



Study: Linked Learning valuable in transition

At a time when stakeholders are emphasizing that a competitive U.S. workforce will require postsecondary education, some high schools have adopted programs that use [Linked Learning](#) with a career pathway to prepare students for the transition to higher education and employment. An [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) report released on Oct. 9 reviews research and policy on linked learning in California.

According to [Beyond High School: Efforts to Improve Postsecondary Transitions Through Linked Learning](#), the programs rely on four principles: a rigorous academic core curriculum, technical skills, work-based learning, and personalized student support. More than 20,000 California high school students are in Linked Learning programs.

The report's authors called for integrating academic and career and technical courses, as well as increasing focus on students' postsecondary transition. Also recommended was use of federal funds such as the [School Improvement Grant](#) program for helping Linked Learning implementation in districts.

The report noted that at [Dozier-Libbey Medical High School](#) in Antioch, 97 percent of students graduated on time in 2012 compared to the state and district averages of 79 percent and 66 percent, respectively. [Porterville Unified School District](#) had a 72 percent graduation rate for ELLs in 2012, 10 points higher than the state average for ELLs.

During a webinar on Oct. 9 releasing the report, Phillip Lovell, Alliance vice president for policy and advocacy of comprehensive high school reform, said, "We're not going to be able to increase the nation's graduation rate without increasing California's graduation rate." Examining California's progress with Linked Learning programs could inform stakeholders' work across the nation toward higher graduation rates, Lovell said. He added, "Why Linked Learning? The short answer is because it works."

"The data shows that kids participating in Linked Learning are more likely to graduate from high school, and they're more likely to go on to a four-year college," Lovell said. So, looking at the data, this is clearly something that the country should be paying attention to."

Diane Friedlaender, senior associate at the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#), discussed a study released earlier this year by SCOPE cited by the Alliance. The SCOPE study focused on philosophy and practice in four student-centered schools. Two of the schools use Linked Learning healthcare/biomedical curricula and serve high-poverty, predominantly minority students.

"Nearly all the students had completed" California's "a-g" courses required for admission to the [University of California](#) and [California State University](#) systems, according to Friedlaender. "That contrasts drastically from other students in those same districts."

The schools use "rigorous and inquiry-based instruction where students are learning to solve real problems" and work collaboratively, Friedlaender said. "There's a shift from task

completion to mastery" with students expected to "demonstrate deep understanding" of what they learn.

For example, at [Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School](#) in Sacramento, 2011 graduate Seraiya Wright said during the webinar that her school's teachers and administrators "were very upfront with us about what we needed to get done in order to graduate." Wright is currently a nursing major at Howard University in Washington, D.C. She added, "The one thing that I felt was the most valuable was my work-based learning experiences. It really gave me a solid foundation of what professionalism really is . . . and that has helped me tremendously" with the transition to college.

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