FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Syosset, NY – Aug. 16, 2011 – The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA) congratulates the San Francisco Unified School District and Superintendent Carlos A. Garcia for new released state data showing ongoing improvements in student performance across the district and at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

The NUA has been a partner with the school district for several years, working directly with staff in local schools including Visitacion Valley Middle School and George Washington High School. Drawing from research-proven strategies, the NUA and local educators designed and implemented professional training and small-group workshops to help hundreds of teachers coach and mentor students to address academic challenges.

“Improving the performance of all students to close academic achievement gaps is one of the nation’s biggest challenges. San Francisco is showing that it can be done,” said Eric Cooper, NUA’s president and founder. “By setting high expectations, identifying and building on student strengths and showing consistent leadership, San Francisco is building bridge to stronger overall achievement.”

According to data announced yesterday by Superintendent Garcia, the district’s standardized test scores improved in both English language arts (ELA) and in math, continuing an upward trend which in the past six years has seen proficiency rates in ELA improve by 9.9 percent and by 9.4 percent in math in grades 2-7.

For the third year in a row, the district narrowed the achievement gap between different student groups, meaning that the rate of growth for particular groups was higher than the district growth as a whole. For example, math proficiency by Latinos improved by 2.2 percent and in ELA, and the growth rate of African Americans was 2.7 percent.

“Our students are moving in the right direction, with almost double-digit growth in performance over the past six years,” Garcia said. “Unfortunately, this progress may be in jeopardy because recent budget cuts have forced us to cut back on critical resources, including the professional development received from the NUA.”
At the school level, there were 17 elementary and K-8 schools with 75 percent or more of students scoring at proficient or above in ELA and 18 such schools with 80 percent or more scoring at proficient or above in math. There were seven high schools in which more than half of the students scored at or above proficient in ELA and five where one-third or more tested at or above proficient in Math.

“The new scores validate all of the work that has been put in by students and teachers. This is cause for joy and celebration,” said Ericka Lovrin, the principal at George Washington High School, which was cited as a standout for proficiency rates in both ELA and math. “When I saw the data, one of the first things that came to mind was NUA. This was a group effort by the entire school, but NUA has been an essential partner and guiding force.”

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Based in Syosset, NY and founded in 1989 at Teachers College, Columbia University, the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education provides student-focused professional development, advocacy and organizational guidance to expand and accelerate student achievement. NUA works with teachers, school administrators and communities to identify strengths to leverage the needs and break down barriers to achievement and transform schools.