



Chapter Two

fostering career
competencies,
youth
development, and
academic mastery
via workplace
learning
experiences

*Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Ph.D.
Talma Shultz Ph.D., contributor*

fostering career competencies, youth development, and academic mastery via workplace learning experiences

*Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Ph.D.,
Talma Shultz, Ph.D., contributor*

Problem of Practice

How to provide high-quality, pathway-integrated workplace learning experiences for all students?

Abstract

In this chapter, we learn how one school in Los Angeles has worked with its employer partners to improve the workplace learning experience for students. By carefully integrating work-based experience with the academic and Career Technical Education (CTE) learning goals of the school-based pathway program, the Community Health Advocates School aims to prepare students in its South Central Los Angeles community to excel in higher education. The school also aims to help students to become transformative leaders through a career pathway in contextually competent social work, behavioral health, and/or other community health professions.

Introduction

A central feature of Linked Learning and career-themed academies is a commitment to providing pathway-relevant work-based learning experiences. Ideally, such experiences can help students better understand future options and give them expanded opportunities to demonstrate social competencies, technical skills, and academic mastery. Pathway leaders often report two major organizational challenges in providing work-based learning opportunities. The first invariably relates to issues of scale. How can schools develop and nurture enough business and community partners who can make long-term commitments to bringing students into their workplaces to have meaningful experiences?

A second frequently mentioned and more complex challenge relates to the quality of the workplace experience from the student's perspective. High-quality workplace learning experiences must explicitly integrate into the student's current academic and technical curriculum so that the two elements can deepen and reinforce each other (ConnectEd California, 2012). Addressing this challenge requires close collaboration between school-based educators and workplace internship providers. Pathway teachers report that they must understand what employers can offer so that they can determine how their curriculum and instructional practices will help students to have successful workplace learning experiences. Likewise, potential employer partners report that they need to understand the specific learning objectives that students bring with them so that they can be intentional about helping students achieve those objectives.



Background

The Community Health Advocates School (CHAS) opened its doors in the 2012-13 school year. It was one of three pilot schools established on the site of the newly constructed Augustus Hawkins High School campus. Teachers initiate the proposal process to establish pilot schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). They invite district administrators, community parents, students, and school partners to collaborate and consult on the process. Modeled after semi-autonomous pilot schools in Boston, LAUSD's pilot schools have charter-like autonomy (e.g., over budget, schedule, governance, and thematic focus of the curriculum) while teachers and school staff remain district employees. The organizational vision for CHAS is to prepare students in its South Central LA community to excel in higher education and to become transformative leaders through a "career pathway in contextually competent social work, behavioral health, and/or other community health professions" (LAUSD, n.d., p.4).

According to the LA County Department of Public Health, there are approximately 1.05 million residents living in South Central Los Angeles, over one-third of whom (33.6%) live at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. This neighborhood also has the county's highest rate of adults with less than a high school education (41.4%) and highest rate of adults (30.6%) who report that their health is only fair or poor (LA County Department of Public Health, 2016). In explaining why they chose to focus on a health advocacy pathway, CHAS's founding teachers and community leaders cited a severe shortage of physical and mental health services. Concurrently, there is a high incidence of mental and other chronic health illnesses and trauma-induced social problems that affect parents and students in the immediate neighborhood of the school. A health advocacy pathway would "nurture, empower, and inspire the future social workers and community health advocates of South Central" (LAUSD, n.d., p.4).

Elements of Early Pathway Design and Implementation

CHAS's founding teachers and community leaders modeled their health advocacy pathway on the Linked Learning concept from its very inception. They combined academic and career technical curricula, comprehensive student supports, advisory, and workplace learning experiences.

ACADEMIC AND CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION INTEGRATION

Grade-level teacher teams lead instruction at CHAS. They deliver an interdisciplinary curriculum based on California's Common Core State Standards as well as on the state's career technical education (CTE) model curriculum standards for behavioral health pathways. Teachers weave together the academic content and CTE standards through project-based learning. Some projects, for example, integrate the themes and skills of social work or mental health into one content area, such as a community resources expository research project in an English class. In other examples, projects might integrate multiple subject areas through a shared social work lens in a collaborative world history, math, and English project that examines global trends in mental health. CHAS teachers also collaborate in cross-grade, subject-based teams to ensure that students build on previously learned skills and are challenged by increasingly rigorous expectations as they move up in grade level. The pathway content also incorporates key industry-specific competencies derived from the Master of Social Work Program at University of Southern California. The object is to equip students with the most current and relevant industry-based capacities and necessary skills to enter college and/or pursue a career in social work.

