as part of the student researchers' training, providing the researchers the opportunity to learn through participant observation. All subsequent focus groups were facilitated by one or more student researchers. All focus groups were also attended by ASR, SFUSD, and AFG staff who provided transportation and support to student researchers and referrals to participants for services or assistance as needed. Translation was provided by ASR, AFG, and student researchers as needed. The focus group held at Visitation Valley Middle School was conducted in both Spanish and English concurrently, with facilitation provided by two bilingual student researchers.

Each focus group ran for roughly one hour and each was audio recorded. Data from the focus groups were discussed and initially analyzed by student researchers immediately following each focus group at a debriefing session with ASR research staff. During these

sessions, the student researcher would identify the major themes and patterns that arose from each group and any deviations from the overarching patterns that were developing, or interesting stories that emerged from the groups would be identified. Any additional questions that might be incorporated into subsequent focus groups to better understand the emergent themes were also discussed. The focus group protocol (see Appendix 2) was updated as needed to ensure learnings were implemented across researchers and focus groups. Student researchers also engaged in a mini-focus group to address the protocol questions themselves and to reflect on their own experiences.

Transcriptions of focus group audio recordings were analyzed by ASR staff using grounded theory techniques, coding the content and identifying systematic patterns that arose from coded themes.<sup>2</sup> As each focus groups' content was coded, additional themes were added or collapsed to arrive at the underlying, most resonant themes that arose from focus group discussions.

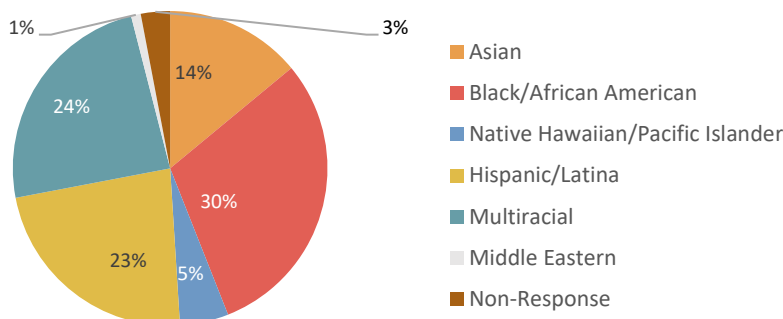
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<sup>2</sup> E.g., Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

### Sample: Focus Group Participants

All 97 focus group participants self-identified as girls of color. As illustrated in Figure 1, demographic survey data collected at the focus groups show that participants primarily identified as Black or African American, followed by students identifying as multi-ethnic.

Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of Focus Group Participants

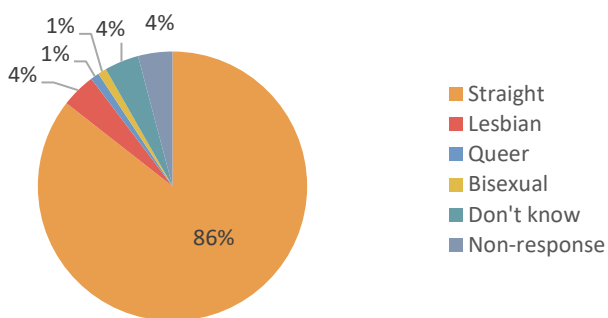


N= 97 (display includes all non-responses)

Readers should note that the focus group sample is not representative of the SFUSD middle and high school population, as only girls of color were recruited for participation and Black or African American students were intentionally oversampled to ensure representation of voices that are underrepresented in the student population.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the majority of participants identified their sexual orientation as “straight”. Six percent identified as lesbian, bisexual or queer, which is consistent with recent estimates of the SFUSD population.<sup>3</sup> LGBTQ youth are more likely than their peers to experience bullying in school, they are at greater risk of violence, at greater risk of forced sex, and as a recent youth risk study found, 29% of LGBTQ youth reported attempting suicide at least once in the past year.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 2. Sexual Orientation of Focus Group Participants



N= 97 (display includes all non-responses)

In addition, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth, as well as Black and Hispanic youth are disproportionately represented among those youth who are homeless and/or involved in the justice system.<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that one in 30 young people ages 12-17 years old in the United States will experience housing instability or homelessness over the course of a year.<sup>6</sup> While SFUSD

<sup>3</sup> Simmons, M, David, R, Larsen-Fleming M, and Combs, N. 2008. A Snapshot of Youth Health and Wellness, San Francisco 2009. Adolescent Health Working Group. San Francisco, California.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Disease Control. 2018. LGBTQ Youth. Retrieved July 2018 from <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Britton, L. March 2018. Preventing Homelessness for System-Involved Youth. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfcj.12107>

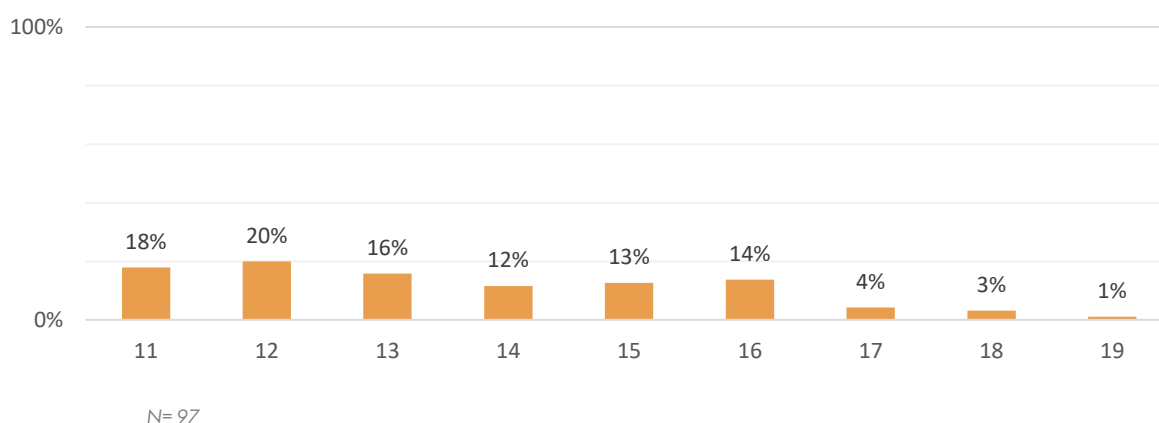
<sup>6</sup> Voices of Youth Count. 2018. *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Retrieved July 2018 from [www.voicesofyouthcount.org](http://www.voicesofyouthcount.org).

estimates that 1 in 25 students is homeless in the district,<sup>7</sup> 14% of focus group participants reported one or more nights of housing instability.

Adolescents who are involved in the foster care or justice systems, or are dually involved, are at risk for continued system involvement in the justice system, homeless services system and hospital emergency services.<sup>8</sup> While figures identifying justice system involvement are not available for the SFUSD population, less than 1% of SFUSD students have a history of involvement in the foster care system.<sup>9</sup> Among focus group participants, 3% reported a history of foster care, and 2% reported some involvement with the justice system.

The average age of focus group participants was 13.6. As shown in Figure 3., the focus group sample age distribution skews somewhat younger, with slightly greater representation among 11- and 12-year-olds.

Figure 3. Age of Focus Group Participants



More than 70% of students reported that they were involved in after-school activities. Sixteen percent (16%) indicated that they were responsible for taking care of someone else after school.

In addition to basic demographic and background information collected on the focus group surveys, participants were asked to write one word to describe themselves. Their responses are depicted in the word clouds used throughout this report.

<sup>7</sup> SFUSD. 2017. "New partnership works to end homelessness in SF", <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/news/from-the-desk-of-the-superintendent/2017-superintendents-column-archive/01/new-partnership-works-to-end-student-homelessness-in-sf.html>

<sup>8</sup> Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI). Young Adult Outcomes of Foster Care, Justice, and Dually Involved Youth in New York City. Retrieved from [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/foster\\_care\\_justice\\_and\\_dually\\_involved\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/foster_care_justice_and_dually_involved_exec_summary.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Based on calculations from SFUSD-provided data for 2016-17.

# Middle & High School Girls in SFUSD

**9 in 10** girls who attend SFUSD are girls of color



**4 in 10** are Asian/Pacific Islander



**3 in 10** are Latina



**1 in 10** are Black/African American



English Language Learners

57%  
Latina

33%  
Asian/  
Pacific  
Islander



**58** home languages are spoken in SFUSD

47%  
English

21%  
Cantonese

20%  
Spanish

2%  
Tagalog

2%  
Vietnamese

2%  
Mandarin

Girls who did not graduate in 2016-17

134  
Latina

69  
Black/  
African  
American

25  
White

59  
Asian/  
Pacific  
Islander

2  
Native  
American

2  
Multiracial

## Asian/Pacific Islander Girls

1 of 10 did not graduate



2 of 10 are Special Education participants



7% of foster youth at SFUSD are Asian/Pacific Islander



71% are meeting performance standards in Math



Asian/Pacific Islander girls missed **5%** of their class periods



77% are meeting performance standards in English Language Arts/Literacy



42% of girls feel like they don't belong | 35% of girls feel unsafe | 29% of girls feel the climate doesn't support academic learning

## Latina Girls

2 of 10 did not graduate



4 of 10 are Special Education participants



35% of foster youth at SFUSD are Latina



16% are meeting performance standards in Math



Latina girls missed **14%** of their class periods



33% are meeting performance standards in English Language Arts/Literacy



42% of girls feel like they don't belong | 35% of girls feel unsafe | 30% of girls feel the climate doesn't support academic learning

## Black/African American Girls

3 of 10 did not graduate



2 of 10 are Special Education participants



46% of foster youth at SFUSD are Black/African American



11% are meeting performance standards in Math



Black/African American girls missed **20%** of their class periods



22% are meeting performance standards in English Language Arts/Literacy



50% of girls feel like they don't belong | 40% of girls feel unsafe | 37% of girls feel the climate doesn't support academic learning

## White Girls

1 of 10 did not graduate



1 of 10 are Special Education participants



6% of foster youth at SFUSD are White



69% are meeting performance standards in Math



White girls missed **10%** of their class periods



84% are meeting performance standards in English Language Arts/Literacy



36% of girls feel like they don't belong | 34% of girls feel unsafe | 33% of girls feel the climate doesn't support academic learning



## Quantitative Findings

The quantitative secondary data reported here provide the context within which girls of color experience their day-to-day lives, as reported in the qualitative focus group data. This section provides a demographic profile of the 15,324 middle and high school girls attending SFUSD during the 2016-17 school year, representing 48% of all middle and high school students in the district. Next, to gain a better understanding of the school experiences of girls of color in SFUSD, student outcome data from 2016-17, including class absenteeism, standardized test scores, student survey responses, and graduation rates are presented and disparities by gender and/or race/ethnicity are explored.

