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## A new day for learning in San Francisco

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We cannot let the economic downturn and the outcome of Tuesday's election thwart our sense of urgency about educating our children. In San Francisco, we are seizing this time to galvanize the community around a new vision of what it takes to prepare the next generation for success in life.

We do this because the crisis facing our children not only destroys lives but also jeopardizes the future for all of us. The United States ranks first among industrialized countries in the number of persons incarcerated - the result of what the Children's Defense Fund calls the "cradle to prison pipeline."

Here in California, we spend \$8,486 a year educating a high school student, while we spend \$234,029 a year incarcerating one inmate in the state's youth prison system.

Prison need not be a destination for youth - if they receive what they need to succeed in school. That is why the San Francisco Unified School District is rethinking the traditional school day to create an enriched and more compelling learning environment - one unrestricted by walls, clocks or calendars.

Together city, school and community leaders want to make schools even more vibrant centers of community life - with a full range of services and opportunities that include everything from after-school enrichment programs that are seamlessly connected to in-school learning, to dental clinics, to places for community dinners, to sites for vocational training for adults.

To do this, the school district, the city and community organizations have created a formal partnership. This is a new day - the school is opening its doors to the community and saying, [sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c...](http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c...)

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"We need every one of you to ensure our children graduate from college."

Our schools aim to expand partnerships of all kinds throughout the city - with businesses, nonprofits, professional associations, arts organizations, universities, hospitals, individual volunteers and, most importantly, families. The goal? To maximize opportunities for young people and leverage every resource we can bring to bear on learning. That includes aligning and blending public-agency budgets that are now developed independently so that they focus on joint strategies and a common outcome: ensuring young people graduate from high school and college and find a path to a career.

What could this mean to a student at Burton High School? In ninth grade, he would be enrolled in a career academy in finance. He would learn the principles of auditing in class at school and combine this with afternoon and summer real world experiences in a local bank.

By 11th grade, he would provide leadership at a student-run tax clinic - because he had both the knowledge of finance and the leadership skills honed in the Beacon Center after-school program. His parents would be well versed in the options for his education through evening workshops at the Beacon Center and would be connected by the school to services at the family resource center down the street.

If he stumbled along the way, he would work with a local community organization stationed at the school on coping with the violence in his community. He would have the opportunity to job shadow a volunteer businessperson who could serve as a role model.

By 12th grade, he would take weekend classes at City College of San Francisco, and he would be able to stay at Burton taking both high school and college classes simultaneously.

San Francisco can play a leadership role in rethinking education. We are one of two national demonstration sites for the C.S. Mott Foundation's New Day for Learning initiative. The goal is to discover what works on the ground in schools where the issues facing our community's future are most pressing. But building a new system requires work on all fronts. We, as a city, can lay a new foundation for our schools together.

Carlos Garcia is the superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District. Margaret Brodtkin is the director of San Francisco's New Day for Learning Initiative and works with the San Francisco School Alliance, a nonprofit organization that promotes innovation in public schools. To learn more, go to [newdayforlearning.org](http://newdayforlearning.org).

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