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS AND ADVISORY

Pathway leaders have partnered with a number of community-based organizations to provide students with expanded learning and leadership opportunities aligned to pathway goals. These include homework assistance and tutoring, as well as structured fitness classes and performing and fine arts activities. School leaders have emphasized the importance of seeking out community partners who commit to providing opportunities for social and emotional learning (SEL) that are relevant to the pathway, and to college and career readiness more broadly. One partner organization, for example, focuses on student engagement approaches and activities designed to build student confidence and positive decision-making (e.g., agency and self-efficacy); intra-personal skills (e.g., personal responsibility and accountability); inter-personal skills (e.g., effective communication, conflict resolution, team work); and emotional intelligence (e.g., managing anger, fear, and peer pressure). But the centerpiece of student support and personalization, according to school Principal Claudia Rojas, is Advisory.

Every student at CHAS has a 35-minute Advisory class and an advisor, who is also a teacher for one of their pathway classes. The Advisory class focuses on personal and academic support, and the advisor is the primary advocate for the student within the school. The design of Advisory at CHAS was inspired by Linda Darling-Hammond's research, which has affirmed the importance and positive impact of deep, meaningful relationships between students, teachers, and parents/caregivers on student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2006-2007).

WORKPLACE LEARNING

The pathway design also includes a workplace learning component. CHAS collaborates with local community clinics and health providers to provide students with hands-on experience in a variety of settings employing pathway skills, including internships, job shadowing, and other regular opportunities. Through these experiences, students engage with health-field practitioners to practice and reflect on their roles as community advocates.

Early Implementation Challenges

By the late summer and fall of 2015, CHAS had advanced its first two cohorts of graduates, and school leaders were proud of the number of those graduates who were enrolling in postsecondary education. But they were not satisfied. Dr. Talma Shultz, Director of Strategic Innovation and Programs at the Center for Powerful Public Schools (CPPS), is a school redesign advisor and Linked Learning coach for CHAS. Dr. Shultz notes that staff were concerned that, in final assessments, graduating seniors were not consistently able to identify and discuss specific skills and competencies they had acquired in workplace learning experiences. Dr. Shultz says:

“For example, students might report that they had learned a lot about ‘organizing good meetings’ or ‘gathering information’ rather than reporting that they learned how to ‘develop an agenda’ or ‘develop an asset map’ of services available in a geographic area.”

Consequently, teachers worried that students would have trouble generalizing from their high school experiences and applying what they had learned to new work and college settings.



Perhaps more troubling was news that two of the school's stronger early graduates had dropped out of college after completing only one semester. Although these students reported that they were academically prepared, they explained that they had dropped out because they were overwhelmed by the less collaborative culture and climate in college and felt that they “did not belong there.” These signals pushed CHAS leadership to accelerate a period of self-study and design-based inquiry that was initiated in 2014-15, moving into high gear as the 2015-16 school year began.

A PERIOD OF SCHOOL SELF-STUDY

As the teachers and pathway leaders studied their students' outcomes, three things became evident. First, teachers felt they needed to be more explicit about the pathway's SLOs and how students might apply them in college or workplace settings. Developing more specific and transparent SLOs would help students to become meta-aware (i.e., meta-cognitive) of what they were learning and its generalizability. Second, to bolster the student experience at CHAS, teachers believed that the pathway needed internship opportunities that provided students with both the depth and length of experience sufficient for them to develop and demonstrate specific knowledge, skills, and mindsets. Dr. Shultz said,

“It was not clear how students were prepared for internships, and there was no system or structure to focus on the content of the internship that would ensure that students were accountable. In short, the internships were not integrated.”

Figure 1.
Elements of Redesign of Senior-Year Experience

FALL SEMESTER	SPRING SEMESTER
Clarify Pathway Learning Goals	
Prepare for External Internship	Receive Support for External Internship
Mentor Peers	Participate in External Internship
Take Capstone Course	

As well, that internship experience needed to build student agency and self-efficacy so that students would be more sure-footed as they sought to translate what they learned at CHAS in new and unfamiliar work and postsecondary settings. These multiple opportunities to demonstrate key competencies would help minimize transition gaps from one educational institution to another and more effectively transition students to the workforce. Finally, teachers recognized that they would need to bring their employer partners into closer collaboration so that workplace experiences would naturally build and extend the school’s learning objectives for students.

