



Chapter Six

aligning school- level student supports with district-wide strategies and standards for student learning

Marisa Saunders, Ed.D.

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Problem of Practice

How can school district administrators collaborate with school and pathway leaders to ensure that teaching and learning in pathways is coherently aligned to district-wide learning goals and standards?

Abstract

This chapter explores how vertical integration of school-level student supports with district-wide strategies for college, career, and civic readiness has been instrumental in building instructional capacity within the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Linked Learning pathways. It begins with a description of the context that gave rise to Linked Learning, and discusses how Linked Learning aligns with and supports current efforts to ready all students for graduation and postsecondary success. The chapter then examines how effective vertical integration enables high quality implementation by helping pathways and partners to work together across a complex system to collectively own the principles, norms, practices, and beliefs that undergird Linked Learning and support all students' success.

Introduction

Vertical integration of supports has created coherent learning environments for teachers and other adults who work with students. As the strategies that will be discussed here demonstrate, vertical integration has assisted in fostering the conditions necessary for adult collaboration, teamwork, and professional capacity building that are critical to the implementation of the Linked Learning approach. By providing coherently designed guidance, support,

expectations, and professional learning opportunities to school leaders, teachers, and pathway partners, vertical integration contributes to organizational efficiency, as well as the equitable outcomes LAUSD and its district partners aim to achieve.

Background

A DISTRICT-WIDE POLICY TO PROMOTE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS FOR ALL

The A-G course sequence is comprised of 15 yearlong (or 30 semester) courses that students must pass with a grade of “C” or better to be eligible for University of California/California State University admission. Beginning with the graduating class of 2016, students must complete the college preparatory course sequence in order to earn a high school diploma. Students must earn a grade of “D” or better in A-G courses, and meet California Department of Education Requirements as well as satisfying additional LAUSD requirements for graduation.

In 2005, the LAUSD Board of Education approved the *Resolution to Create Educational Equity through the Implementation of the A-G Course Sequence*. The “A-G for All” resolution responded to the hundreds of students, families, and community members who demanded a remedy to long-standing inequalities in access to college

preparatory courses across Los Angeles high schools. It would mark the beginning of a shift in LAUSD's commitment to ready all students for college and career. The resolution called for LAUSD to implement a rigorous and relevant college preparatory curriculum (A-G) for all students entering the ninth grade, and to provide the necessary learning supports, across all grades, to ensure that students are prepared to enter and master the A-G course sequence. At a point in time when less than half of all students who entered as ninth graders graduated four years later (with even lower rates for low-income students and students of color), and when approximately one-fifth graduated having successfully completed the A-G course sequence (with a grade of 'C' or better), the district had a great deal of work ahead.

Effective implementation of the resolution not only required LAUSD to increase access to A-G courses across the district, but to focus on the delivery of the curriculum. In the first years that followed, the district, community-based organizations, and research partners monitored implementation, and the data made clear that while access to college preparatory courses largely increased across the district, successful course completion lagged woefully. As Linked Learning (known as Multiple Pathways at the time) was gaining traction across the state, community and research partners lifted the approach as a possible strategy for preparing LAUSD students for college, career, and civic life.

In 2008, LAUSD's Board of Education recognized and endorsed Linked Learning as a means to provide equitable and high quality learning opportunities to all of its students to raise grade level proficiency and A-G completion rates, and to improve college and career readiness. According to the 2008 resolution, "providing students access to Multiple Pathway programs, would not supplant previous reform policies, but rather act as an implementation strategy that could effectively improve A-G completion rates and graduation rates, bring relevance to the learning process, prepare students for lifelong success, and provide the necessary skills that will enable students to nimbly move through school and work as the 21st century workforce requires" (For more information see: <http://laschoolboard.org/sites/default/files/10-28-08regbdAgenda.pdf>). Indeed, when LAUSD joined the California Linked Learning District Initiative in 2010, the natural alignment between Linked Learning, district goals, and state expectations, as defined by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), was evident.

A MOVEMENT FOR SCHOOL CHOICE, AUTONOMY AND SMALL COMMUNITY-ANCHORED SCHOOLS

Along with the policy shift to universal college and career readiness, a concurrent social movement in Los Angeles aligned with and accelerated the eventual embrace of Linked Learning strategies. With a long history of reform, LAUSD was grappling with a range of educational challenges and was working to develop and implement strategies that could address demographic shifts, widening achievement gaps, and persistent inequalities (Kerchner, Menefee-Libey, Mulfinger, & Clayton, 2008). Linked Learning emerged from these efforts. Many previous improvement efforts had created an environment that aligned with and buttressed Linked Learning implementation and the call for vertical integration of student supports. The experience in Los Angeles' Pico Union Community serves as an illustration.