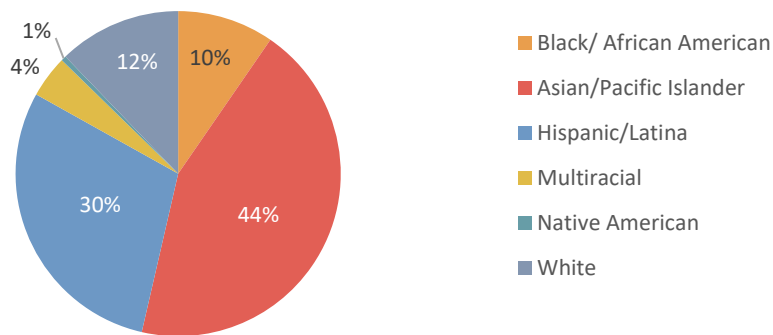
### Demographic Profile

#### Age and Ethnicity

Middle and high school girls in SFUSD ranged in age from 11 to 19, with an average age of 14.4 as of the beginning of the school year. Over half of girls were in high school (59%), and students were evenly distributed across grade levels.

As illustrated in Figure 4, **girls identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander represented the largest proportion of girls in middle and high schools at SFUSD during the 2016-17 school year (44%), followed by girls identifying as Hispanic/Latina (30%).**

Figure 4. Race/Ethnicity, 2016-17



N=14,541; source: SFUSD; total may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



## English Learners

Immigrant youth who are English learners face significant challenges in fulfilling course requirements while also learning English and adjusting to life and culture in the United States. Such challenges are reflected in the **lower graduation rate observed among English language learner high school girls**, which stood at 74%, compared to 87% of all girls in the district for the most recent graduating cohort.<sup>10</sup>

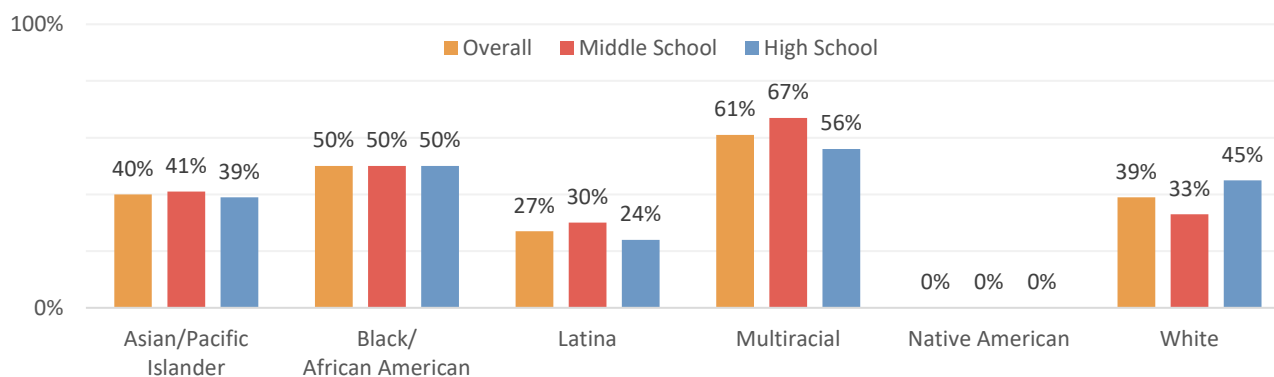
In the 2016-17 school year, 14% percent of girls in SFUSD middle and high schools were English language learners. **The majority of English language learner girls identified as either Latina (57%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (33%).**

English was the most common home language, spoken by nearly half of the middle and high school girls in SFUSD (47%). Roughly one in four middle and high school girls speaks Cantonese (21%), and another one in four speaks Spanish (20%) as their home language. In addition, another two percent each of the middle and high school girl population in the district speaks Tagalog (2%), Vietnamese (2%), and Mandarin (2%) at home.<sup>11</sup>

## CELDT Assessment

The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is a formal assessment of a student’s proficiency of English language standards. The test is administered to any student from grades K-12 who has a home language other than English. The test score yields a result that classifies the student's proficiency level as *beginning*, *early intermediate*, *intermediate*, *early advanced*, or *advanced*. As illustrated in Figure 5., the percentage of middle and high school girls performing at the *early advanced* or *advanced* levels on the CELDT by race and ethnicity. As illustrated below, **Latina girls scored lower on the CELDT relative to other girls.**

Figure 5. Early Advanced or Advanced CELDT Classification by Race/Ethnicity



Overall n=2,042 (middle school = 898 & high school = 1,144). All differences were statistically significant. Results for African-American, Multiracial, and Native American girls should be interpreted with caution due to small group size (<10).

## Special Education

Students who participate in special education programming also face unique challenges, such as academic learning delays and strained interpersonal relationships, which may negatively impact their academic performance and experiences in school.<sup>12</sup>

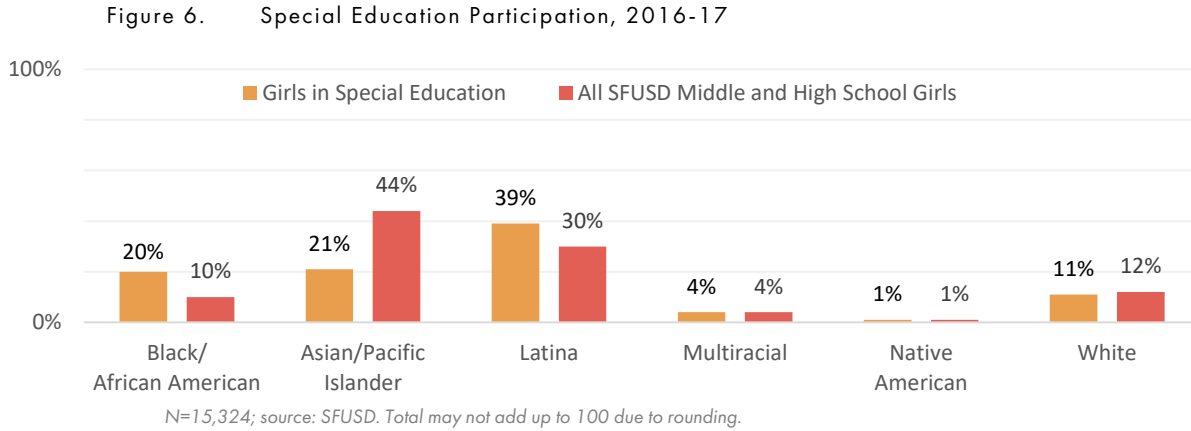
<sup>10</sup> Data retrieved from DataQuest:

<https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/GraduateReporting/GraduatesByEth.aspx?cTopic=Graduates&cYear=2016-17&cSelect=3868478--San+Francisco+Unified&cChoice=DstGrdbByEt&level=District&cType=ALL&cGender=B&cGroup=G12>

<sup>11</sup> Over 58 home languages were spoken by girls in SFSUSD. The full list of home languages includes: Amharic (Ethiopia), American Indian, American Sign Language, Armenian, Arabic, Assyrian, Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Burmese, Cebuano (Visayan), Chamorro, Chinese Cantonese, Chinese Chaozhou (Chiuchow), Chinese Mandarin, Chinese Other, Croatian, English, Ethiopian, Farsi (Persian), Filipino Ilocano, Filipino Tagalog, French, German, Greek, Gujarati (India, Pakistan), Hebrew, Hindi (India), Hungarian, Indonesian, Indian Other (India), Italian, Japanese, Khmu, Kmer (Cambodian), Korean, Laotian, Malay, Mien (Yao), Other Asian, Punjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss, Thai, Turkish, Tongan, Tigrinian (Ethiopia), Urdu, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Other Non-English Languages.

<sup>12</sup> Landrum, T. et al. (2003). What Is Special About Special Education for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders? The Journal of Special Education, Vol 37, No 3.

Furthermore, there are persistent racial disparities observed in the percentage of students who are enrolled in special education programs.<sup>13</sup> In SFUSD, 10% of girls participated in special education during the 2016-17 school year, and as illustrated in Figure 6, **Black or African American girls and Latina girls are disproportionately represented among those in special education programming.**

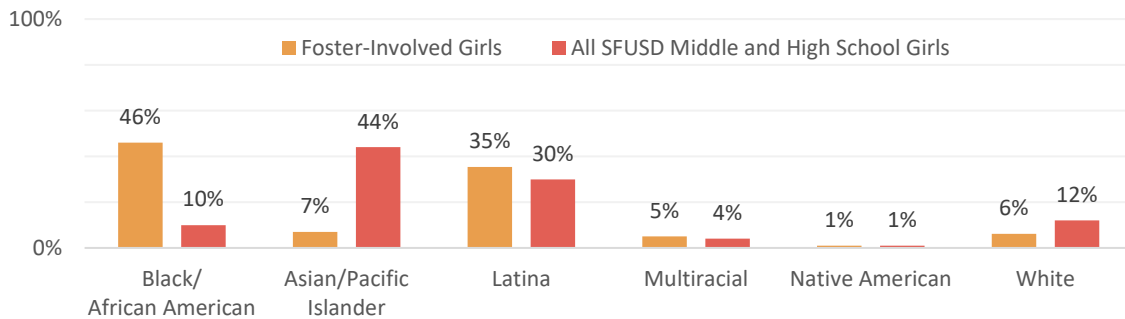


<sup>13</sup> Artiles, A. and Trent, S. (1994). Overrepresentation of Minority Students in Special Education: A Continuing Debate. *The Journal of Special Education*. Vol 27, No 4. Pp 410-437.