Towards an Integrated Workplace Learning Experience at CHAS

Informed by the results of the self-study, during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, CHAS pathway leaders developed a plan focused on redesigning the senior year experience with a fully integrated workplace learning component (see Figure 1). That redesign would eventually include the following elements:

- 1. Clarified Learning Goals.** Staff and students would take on a clarified set of learning goals, narrowing in on more specific objectives.
- 2. A Two-Part, Year-Long Internship for All Seniors.**
 - a. Peer Mentorship.** The first semester of the internship would be an in-house program focused on Pathway CTE skill development for peer mentors. CHAS students would begin the senior year in an internal health advocacy internship rotation by taking on the duties of a peer mentor and case manager for two or three freshman or newcomer immigrant students at CHAS.

- b. Employer-Based External Internship.** In the second semester of the senior year, students would rotate to an on-site placement with a health careers workforce partner that would build on the Peer Mentorship experience.

- 3. A University of California-Approved Capstone Course.** A year-long Capstone Course would serve as a bridge between the Peer Mentorship and the workplace learning experience. Its curriculum would focus on the learning sciences frameworks relevant to the health advocacy pathway. These frameworks would support Peer Mentorship skill-building and competencies valued by health care professionals (e.g., knowledge of how to build continuous learning and improvement systems for quality health care). This course would also provide opportunities for students to reflect, document, and be assessed on the competencies they were modeling and practicing in their internships.

CLARIFYING PATHWAY LEARNING GOALS

CHAS pathway leaders recognized that in order for students, teachers, and employers to learn together and use their time effectively, each needed to be clear about what career-relevant skills and knowledge would be assessed at the end of the senior year. Encouraged by a WASC accreditation review, a process that helps schools identify and implement school improvement plans and supports federal and state school accountability, pathway leaders partnered with the Center for Powerful Public Schools to redesign the schools’ CTE curriculum following the CPPS Competency-Based Approach to Professional Education (CAPE) framework (<http://powerful.org/programs/competencies-approach-to-professional-education-cape/>).

The CHAS pathway’s student learning objectives (SLO) are outlined in Figure 2. These specific and actionable SLOs are designed to help students become more aware of the CTE skills and behaviors they need to master in order to advance and sustain progress in their academic and professional careers.

Figure 2.
Pathway-Specific Learning Objectives:
Key Competencies for Health Advocates & Health Professionals

PROFESSIONAL/CAREER COMPETENCIES	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
HEALTH ADVOCATES	(1) Identify the various types of health (i.e., physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and environmental); (2) Create and organize a campaign to improve health; (3) Connect client to appropriate health services; (4) Apply concepts of oppression and marginalization to advocate for human rights and social and economic justice; (5) Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication; (6) Demonstrate empathy.
CRITICAL THINKERS	(1) Explain the disparities amongst communities as they relate to health issues; (2) Gain self-awareness of personal bias; (3) Analyze and investigate situations to come to ethical decisions; (4) Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power.
COLLABORATORS	(1) Create and deliver group presentations with peers and professionals; (2) Manage a peer mentorship caseload; (3) Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues; (4) Consult with peers and professionals to draw conclusions; (5) Formulate policies for social wellbeing.
RESEARCHERS	(1) Conduct community asset mapping; (2) Distinguish and integrate multiple sources of knowledge; (3) Investigate multiple sources and points of view, and cite evidence; (4) Use researched evidence to inform practice.

Dr. Shultz explains,

“The industry-relevant nature of the curriculum design will help students to become familiar with ‘industry language’ that will enable them to communicate effectively with health care professionals and open doors for professional learning beyond the school.”

Employer partners report that greater awareness of the SLOs helped them to identify opportunities within their organizations for youth to practice the relevant skills and to develop personal agency by discovering the logic of the academic and CTE content taught in the classroom setting. As well, CHAS pathway leaders report that the SLOs sent clear signals to the entire teaching staff, as well as to employers and students, about the social and emotional learning skills that would support professional development and academic learning. This includes building the capacity for empathy, social and cultural awareness, conscientiousness, self-discipline, self-efficacy, and growth

mindset (Nagaoka, Farrington, Ehrlich, & Heath, 2015). Clarifying the new SLOs and integrating the CAPE framework also informed school-wide teacher practice and employer engagement. As one employer commented:

“We noted that students didn’t always remember the content. With this framework (CAPE) and better alignment to school outcomes, we can tighten our internship work. We are also interested in learning more about instructional strategies that can help us define our metrics of success for our work with youth.”

