

# KEEP US LINKED

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT AMID THE PANDEMIC



## SPRING 2020 LINKED LEARNING SURVEY

Linked Learning students will shape the future of the California workforce. Numbering in the tens of thousands, many are first in their families to pursue [college and career](#) on a pathway that combines rigorous academic learning with hands-on career experience. But like many students across the country, their educational journeys were seriously disrupted as the COVID-19 crisis shuttered schools in spring 2020. To understand their realities and their needs, the Linked Learning Alliance engaged FINN Partners to conduct a survey\* of Linked Learning high school juniors and seniors—those students facing critical transitions—from May to June.

### ABOUT SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

**1,341**

Linked Learning  
student  
respondents

**58%** high  
school juniors

**42%** high  
school seniors

**41%**

will be the  
first in their  
family to  
attend college

**80%**

students of color:  
African American,  
Latinx, Asian  
American, other

**7** school districts  
represented:

Antelope Valley, Lindsay,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles,  
Oakland, Pasadena,  
San Bernardino City

\* This is not considered a scientific survey, and results should not be interpreted as applying to a larger audience of students beyond those who responded.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

### Clarity is essential.

Students are confronting overwhelming uncertainty and anxiety—from how their grades and tests will be counted to whether their internship and job opportunities will disappear. They seek clarity on expectations and outcomes, and how best to plan for the future.

“It can be frustrating sometimes to need to work around the effects of COVID-19 for college, when all of your programs/jobs/internships have been cancelled, when you have to keep up with the many deadlines/assignments/updates from teachers and administration spread across different websites and emails, when you can't get feedback on your plans for college and applications, and when the whole future seems unclear, but you still have to plan for it.”

- Senior, Long Beach

**59%** of juniors

Making decisions about college and career plans is difficult

**58%** of seniors



**40%** of juniors

I am not sure how my work will be graded

**30%** of seniors

“Being a student during this time is very difficult. I am unmotivated, stressed and confused. I do not know how most of schoolwork is being graded or what is expected from me and worried about my family's health more than school.”

- Junior, Antelope Valley

## Staying motivated is a real challenge.

Increased uncertainty, virtual learning due to social distance requirements, and added stressors like family illness and financial hardship pose major challenges to student motivation, but many intend to persevere.

**66%** of juniors

Motivation is difficult

**68%** of seniors

“It is very hard to stay motivated without my peers next to me pushing me forward, without my teachers next to me giving me feedback on my work. The work is very impersonal and thus I have no motivation to do it.”

- Junior, Oakland



“One of the most important things is to make students feel like the schoolwork they are doing is important by making it clear that it will be applicable to the real world or at least useful in their next year of school. If students feel like what teachers are teaching is meaningful and is not just busywork or some mindless assignment to bring grades up, then they are more likely to do the work.”

- Senior, San Bernardino City

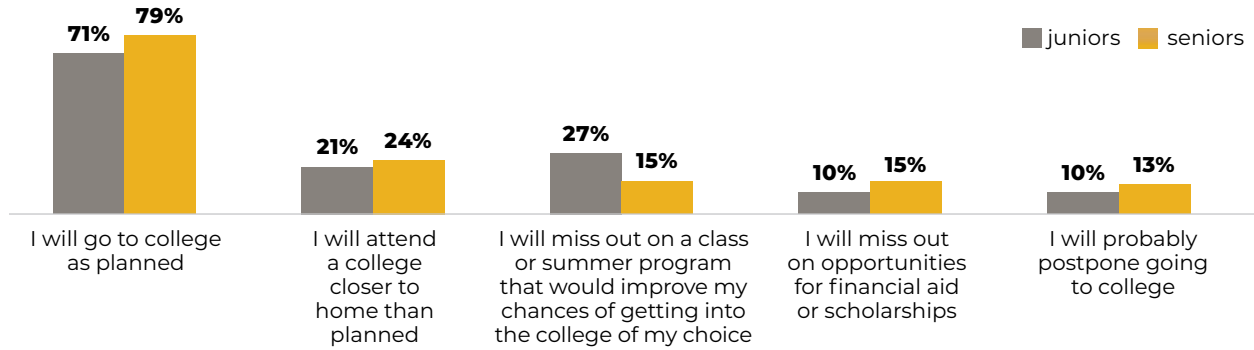
**56%** of juniors

Keeping up with schoolwork at home is a real challenge

**58%** of seniors

## Most still plan to go to college, but plans are looking different.

Thanks to earlier preparation and support, most seniors say they still expect to go to college. Juniors who had less time to prep before the shutdown feel slightly less secure about their plans. However, students at both grade levels anticipate other changes related to their education.

