SFUSD Launches Three-Year IT Project to Empower Educators with Real-Time Data to Support Students and Better Inform Parents

Grant support from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation enables seamless data transfer between education IT systems

May 17, 2018 (San Francisco) - The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and its non-profit partner SPARK*SF Public Schools today announced the launch of the Unified Data Ecosystem Acceleration Project, a three-year project which will transform its current data systems to meet the growing needs of students and educators in the district. Through this project SFUSD will overhaul its data architecture giving educators access to real-time data on student enrollment, attendance and performance. Empowering educators with the ability to manage and analyse timely, secure and accurate information is critical to seeing the full-picture of student progress and in determining where supports may be needed. This work has been made possible by a grant from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF).

The $1.2 million Unified Data Ecosystem Acceleration Grant from MSDF will fund the first phase of a three-year rebuild of the District’s IT systems. Building on the Ed-Fi Data Standard and Operational Data Store, the District’s IT systems will be able to seamlessly connect educational data systems that are currently siloed. Bringing interoperability into the data architecture will ensure that valuable information held in educational systems like the Student Information System, assessments technology, and curriculum applications will eventually be surfaced through a single portal so that educators, administrators and parents can easily see a full-view of a students’ portfolio.

“It is absolutely critical for us to invest in making our systems more usable for our educators,” SFUSD Superintendent Dr. Vincent Matthews said. “This grant will give us a platform to better connect systems and allow us to more clearly see how we can best serve the students of San Francisco. Teachers will have important data about students right at their fingertips, and the new system will reduce the technology burden on teachers, freeing up their time to do what they do best—supporting our learners.”

Currently, SFUSD houses important student data in multiple formats and through multiple vehicles, including online and physical copies, making real-time data delivery to educators impossible. Searching for data means logging into multiple systems, and there are limited tools to measure operational or programmatic performance.

“The primary goal of the Foundation is to help children living in urban poverty. There are a number of ways that we go about tackling this very large global problem, and we believe that one of the most impactful ways is through education, specifically data driven education. What that means in practice is that we look for opportunities to get critical data into the hands of educators, parents and administrators so that they can best support the students that need it most,” said Lyria Zeh, program manager, Data Driven Education, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. “SFUSD has a dedicated staff of visionaries that is directly aligned with our goals and we have the opportunity to fund important work that will impact the students and community of San Francisco for years to come.”

The new data system architecture will allow SFUSD to:
• Achieve better accuracy and consistency by improving processes and governance practices relating to enrollment, attendance and behavior.
• Create new equity reports that source data from the Ed-Fi Operational Data Store to monitor and identify systemic equity issues from the Unified Data System.
• More effectively manage district's early warning systems which can alert educators to student needs as it relates to attendance, intervention and progress.
• Track vulnerable African-American students in a new longitudinal data vault to ensure that appropriate interventions are being made and that individual outcomes are improved.

“Unifying our data systems positions SFUSD to make data more actionable for teaching, learning, and operational improvements. This is a key transformational lever in our digital district plan and will help SFUSD realize Vision 2025,” said Melissa Dodd, Chief Technology Officer.

ABOUT THE MICHAEL & SUSAN DELL FOUNDATION
The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (www.msdf.org) is dedicated to improving the lives of children living in urban poverty around the world. Headquartered in Austin, TX with additional offices in New Delhi, India and Cape Town, South Africa, the Dell foundation funds programs that foster high-quality public education and childhood wellness, and improve the economic stability of families living in poverty. The foundation has committed more than $1.5 billion to global children's issues and community initiatives to date.

ABOUT SPARK* SF PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPARK* SF Public Schools is a non-profit organization dedicated to cultivating and administering philanthropic partnerships for the San Francisco Unified School District, and supporting its 58,000 students across various initiatives including Early Education, Literacy, STEM, College & Career Readiness, Wellness, Talent, and Equity. To learn more, visit: www.sparksfpublicschools.com

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