## Foster Care

Youth with a history of foster care are more likely to experience challenges with poor school performance, justice involvement, and higher rates of school dropout relative to their peers. Additionally, without the support of family, schools, and the community, youth with a history of foster care may experience additional challenges later in life.<sup>14</sup> A total of 197 students identified as foster youth in SFUSD during the 2016-17 school year. Of these students, 105 (53%) were girls. Foster youth were more likely to be girls of color: **46% of foster youth girls were African American and 35% were Latina**. As Figure 7. depicts, **a disproportionate number of girls of color in SFUSD were foster-involved, particularly Black or African American girls.**

Figure 7. Race/Ethnicity of Female Students who are in Foster Care, 2016-17



SFUSD Foster Status N=99; SFUSD Race/Ethnicity N=14,541; \* Total may not add up to 100 due to rounding. A total of 99 foster youth girls had matching race/ethnicity data.

<sup>14</sup> See Steffe, M and C McNamara-Barry. 2012. "The challenges in the transition to adulthood for foster care youth: a literature review", *Modern Psychological Studies*, 17(2), article 7 for a review.

## Student Outcomes

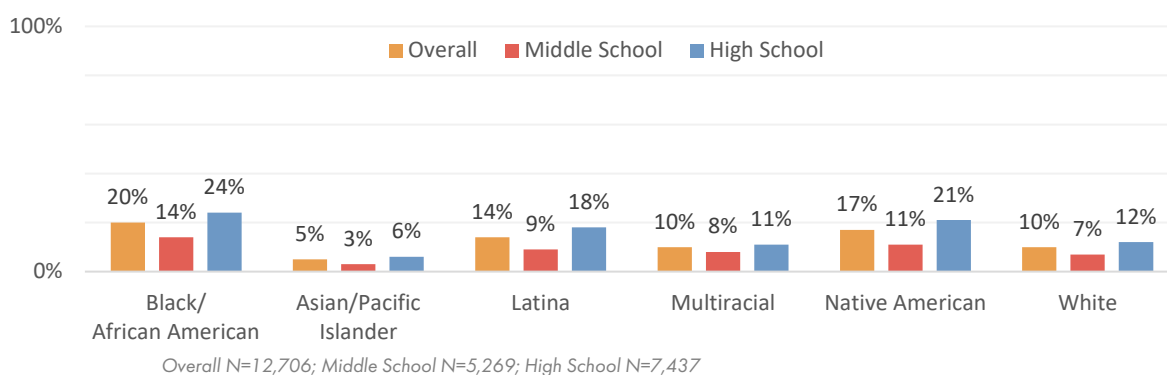
This section examines various measures of student efficacy and achievement at SFUSD among middle and high school girls, highlighting areas of racial/ethnic and/or gender disparity where they are observed.

### Absenteeism

Absenteeism<sup>15</sup> is a proven warning sign of high school dropout risk for all students regardless of their socioeconomic status.<sup>16</sup> Youth of color, as well as low-income, homeless, foster, and special education students, tend to experience disproportionately high rates of absenteeism.<sup>17</sup> On average, during the 2016-17 school year, girls were absent from their class periods 9.5% of the time, which was slightly lower than the 9.9% found among boys.

**Black or African American girls had the highest overall rates of class period absenteeism, missing an average of 20% of their class periods,** followed by Native American (17%) and Latina (14%) girls. As Figure 8 shows, rates of absenteeism rise between middle and high school across all racial/ethnic categories. **Black or African American high school girls in SFUSD missed nearly one-quarter of their class periods (24%).** Native American and Latina high school girls missed nearly one in five class periods at 21% and 18%, respectively.

Figure 8. Class Period Absenteeism, 2016-17



<sup>15</sup> Absenteeism was calculated by examining the proportion of class periods students were absent from compared to the total number of possible class periods a student could have attended (i.e., the sum of present, absent, and tardy).

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.attendanceworks.org/> for research literature and other resources re: chronic absenteeism.

<sup>17</sup> Gee, KA. 2018. "Minding the gaps in absenteeism: Disparities in absenteeism by race/ethnicity, poverty, and disability", *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 23(1-2): 204-208.

### Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) Tests

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) tests are based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. The tests are administered in grades 3-8, and grade 11. They are designed to support teaching, as well as to assess learning. Based on their scaled scores, students fall into one of four categories of performance called achievement levels. Students performing at Levels 3 and 4 are considered on track to demonstrating the knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness. Overall, during the 2016-17 school year, 63% of all girls in middle and high school grades at SFUSD performed on track in ELA, compared to 52% of boys. Similarly, 52% of girls and 47% of boys performed on track in math. These differences were statistically significant.

However, there were stark differences in SBAC performance by race, as illustrated in the figures below. **Less than one in four Black or African American middle and high school girls was on track in ELA and only 11% were on track in mathematics.** By comparison, 84% of White middle and high school girls were on track in ELA and 69% were on track in math.

Figure 9. Percentage of Female Students Performing On Track on SBAC ELA

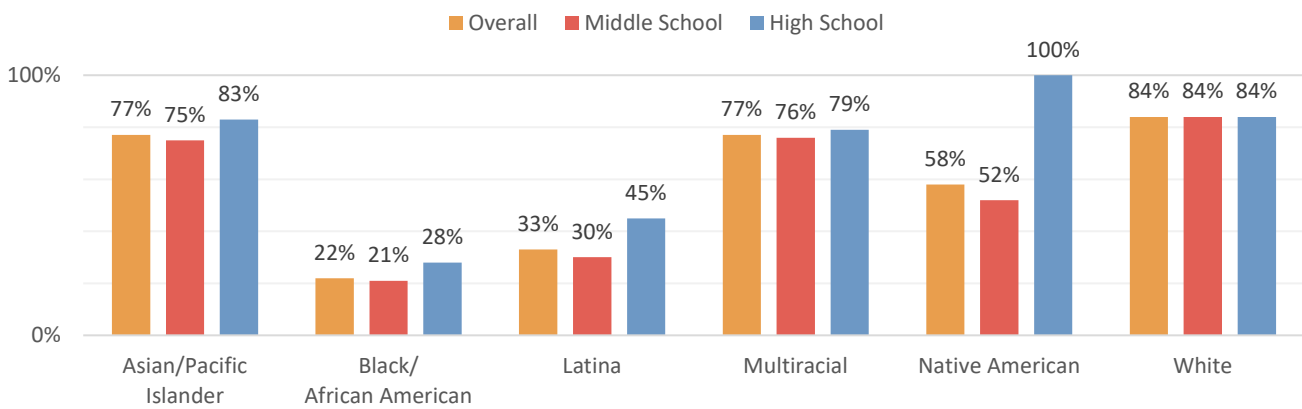
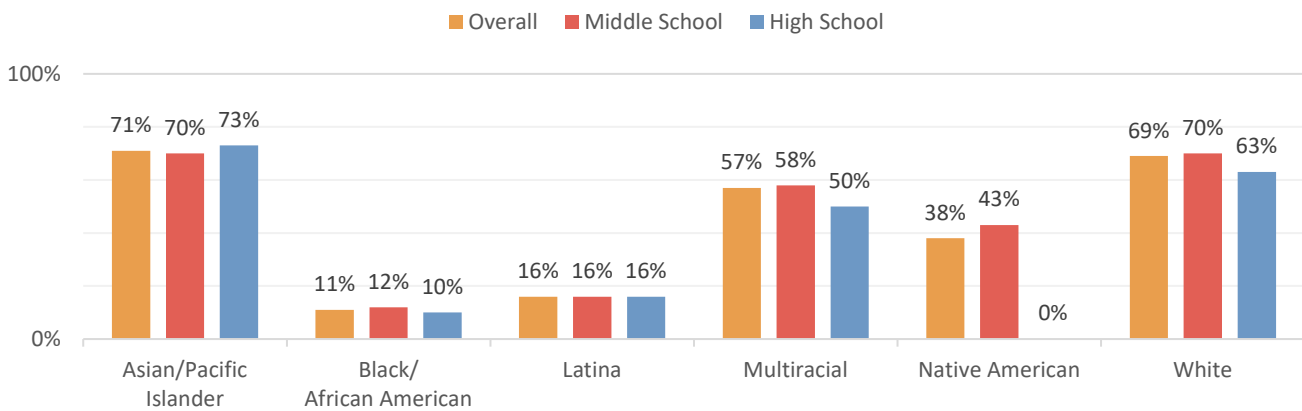


Figure 10. Percentage of Female Students Performing On Track on SBAC Math



Overall N=6,538 (middle school = 4,937 & high school = 1,601).  
 All SBAC findings showed statistically significant differences between groups. SBAC ELA results for Native American girls in high school should be interpreted with caution due to small group size (<10).

### Student Survey Ratings

As part of the School Quality Improvement Index, SFUSD collects survey data from students in the domains of *Social Emotional Learning* and *Culture-Climate*. The surveys are distributed to students in elementary, middle, and high schools. Constructs in the *Social and Emotional Learning* domain include growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness. Constructs in the *Culture-Climate* domain include: climate of support for academic learning, knowledge and fairness of discipline, safety, and sense of belonging/school connectedness. Figure 11 and Figure 12 on the following page show "favorability," defined as the average

percentage of students who responded favorably to the questions related to the identified domain-construct. For example, 78% of all female students in middle and high school grades responded favorably to questions related to self-management.

Key takeaways include:

- In terms of *Social Emotional Learning*, girls provided the highest favorability ratings in the area of “self-management” and the lowest in “self-efficacy”.
- Foster youth and Latina girls had lower favorability ratings as compared with other girls across all domains of *Social Emotional Learning*. These differences were statistically significant.
- Black or African American girls also gave significantly lower ratings across domains in *Social Emotional Learning*, with the exception of the “growth mindset” area, where ratings were similar to girls’ ratings overall.
- In terms of *Culture-Climate*, girls generally gave the highest favorability ratings to “climate of support for academic learning” and “safety”. Black or African American girls gave lower favorability ratings across all areas in the *Culture-Climate* domain as compared to other girls. Although this difference was not found to be statistically significant, it does suggest that Black/African American girls feel generally less comfortable with the “culture-climate” at their schools, feeling less safe, less of a sense of belonging, less likely to feel a climate of support for learning, and less likely to feel a sense of knowledge and fairness of discipline.

