LINKED LEARNING
GOLD CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

LINKED LEARNING® ALLIANCE

Linked Learning Gold Certification™ is the highest standard for college and career preparation, based on evidence of excellence in integrating the core components of Linked Learning. Learn more at LinkedLearning.org/Certification.

These evidence-based standards were developed and piloted by teachers, counselors, administrators, and students in Linked Learning pathways, and with input from technical assistance providers, educational equity experts, and industry and postsecondary partners. They emphasize cross-subject, student-centered learning with strong career and postsecondary integration, combined with student supports that ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF STUDY

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CONNECTED TO POSTSECONDARY AND INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS.

DOMAIN	MEETING THE STANDARD	EXCELLING THE STANDARD
1.1 **Cohort Structure**	With few identified exceptions, participating students are part of a pathway cohort class for 50% of their schedule, or a minimum of two academic courses and one CTE/career-themed course. A cohort constitutes a common curricular experience with the same teacher among a group of students participating in the same pathway. It is not necessary that students share a common course section. Students who are English language learners and those who are participating in an individualized education program have equitable access to classroom learning in this cohort. This standard has corresponding data requirements.	With few identified exceptions, pathway students are in a pathway cohort class for 65% of their classes, or four or more classes, including a minimum of at least one CTE/career-themed course.
1.2 **Curriculum and Instructional Design and Delivery**	Pathway core content (English language arts, math, science, social science) and career technical education (CTE/career-themed courses) are built on a foundation of cross-subject and industry-infused curriculum and instructional design, giving students opportunities to make connections across academic content areas and between academic and career content. Pathway provides students with multiple interdisciplinary learning opportunities throughout the pathway experience, which also includes work-based learning opportunities. Pathway instructional design is based on a defined set of student outcomes, as determined by pathway outcomes or a graduate profile. Students are offered multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery in alignment with outcomes and standards. Pathway curriculum is designed at a level of rigor to develop strong critical thinking skills that prepare students for postsecondary academic success and success in the workplace. The depth and complexity of student learning is evident through student work samples and instructional practices that utilize student-centered, collaborative, and project-based learning in the classroom, and build in opportunities for students to reflect and provide feedback on their learning experiences. Attention to equitable access to the instruction for all identified demographic subgroups is evident through instructional scaffolding and attention to building academic mindsets and developing socio-emotional learning competencies.	Industry and postsecondary partners have multiple opportunities to participate in industry-infused curriculum design at all grade levels. Pathway provides staff with continuous learning and improvement opportunities to ensure that pedagogy is culturally informed and instructional strategies are inclusive.

1.3 *Assessment of Learning*	Assessments align with and are designed to measure pathway student outcomes and/or graduate profile. They are designed intentionally to provide evidence of students' critical thinking skills and their complex understanding of the integrated curriculum.	To demonstrate growth in industry knowledge and workplace skills, pathway students complete a rigorous, summative, performance-based assessment at the end of their CTE/career-themed courses (e.g., certification exam or portfolio) and/or participate in an end-of-internship exhibition of learning.
	Assessment design provides multiple opportunities throughout the pathway course of study for students to demonstrate their learning to a broader audience of peers, industry representatives, and/or other community members.	Pathway provides staff with continuous learning and improvement opportunities to ensure that equitable and culturally informed assessment strategies are in place.
	At least annually, students formally share their cross-subject, CTE/career-themed learning through a public demonstration of knowledge and mastery of content standards. These experiences are designed to enable students to practice skills that will be needed to successfully complete the pathway culminating project.	
	During their senior year of high school, all students are required to submit a culminating project (e.g., internship project, capstone project, or defense of learning) that builds upon the integrated program of study. This represents a rigorous summative assessment in which students demonstrate and reflect upon their academic, career/technical, and social-emotional knowledge in an authentic, experiential way.	
	Adaptations and alternative assessment methods are used when appropriate to ensure equitable opportunities for all students to demonstrate expected knowledge and skills.	
	This standard has corresponding data requirements.	
1.4 *Early College Credit Opportunities*	Early college credit opportunities are available to all students through Advancement Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, and/or by formal agreement with a post-secondary partner to provide dual enrollment opportunities, articulated high school classes, or credit by exam. Pathway is able to demonstrate the degree to which students are participating in and obtaining credit through these opportunities.	Through formal dual enrollment partnership(s), or equivalent, a majority of pathway students participate in and successfully complete early college credit opportunities.
	This standard has corresponding data requirements.	The pathway team maintains data on student participation and success in early college learning opportunities, disaggregated by demographic subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity, English language learners, individualized education plan participants), in order to monitor equitable access and outcomes for all students.
1.5 *Partner Input and Validation*	Postsecondary, industry, and other partners inform and validate the design and implementation of the pathway program of study, including pathway outcomes and student assessments. These partners assess the effectiveness and quality of the program on an ongoing basis, and this input is used to improve alignment to industry and postsecondary needs.	Postsecondary, industry, and other partners work with the pathway team on curriculum co-design and co-validation through a formalized collaborative process to assess program quality, effectiveness, and alignment to postsecondary and industry expectations.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