ESTABLISHING A TWO-PART, YEAR-LONG INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

Once they established clear and specific CTE learning objectives, CHAS pathway leaders conducted an assessment of the then-current internship program. They realized that students would have more effective and meaningful workplace experiences if they had prior

opportunities to practice the expected behaviors and to develop key competencies valued in health advocacy, like active listening or motivational interviewing. After some study, CHAS leaders decided to adapt a form of peer mentorship as a vehicle for providing an internal workplace experience for all seniors in their first semester. Dr. Shultz remarks:

“We took the idea of peer mentoring, and considered the skills that students could begin to develop and practice, including skills related to case management or community asset mapping. Such an experience would help students to be better prepared to go out into the workplace.”

As mentors, students would have the opportunity to develop transferable, applied workplace skills while also applying basic and higher-order social and emotional learning applicable to a broad range of postsecondary options.

Peer Mentorship (Both Semesters of the Senior Year)

As noted, the Peer Mentorship program at CHAS was set up as a school-based internship, integrating job responsibilities, skills development, and relationship building. The program would afford mentors the opportunity to apply and model what they learn in their Behavioral Health Advocacy/Social Work CTE courses. At the same time, the experience would build SEL competencies that would serve them well as they prepared to transition to college and/or career broadly. The experience would prepare students for an external workplace internship with industry partners.

The Structure. Students begin the Peer Mentorship program in the first semester of their senior year. Mentorship provides students an opportunity to build pathway-relevant interpersonal skills, including active listening, developing empathy for the needs of mentees, and coaching. It allows time for team building and introspection about the mindsets that may hold them back. This content is reinforced and deepened during the year-long Capstone Course (described below), which begins with a two-day workshop. During Advisory classes, mentors spend time observing their mentees to gain insights about their behaviors and needs. Mentors then develop a plan for their mentees to offer support, guidance, and connection to school resources. Mentors often reach out to teachers to investigate tutoring opportunities or other resources for their mentees. They connect mentees to school activities, take time over lunch break to talk about

mentees’ challenges and successes in school, and organize team building or other activities.

SEL Competencies for Mentors. The range of experiences encompassed in the Peer Mentorship program supports mentors to develop several SEL competencies, forming a stronger sense of identity and agency, including self-efficacy and growth mindset (Nagaoka et al., 2015). For example, peer mentors are encouraged to build a belief in their own ability to change their outcomes by the choices they make, and to support their mentees to do the same. This belief, self-efficacy, is understood to play a critical role in academic outcomes (Transforming Education & CORE, 2014). CHAS teachers willingly listen and learn from students’ perspectives, which supports youth in developing self-efficacy and improves the Peer Mentorship program by extension. As an example, a teacher describes the recent introduction of a new activity into the Peer Mentorship curriculum:

“Just this week, we introduced an activity [into the Peer Mentorship program] that came from a student’s reflection. He talked about being a freshman and not even knowing what a transcript was. This week, mentors shared their transcripts with their mentees, and let them know, ‘this is what I did well, and this is what I didn’t do so well.’”

Related, the Peer Mentorship program seeks to build students’ growth mindset, underscoring the connection between effort and improvement. The curriculum places a high value on working diligently toward goals with the expectation that doing so will result in attaining those goals.

CHAS teachers observe that the mentoring experience helps students to feel positively about themselves, knowing that they are making a difference in the lives of others. They report that they see students gaining self-awareness about their identities as well as about their professional potential. In turn, students feel prepared and confident to engage in an internship outside of school.

Practicing CTE Skills. The Peer Mentorship program also offers valuable practice for seniors to develop industry-relevant competencies. Motivational interviewing, for example, is a technique learned and practiced by peer mentors during conversations with their mentees, coupled with structured observations that take place during mentees’ Advisory classes. As well, peer mentoring provides an

opportunity for students to practice personal and community asset mapping as mentors and mentees explore positive qualities and celebrate personal strengths through their interactions, and as mentors identify and share resources that could prove useful to meet their mentees' needs. Opportunities to acquire and model these skills in a teacher-supervised environment ultimately form critical pieces of CHAS's integrated set of experiences, carefully designed to support students to arrive to their second semester internship prepared to contribute and ready to learn.