Taken together, the school surveys reveal a pattern of girls of color providing less favorable ratings on measures of *Social Emotional Learning* and *Culture-Climate*, which points to areas of potential inequities that require attention. The ratings clearly indicate disparate experiences, particularly among foster youth, African American, and Latina girls as compared to the overall average responses.

Figure 11. Social-Emotional Learning Scores (% with a Favorable Response)

	All Middle Schoolers	All High Schoolers	All Girls	Middle School Girls	High School Girls	Foster Youth Girls
	n=9,459	n=8,542	n=8,818	n=4,603	n=4,215	n=52
Growth Mindset	62%	64%	<b>63%</b>	63%	64%	56%
Self-Efficacy	57%	48%	<b>50%</b>	55%	43%	43%
Self-Management	76%	76%	<b>78%</b>	79%	78%	56%
Social Awareness	62%	63%	<b>66%</b>	65%	66%	57%
	Black/African American Girls	Asian/Pacific Islander Girls	Latina Girls	Multiracial Girls	Native American Girls	White Girls
	n=559	n=4,354	n=2,134	n=270	n=31	n=1,044
Growth Mindset	61%	62%	52%	72%	71%	75%
Self-Efficacy	46%	47%	41%	56%	53%	62%
Self-Management	64%	76%	71%	80%	78%	84%
Social Awareness	59%	65%	61%	70%	64%	73%

Figure 12. Culture-Climate Scores (% of Respondents with a Favorable Response)

	All Middle Schoolers	All High Schoolers	All Girls	Middle School Girls	High School Girls	Foster Youth Girls
	N=9,459	N=8,542	N=8,818	N=4,603	N=4,215	N=52
Climate of Support for Academic Learning	70%	70%	<b>69%</b>	68%	69%	66%
Knowledge and Fairness of Discipline	60%	59%	<b>60%</b>	60%	59%	60%
Safety	59%	75%	<b>67%</b>	60%	75%	60%
Sense of Belonging	60%	60%	<b>59%</b>	59%	59%	55%
	Black/African American Girls	Asian /Pacific Islander Girls	Latina Girls	Multiracial Girls	Native American Girls	White Girls
	N=559	N=4,354	N=2,134	N=270	N=31	N=1,044
Climate of Support for Academic Learning	63%	71%	70%	67%	63%	67%
Knowledge and Fairness of Discipline	52%	59%	60%	55%	63%	59%
Safety	60%	65%	65%	65%	62%	66%
Sense of Belonging	50%	58%	58%	61%	60%	64%

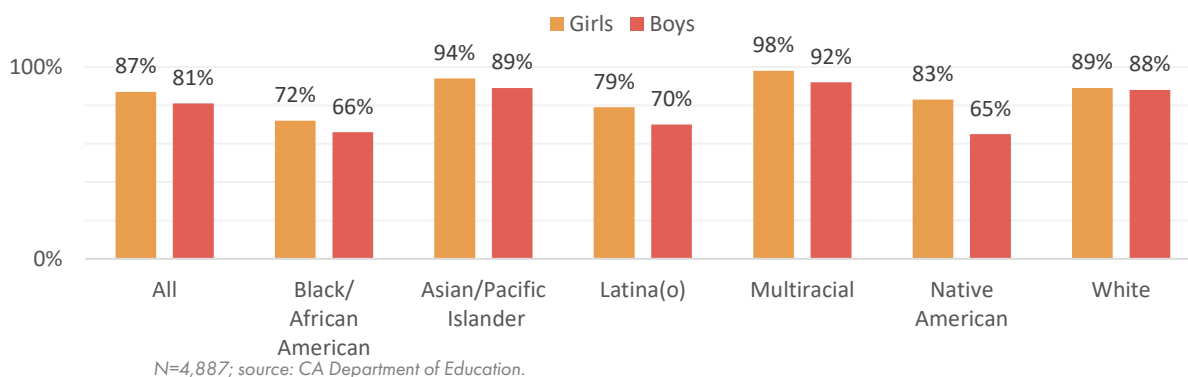
<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> Positive Result Compared to Average of All Girls: Diff >= 5%
<span style="color: #D4AF37;">■</span> Average Result Compared to Average of All Girls: -5% < Diff < 5%
<span style="color: #C00000;">■</span> Negative Result Compared to Average of All Girls: Diff <= -5%
<span style="color: #000000;">□</span> Average Result

## Graduation Rates

The graduation rate for all girls in SFUSD for the 2016-17 school year was 87%. While girls graduated at higher rates than boys did, there were disparities in the graduation rates among girls.

Mirroring the above disparities found across student outcomes (e.g., class period absenteeism, SBAC outcomes, as well as in Student Survey responses), **Black/African American, Latina, and Native American girls were less likely to graduate compared to the overall average**, as illustrated in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Graduation Rates of Girls and Boys, 2016-17



## Quantitative Summary

In sum,

- Black or African American girls had the highest overall rates of class period absenteeism, missing an average of 20% of their class periods, followed by Native American (17%) and Latina (14%) girls.
- Less than one in four Black or African American middle and high school girls was on track in ELA and only 11% were on track in mathematics.
- Black or African American, and Latina girls had lower favorability ratings as compared with other girls in *Social Emotional Learning* and *Culture-Climate*.
- The majority of English language learner girls identified as either Latina (57%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (33%).
- Girls in foster care rated the Social Emotional Learning domain lower than their peers.
- Given the multiple and systematic disparities found across the student outcomes reported above, it stands to reason that lower percentages of Black or African American, Latina, and Native American girls graduate high school as compared to their peers.



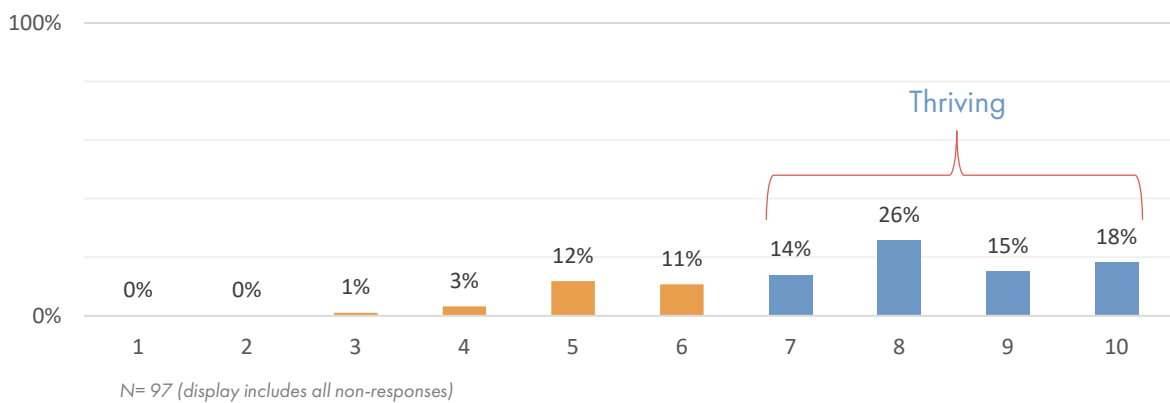
# Qualitative Findings

Before each focus group began, participants were asked to complete a measure of life satisfaction, the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale. This question asked the girls to:

*Imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. If the top step is 10 and the bottom step is 0, on which step of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?*

Data from this scale provide some basic insight into respondents' self-assessed well-being and are coded into three categories: *thriving*, *struggling*, and *suffering*. At the time of their focus group participation, most participants were *thriving* (73% reporting a 7 or higher) according to the Cantril Scale, and nearly one-quarter (23%) were *struggling* and 4% were *suffering*.

Figure 14. Life Evaluation of Focus Group Participants (Cantril Ladder Scale)



“ I feel like we’ve been through a lot as young ladies and women, and I feel like for a lot of people to grow from that is really strong and empowering, because you see a lot of women who went through hell and back, and they became something.”

During the focus group sessions, focus group participants talked about specific issues and how each issue played out in different areas of their lives, including their experiences at school, in their families, and in their communities. Focus group findings are presented in three sections, based broadly on the themes that arose in the sessions: *challenges*, *resilience*, and *suggestions for improving SFUSD*.

## Theme 1: Challenges

Social labels and personal identity were central to the girls' discussion of their experiences at school, at home, and with their peers. Participants talked about the ways in which gender and race/ethnicity intersected in their experiences at school with their peers, in interactions with teachers, and expectations for their future.

### Diversity and School Climate

Focus group participants were aware of the way race and immigration status affected their interactions with peers. The girls observed that students at school self-segregated based on race. Girls experienced racism and discrimination on campus, and noted that racial tensions in the school climate seemed historical and institutionalized, and likely pre-dated their entrance into the school.

Participants reported that group segregation affected not only how students interacted with one another on campus, but also how they connected with fellow students in class. Some participants also talked about the challenges associated with being a minority student in classes: ***"[What] I kinda like about the school [is] that it's diverse. But like [they] said, if you take a class, it will be full of one race, and then there'll be like one Black person in there. And it can be awkward."***

Within the focus groups, the racial tensions felt at school played out in the way participants talked about different racial groups; they stereotyped one another. For example, some participants talked about Asian students always doing well in school, being good at math and science, and overtaking advanced placement (AP) classes. Students held assumptions about one another which contributed to the segregation, as students' perceptions of one another prevented them from supporting one another across racial/ethnic lines. One African American student said about other students, ***"They don't be trying to help you at all. They look at you like, 'You should know this.' They need you to be smart like them. And they don't expect you to actually have challenges."***

Girls also discussed how racial tensions impacted their academic experience. Black or African American reported being bullied by students for performing well in class or for connecting with teachers. The Black or African American girls shared that, if their academic performance and behaviors contradicted students' stereotyped expectations of a Black or African American girl, they get called "white washed." Girls who were English language learners (ELL) and immigrants noted being mistreated by their peers for not speaking English. One ELL girl observed that ***"there are many new students that come to this country and they don't know the language so there are other students that make fun of them just because they don't know the language."*** A second girl shared that she personally experienced this. She said, ***"Yeah, I have [the] same experience. . . Not [only do] the white people [make fun of ELLs], but also the Black people, they say bad thing[s] about people who don't speak English, like me."***

Participants also noted there were not many people who looked like them among the teachers and staff. Girls reported that this added to the feeling of not being well understood by teachers and staff. Girls said that they did not have many adults on campus they could relate to or trust.