A CONTINUUM OF MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES WITH WORK AND REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS OF LEARNING.

DOMAIN	MEETING THE STANDARD	EXCELLING THE STANDARD
2.1 **Work-based Learning Plans**	The pathway provides students with a work-based learning (WBL) plan that includes a continuum of WBL experiences aligned with the program of study curriculum and pathway and/or graduate outcomes. The pathway program provides students with opportunities to engage with the plan by, for example, tracking their participation in specific activities, and/or reflecting on the plan at various times throughout their pathway experience. The plan is personalized as needed to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. The WBL plan is articulated with the program of study and pathway academic outcomes and/or graduate profile. The WBL plan is informed by and/or validated by input from industry partners.	Students customize their WBL plan and track their experiences based on pathway outcomes, district graduate profile, and/or personal goals. Students regularly reflect upon and update their plan, taking into account their postsecondary goals and plans.
2.2 **Student Work-based Learning Experiences and Self-assessments**	All students successfully complete a range of WBL experiences, from career exploration activities to career training. The pathway provides opportunities for all students to pursue formal WBL internships or apprenticeships and to obtain industry certifications. The pathway provides equitable access to high-quality WBL experiences for all students. All students participate in WBL self-assessments on a periodic basis throughout their pathway experience, and after individual WBL experiences. These self-assessments give students the opportunity to reflect on their WBL skills development, their understanding of the industry, and links between academic and WBL experiences. Feedback gathered through student self-assessments are also used to inform the WBL plan. This domain has corresponding data requirements.	A majority of students successfully complete an internship or similar experience in a placement aligned with the pathway theme. Success is measured against employer evaluation and industry and pathway outcomes. The pathway team uses information from student self-assessments to evaluate the scope and quality of WBL experiences and to make ongoing program improvements.
2.3 **Work-based Learning Provider Assessment of Student Workplace Readiness**	Industry partners and employers/supervisors evaluate individual student workplace readiness development and performance in WBL experiences on an annual basis at minimum. Partners/supervisors assess the quality of student preparation and performance in WBL activities (professionalism, soft skills, etc.) and on skills and knowledge related to pathway outcomes. This feedback is used by students and teachers in meeting pathway and industry outcomes. This domain has corresponding data requirements.	Feedback and validation from employers occurs regularly and is used to improve the workplace readiness of students. Employers participate both in the preparation of students for the worksite and in the evaluation of student intern performance. WBL data is tracked through a system that specifies clear student learning outcomes, metrics, and benchmarks. Employers participate to formally validate the work readiness of students.

INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS

MEETING THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF EACH YOUNG PERSON TO EQUIP ALL FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO COLLEGE AND CAREER.

