

In Crisis There is Opportunity



Dear Advocates for San Francisco's Children,

The SFUSD is putting to a test the axiom that "in crisis there is opportunity." In my 33 years of advocating for the city's children I have never seen one service

delivery system undergo such a torrent of simultaneous challenges – unprecedented budget reductions, an enrollment policy that has made many parents unhappy and led to the unintended re-segregation of schools, and the state/federal demand to turnaround 10 low performing schools overnight by (among other things) replacing about half the staff in most of the schools. This in the face of the highest achievement gap in the state between Latino, African American and Samoan children and their Caucasian and Asian counterparts – a gap that will become harder to address as the economic pressures on families mount and children are distracted from academics by increasingly disastrous life circumstances.

In spite of all this, the District has maintained positive momentum and made significant and important structural changes. And it has embraced the ideas that partnerships of all kinds, extended learning opportunities that create a seamless day and year, and student and family supports must be part of the formula for addressing these challenging issues. I'm no Pollyanna – but the past several months have truly been a remarkable period in our efforts to improve our schools.

Margaret Brodtkin

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First-Ever Professional Development Day for Summer Service Providers Was a Blast!



In this photo: summer program providers benefit from a free training on Behavior Management

One of the top priorities of New Day's summer learning campaign has been to give summer program providers some new tools to address the summer learning loss. Hence a full day of professional development and resource information – the city's first.

Three hundred participants from over 80

organizations gathered on April 21 and attended 30 different workshops on everything from how to gain access to museums for free, to new kinds of stimulating games, to how to handle behavior issues, to how to align summer programs with academic standards.

The day opened with a strong demonstration of the city-wide commitment to summer learning in remarks by General Manager of Recreation and Parks, Phil Ginsburg; Police Chief George Gascon; BAYCAT Director Villy Wang; and School Board President Jane Kim.

When asked in an evaluation survey how the day's learning would impact their work, the positive response of participants was overwhelming:

"I will be able to work with students more positively and effectively."

"This day helps me be a better supervisor- more clear and organized."

"The workshops give me more creative project ideas for the summer."

"I have new connections and potential partners."

"I now have about a dozen more tools that I can draw from."

What's New and Remarkable at San Francisco Unified School District?

As unsettling as all the SFUSD challenges are, over the past several months the motivation to push forward has been unrelenting. **Deputy Superintendent, Richard Carranza** has led a dramatic reorganization of the district's central office which he hopes will better serve students – creating “area teams” that will both integrate all of the support for the schools (such as professional development, data, and operations) and remove bureaucratic barriers from schools receiving these supports. The fact that these new teams will be moved out of the central office and into the community is symbolic of the hoped-for changes. One of the area teams is called the **Superintendent's Zone** and it contains the schools in the **Bay View**, as well as the low performing schools in the **Mission**. The intent is to focus a new level of support on these schools. Furthermore, staff members in central office are busy creating what the district is calling a **first-time “core curriculum”** intended to level the playing field and expose all students to the same high quality courses of study.

The process of developing grants to the state (called School Improvement Grants – or SIG) to turn around the 10 schools on the state's list of the lowest performing schools has also led to some pretty ambitious plans that District leaders say reflect the cutting edge approaches they will be taking. **We at New Day for Learning are particularly pleased to report that in addition to significant curriculum reform, these grants place great emphasis on community school approaches – community and parent engagement, the alignment of school and after-school, summer programs, the expansion of social and emotional supports, and most importantly, school staff whose job it is to coordinate and integrate services** . The SFUSD has also submitted grants to the federal government on early literacy, the creation of magnet schools, and support for the Bay View schools in the Superintendent's zone. And to top it off, the School Board is in the process of approving a comprehensive parent engagement plan that was over a year in the making in collaboration with hundreds of parents and groups, and which institutionalizes the role of parents as partners on all levels of the school district.

New Day Launches Summer Learning Network



In this photo: Representatives from San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art provide resources to summer program providers

Two weeks ago New Day officially began inviting agencies to join the Summer Learning Network. Over 30 organizations immediately joined, and we invite all organizations providing summer opportunities for young people to become part of the Network.

Why have a network? Because summer learning loss accounts for over half of the achievement gap between low income and more affluent kids; and because everyone who has contact with a kid over the summer needs to keep that learning loss from happening. Research shows that most kids don't need remedial summer school as much as they need access to stimulating learning opportunities that are fun and compelling. The Network will facilitate the exchange of ideas and resources, help programs implement our city-wide summer learning goals (see the Countdown for Summer below), and continue to cultivate new opportunities and policies that promote summer learning.

The groundwork for the Network began last fall when we initiated discussions about a city-wide approach to summer learning. Since then San Francisco has received a grant from the Packard Foundation to become part of a statewide policy network and to cultivate 3 model summer learning sites; as well as a grant from the National Summer Learning Association to create professional learning opportunities that can improve programming.

To be a part of the Summer Learning Network, email Melanie Hopson for a Membership form (hopsonm@sfusd.edu).

Community Schools Planning in the Works

We at *New Day* are busy developing ideas for a city-wide community school approach. Some questions hot under discussion which will be vetted throughout the summer and fall are:

- * Should every school in San Francisco be a community school? We are suggesting that the answer could be “yes” and that there could be 3 types of community schools (Basic, Expanded and Full Service Community School) which would vary by the level and intensity of core services and the level and management of school partnerships.

- * How can we strategically focus all stakeholders at a school site on common goals for student success? San Francisco has hundreds of often disconnected programs and services at each of its schools. Research supports the idea that when schools have a person who is responsible for the integration and coordination, services are much more sustainable; school attendance increases; and principals can focus more on being instructional leaders. Can San Francisco pull this off?

- * How can we develop protocols to maximize school-community partnerships so that there are common goals for success and greater levels of accountability all around? We are asking the SFUSD-CBO task force to develop criteria, protocols and processes for ensuring that community partnerships are effective in addressing student needs and learning goals.

- * How can we phase in a community school approach? We are suggesting that this be done gradually, with an early focus on our highest need schools, particularly those in the Superintendent’s Zone.

If you would like the opportunity to lend your voice to this discussion, call Margaret Brodtkin.

Summer Happenings



Join our Countdown for Summer by helping to support kids in these six engaging and healthy ways:

5 days a week of active play

4 new places to visit

3 fresh fruits & vegetables daily

2 summer projects

1 once a day with a good book

0 soda

July 21 is national summer learning day. Celebrate it by helping a child (it could be your own) do something special to enjoy learning on that day.

“Summer is a chance to do something rich and magical, to take a break from the test-driven academics and explore the world beyond textbooks.” – Alec Lee, Director Aim High.

Contact us

Margaret Brodkin brodkinm@sfusd.edu Phone 415.355.2202 x 1574

Jamie Harris harrisj@sfusd.edu Phone 415.355.2202 x 1573

Melanie Hopson hopsonm@sfusd.edu Phone 415.355.2202 x1575

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