### Safety and Security

Girls in the focus groups spoke about peer conflict and pressures associated with social media as well as fears of violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault at school. In terms of *Culture-Climate* ratings of experiences in school reported in Figure 11 of the Quantitative Findings, girls gave least favorable ratings to the 'knowledge and fairness of discipline' and 'sense of belonging'. Moreover, Black or African American girls gave even lower ratings compared to other racial and ethnic groups in all aspects of *Culture-Climate*.

### Drama and Bullying

Girls talked about conflict and "drama" between students and how girls were mean to one another. ***"I feel like during school you get a lot of girls that hate on each other. Girls should not be hating on each other. They should be lifting each other,"*** was a sentiment conveyed by one girl on the way girls treat each other.

Girls talked about being called names and being attacked about their sexuality by other students. One student noted, ***"You get slut-shamed way more than dudes ever will, even if they do more than you do,"*** clearly identifying a double standard for girls' and boys' behavior.

Participants reported that social media was often used as a platform for bullying or starting drama. Girls shared that they commonly see students post comments about their peers that are false or misleading in order to incite conflict. Both high school and middle school girls talked about how easily rumors are spread on social media, as well as how these escalate quickly and lead to negative consequences for girls at school.

### Fear of Violence

School Culture-Climate survey data showed that nearly one-third (31%) of girls did not rate safety on campus favorably. Girls of color rated safety less favorably than their peers, with 40% of Black or African American girls and 35% of Latina and Asian girls reporting unfavorably. In focus groups, some girls in high school talked about fellow students carrying weapons on campus, including guns, and how this seemed to be accepted as normative. In some high school focus groups, participants spent time talking about concern for their own safety on campus. Students talked about the recent school shootings and some had participated in the student walk-out to demand school safety and greater gun control.

Students at two high schools reported feeling that the existing security guards were not enough to protect them and make them feel safe. They also reported that the security guards did not treat all students equally and that they had favorite students who were allowed to walk the halls during class or engage in disruptive behavior without consequence. The focus group participants expressed a desire for security guards who were committed to their jobs and who cared about the well-being of *all* students, not just their favorites. One group also mentioned that they would welcome cameras and metal detectors if it meant that students would be safer on campus.

### Sexual Harassment and Assault

The participants reported seeing and experiencing frequent sexual harassment and assault at school. As one girl shared, ***“Sometimes at school, guys would just, they harass you, but they don’t get into trouble for it. It’s like it’s normal.”***

Sexual harassment and assault were a substantial topic of conversation in most of the focus groups. These experiences included cat-calling and inappropriate touching. In addition to in-person interactions, participants spoke about and worried about harassment on social media from peers. They also spoke about the potential for inappropriate pictures to be posted and spread among peers without their consent.

“ We get smacked in the butt and people think it’s okay, well boys. I don’t know ... it’s just a lot of disrespect towards women. ”

Most high school participants preferred not to talk about specific experiences with assault or abuse, but did speak about the many general forms of harassment they and their friends had experienced on campus and in the community. Middle school students did not talk about having experienced

sexual assault or harassment, though they did speak of the potential for experiencing assault, rape, or abuse in the future, as boys’ disrespectful treatment of girls seemed largely taken for granted and overlooked.

Girls reported feeling as though the burden fell to the girls to protect themselves from male students, older men, predators, and others who might shame them. Many participants talked about the role girls played in preventing sexual harassment and assault, which included being careful around boys so as not to provoke unwanted touching or comments.

Girls relayed that at school, they were told explicitly by teachers and staff members that they were responsible for unwanted attention because of how they dressed or acted. As one girl shared, ***“The teacher says, ‘Why do you dress like this? We like to avoid things like you just said [happened].’”*** Some

“ And also saying sexual comments. Like, ‘Oh, I would do this to her,’ and stuff like that. ”

“ They think it’s okay to grab me and stuff. ”

participants talked about being pressured to wear different clothes in an effort to protect themselves; this pressure was reported to come from parents as well as school staff. Many of the girls acknowledged that it was unfair that they were expected to change the way they dressed or to adhere to a dress code in order to control other peoples’ inappropriate behavior.

or assault oftentimes

***hit them but not him hit you. It’s unfair consequences.”***

Multiple girls reported that when boys harassed or assaulted girls on campus, the boys were unlikely to get in trouble. Instead, girls reported that retaliatory actions against the harassment resulted in punishment: ***“A boy hits you and you hit them back, and the teacher sees you***

Participants at all grade levels reported engaging in some dialogue about sexual assault and harassment at school. When asked, most participants indicated knowledge of their school's policies on sexual assault and harassment. They said they knew what to expect if they reported it to a teacher or administrator. High school focus group participants talked about some of the training they received and conversations they had about sexual harassment and assault in their classes. While all participants seemed to feel that the schools were trying to increase awareness of and address the issue of harassment and assault, they also reported that complaints often went unaddressed and that the burden of proof still lay with the girls who reported the incident.

Most participants agreed that students need to speak up more often when witnessing harassment or assault at school. However, many participants reported that sometimes they let the issue go because the incident felt as if it was not worth reporting, for instance: *"I'll probably report it because it makes me uncomfortable, but if it's really not serious, then I'm not going to do anything about it."* They also shared that many people were uncomfortable talking about the issue and would not feel comfortable reporting a personal incident: *"They don't wanna bring it up. They don't want it to be a long conversation. Sometimes it's an awkward conversation, so they'll make a note about it, because they don't know how to deal with it."*

### Body Image

Many participants reported feeling pressure to maintain their personal appearance and to look and dress a particular way. Focus group participants believed there was greater pressure on young women than on young men to conform to societal beauty standards.

Middle school participants related the pressures they felt getting dressed for school. They reported feeling that they have to "put in more effort" than boys. High school girls spoke more about pressure they perceived from society and their female peers in terms of having the right clothes and the right body type to meet social standards of beauty.

We see a lot of girls on Instagram who are Instagram famous. And their body's like banging. They have a nice ass back, nice ass clothes, they be up to date in everything. And they expect us to have that too. And I be like no... And when somebody gets up on you or when somebody is not wearing the clothes that they have, they expect us to be poor, or broke, or our families are just struggling, and we're not actually. We're saving our money for something bigger and better.

This pressure was embodied in social media. One group of high school girls talked about the pressure on girls to post the perfect picture on social media. They described a process that girls routinely undertake that involves snapping dozens of photos of themselves (i.e., "selfies") from different angles and asking friends for their opinions about which is the best one to post on social media. Participants reported that boys posted pictures and comments without the same kind of scrutinizing review process.

I feel like women have a certain body type we have to follow. Be skinny or have an hourglass figure. All the celebrities have social media, who you follow, you want to be that skinny, so you start starving yourself or something like that.

A number of girls talked about the pressure to meet beauty standards based on specific racial and gender expectations. For example, one participant noted: *"If you're not white or if you have darker skin or if you're fat or too skinny, then you're basically ugly."*

### Teacher and Staff Interactions

Focus group participants shared experiences with respect to the educational climate that highlighted challenges particular to girls of color. Focus group discussions gave a sense that girls did not feel supported at school. Several girls expressed the suspicion that teachers and staff held low expectations of them, that girls were not taken as seriously as boys, and that their voices were undervalued.

Many focus group participants felt that teachers and staff disciplined unfairly as they were being sent to the office or having calls made to their parents for minor infractions

Girls can't do this, can't wear this, wear that. For guys it's like, 'Oh, go ahead, do whatever you want,' kind of.

they believed others were not being called to task for, such as being a few minutes late to class. Girls also reported a suspicion that they were more likely to get in trouble for dress code violations than their male peers and that dress code enforcement was applied unequally to students.

“If you do something [wrong] they will send letters... for how tardy you are, but they will not send letters for how good you are doing.”

Several participants also expressed that girls of color were disciplined for things that other girls were not. This perception is also borne out by the quantitative data: Black or African American and Multiracial girls had the least favorable ratings of knowledge and fairness of discipline in the Culture-Climate survey.

A number of participants reported that teachers disciplined based on personal assumptions and often jumped to conclusions about what

happened or who was at fault: ***“You get in trouble for something. They don't know what you're doing. They don't know your background. They don't know why you did what you did. They just go off of what others say. I don't feel like they care about your feelings or what actually happened.”***

In addition to feeling their teachers did not listen, participants also talked about feeling their teachers could not be trusted and that they would not talk to them if something was troubling them. This related back to participants' expressed perception that teachers acted on assumptions or on what they believed to be in the best interest of the student rather than really listening to and understanding

“You don't always get the grades deserved even if you put in the work to get it.”

what the girls needed or wanted from their interactions. As one student stated, ***“I think I just feel like because they're teachers, and they're adults, and they're in the school district, if they were to hear that something's going on at home, they have to say something. So, it's like you don't always want somebody to say something, sometimes you just wanna vent. And you can't always bring that to the teacher because... they're going to take it to a higher level. And want done.”***

sometimes, that's not always what you

Middle school girls reported sexism and gender bias from teachers, particularly in Physical Education (PE) classes. ***“They have done a lot of things to make sure that you have equal rights but usually it isn't enough. In PE they say that boys are expected to do better than girls and that isn't fair.”*** A few of the girls shared that they had been told by their PE teacher during a physical fitness test that boys were naturally better at physical tasks. Others talked about how girls were expected to play different sports than boys.

