

# Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: Linked Learning



March 2016

**The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 includes several provisions that support the implementation of Linked Learning in California. Linked Learning is an approach to high school redesign that combines (1) rigorous academics, (2) career-based learning in the classroom, (3) work-based learning, and (4) integrated student supports. These four components are woven together in industry-themed pathways that provide for a relevant hands-on learning experience for high school students.**

## Assessments

Under ESSA, assessments must include measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding and may be partially delivered in the form of portfolios, projects, or extended-performance tasks. These higher-quality assessments measure the skills and competencies developed by students who participate in Linked Learning more effectively than traditional assessments. In addition, ESSA authorizes funding that California can use to develop and implement these assessments.

## Accountability

ESSA requires a multiple-measures accountability system that must include at least one indicator of school quality or success selected by the state, in addition to students' performance on the statewide assessment, high school graduation rates, and English language proficiency. This gives California the flexibility to include indicators in its statewide accountability system that will reinforce the implementation of Linked Learning, such as participation in and completion of dual-enrollment course work or participation in and completion of high-quality career pathways.

## State and District Plans

Under ESSA, state and district Title I plans must describe how the state will work with school districts to provide for the effective transition of students between middle grades and high school and from high school to postsecondary education. District plans may include coordination with institutions of higher education, employers, and others and increase student access to dual-enrollment course work. In addition, districts may use Title I funds to support experiential learning opportunities and work-based learning opportunities that provide students with in-depth interactions with industry professionals and academic credit. These new requirements and opportunities reinforce recently-enacted policy in California (e.g., [California Career Pathways Trust](#) and the [Local Control and Accountability Plan](#)).



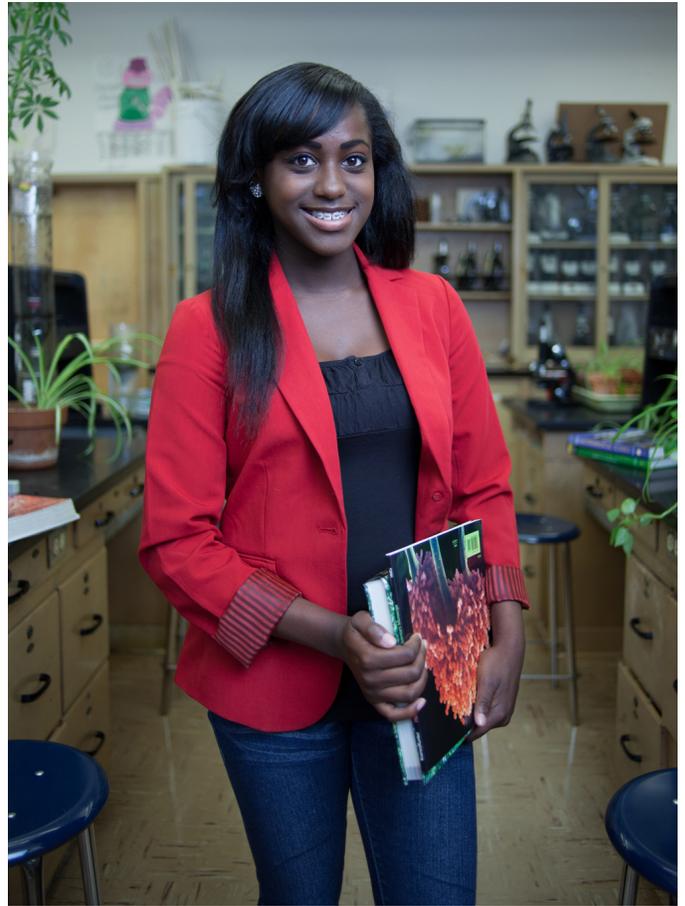
## Professional Development

ESSA explicitly allows states to use federal professional development funds to develop and implement instructional practices that support dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs and the integration of rigorous academics, career and technical education (CTE), and work-based learning.

## Funding for High Schools

ESSA allows districts to target Title I funds toward high-poverty high schools (i.e., high schools with a poverty rate of 50 percent or above). In addition, ESSA allows states to use up to 3 percent of their Title I funds for "direct student services," including CTE course work aligned with the challenging state academic standards and that leads to an industry-recognized credential; advanced course work; and components of personalized learning. Also, ESSA creates the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program, which provides formula grants that states must reallocate as subgrants to districts for dropout prevention and other purposes.<sup>1</sup> States can use these federal funding opportunities as part of a sustainability strategy for the ongoing implementation of Linked Learning.

For additional fact sheets and videos about ESSA, visit [www.all4ed.org/essa/](http://www.all4ed.org/essa/).



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program has three purposes: (1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; (2) improve school conditions for student learning; and (3) improve the use of technology to raise academic achievement and digital literacy for all students. If a district receives less than \$30,000 through this program, the district may choose to support only one of these purposes.

Photos provided by the Linked Learning Alliance.

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC–based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. [www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org)

The **Linked Learning Alliance** is a statewide coalition of education, industry, and community organizations dedicated to improving California's high schools and preparing all students for success in college, career, and life. [www.linkedlearning.org](http://www.linkedlearning.org)