DOMAIN	MEETING THE STANDARD	EXCELLING THE STANDARD
3.1 *College and Career Preparation and Support*	The pathway is successfully preparing students for college and career transitions, and promoting a college and career culture by: · Expecting students to pursue postsecondary education or training · Exposing students to a variety of postsecondary options · Providing targeted student support for postsecondary options (i.e., preparation for PSAT, SAT, ASVAB exams, guidance for college applications, help completing FAFSA and other financial aid applications, etc.) · Providing academic, social-emotional, and career counseling services aligned with pathway and graduate outcomes, and helping students to develop and realize their college and career readiness goals · Helping students develop job application skills and make connections to apprenticeship and certification programs This domain has corresponding data requirements.	The pathway assures a college and career culture by: · Making early college, dual enrollment, and other opportunities available on the high school campus · Sponsoring professional development for counselors, teachers, and other relevant staff on topics related to early college/career readiness awareness · Developing relationships with postsecondary institutions to promote successful student transitions to higher education Nearly 100% of pathway students achieve one or more of the following directly after graduation: · Enroll in a postsecondary institution · Attain an industry-recognized certificate · Enter a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program
3.2 *Social-Emotional Skill Development*	The pathway program includes embedded learning opportunities that emphasize the development of social awareness, self-management, and a mindset of growth and self-efficacy for all students.	Through the program of study, the pathway standardizes protocols that regularly embed opportunities for students to reflect on their social-emotional learning and growth over time. The pathway team routinely assesses and provides formative feedback related to the development of students' skills in social awareness, self-management, and a mindset of growth and self-efficacy.
3.3 *Individual Student Supports*	The pathway team monitors student academic, personal, and social-emotional needs, and provides culturally responsive and timely interventions as necessary. The pathway adopts and implements a systematic plan of assessment and referral for students needing academic or social-emotional interventions. Interventions are personalized and engage students' families as appropriate in order to serve each individual student. A system is in place to assess the efficacy of student supports based on progress of identified subgroups. This domain has corresponding data requirements.	Students benefit from regular check-ins with pathway team members to monitor progress against the plan. The pathway team engages families and leverages community assets to contribute to and serve students' academic and social-emotional needs in a more customized way. Structured peer mentoring opportunities are integrated into intervention strategies.
3.4 *Student Input and Validation*	The pathway seeks and documents student voice and leadership in articulating the pathway theme and making connections between academic studies, WBL opportunities, and college and career preparation. Student feedback solicited on at least an annual basis to gauge whether students understand the relevance of their program in preparing them for life after high school. This information is used to inform pathway improvement and responsiveness to support student needs.	Students often articulate the relevance of their program by serving as leaders, ambassadors, and spokespersons. They are valued partners and leaders in the continuous improvement process by providing regular feedback on the quality of their preparation and helping the pathway team incorporate this feedback into planning and future improvements.

DOMAIN-SPECIFIC DATA REQUIREMENTS

SOME REQUIREMENTS CALL FOR DATA FROM A COMPARISON GROUP IN ADDITION TO PATHWAY PARTICIPANTS.
THIS GROUP MAY INCLUDE THE GENERAL SCHOOL OR DISTRICT POPULATION OR A DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUP OF THE POPULATION.

DOMAIN	MEETING THE STANDARD
1.1 Cohort Structure	• Number and percent of students participating in a pathway cohort comprising 50% of their schedule • Number and percent of pathway students who have two academic courses and one CTE/career-themed course as part of the pathway in a six-period schedule
1.3 Assessment of Learning	• Number and percent of students participating in culminating experiences, including successful completion rate • If available, provide demographic subgroup breakdown for the above • If available, show two or more years of data for the above
1.4 Early College Credit Opportunities	Provide at least two years of data describing early college opportunities for pathway students and comparison group; show data overall and with breakdown by demographic subgroup • Number and percent of students participating in dual enrollment, AP/IB courses • Number and percent of students obtaining credit through dual enrollment, AP/IB exam • Number and percent of students taking credit by exam (if applicable) • Number and percent of students obtaining credit by exam (if applicable) • Number and percent of students participating in course-to-course articulation (if applicable) • Number and percent of students obtaining credit through course-to-course articulation (if applicable)
2.2 Student Work-based Learning Experiences and Self-assessments	Provide at least two years of data describing work-based learning experiences for pathway students and comparison group; show data overall and with breakdown by demographic subgroup • Number and percent of students participating in career awareness activities • Number and percent of students participating in career exploration activities • Number and percent of students participating in career preparation activities • Number and percent of students participating in internships/apprenticeships, paid or unpaid
2.3 Work-based Learning Provider Assessment of Student Workplace Readiness	If applicable, provide at least two years of data describing WBL provider assessments for pathway students and comparison group; show data overall and with breakdown by demographic subgroup • Number and percent of students receiving an industry-recognized certification • Number and percent of students receiving a positive review from their employer/industry partner upon completion of an internship/mentorship
3.1 College and Career Preparation and Support	Provide at least two years of data describing potential impact of college and career preparation for pathway students and comparison group; show data overall and with breakdown by demographic subgroup • Number and percent of graduates enrolled in a two-year or four-year postsecondary institution • Number and percent of graduates entering a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program If available, provide the following additional data: • Number and percent of graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation • Number and percent of graduates who complete one year at a postsecondary institution
3.3 Individual Student Supports	Provide at least two years of data describing potential impact of student supports for pathway students and comparison group; show data overall and with breakdown by demographic subgroup • Number and percent of students formally receiving individual support services • Mean/median GPA of pathway students at each grade level • Number and percent of students chronically absent • Number and percent of students suspended • Number and percent of students who report a positive response by domain on a social-emotional learning and/or school climate and culture survey (if available) • Number and percent of students at beginning of sophomore and senior years who are credit deficient, defined as lacking the number of credits a student should have completed upon entering each respective school year to remain on-track for graduation with a standard diploma in four years

