

Our Children, Our Families Council

Summary of the San Francisco Science Stewardship, Sustainability (4S) Collaborative

(Last updated 6/5/15)

Goals of the Effort

The San Francisco Science, Stewardship, & Sustainability (4S) Collaborative is a cross-organizational partnership between the SFUSD and the science & environmental education organizations and was created to support each other's work. The vision of the 4S Collaborative is to cultivate scientifically and environmentally literate students, teachers and families, and to inspire, engage and sustain them in life-long science learning and exploration. The 4S Collaborative identified the following objectives as important to helping them achieve this vision:

- 1) Create better communication, both formal and informal, between members of the collaborative
- 2) Consistent and clear information dispersal from SFUSD to the 4S members
- 3) Frame academic standards so they are accessible to member organizations
- 4) Improve outreach in underrepresented schools
- 5) Improve collaboration among organizations
- 6) Set shared goals among 4S members
- 7) Prioritize Family Science nights
- 8) Improve afterschool and summer programming options for students
- 9) Advocate for improved funding for transportation for field trips
- 10) Create a platform for sharing best practices within education organizations
- 11) Facilitate networking among the 4S membership organizations
- 12) Coordinate new program offerings and schedules
- 13) Break down barriers to students in underserved communities accessing these organizations
- 14) Evaluate the effectiveness of programming
- 15) Plan collaborative events
- 16) Improve organizations' access to teachers and faculty of SFUSD

Focal Population of the Effort

While the 4S Collaborative's vision consists of all students becoming life-long science learners, they prioritize providing enriching science experiences for underserved students who currently have the least access to high quality extracurricular, educational science experiences.

Impact

Since the 4S Collaborative was founded in 2006, the extent of collaboration among science education organizations across the city has improved. Member organizations now have an open line of communication with SFUSD, are informed of current academic standards in science, and have collectively devised strategies for serving diverse populations. The 4S Collaborative believes that underserved communities now have greater access to member organizations as a result of their efforts. Lastly, lines of communication between member organizations and teachers have improved through the 4S Collaborative.

Challenges

Attendance and turnover are continual challenges for the 4S Collaborative. Individual contacts from organizations that participate in the 4S Collaborative continually change, such that maintaining a consistent focus becomes difficult. Similarly, because the 4S Collaborative's point person at SFUSD has changed frequently, networking between the district and 4S members has been reduced.

Origins of the Effort

The SF Science Collaborative was started by the SF Education Fund back in 2006. This group of science education organizations and San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) joined to form the collaborative because they all served San Francisco Unified students, teachers, and families. This large group of over 30 organizations met on a monthly basis to keep each other informed, to collaborate, and to plan how to better serve the underserved students and families of SFUSD. Several meetings that year consisted of discussions about the participation levels of schools and teachers across the district. Some Collaborative members worked to connect the California Science Standards to field trips and activities offered by organizations in the Collaborative. Other members began discussing best practices and sharing these with participating organizations.

By 2008, this group was no longer supported by the SF Education Fund and collaborative members Jessica Neely (KQED QUEST) and Helena Carmena (Cal Academy of Sciences) worked to sustain the group. Committees continued to meet and the way in which organizations presented Science Standards to teachers was examined more closely. The collaborative fielded a table at Presidio Teachers' Night and had a raffle of donated items and began discussion of a web site as a one-stop shop for learning about and planning science-related field trips.

In the fall of 2010, Nik Kaestner, the Director of Sustainability at SFUSD, convened many past Collaborative members and new community organizations to join the Ecoliteracy Group (a sustainability and environmental education group that served San Francisco Unified School District). This committee had many of the similar goals as the Collaborative including aligning programs to the standards and dealing with transportation issues. Soon afterward, members of both the Ecoliteracy Group and the SF Science Collaborative agreed to combine to form the 4S Collaborative.

Leading the Effort

Currently, SFUSD's Science Department takes responsibility for the collaborative. Sarah Delaney, the Science Program Administrator who oversees the science curriculum and instruction for SFUSD, manages the 4S Collaborative. While neither Sarah nor anyone else from Science Department receives additional funding for the 4S Collaborative, Sarah and other members from her department plan and organize 4S meetings and outreach events.

Members of the Effort

The 4S Collaborative currently has a mailing list that goes out to the 180 current members who represent an array of museums and educational organizations as well as the school district. The following is a list of organizations represented on the 4S Collaborative.

Organization
18reasons.org
49 Farms
Alameda County Office of Education
Alliance for Climate Education
Art-ecology
Astronomical Society of the Pacific
Audubon Canyon Ranch
Bay Area Community Resources
Bay Area Discovery Museum

Bay Area Wilderness Training
Bay.org
Cal Academy of Science
City & County of San Francisco
City College of San Francisco
Community Grows
CUESA (Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture)
CuriOdyssey
Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families
Ecology Centery of San Francisco
Education Outside
Energy Coalition
Exploratorium
Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association
Friends of the Urban Forest
Golden Gate Audubon Society
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
Green Schools Initiative
Grow Your Lunch
Habitat Potential
KQED
Literacy for Environmental Justice
Marine Science Institute
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
National Parks Service
Nature Bridge
NorCal Hostels
Presidio Trust
RAFT (Resource Area for Teachers)
Randall Museum
Recology
S. D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation
SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education)
San Francisco State University
San Francisco Zoo
Scrap SF
SF Nature Education
SF Public Utilities Commission
SFUSD
Strategic Energy Innovations
The Energy Coalition
The Marine Mammal Center
Treasure Island Sailing Center

Tree Frog Treks
UC Berkeley
UCSF
University of San Francisco
WildCare
WorldLink
YMCA

Structure of the Effort

The 4S Collaborative meets 4 times per year, and each quarterly meeting has a theme decided upon by Ms. Delaney and the SFUSD Science Department. Because the mailing list of members has multiple individuals from the same organization, generally only one contact attends from each group. Therefore, roughly 10 to 15 people attend the meeting, each from a different organization, and then each member in attendance brings that information back to the other members at the organization. The meetings generally consist of an education component, led by SFUSD’s Science Department or an outside specialist, and then there is time for networking and discussions of best practices.

The Role of Data

The organizations represented in the 4S Collaborative have expressed interest in a shared collection tool to compile and compare data across organizations. While they have drafted a form for all museums and outdoor education providers to use, it has yet to be adopted.