The Belmont Zone of Choice

In 2004, Belmont High School, located in the densely populated Pico Union Community of Los Angeles, was identified as one of the country's "dropout factories" where only 35% of its 5,400 students graduated (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). When plans to open a learning complex near the original Belmont site fell through, community members persisted in pressuring the school board to tackle overcrowding as well as to establish a new instructional program that could address students' learning needs. Instead of duplicating the large, comprehensive high school that had been failing students, the idea to create smaller, more personalized learning environments was proposed—the Belmont Zone of Choice¹. A grassroots coalition of



¹ For a historical account of Belmont Zone of Choice read, Martinez, R. A., & Quartz, K. H. (2012). Zoned for Change: A Historical Case Study of the Belmont Zone of Choice. *Teachers College Record*, 114(10).

community-based organizations that had come together to work on the passage of the “A-G for All” resolution felt strongly that smaller schools and small learning communities (SLCs) could provide an opportunity for more personalized education and a closer link between students and teachers—something that was sorely lacking in the area’s overcrowded high schools.

LAUSD has struggled to manage and support change centrally, while allowing for local innovation and autonomy. In 2000, for example, LAUSD began trying to divide governance into smaller “local districts”: 11 local districts in 2000, 8 in 2004, and ultimately 6 in 2015. Currently, Pilot Schools (which include some, but not all the Linked Learning high schools), receive operational support from a Local Options Oversight Committee, within LAUSD’s Office of School Design Options.

Consequently, one challenge that the District’s Linked Learning Office has taken on is the job of coordinating leadership, operational and instructional supports from numerous central and local district offices. This important vertical alignment task is one that is familiar to pathway leaders in large districts and assures that school and pathway-level initiatives are coherently integrated with district goals and expectations.

In addition to endorsing a choice structure, advocates of the Belmont Zone of Choice also came to embrace the notion of a governance structure that would grant schools greater autonomy. Based on the Boston Pilot Schools, local leaders aimed to create and implement autonomous schools within Local District 4 (LD4)—a sub-district encompassing the Pico Union area—with a specific focus on creating new, innovative schools. The novel approach was rooted in the assumption that by removing barriers to innovation, school leaders and teachers could create schools that could best meet the needs of their students and successfully prepare all students for college and career. The concept was viewed by community members and local leaders as a means to advance effective teaching and

learning. With autonomies in five significant areas—staffing, budget, curriculum and assessment, governance, and scheduling—Pilot Schools were seen as a critical constituent for change. A few months following the establishment of the Belmont Zone of Choice, LAUSD adopted the Pilot School model through a formal Memo of Understanding with the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA). The demand for student-centered, teacher-driven, and community-based change is currently represented by 48 Pilot Schools and 17 Zones of Choice within LAUSD. Many of these schools are implementing a Linked Learning approach to high school education.

Linked Learning in LAUSD

LAUSD’s proposal to participate in California’s Linked Learning District Initiative emerged from community demands for universal access to college and career readiness, and from efforts to establish choice and autonomous governance structures. Indeed, the proposal to participate in the Linked Learning District Initiative was originally submitted by and only involved Local District 4 (LD4)—the home of the Belmont Zone of Choice. Local district leaders and community members felt that the approach not only aligned with the concept of choice and autonomy as established by the Zone of Choice, but that these concepts were required for successful implementation of Linked Learning. With greater flexibility, schools within LD4 were poised to provide innovative programs of instruction that sought to match students’ interest to course offerings, and increase engagement, graduation rates, and students’ readiness for college, career, and civic life. In addition, many of the same community members and organizations that were instrumental in bringing about these major changes saw Linked Learning as having the potential of bringing relevance to the rigor demanded by the “A-G for All” resolution, providing students with meaningful choices, and providing the skills and confidence students need to succeed in college and career. For example, the Center for Powerful Public Schools (known as the Los Angeles Small School Center at the time) provided critical support to both the Pilot School effort and to LD4’s proposal to participate in California’s Linked Learning District Initiative. And, the Alliance for a Better Community (ABC), an organization that was instrumental in the “A-G for All” resolution and the Belmont Zone of Choice, identified the potential of Linked Learning. According to ABC, “‘A-G’ plus ‘SLC’ = Linked Learning.”