High school girls expressed a perception of bias in their academic pursuits. Despite the fact that girls outperform boys in standardized mathematics tests in SFUSD, participants felt that girls didn't have the same access to college preparation and educational opportunities that boys did and that they were less likely to be assigned to high level math and science classes because of their gender. Overall, during the 2016-17 school year, 52% of all girls in middle and high school at SFUSD performed on track in mathematics, compared to only 47% of boys. These differences were statistically significant, yet girls believed that their teachers have higher expectations for boys. These girls' experiences are well-documented in the research literature that demonstrates how perceived teacher bias continues to deter girls and young women from pursuing study in math and sciences.<sup>18</sup>

Some focus group participants talked explicitly about the mistreatment they received not only because they are girls, but because they are girls of color. One girl explained: ***“There is already a double standard for females and males, and stereotype that African Americans can't stay focused and can't amount to anything. It is compounded by being black and a girl. This happens in the schools. African American students get provoked. Teachers are testing them in areas that they know they will fail.”***

“The teachers don't care if you ask for help, they will not teach. They act like they care the first day of school. As the year goes on, they show another face. If you do not get the work, you are just stuck.”

<sup>18</sup> See, for example: Cimpian, JR., Lubienski, ST, Timmer, JD. 2016. “Have gender gaps in math closed? Achievement, teacher perceptions, and learning across two ECLS-K cohorts”, AERA Open, 2(4); Lavy, V. and E. Sand. 2015. “On the origins of gender human capital gaps: Short and long term consequences of teachers' stereotypical biases”, NBER Working Paper No. 20909; Shmurak, CB & TM Ratliff. 1994. “Gender equity and gender bias in the middle school classroom”, Research in Middle Level Education, 17(2): 47-66.

Black or African American students also reported that teachers were not as willing to help them and did not offer them resources that were offered to White or Asian students, such as AP classes, based on the assumption that they were not capable of them and would not do well. Some participants also commented that even when they were assigned to AP classes, they felt out of place. As one student recounted, *"Well, when I transferred to one of my AP classes, my teacher... asked, 'Oh, are you sure you wanna do this class?' And I'm like, 'Yeah. Of course I am. That's why I transferred here.' But I didn't hear that teacher asking other races, 'Are you sure you wanna be in this class?' That doesn't even make sense. What type of question is 'Are you sure you wanna be in this class?'"*

In addition, Black or African American high school girls talked about teachers and staff having stereotypical perceptions of how they behave: *"[Teachers] expect you to be loud or be ratchet. And [when] we are not like loud, ratchet or doing bad in school, they will be so surprised."*

Latina ELL students also described witnessing and experiencing teachers' differential treatment based on race. A girl in a Spanish-language focus group shared that teachers favor some students over others based on race: *"there's certain teachers or staff that pay more attention to a certain type of race more than another."* Monolingual Spanish-speaking students also noted that *"sometimes teachers . . . [look] down or make them [Latina ELL students] feel less than other people just because of their race."*

“Yeah, I don't think they expect us to be intelligent and be achievers, and so, I don't know. I think they expect us to be loud. They expect us to be angry. They expect us to be fighters. They expect us to be all of these things.”

Such experiences can have profound, long-term impacts on girls of color. As indicated in the “Quantitative Findings” section of this report, Black or African American and Latina girls gave consistently lower favorability ratings on their experiences in school across most or all domains of Social Emotional Learning, particularly in self-efficacy, growth mindset, and social awareness, which suggest that Latina and Black or African American girls have a very different school experience than their peers.

Participants reported a general lack of respect, support, or celebration of different races or cultural backgrounds in their schools. Girls at one school reported there had been no celebration of Black or African American History Month. Another participant noted, *"When they do talk about Black history, they bring up the same people. They don't know what's going on right now. [There are] so many more people in Black history that we haven't even learned about."* Some students talked about the importance of “a class focused on them,” where they can learn about their heritage and gain pride in themselves and their history.

However, a few participants identified specific teachers or counselors who have supported them. These individuals were often teachers that they could identify with, who interacted with them on a personal level, and who reminded them that they could persevere. One student talked about one of her favorite teachers: *"My American Literature teacher, because he can tell that there's days that I really just wanna give up. And I just don't wanna do it no more. But he can see, sometimes he just knows that I'm not into it, but he'll push me back. He'll tell me, 'You got this. You can do it.' And he just pushes me to not give up."*

### Academic Futures and Careers Paths

Participants talked about their future career goals, which often included gendered expectations, but this also varied by ethnicity. For example, Asian girls reported that there was a lot of pressure to have a high-paying, high-status job like a doctor or lawyer while also being expected to have a family. Latina girls more often reported feeling intense pressure to take care of family rather than pursue careers. Black or African American participants were more likely to report wanting to pursue academic study and independent careers but feeling that school and society were not providing them the same opportunities as other students.

Most of the young women who participated in focus groups talked about going to college and their interest in pursuing higher education. Many of the young women also talked about being the first women in their families to attend college. They talked about being driven to succeed in order to share their success with their mothers or grandmothers: *"My mom didn't go off to college because she had me. So, I feel like me finishing high school and me going off to school is not only, I'm not only doing it for myself, but I'm doing it for my mom because she could've gave me up, and she could've finished her life, but she didn't."*

Many of the girls talked about unwanted pregnancies and the responsibilities girls were expected to carry if they were to become pregnant. They believed that boys did not have the same pressure to care for children and would still be free to pursue their academic and career goals. Many of the participants talked about having single mothers themselves, and having watched their parents put careers on hold in order to take care of their families. This was respected by the participants but was also perceived as a hardship.

“Once you get pregnant you cannot do anything. You are responsible to take care of the children. Not the boys, they can just go away.”

### Immigrant Experiences

First-generation and new immigrant students talked about some of the challenges they face in terms of how they are perceived by other students, additional responsibilities they are expected to assume, and gendered expectations for their futures. Some girls of immigrant parents spoke about the challenges their parents endured and the respect and pride that those experiences engendered in them.

Girls that spoke English as a second language expressed feeling judged and derided by others. For example, one Latina student noted: *“New students that come to this country, they may not speak the language as well and they are not treated well, not respected by students. Students should have more understanding that learning a language is hard - not just white people that pick on them, black people, could be anybody.”*

“There are many new students that come to this country and they don't know the language so there are other students that make fun of them just because they don't know the language.”

While many girls talked about their families' expectation that they contribute to their households by helping with housework, preparing food, and caring for other family members, this was particularly true for Latinas and Asians, and especially among recent immigrants. Both middle school and high schoolers talked about how they were expected to do more around the house than their brothers, as well as how they resented their additional domestic responsibilities. One participant noted, *“I'm the baby of the family and I have an older brother, but ever since I was old enough to learn how to cook that has been my parents' goal. Sometimes they make me make dinner, but my brother's older yet he doesn't really know how to cook. I'm just like, what's the correlation? He's the oldest one, he should be learning how to take care of me too, not just me taking care of him.”*

“I feel the support of my mom because as they've all said, my mom came here from nothing, and so, she came from nothing. She had like three kids and then she had four, so she had all these jobs ... [She] wants me to feel like I can handle it and do whatever I want and make sure I'm gonna make her proud and I can show people that I'm smart...”

Some of the immigrant and first-generation participants talked about the gendered expectations for girls in their households as an artifact of practices from the regions from which their families immigrated, as a recent Latina immigrant noted: *“Especially in my country, when you graduate from high school, most women, they don't go to the college. Families force them to marry or to stay at home to do house work. But the man, they go straight to college and get more opportunity in life.”* Another girl related her experience with gendered limitations growing up in an Asian family: *“My dad's Vietnamese and my mom's Chinese. Both my parents are pretty strict. They said girls can't go out and boys can go out. I'm locked home, the whole summer too.”*

Despite the challenges associated with being immigrants and children of immigrants, the girls also spoke with pride about the courage it took for their parents to uproot themselves and create new lives for themselves and their families. For example, one girl related, *“My parents are not from here, so for them to come to another country and build a new life and try to give us kind of some food and provide us food, all that [is] something that I look up to. I want to be like them or probably make them proud.”* Several girls spoke about wanting to make their parents proud of them because of how hard their parents worked to improve their families' lives.



“

My mom came here from nothing... I'm going to make her proud

”



## Theme 2: Resilience

Although there was much discussion of the challenges young women have experienced, there was also discussion of those elements in girls' lives that helped them feel more resilient and supported. It is well documented that young people with the support of role models and other informal social networks are poised for better outcomes than those without such resources.<sup>19</sup>

### Role Models and Supports

Most girls felt supported and inspired by their family members. When focus group participants were asked about their role models and supporters, nearly every student talked about someone from their personal life. Role models were most often family members: mothers, aunts, fathers, and older siblings. Most participants reported their role models were also their biggest supporters and the people who pushed them the most to do well in school: *"They taught me how to survive and thrive and do everything I want to achieve. I come to school and do well for them so that one day I can take care of them like they take care of me."*

Some of the young women also said they were inspired by notable Black or African American figures in history, politics, and popular culture. Barak Obama, Anita Hill, Oprah, and Denzel Washington were noted in one focus group. The qualities the young women were most inspired by were perseverance, standing up for what is right, and dedication to helping others succeed. A few of the young women who came from first- or second-generation immigrant families identified other successful immigrants as their role models: *"Mine is my friend's dad because his dad is the first generation that came to America and he worked really hard and he came up with a business and now he's super successful. I'm also the first generation to come here so I want to be like him."*



“ [I] feel supported when I am recognized, [it's] not always about positive recognition or praise, but [it is] caring about you and your well-being. ”

<sup>19</sup> See Urban Child Institute findings: <http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/articles/updates/positive-role-models-are-linked-to-success-in-school>

## Confidence and Success

While girls shared that the challenges they faced as girls of color may have had a negative impact on their confidence and future expectations, they also discussed how these challenges have been managed and described feeling motivated to advance their goals for their futures nonetheless.