OVERARCHING DATA REQUIREMENTS

CROSS-CUTTING METRICS RELATING TO EQUITY.

	MEETING THE STANDARD	EXCELLING THE STANDARD
Pathway Completion	**80% or more participating students successfully complete the pathway.** Students who are enrolled for the entire duration of the pathway successfully complete the courses that constitute the pathway program of study, including a three- to four-year CTE/career-themed sequence. Provide two years of data on the following: · Total number and percent of students who completed the pathway · If available, breakdown by demographic subgroup In addition, maintain data on students who leave the pathway before completing the course of study, monitoring attrition through an equity lens. Use this information to identify potential deficiencies in student supports.	Spanning at least two years, all students, including those in identified demographic subgroups, successfully complete all courses in the pathway program of study.
Early College Credit Completion	**Pathway students participate in and obtain college credits at rates equal to or higher than peers in the comparison group.** Provide two years of data on the following: · Number and percent of pathway students who participate in and obtain college credit and those in comparison group · If available, breakdown by demographic subgroup	All identified demographic subgroups participate in and obtain college credits at higher rates than subgroups districtwide over a period of at least two years.
High School Graduation	**Pathway students graduate at rates equal to or higher than peers in the comparison group.** Provide two years of data on the following: · Number and percent of graduating pathway students and those in comparison group · If available, breakdown by demographic subgroup	All identified demographic subgroups graduate at higher rates than subgroups districtwide over a period of at least two years.
College Qualification	**Pathway students qualify for college at rates equal to or higher than peers in the comparison group**. Students should meet the requirements to qualify for entry to public universities in the state (including college preparatory coursework, English and math placement exams, GPA, a-g requirements in California, etc.). Provide two years of data on the following: · Number and percent of students who completed all academic requirements to qualify for college as described above · If available, breakdown by demographic subgroup	All identified demographic subgroups qualify and are admitted to college at higher rates than subgroups districtwide over a period of at least two years.
Pathway Equity	**Student data shows that the pathway promotes equity across student subgroups in at least one area.** Pathway team uses readily accessible measures/data points (SARC, dashboard, etc.) to understand trends in student achievement. When disaggregated by demographic subgroups, evidence demonstrates that the pathway is providing an environment that promotes success for all students by closing a gap on at least one of the following areas. · Number and percent of graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation · Number and percent of graduates who complete one year in a postsecondary institution · Number and percent of suspended students · Number and percent of chronically absent students · Number and percent of students who report a positive response by domain on a social-emotional learning and/or school climate and culture survey · Number and percent of students at beginning of sophomore and senior years who are credit deficient, as defined in data table 3.3	In addition to the specified requirements, the pathway team: · Uses multiple measures or data points consistently to evaluate student growth and/or success · Applies consistent, systematic structures to ensure ongoing evaluation of growth · Uses explicit interventions and supports within identified subgroups and focuses on narrowing the achievement gap · Presents data showing significant narrowing of the achievement gap for all subgroups over time There is evidence that pathway recruitment and enrollment efforts have yielded positive results for students reflecting the diversity of the school or district over more than two years. Established practices and policies are in place to ensure open access and diversity through the involvement of students, business partners, and community partners.