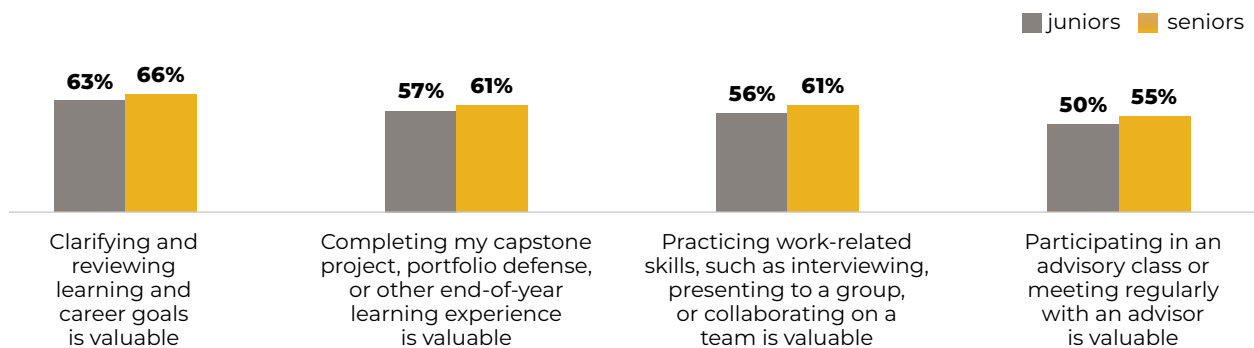


“Being a student during this time is very difficult ... there are so many questions that we have for our counselors regarding college, and that can be very difficult and stressful because it’s our future.”

- Senior, Antelope Valley

## Linked Learning connections matter.

Linked Learning students trust their school districts and valued engagement across the board with teachers, counselors, peers, and industry professionals as the pandemic shuttered schools. They seek the connections and opportunities that have helped them in the past to continue through this critical time.

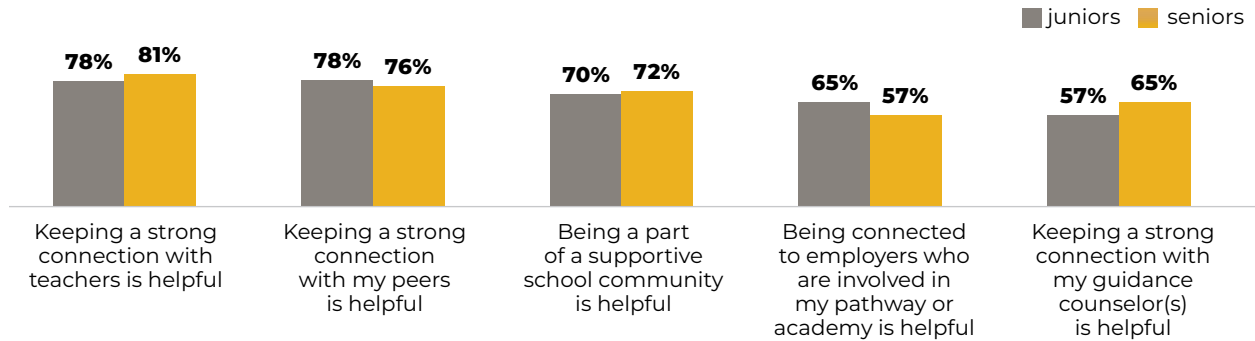


“It’s complicated, to figure out how to do certain things while being at home. Those of us in academies have internships and projects that would normally require us to be outside and now we have to adapt and figure out how to accomplish these things.”

- Junior, Pasadena

## Relationships are key.

Linked Learning students deeply value the connections made through their smaller learning communities. Relationships with teachers, counselors, industry partners—all those who make Linked Learning possible—were critical through the school closures and must remain integral as schooling evolves.



“Doing any school related activity is difficult because doing work from home doesn’t keep my attention on schoolwork. At school I had teachers that I liked, could trust, and who cared about my education enough to keep me working hard for them and myself.”

- Junior, Antelope Valley

“Now more than ever is the time you should listen to student voices and implement the changes we have for so long asked for. We need to change the school system to where it feels like students are valued, where teachers, staff, and students can build relationships with each other. We need to create a space where students can be involved in the decision making that affects THEIR education.”

- Junior, Long Beach



## TAKING NEXT STEPS TOGETHER

Linked Learning students have worked hard to prepare for the full range of postsecondary opportunities. While the pandemic has exacerbated many of the deep, systemic inequities many of them face, their extraordinary potential remains. We must keep our students linked to the future they envisioned.



The Linked Learning Alliance is organizing communities, educators, and business leaders to get creative and continue providing young people with the powerful mix of academic learning and work experiences known to ignite their sense of purpose and keep them on the path to success.

Students are telling us what they need today for a better tomorrow. We need to hear them and be here for them in meaningful ways. [Contact the Linked Learning Alliance](#) to find out how you can support students in your community.



### ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Linked Learning Alliance serves the coalition of educators, employers, and community organizations dedicated to advancing equity and excellence in education through Linked Learning. Based on evidence of positive effects for students, the Alliance sets standards to ensure Linked Learning quality and access. School districts seek certification through the Alliance to ensure that their pathways are operating with the fidelity required to benefit all young people. Visit us at: [LinkedLearning.org](https://www.linkedlearning.org).