Workplace Rotation (Second Semester Internship at Partner Site)

In response to the identified need for meaningful internship experiences, CHAS leaders joined forces with local employers. Together, they carefully crafted workplace learning opportunities that would build on the school-based Capstone Course and Peer Mentorship program. An important goal for the redesigned internship experience was to address the concern that graduating students were unable to articulate the competencies they were developing both at school and in the workplace. To that end, CHAS leaders and employer partners reconceived the internship to clarify how students would be able to use what they learned to better understand their postsecondary options and to be better prepared for college and career. To build metacognitive awareness into the external internship experience, employers must carefully articulate professional competencies and how they align with the SLOs. However, this does not come naturally for many employers. As Dr. Shultz elaborates:

“Employers may think of the way they work as more organic. I appreciate that, but students need to understand the value of what they are learning.”

This step required significant participation and buy-in from employer partners. As such, two key partners agreed to pilot a closer collaboration with teachers to strengthen the learning experience in the workplace settings.

Pilot Planning/Commitments from Participating

Employers. With CPPS support, CHAS leaders began to test their ideas with an intensive pilot project involving employer partners at two nearby clinics, University Muslim Medical Association Clinic (UMMA; www.ummaclinic.org) and St. John's Well Child and Family Center (St. John's; www.wellchild.org). CHAS leadership was instrumental in identifying their students' needs and contributing their

Motivational interviewing is “a counseling method that helps people resolve ambivalent feelings and insecurities to find the internal motivation they need to change their behavior. It is a practical, empathetic, and short-term process that takes into consideration how difficult it is to make life changes.” <http://www.psychologytoday.com/therapy-types/motivational-interviewing>.

Behavioral observation is “watching and recording the behavior of a person in typical environments. The assumption is that data collected are more objective than are perceptions. Most methods of behavioral observation provide quantitative and objective data that can be used to determine current levels of behavior, to set goals for behavioral improvement, and to measure change following intervention plans.” <https://psychology.iresearchnet.com/papers/behavioral-observation-methods/>

Asset mapping is a way to “provide information about the strengths and resources of a community and can help uncover solutions. Once community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted in a map, you can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health. Finally, asset mapping promotes community involvement, ownership, and empowerment.” http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw_cba20.pdf

expertise in instruction and student support. But the employer partners' expertise and commitment to support the professional growth of students was essential. They were willing to revise their offerings and integrate student learning outcomes and professional competencies over the course of a 12-week internship. CPPS' role was to design curriculum components and instructional resources based on the learning objectives that teachers identified as school priorities. CPPS also provided the employer partners with a blueprint for worksite-based curriculum aligned with professional competencies and student learning outcomes.

CHAS leaders anticipated that this collaborative and intentional planning process would result in defined responsibilities and commitments among the external internship providers, CHAS teachers and administrators, and students and their families. These responsibilities and commitments were linked to professional competencies required by the clinics and learned and practiced at CHAS. Gaining understanding of these competencies, articulating them as "skill sets" or "competency maps," and establishing opportunities for workplace and school-based learning to support one another together framed the early internship planning. This thinking aligned with professional education and training practices, making it an effective framework for these discussions (Neiworth, Allen, Ambrosio, & Copen-Abrahamson, 2014). By clearly aligning CHAS's learning goals with competencies valued and expected by behavioral health professionals, CHAS leadership was able to do two things: 1) Make a clear ask of the employers to explicitly support student learning outcomes; and 2) Make a clear offer to the employers of the value students could bring to the workplace. Simultaneously, CHAS was able to provide students with an opportunity to "try out" the experiences of a professional.

Mapping the Student Learning Objectives to Employer-Desired Competencies. As noted earlier, establishing CHAS's pathway learning goals was a critical early step. Applying Center for Powerful Public Schools' Competencies Approach to Professional Education (CAPE), Dr. Shultz now worked with CHAS's teachers and the employers to translate the student learning outcomes into competency maps—or "buckets of integrated learning"—that aligned with the skills and knowledge needed in the field of behavioral health.

At St. John's, the relevant professional competencies identified by the internship supervisors (e.g., process facilitation, collaborative development, and communication for change) were mapped to the pathway goals for health

advocacy, strategic thinking, and collaboration. Articulating these competencies helped to introduce employer partners to the school's learning goals and provided clarity and mutual understanding of expectations related to the internship. The process also helped both the employer partners and CHAS teachers articulate how they would work in tandem to take a metacognitive approach designed to make the goals, outcomes, and purpose of each internship activity specific and more visible to students.