Some of the external factors the girls described being challenged by included insensitive comments made by others about girls' race, gender, and physical appearance. One African American girl shared, *"[There are] those moments, growing up, you're always being pushed down for either being a certain color or for being a girl. And also being surrounded by people who are constantly telling you stuff, like, 'Oh, they're gonna make it before you do. Look at their score they got on their test. And look at the score you got on your test.' And that brings you down. So it brought me to a really dark place, where I'm like what am I even gonna do with the rest of my life if I'm constantly going to be in other people's shadow?"*

Despite these negative external factors, girls shared that they were able to gain confidence and become comfortable with themselves over time with the help of a number of supports: *"I feel confident in my present state because it took me a long time to get here, to understand my self-worth. My role models helped me to understand my self-worth, to understand the tough times, temptations, and drama and to understand that we can do anything we put our minds to."* Another girl described finding inspiration in youth-led movements that gave her confidence in her future, like the March for Our Lives and through her participation in the peer-led focus groups: *"I was just confident, because I was tired of being put down because of who I am and what I look like. But yesterday [at the March for Our Lives] and today [in the peer-led focus group], I experienced what it truly feels like to be confident because of who you're going to be."*

Most participants expressed the expectation that they could achieve their future goals despite the current challenges they face. Girls felt their futures relied on personal responsibility, and therefore looked toward opportunities in their future, such as going to college and noted its importance to their future goals. Some even expressed that they wouldn't really feel successful until they were in college. Yet the road to success was mostly discussed as something they had to accomplish on their own—*"if I do what I am supposed to," "if I keep up my grades and stay on track," "if I work on my attitude"*—as participants took a lot of personal responsibility for their future. Some of the participants expressed a perception that there was nothing the school would or could do to support them in their aspirations, and so they feel they must work toward their future goals all on their own, without school support. While the School Climate Survey measures *Climate for Academic Learning* (Figure 12) it does not measure whether or not girls feel school supports their future goals.

Some of the girls discussed feeling powerless to effect change in their schools. This was particularly true among the focus groups with Latina ELL students. The sense of disempowerment expressed in these groups is corroborated in the School Climate Survey findings that Latinas rate *growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness* lower than girls overall rated these items.

## Social Awareness and Activism

Participants in both high school and middle school focus groups were politically active and wanted to find more ways to get involved in the causes they felt were important.

The recent Women's March and #MeToo Movement were at the forefront of many conversations around their experiences as girls. Focus group participants talked about gender politics when discussing the role of social media in their lives, the challenges of sex, pregnancy, and abortion rights, sexual harassment, and the wage gap. Some participants also talked about how seeing other women stand up and speak out made them proud to be girls.

Some focus group participants had also participated in a recent walk-out to protest gun violence. Participants talked about the how marches, rallies, and walk-outs empowered them and provided them with a sense of agency and community. As one participant explained, *"It was really important for me to walk out yesterday, and to go out so that I can learn that there are opportunities out there for people like me who are compassionate [...] people who look out for other people or stand up for things that don't seem right."*

Some participants felt that there should be opportunities on campus for students to understand more about social issues and learn about ways to organize and become more politically active. A few students also felt that there should be more information for students about voting and voting rights.

### Theme 3: Suggestions for Improving SFUSD

Focus group participants were all asked what SFUSD or their school could do to help them be more successful. This section provides an overview of participants' suggestions. While some of the suggestions were unrelated to the girls' gender or race, they have been included in an effort to share their voice.

#### Food

One of the most frequent suggestions from participants was improving the food on campus. Students spoke about how there were very few things they liked and when those things were available, they often ran out. Having access to adequate and nutritious food is essential to academic success and learning. With high rates of youth homelessness and family poverty in San Francisco, access to school lunch programs which are low-barrier and accessible to all students without induced stigma are essential to student achievement. Homeless children experience hunger more than twice as often as other children and often their most nutritious meal during the day is the one they receive through the school breakfast or lunch program.<sup>20</sup>

“ Sometimes it's not even enough, they might have hot dogs or whatever and everybody, they're all right so when you go and try and get one there's not enough.”

#### Schedule

Participants reported struggling with the early start time and wished that school started later. Some participants reported feeling tired from staying up to complete their homework and thought a later start time would let them get a little more sleep. Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics endorse a school start time of 8:30 or later for middle and high schools to better support adolescent health, academic achievement, and quality of life.<sup>21</sup> Some of the middle school students suggested having fewer classes each day.

#### Feminine Hygiene Products

One of the most frequent challenges girls reported facing at school was menstruation. Participants suggested having additional feminine hygiene supplies available for girls. The relationship between menstrual hygiene management and educational attainment is well-documented<sup>22</sup> and global efforts are underway to make menstrual hygiene products widely available in schools in developing countries to improve school outcomes for girls. Although such efforts in public schools in the United States lag, California will require public schools to provide free menstrual products to students grades 6 through 12 beginning in 2018.<sup>23</sup> Recognizing the challenge that young women and low-income families may have in anticipating and preparing for menstrual hygiene needs, some universities have begun providing free hygiene products in public bathrooms as well.

#### Facilities and a Quiet Space

Girls suggested improving and repairing the school facilities. Students reported that many of the facilities felt old and in disrepair. Items for improvement included things like drinking fountains, lockers, and heaters. Data have shown that the quality of school facilities not only affects student pride and behavior but also impact student outcomes and achievement.<sup>24</sup>

One participant also suggested having a place for people to go when they needed a quiet environment to calm down and relax. Recent research demonstrates the importance of having such spaces, particularly for those students who perform better in subdued environments.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Access to Food for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students. National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved 2018 from [nche.ed.gov](https://www.nche.ed.gov)

<sup>21</sup> Centers for Disease Control. "Schools Start Too Early". Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.cdc.gov/features/school-start-times/index.html>

<sup>22</sup> Ameade EPK, Majeed SF. 2015. "Improving girl child education and menstrual hygiene through free sanitary pad provision to secondary school girls-opinion of female university students in Ghana", *Journal of Health Education Research & Development* 3:143.

<sup>23</sup> [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180AB10](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB10)

<sup>24</sup> Uline, C., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2008). The walls speak: the interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46, 55-73.

<sup>25</sup> See Cain, S. 2013. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. Broadway Books.

## Academics and Expanded Curricula

Participants expressed the desire for additional classes, especially AP classes and classes that would help them navigate today's world. Some students wanted classes that would prepare them for "real life," including information on voting and getting involved in the community. A number of the participants and student researchers participated in the African American Heritage Course at Mission High School, and suggested more opportunities for students to enroll in the class. They suggested expanding the class to other schools and to add other classes like it. Many of the girls talked about the importance of learning about their heritage and feeling pride in themselves and their history—they wanted other girls with different ethnic backgrounds to experience the same. Some participants also suggested a women's studies class.

## Extracurricular Activities, Field Trips, and Exposure

Participants desired more clubs and activities on campus. A few participants suggested a club that would help them become politically active and engage people around different social causes. Students also wanted more field trips and opportunities to have experiences outside of the school, even outside of San Francisco. Some students suggested participating in college preparedness activities and classes in the middle schools so that students could be exposed earlier. Participants also suggested that colleges visit their school to talk to students and tell them about their programs.

## Teacher Trainings and Additional Support

A number of participants suggested having better trained teachers who could teach subject matter in new and interesting ways so that more students might engage and learn rather than be left behind. Many girls reported feeling like there were a number of new teachers at their schools who were often challenged by difficult students. Girls also expressed a perception that teachers didn't care or have time after school to help them with their coursework. Alternatively, girls who reported having supportive teachers and role models at school often mentioned that these teachers would take additional time to explain things that the girls did not understand and make themselves available after class for additional assistance.

## Staff Diversity and Representation

Students expressed a desire for more staff and teachers who looked like them and would make them feel represented at the school. Participants suggested increasing the number of Black or African American teachers and staff members. Students felt it was important to have teachers who could understand where they were coming from, what they were feeling, and would encourage them to work hard and be successful. They suggested additional trainings and hiring practices that ensured teachers really cared about the students.

## Building a Shared Community

When focus group participants were asked what they would change about their schools, many students wanted their peers to be nicer to each other and have more empathy for each other's differences. This was true of all students, but particularly of recent immigrant and first-generation students. Students suggested that there should be more celebration of diversity, cultures, and heritages, as well as activities to increase school spirit and inclusiveness.

## Safety

To improve the overall safety and environment of their schools, focus group participants recommended better trained security guards and facility improvements such as cameras and metal detectors. Some girls reported feeling unsafe in light of recent school shootings.

More opportunities for more people to take African American women's heritage course. Important to know the positive history and the value of being African American. Not just an ethnic studies class but focused on them, Latina women, AA women, etc.

One thing the school can do is have more connections. Me personally, I want to be a nurse. And for the longest, I've been looking for internships or anything that I can work in a hospital, but I didn't know what was what. I could ask my counselor. But she'd be like, 'Oh. I don't know.'

## Sexual Harassment and Assault

Participants' recommendations for how to make the school safer for girls with regard to sexual harassment and assault included holding boys accountable for their actions and teaching and encouraging girls to speak up about harassment and assault when they see it occur.



“

Our generation  
can change the  
whole world.

”

## Summary of Findings

This study provides important information about the lived experiences of girls of color in the San Francisco Unified School District. Administrative data from SFUSD provide an understanding of student population characteristics and the scope of some of the disparities faced by girls of color. The experiences shared by the 97 young girls who participated in focus groups provide the context and story behind the quantitative data. This study also recognizes the importance of providing an opportunity for young women of color to gather and feel valued, to share their expertise, and to honor their heritage and experiences through these focus groups.

### Data show race/ethnic disparities in academic outcomes.

- 28% of Black or African American girls and 21% of Latina girls did not graduate from high school, as compared to 6% of Asian/Pacific Islander girls and 11% of White girls who did not graduate in 2016.
- Compared to 16% of White girls who are not meeting common core standards in English and 31% who are not meeting standards in math:
  - 78% of Black or African American girls are not meeting common core standards in English and 89% are not meeting the standards in math.
  - 67% of Latina girls are not meeting common core standards in English and 84% are not meeting the standards in math.
  - 23% of Asian and Pacific Islander girls are not meeting common core standards in English and 29% are not meeting standards in math.

