

GOING FOR GOLD

SYNOPSIS FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS

Linked Learning is transforming education by engaging young people, connecting schools with postsecondary and employer partners, and producing more equitable outcomes.

Students work harder and dream bigger when their learning connects with them and connects them to the world. Linked Learning delivers what young people need to graduate from high school ready for college and prepared to fully participate in the economy and civic life. Students receive rigorous learning that ignites their passions, relates to their life experiences, and elevates their career aspirations.

Linked Learning is a proven, systemic approach operating in hundreds of schools across the country. The Linked Learning approach integrates academics aligned to college-ready requirements with sequenced, high-quality career-technical education, work-based learning, and comprehensive student supports. Research shows that implementing Linked Learning with fidelity to these components results in tangible benefits that include higher graduation rates, more credits earned by the end of high school, and development of the mindsets and skills students need to thrive—in, and after, high school.

Districts seek certification from the Linked Learning Alliance to ensure that college and career pathways are operating with high quality. Certification standards were developed in collaboration with the diverse field of Linked Learning educators and support continuous improvement for all. Pathways gain Silver certification when they establish the core components of Linked Learning and achieve Gold certification when they demonstrate high-quality implementation of these components and equitable opportunities for all students. With 12 Gold pathways in California and hundreds of Silver-certified pathways striving for Gold, the Linked Learning field is moving closer to the day when all students have the ability to light their own path to success in college, career, and life.



LINKED LEARNING GOLD CERTIFICATION™

The highest standard for college and career preparation, based on evidence of excellence in integrating the core components of Linked Learning.

INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF STUDY	WORK-BASED LEARNING	INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS										
<p><i>Student-centered learning connected to postsecondary and industry expectations.</i></p>	<p><i>A continuum of meaningful experiences with work and real-world applications of learning.</i></p>	<p><i>Meeting the developmental needs of each young person to equip all for a successful transition to college and career.</i></p>										
<p>Instructional design connects rigorous academics and career-themed coursework. Core academic content and career-technical education cross disciplines and are infused with concepts and methods relevant to the industry of focus.</p> <p>Instructional delivery is student-centered, collaborative, and project based, with attention to providing access to all students.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to demonstrate their learning through methods that include an annual public presentation and a culminating project. Assessment design provides opportunities for students to engage in authentic self-reflection, practice acquired skills, and share their mastery of content with peers, industry representatives, and/or community members.</p> <p>Early college credit opportunities such as dual enrollment, AP/IB courses, course articulation, or credit by exam are accessible to all students. Pathway students participate in these opportunities at rates equal to or higher than similar peers across the school or district.</p> <p>Postsecondary and industry partners inform and validate the design of the program of study and assess its quality and effectiveness on an ongoing basis. Feedback from this process is used to improve alignment to industry and postsecondary needs.</p> <p>Students have the opportunity for shared learning through a cohort structure focused on cross-subject projects and work-based learning experiences related to the pathway theme.</p> <p><i>Related data requirements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number and percent of students engaged in and successfully completing culminating projects/demonstrations• Number and percent of students participating in and successfully completing early college credit opportunities• Number and percent of students in a pathway cohort for portion of schedule	<p>Students follow a work-based learning plan that is informed by input from industry partners and tied to the program of study and outcomes defined for their pathway. Students have opportunities to engage with these plans, for example, by tracking their participation in specific activities.</p> <p>Students successfully complete multiple experiences ranging from career exploration activities to training and career preparation. Experiences are of high quality and are personalized as appropriate to ensure equity of opportunity.</p> <p>Students have access to formal work-based learning through internships and apprenticeships, as well as opportunities to gain industry certificates.</p> <p>Students self-assess their work-based learning experiences periodically and after completion of specific activities. They connect these experiences to their academic studies while reflecting on their career skills development and their understanding of the industry of focus. Self-assessment feedback informs the work-based learning plan.</p> <p>Industry partners evaluate the workplace readiness of individual students, including the quality of their preparation, performance, and soft skills (e.g., ability to work in teams, ability to present information). Students and teachers use insights gained from these evaluations to improve practices and meet pathway and industry outcomes.</p> <p><i>Related data requirements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number and percent of students participating in work-based learning experiences and self-assessments• Number and percent of students receiving a positive review from employer/industry partner• Number and percent of students receiving an industry-recognized certification	<p>Students experience learning that emphasizes social awareness, self-management, and a mindset of growth and self-efficacy. Students have a voice and leadership role in articulating the pathway theme and making connections between their academic studies, work-based learning opportunities, and college and career preparation. Student feedback is solicited regularly and used to inform improvements.</p> <p>Teachers and counselors monitor student academic, personal, and social-emotional needs and provide culturally responsive and timely supports. They engage families in student development plans as appropriate. They also adopt and implement a system of assessment and referral for students in need of interventions.</p> <p>Students learn in a culture of high expectations, are introduced to a variety of postsecondary education and training options, and identify individual college and career readiness goals with support from counseling services.</p> <p>Students receive guidance and targeted support as they complete college entry tests, financial aid applications, and other requirements for accessing postsecondary education.</p> <p>Students gain job application skills and resources they need to be prepared for entering the workplace, apprenticeships, and certification programs.</p> <p><i>Related data requirements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number and percent of students formally receiving individualized student supports• Number and percent of students reporting a positive response in a survey of social-emotional learning or school climate/culture• Number and percent of students: chronically absent, suspended, credit deficient• Number and percent of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution• Number and percent of graduates entering a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program										
<p><i>Data requirements related to equity:</i></p> <table><tr><td>Pathway Completion</td><td>80% or more participating students successfully complete the pathway. Number and percent of students who completed coursework and career-themed sequence, with breakdown by demographic subgroup. Data on students who leave the pathway before completion to identify potential deficiencies in student supports.</td></tr><tr><td>High School Graduation</td><td>Pathway students graduate at rates equal to or higher than similar peers across school or district. Number and percent of graduating pathway students and those in comparison group, with breakdown by demographic subgroup.</td></tr><tr><td>Early College Credit Completion</td><td>Pathway students participate in and obtain college credits at rates equal to or higher than peers in the comparison group. Number and percent of pathway students who participate in and obtain college credit and those in comparison group, with breakdown by demographic subgroup.</td></tr><tr><td>College Qualification</td><td>Pathway students qualify for college at rates equal to or higher than similar peers across school or district. Number and percent of students who completed all academic requirements for admission to the state college/university system, with breakdown by demographic subgroup.</td></tr><tr><td>Pathway Equity</td><td>Student data shows that the pathway promotes equity across student subgroups in at least one area. Number and percent of graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation and/or who complete one year at such an institution. Number and percent of students suspended, chronically absent, and/or credit-deficit. Number and percent of students reporting a positive response in a survey of social-emotional learning or school climate/culture.</td></tr></table>			Pathway Completion	80% or more participating students successfully complete the pathway. Number and percent of students who completed coursework and career-themed sequence, with breakdown by demographic subgroup. Data on students who leave the pathway before completion to identify potential deficiencies in student supports.	High School Graduation	Pathway students graduate at rates equal to or higher than similar peers across school or district. Number and percent of graduating pathway students and those in comparison group, with breakdown by demographic subgroup.	Early College Credit Completion	Pathway students participate in and obtain college credits at rates equal to or higher than peers in the comparison group. Number and percent of pathway students who participate in and obtain college credit and those in comparison group, with breakdown by demographic subgroup.	College Qualification	Pathway students qualify for college at rates equal to or higher than similar peers across school or district. Number and percent of students who completed all academic requirements for admission to the state college/university system, with breakdown by demographic subgroup.	Pathway Equity	Student data shows that the pathway promotes equity across student subgroups in at least one area. Number and percent of graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation and/or who complete one year at such an institution. Number and percent of students suspended, chronically absent, and/or credit-deficit. Number and percent of students reporting a positive response in a survey of social-emotional learning or school climate/culture.
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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. Learn more at [LinkedLearning.org/Certification](https://www.linkedlearning.org/Certification).