At UMMA, early discussions centered on the work of the clinics, what students could contribute to that work, and what they could learn at each site. Two opportunities surfaced: 1) participating in the development of youth-centered programming, and 2) engaging in case management. Ultimately, case management became the focus of the internship at UMMA, in large part reflecting the students' interests. Together, CPPS, CHAS leaders, and the UMMA internship supervisor developed an internship curriculum that would encompass employer-led professional education, training, and work activities that could best support the students' learning goals. UMMA adapted relevant staff training modules for use with the students, including professional development modules in case management, motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care. They asked students to develop a community resource guide, including outreach by phone to local service providers. This on-the-job training experience allowed students to build more SEL competencies, as it required them to engage professionally in sometimes challenging situations, to stay calm when people were rude, and to have an appropriate demeanor.

The structure and support have proven effective. As one supervisor reports:

"We identified a specific structure, and identified what we want students to learn. There are stronger expectations put on paper. Students should be able to describe, comprehend, define, communicate, and apply."

Revising the Internship Handbook. Key to establishing shared expectations among students, teachers, and employers, was the revision of the CHAS Internship Handbook (see <https://www.hawkinshs.org/apps/pages/CHAS>). The 24-page, comprehensive handbook describes the competencies that students are learning in school, including training in pathway-related academics,

communication, and work readiness. Fourteen objectives for internships are provided, along with program responsibilities for student, internship supervisor, and CHAS teacher alike. In addition, the CHAS student learning outcomes and pathway outcomes (i.e., competencies for Mental & Behavioral Health, Public Health, and Social Work) are included. Employer partners are expected to select three to five of the competencies that interns will practice. These competencies are then incorporated into an Individualized Training Plan to which the supervisor, instructor, and student must all commit, making the learning explicit and relevant, connected to both school and the profession. Beyond signing the Individualized Training Plan, a Parent Contract (provided in both English and Spanish) requires signatures from the student, parent, internship supervisor, and CHAS principal. An Intern Standards of Conduct form requires signatures of the intern and supervisor. In addition, the handbook includes: a grading rubric, with weights for assignments, attendance, and behavior; internship contact and calendar form; intern orientation checklist; time sheet; worksite experience evaluation; supervisor reference letter example format; final internship presentation outline; and supervisor feedback form.

Introducing a Re-Designed Capstone Course

A highlight of the school's efforts to integrate the academic, social and emotional, technical, and workplace learning components of the pathway is the Senior-Year Capstone Course for Future Mental and Behavioral Health Professionals. This yearlong course runs in parallel to the Peer Mentorship and External Internship experiences and serves as a structural opportunity for teacher-guided, curriculum-grounded inquiry into both. In this course, students explore the conceptual frameworks, terminology, professional capacities, social skills, mindsets, and ethical standards that are specific to the behavioral health professions. Each of the course's four units acts as a through line that helps students to connect their academic and CTE coursework to their Peer Mentorship practicum and to prepare them for effective workplace internships and postsecondary transitions to college and careers.

The introductory unit of the Capstone Course begins with a focus on the skills and conceptual frameworks applied by mental and behavioral health professionals in social work practice. As students learn these skills and behaviors in the classroom, they are encouraged to practice and model what they are learning with their ninth grade or newcomer mentees. These skills include, for example, the practice

of motivational interviewing to support mentees in their growth as learners and as they adapt to new routines and expectations. Other examples are lessons on empathetic listening, case study analysis, evidence-based practice and decision-making, youth development frameworks, restorative practices, and text analysis. Students might also use sample case studies to learn how to conduct assessments, develop evidence-based interventions, and to explore legal and ethical concerns that bear on roles that mental and behavioral health practitioners play. According to CHAS Lead Teacher Erica Ramirez:

“This coursework relates in concrete ways to the student’s practicum in mentorship, but provides deeper learning opportunities that will be generalizable to learning experiences over the course of a lifetime.”

As noted, the Capstone Course curriculum is closely aligned with the Peer Mentorship program. Once seniors in the pathway are assigned their mentees, they must write weekly mentor/mentee meeting journals to reflect on the effectiveness of these meetings. Teachers guide students to include detailed examples of strategies used to facilitate motivational conversations, such as posing questions, reflecting on feelings, or responding to situational characterizations with alternative interpretations. The journaling allows student mentors to learn how to document and assess how effectively they are applying strategies, frameworks, techniques, and social and emotional learning in their mentorship practicum. Dr. Shultz says:

“Students who have gone through this approach report that in addition to gaining important skills and knowledge, they are gaining self-confidence and agency as they are becoming more explicitly aware of what they are learning, and of their ability to improve their mastery in academic and career relevant areas.”