### School can be a tough place for girls of color.

#### Girls of color do not feel a sense of belonging

- While collectively, girls of color comprise a majority of girls at SFUSD, each group remains a minority—1 in 10 girls is Black or African American, 3 in 10 girls are Latina, and 4 in 10 girls are Asian or Pacific Islander.
- Girls reported that students self-segregate based on race and there are often tensions between groups.
- Findings from the *Culture-Climate Survey* indicate that 58% of Latina and Asian or Pacific Islander girls and 50% of Black or African American girls did not feel a sense of belonging at school.
- Immigrant and first-generation girls face additional challenges associated with English language learning, navigating cultural biases, and confronting stereotypes at school, at home, and in society at large.
- Girls reported feeling underrepresented and could not see themselves in the teachers and administrators in their schools; they suggested more teachers of color in order to increase students' sense of trust and belonging.
- Girls reported a general lack of respect, support, or celebration of different races and cultural backgrounds; they suggested having more cultural celebrations on campus, and adding classes such as the African American Heritage class offered at Mission High School to honor their heritage and the achievement of different race and ethnicities in America's history.

#### Girls of color face racism and sexism on campus

- Girls reported experiencing racism and sexism on campus from peers and staff members.
- Latinas recounted being made fun of for not speaking English well.
- Black/African American girls believed that teachers expected them to behave badly and perform poorly due to their gender and race.
- Asian girls reported that both students and teachers expected them to do well, to not need any help, and to be high-achieving.

#### Girls of color do not feel safe

- 40% of Black or African American girls and 35% of Asian and Latina girls did not rate safety on campus favorably.
- Girls reported seeing and experiencing both sexual harassment and assault on campus.
- Girls felt that they carried the burden of proof when incidents occurred and that teachers, staff, and parents made them feel responsible for protecting themselves from perpetrators.

### Girls of color do not feel supported academically

- Girls reported that teachers and fellow students did not take the time to help them when they did not understand something in class.
- Girls reported they did not have the same access to college preparatory and advanced placement classes as their peers and if they were placed in those classes, they did not feel welcome.

However, there are unique opportunities for SFUSD staff and the community to support girls.

### Girls have strong role models at home and in the community

- Nearly all of the girls reported having a family member, often their mother, who was their role model.
- Girls also reported looking up to other persons of color who had gone through similar challenges and had been successful and/or helped to ensure the success of those around them.
- While few girls reported having a role model on campus, a few girls talked about having teachers or administrators who took the time to understand them as individuals and support them in their persistence and academic achievement.

### Girls remain confident in themselves and in their futures

- Girls reported having confidence in themselves.
- Girls talked about working toward college and future careers in medicine, law, and academia.

### Girls want to be engaged in their communities and provide input on how to improve their schools and community

- Girls wanted to learn more about how to get engaged in advocacy and politics.
- Some girls had already participated in marches, protests, walkouts, and had worked to change policies in their schools.
- Girls had specific suggestions on how SFUSD could better support them in their learning and future endeavors.
- Girls wanted additional teacher trainings, expanded classes, improved facilities and safety measures, as well as policies and activities that would help build community and belonging for all students in SFUSD.

It is the hope of the research team that these data will be used to inform the development of gender-specific, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, strength-based, and developmentally appropriate (GCTSD) approaches, policies, and programming at SFUSD.

We would like to recognize the incredible contribution of the student researchers who participated in research trainings, research design, and data collection efforts. This community-based participatory research effort was grounded in the belief that girls know best and that informed action must be developed from a collaborative approach to research. These young women have embodied these ideals.

The work of this project continues through the sustained participation of girls of color, the technical assistance team, AFG staff, and AFG partner agencies. The technical assistance team includes AFG and SFUSD staff, as well as community partners listed in the *Acknowledgments* section of this report. The technical assistance team and the girl leadership team will meet in-person over a series of months and distilled findings from the research and translating them into program, policy, and practice recommendations. The girl leadership team and the technical assistance team will be working with the district to move 2-3 of the recommendations forward in the next year.

# Appendix 1: Demographic Survey

The following survey was developed by ASR in January 2018, prior to girls joining the initiative. Participants were allowed to refuse the survey or skip any question they did not feel comfortable answering. All participants completed at least some portion of the survey.

## Today's Date

		/			/					
Month			Day			Year				

## Age

--	--	--

## Ethnicity

<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Hispanic / Non-Latino
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hispanic / Latino

<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

## Race

More than one race is permitted.

<input type="checkbox"/>	American Indian or Alaska Native
<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or African American
<input type="checkbox"/>	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

<input type="checkbox"/>	White
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse



### How's Life?

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

If the top step is 10 and the bottom step is 0, on which step of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?

10	<input type="radio"/>	
9	<input type="radio"/>	
8	<input type="radio"/>	
7	<input type="radio"/>	
6	<input type="radio"/>	
5	<input type="radio"/>	
4	<input type="radio"/>	
3	<input type="radio"/>	
2	<input type="radio"/>	
1	<input type="radio"/>	
0	<input type="radio"/>	

### Do You Consider Yourself...?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Straight
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gay
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Queer

<input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

### Have You Ever Been In Foster Care?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

### Are You Involved In Any After School Activities?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

### Have You Ever Been Involved In The Justice System?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

Have You Ever Not Known Where You're Going To Stay At Night Or Have You Ever Been Without A Safe Or Stable Place To Stay?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

Are You Responsible For Taking Care Of Anyone After School?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse

What Is One Word You Would Use To Describe Yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 2: Focus Group Protocol

## Greeting

Hello. I'm \_\_\_\_\_. Thanks for being here. Feel free to grab something to eat and make yourselves comfortable.

## Demographic Survey

Hand out the survey and introduce it, remind participants it is voluntary, confidential and that they can skip any questions they don't want to answer. Ask them to put their completed surveys in the manila envelope.

## Overview

SFUSD, the Alliance for Girls, and the community have all noticed that grades, test scores, college attendance and experiences are different for girls of color than many of their peers. However this data only tells us so much. We want to know the why behind the numbers, to understand what may be effecting their experiences in the classroom and in the community.

## Today's Goals

Today we want to create a comfortable setting for girls to share their experiences so that we can:

- Understand the experiences of girls at school and in the community
- Hear about the challenges and successes girls of color experience at school and in the community
- Ensure girls have a voice in what is happening in their school and community

## Group Agreements:

Before we get started, we wanted to start out with a few things to get us comfortable in the room. First, feel free to get more food or drinks and use the restroom if you need to. We also hope we can agree that:

- Everything that is said stays in the room
- Everyone will participate fully but also make that sure everyone has a chance to be heard
- Use one mic (try not to talk over one another)
- Tell your honest opinions
- Respect different opinions

How does that sound to everyone? Is there anything we want to add to this list?

## Question Overview

Now I want to let you know the types of the questions we'll be asking you this afternoon. They will mostly be about your experiences in school. We will get to know each other and then talk about:

1. Challenges in school that you might face,
2. The influences and role models you have,
3. How social media affects you,
4. How confident and successful you feel,
5. And your suggestions for how to make your school a better place for girls to learn and grow.

## Introductions

- Introduce yourself
- Make space for Livier or Ms. Jordan to do the introduction about mandated reporting and connecting to supports
- Have the girls introduce themselves

### Potential Ice Breakers

Activity	Question	Materials and Time Needed
1. Share aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is something that people don't know about you and wouldn't assume just looking at you?</li> <li>• What is one things you like about school, what is one thing you dislike?</li> </ul>	(7-10 minutes)

### Meaty Questions:

Theme	Question	Time Needed
1. Getting to know you	<p>Sometimes it's nice to believe that anything is possible. It lets us think about what we can change and maybe see things in a different light. So for a minute pretend you have a magic wand.</p> <p>* If you could change one thing about your school, what would it be?</p> <p>Probes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Think about identifying the problem</li> <li>- Is there anything at school that makes you feel uncomfortable?</li> </ul> <p>Give an example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I would change how women are seen as lesser than men, or I would make the hallways wider.</li> </ul> <p>Follow ups to get more detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why is it such a problem?</li> <li>- Who do you think has a role to play in changing it?</li> </ul>	5 minutes
2. Challenges	<p>* What challenges do girls face that boys don't?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do girls deal with their problems?</li> <li>- What would you recommend? How would you change it?</li> </ul> <p>If Sexual Harassment comes up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you see sexual harassment at school?</li> <li>- Do you talk about sexual harassment at school?</li> <li>- Do you know what to do if someone experiences it?</li> <li>- Do you think SFUSD is doing enough to address that challenge?</li> <li>- What is your definition for sexual harassment?</li> <li>- Have you had someone explain to you what it is?</li> <li>- Do they actually help?</li> <li>- Do you think they will change it?</li> </ul>	
3. Influences/role models	<p>* Who are your influences and role models? It can be someone or something at home or at school.</p> <p>Clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who are your supporters, people that help you out when you need them or cheer you on?</li> <li>- Who or where do you go when you need information? Your peers, your teachers, friends, the internet?</li> <li>- When do you feel most supported? Make it specific – can be someone or something at school or home.</li> </ul>	7 minutes
4. Media (social media, expectations/representation of women/girls)	<p>* How does social media impact you?</p> <p>Clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When do you use social media?</li> <li>- What do you use it for?</li> <li>- Is it always good? Always bad?</li> </ul>	5 minutes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do most of you have access to a cell phone? How does that impact what you do on a daily basis?</li> </ul> <p>Digging deeper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do society’s expectations for women and girls affect your own experiences? What does society expect of women and girls? How do you feel about that?</li> </ul>	
<p>5. Empowerment/social change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Do you feel confident as a girl? Why or why not?</li> <li>* Do you feel successful as a girl? Why or why not?</li> </ul> <p>Where do you feel successful?</p> <p>Digging deeper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Let’s go back to our very first question and get our magic wand back out. What could your school do to help you be more successful and confident? It could be anything.</li> <li>- Do you see yourself succeeding in life? Now and Future? What needs to happen in order for you to get there?</li> </ul>	<p>7 minutes</p>

**Closing and Thank You:**

First we want to thank you for your time and for sharing your expertise. As a thank you we wanted to share a gift card with each of you. If you would like to know more about the project or ways to get involved, please follow up with Livier.

# GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

The Lived Experiences of Girls of Color in  
San Francisco Unified School District  
2018



**SFUSD** SAN FRANCISCO  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



*Helping People  
Build Better Communities*