

ALIGNING STRATEGY WITH FACULTY CULTURE TO PROMOTE NEXT GENERATION LEARNING

UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY ACADEMY
THE BAY SCHOOL OF SAN FRANCISCO

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IMPERATIVE

From the inspiration of our schools' missions to our shared belief that ongoing **SOCIETAL CHANGE REQUIRES CONSTANT CURATING OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS**, we see innovation as, in essence, the routine and culture of effective schools.

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In Thomas Friedman's new book *Thank You For Being Late: An Optimist's Guide To Thriving In The Age Of Accelerations*, he writes, "Indeed, as the world becomes more interdependent and complex, it becomes more vital than ever to widen your aperture to synthesize more perspectives." **UNIVERSITY PREP'S NEXT GENERATION LEARNING INITIATIVE** seeks to do exactly that: open and broaden our students' ability to see, hear, learn and make sense of a world accelerating at a rate unseen for centuries, according to Friedman. Again, Friedman explains: "So many aspects of our societies, workplaces, and geopolitics are being reshaped and need to be reimagined." Who else is there to reimagine the world than our students who will inherit and lead the next generation of change?

BAY SCHOOL OF SF

Innovation and the disruption of the traditional learning paradigm have been baked into Bay's mission since our founding in 2004. Curriculum is iterative; students and culture are constantly evolving, and so must our program to sustain a relevant, impactful experience. Bay's first **ACADEMIC SCHEDULE AND PROGRAM** brought with it a host of leading-edge practices and curricula. Over the past two years we've engaged in a faculty-driven, strategic, inclusive process to envision the next iteration of the Bay program, leading to our faculty's re-dedication to innovation and risk-taking. Ultimately it's about never resting along the journey **TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF EACH CHILD AND THE STUDENT COMMUNITY** in complex societal times.

"The challenging work of collaborative teaching is also the most rewarding; I've never learned so much at any other point in my career."

"Disciplinary thinking still has great value. Departmental isolation, less so."

IDEA

Our "hikes" and "summit ideas" have taken us from our classrooms to schools around the world to study what works best for students; what drives us is the development of students' voice and agency leading them to embrace their roles in a dynamic world.

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We have identified three lenses through which our students can gain the skills to further deepen their understanding of people, perspectives and systems: **(1) SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING, (2) SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, AND (3) INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING**. Underpinning these three focus areas is a commitment to developing, growing, and championing student agency in what we are calling the **U (YOU) LAB**: the ability of students to take an optimistic view of their power to make meaningful, positive change in their communities and the world through entrepreneurial, creative thinking and problem-solving. We are designing a physical space to support student agency and the U Lab to empower our students to become "intellectually courageous, socially responsible, citizens of the world," to quote our mission. "We are the first generation to have the people, ideas and resources to solve all of our greatest challenges," according to Frank Fredericks, as quoted in Friedman's book.

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A series of "hikes" over the past decade, from the launch of team-taught interdisciplinary classes to a range of pilots testing various approaches to experiential learning, have led to Bay's steadfast commitment of the development of **STUDENT VOICE AND CHOICE** in student education. With the unanimous support of the faculty these myriad curricular adventures will culminate in 2018-2019 with the launch of an updated academic schedule including two "intensive" terms in which a student dives deeply into a single course over three weeks for academic credit. Our mission asks us to balance challenging academics and innovative thinking with a mindful approach to learning and life in preparation for a dynamic world; upon reaching our "summit" we will further eliminate the boundaries of the progressive classroom to reflect the world that awaits our students, allowing greater time and freedom for authentic discovery, extensive field trips and extended travel, true community-school partnerships, focused project time, and immersive learning all with faculty who thrive when engaging and empowering their students' passions.

IMPLEMENTATION

Effective and sustainable innovation begins with teachers and their creative questions and ideas that are supported and nourished. Processes and decision-making are distributed, well-organized, and thoughtfully facilitated. We accept that effective change in schools is rarely linear, and that it requires the active engagement of all constituents of the community.

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Our teachers play the most critical role in preparing our students to become intellectually courageous, socially responsible citizens of the world. Our ongoing commitment to their professional growth and development through our nationally recognized **INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHER IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ITIP)**, and reducing teaching loads to ensure that our teachers have the capacity to continuously improve, with collaboration as a core value, is critical to our ability to fulfill our initiative. At the end of the day, the enduring relationships between students and teachers serve as the cornerstone upon which our entire initiative is built. Friedman shares the findings of a 2014 Gallup poll of college graduates regarding what helped them be prepared to be successful. The answer: having had a teacher "who cared about them as a person or having had a mentor who encouraged their goals and dreams." This is why our initiative is teacher led. Fortunately, we do not need to retool our program to match the needs of the future; instead, we need to commit to evolve our program to keep pace with the rapid acceleration hitting every facet of society.

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What began as a desire among teachers to **COLLABORATE** and **CREATE MORE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES** has led to years of iterative, ongoing improvements driven in part by the "seeds" germinated from these pilots across the curriculum and faculty. Idea built on idea, program pilots sparked new endeavors, enthusiasm built to spread related pedagogical and curricular themes across the school, and a collaborative schedule review committee process launched with distributed leadership. Now, with 18 months to go until the launch of **BAY'S UPDATED SCHEDULE**, the faculty, staff, and community is energized around a renewed vision for great teaching and learning. Teacher morale is at the highest place it's been in many years, and the culture of yes, which started all of this, is thriving not just in administrative offices but throughout the school.

WHAT DRIVES US IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' VOICE AND AGENCY LEADING THEM TO EMBRACE THEIR ROLES IN A DYNAMIC WORLD.

RESOURCES

DESIGNING THE NEXT GENERATION LEARNING STRATEGIC INITIATIVE
<https://goo.gl/v54Kmm>