In the second unit of the course, students are introduced to improvement science frameworks and methods of organizational analysis routinely employed in clinics, hospitals, and laboratories. These frameworks and methods are generalizable to all aspects of organizational and systems improvement. They are drawn from the Institute for Health Improvement, which aims to help healthcare professionals to learn about how to enhance the function and organizational effectiveness of a system by identifying

what needs to be improved, by how much, by when, for whom, and to what end (Nolan, 2007). Lessons may tie directly to the Peer Mentorship program, or be more loosely aligned. For example, in one lesson, students draft an AIM (i.e., goal statement) with their assigned mentees to address a need they have identified through empathetic interviewing and observations. These could be academic or social and emotional growth AIM statements, answering the question: “What are we trying to accomplish through this process?” They set goals for improvement, identifying what needs to be improved, by whom, and by when. Students summarize in writing their rationale for focusing on a particular AIM given what they learned about their mentees through interviews and observations conducted. To learn the methodology, in another example, students might engage in a Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle of inquiry, focused on a broader topic, such as improving the nutritional quality of food and operational improvement of food service in the high school cafeteria. Teams propose an AIM, generate change ideas for improvement, propose measures, and analyze data produced by the teacher in conversation with students. Lead Teacher Erica Ramirez explains:

“At the end of this process, we usually assign students to individually write an analysis or reflection paper documenting their findings and to draw on available evidence to assess the effectiveness of the intervention they originally proposed.”

Next, students work on the AIMs developed for their mentees, identify measures and change ideas for each AIM, and collect data to determine if they attained their AIM and their mentees improved. The performance assessment is a detailed plan for implementing the whole improvement cycle, including reflections on what they have learned about the process and about themselves.

In the second semester, as previously noted, students are matched and placed as interns at various sites including community-based clinics, nonprofit organizations, and other mental and behavioral health locations. During this semester, work in the Capstone Course turns to tasks and inquiry relevant to workplace learning. In the Capstone Course, student interns identify their professional goals in relation to their internship placement, and they define and commit in writing to the school-wide SLOs that they agree to pursue during their internships. The last two units of the Capstone Course thus focus on preparing and supporting students for



success in these workplace experiences and on documenting what they are learning. Early in the second semester, prior to the beginning of their internships, students review and revise work-readiness tools: goal-setting, work ethics, resumé, cover letter, and employment application. Students also review workplace conduct and rights, specifically digital citizenship and sexual harassment. They learn about the importance of time management, code switching, interviewing other professionals at the site, identifying their needs, and reaching out for support so that they may fully benefit from their internship.

Once the internship begins, the final unit of the Capstone Course focuses on maintaining a weekly blog that engages interning students in constant reflection on the educational growth necessary to gain employment and succeed professionally. Along with their weekly time-card, students document tasks accomplished, and goals for the following week. As a culminating task, students present their employers with recommendations for quality improvement, including suggested goals and actions for improvement. Once the 12-week internship concludes, students create a PowerPoint presentation to share their learning with other students and professionals. “In this way,” says Dr. Shultz, “students communicate their learning and expose others to diverse opportunities in the field.”

Reflections on the First Two Years

CHAS leaders were pursuing an ambitious vision when they set out to redesign the senior year experience with a fully integrated workplace learning component. Ensuring that students are building SEL competencies and CTE skills, while recognizing that the activities must also benefit the employer, is a complex undertaking. After the first year, it was important for CHAS leaders to recognize that collaborating with employer partners had led to significant growth for students and as well as strong community partnerships. Beyond that, the school had embraced the metacognitive approach, established a process to align professional competencies, and embedded the importance of integrating education, practice, training, and social and emotional learning into school and workplace learning.

To move ahead, CHAS leaders understood that they needed to listen carefully, not just to the reflections of students and teachers, but to the employer partners as well. This would enable them to plan effectively for the evolution, expansion, and sustainability of the program. Thus, after the first full year of off-site internships, CHAS leaders conferred with UMMA and St. John's to take stock and reflect on the successes and challenges, to acknowledge the intensity of effort expended by the intermediary and employers, and to consider next steps.

Looking to the future includes considerations of new directions in content or emphasis for the pilot internship providers. For example, UMMA is embarking on an effort to improve the client experience. Working with CHAS, the internship supervisor is considering ways to develop a strand focused on improving the quality of the patient experience from the time they enter until the time they participate in an exit protocol. Opportunities to build competencies around teamwork and to support growth in professionalism are among the areas being studied. In addition, the UMMA supervisor plans to expand interns' experiences in clinics, including shadowing case managers. Talking about plans for next year, the supervisor's sense of opportunity resonates:

“I want to have students spend more time in the clinics. It will take more coordination, but I want to increase the students' interaction and communication with case managers if that's what the students are interested in... This (next) year I also want to focus on writing in the workplace.”

In addition, CHAS is planning to expand the collaboration and employer induction process to additional employer partners. To this end, they are working to establish effective ways to engage and strengthen the capacity of additional employer partners, perhaps through a learning community comprised of current and new CHAS internship providers.

References

- Los Angeles Unified School District (n.d.). Community Health Advocates School Proposal. Available at: https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/domain/319/psc%203.0%20high%20schools/SRHS3_CHAS_Proposal.pdf
- ConnectEd California (2012). “Work-based Learning in Linked Learning: Definitions, Outcomes and Quality Criteria,” Field Review Draft (Berkeley, CA, November 2012). Available at: <http://www.temescalassoc.com/db/lia/files/2015/05/WBL-Definitions-Outcomes-Criteria.pdf>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Ross, P., Milliken, M. (2006-2007). High School Size, Organization, and Content: *What Matters for Student Success?* Brookings Institution Press
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (2016). Key Indicators of Health 2016, by Service Planning Area (LACDP, January 2017). Available at: http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ha/docs/2015LACHS/KeyIndicator/PH-KIH_2017-sec%20UPDATED.pdf
- Nagaoka, J., Farrington, C., Ehrlich, S., Heath, R. (2015). Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework. Concept Paper for Research and Practice. *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research*. Available at: <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Foundations%20for%20Young%20Adult-Jun2015-Consortium.pdf>
- Neiworth, L., Allan, S., Ambrosio, L., & Copen-Abrahamson, M. (2014). *Charting a Course to Competency: An Approach to Mapping Public Health Core Competencies to Existing Trainings*. Health Promotion Practice March 2014; Vol. 15., Suppl 1 33S–38S, p. 33S. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1524839913509274>
- Nolan, T.W. (2007). *Execution of Strategic Improvement Initiatives to Produce System-Level Results*. IHI Innovation Series white paper. Cambridge, MA: Institute for Healthcare Improvement. (Available on www.IHI.org)
- Transforming Education, CORE, Introduction to Self-Efficacy. <https://www.transformingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Introduction-to-Self-Efficacy-Handout-Finalv2.pdf>

About the Authors

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Ph.D., is deputy director of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University where the focus of his work is on the study and promotion of change in public schools; the implications of education reform for disadvantaged students, education law, and policy; and the effect of immigration on schools and communities. He is an editor, with Marisa Saunders and Jeannie Oakes, of a book that address the importance of a youth-sector approach to education and the importance of expanded learning opportunities to low-income minority youth, *Learning Time: In Pursuit of Educational Equity*. He is also the lead author, with Elizabeth Newman and Graciela Borsato of *Equitable Access by Design: A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Student Supports within Linked Learning Pathways*. Prior to his appointment at the Gardner Center, Jorge served terms as a program officer for educational opportunity and scholarship at the Ford Foundation, and as a senior program officer at both the James Irvine and William & Flora Hewlett Foundations. He also served as a senior research associate at The Urban Institute and as a lawyer and policy analyst for the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Talma Shultz, Ph.D., is a trained neurobiologist, psychologist and educator with over 20 years of experience designing environments to support the thriving of underserved youth. Currently she serves as the director of strategic innovation and programs at Center for Powerful Public Schools (CPPS) in Los Angeles where she oversees programs and initiatives that support the integration of academic growth, youth development, and career competencies in schools as an approach to high school reform. Her work includes curriculum design and teacher professional growth towards equitable outcomes for all students. Some of her work at CPPS has been documented in *Equitable Access by Design: A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Students Supports within Linked Learning Pathways*.

This chapter is part of a guidebook, made possible by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation, on integrated student supports for college and career readiness. The guidebook offers seven illustrative profiles of educators and their partners in California high schools who are working collaboratively to develop comprehensive student supports that “link together” a rigorous academic curriculum, technical education, and workplace opportunities into a coherent learning experience for every youth in their school.