VERTICAL INTEGRATION WITHIN LAUSD

The reorganization of the district into geographic regions and an ISIC moved Linked Learning implementation from a localized to a district-wide effort in 2012-13. In 2012, LAUSD established the Linked Learning office. Esther Soliman, a former principal of the first LAUSD high school to achieve Linked Learning certification (a school that was originally established as an SLC on the campus of Belmont High School), was chosen to lead the office and oversee implementation of the Linked Learning District Initiative. The establishment of the Linked Learning Office reflected LAUSD's desire to bring Linked Learning to scale across the district, and signaled the recognition that scale could only be made possible through careful management and district involvement to ensure high-quality implementation. Unlike a purely technical or structural fix, Linked Learning was seen as a process that would demand specificity during its implementation. It would look and feel different based on the theme of the pathway, students' existing and developing needs for learning and growth, the community, and teachers' unique interests, strengths, and experiences. Teachers would require the opportunity to engage in a learning process, develop new skills, and acquire new insights and beliefs to successfully implement the approach. As such, a key role of the Linked Learning Office was to create coherency across schools—to ensure that the distinctive features of each pathway continued to meet the goals and expectations of the larger district. To accomplish this goal, the district established a pathway onboarding process and introduced the delivery of a wide range of implementation supports to participating schools. In addition, and in part as a result of these integrative efforts, the district also repositioned the work of the Linked Learning Office as central to ongoing curriculum and instruction improvement efforts.

PATHWAY ONBOARDING

Securing Teacher Voice and School Asset Mapping

There is increasing acknowledgment, among researchers and practitioners, that teachers must have an active role in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of educational improvement efforts (Rust, 2009). In a climate where one school improvement idea, program, or innovation is often quickly replaced with another, *how* a teacher embraces and understands a particular improvement effort is critical in its establishment and sustainability. From the outset, the Linked Learning Office took up the concern of

how teachers—the individuals most closely engaged with and influencing students' learning—understood and implemented the approach. According to the district's Linked Learning Administrator, finding the teachers who would choose to undertake this transformation effort and then support the many components of its implementation was primary. In a 2012-13 onboarding memo she states:

“These teachers will be motivated because we are giving them support, some decision-making power, an opportunity to create something innovative, and a chance to make a difference in these kids' lives. They are exhausted and have been inundated with ‘fixes.’ We are asking teachers to come to the table and work with us to create a successful school for the kids in their neighborhood... I think 80% of the success of this work can only happen with the right faculty and leadership staff.”

An onboarding process would facilitate finding the “right” faculty and leadership staff. It would also facilitate an asset mapping exercise that would help district and school staff to identify key strengths and resources already at play in participating schools and those that would need to be cultivated.

Some schools and small learning communities across the district already possessed some elements of Linked Learning, including, for example, California Partnership Academies (CPAs) and theme-based SLCs (many located within LD4). However, it was not assumed that these schools/SLCs would share the vision to grow their program into a full Linked Learning pathway committed to the core components of the approach. As such, the district moved away from a strategy of identifying and selecting potential pathways for full implementation to creating an opportunity for pathways to identify themselves, with the hope that many CPAs and SLCs would choose to fully implement the approach. With growing interest in the supports and resources that Linked Learning implementation could provide, the Linked Learning Office established a process, open to any school or SLC, for determining readiness for Linked Learning implementation and district support. The onboarding process aimed to assist the district in determining which schools were interested in implementing the approach, what processes and structures were in place at the school level, and how much support full implementation would require. Established in 2012-13, the onboarding process consists of a school application, half-day visits to potential pathways, and structured conversations

with school-level teachers and administrators. The process has undergone revisions over the course of the last five years, but its main components remain intact.

Importantly, the Linked Learning Office has developed criteria to becoming a pathway with the goal of providing those who will be responsible for change a voice in imagining and directing that change. According to the Office Administrator:

“... Too often programs are painstakingly developed over an extended period of time and then washed away in a flood of new ‘fixes.’ Teachers and leadership need to know that the work they do will be respected and cultivated. They need to have the ability to make decisions for their school and students.”

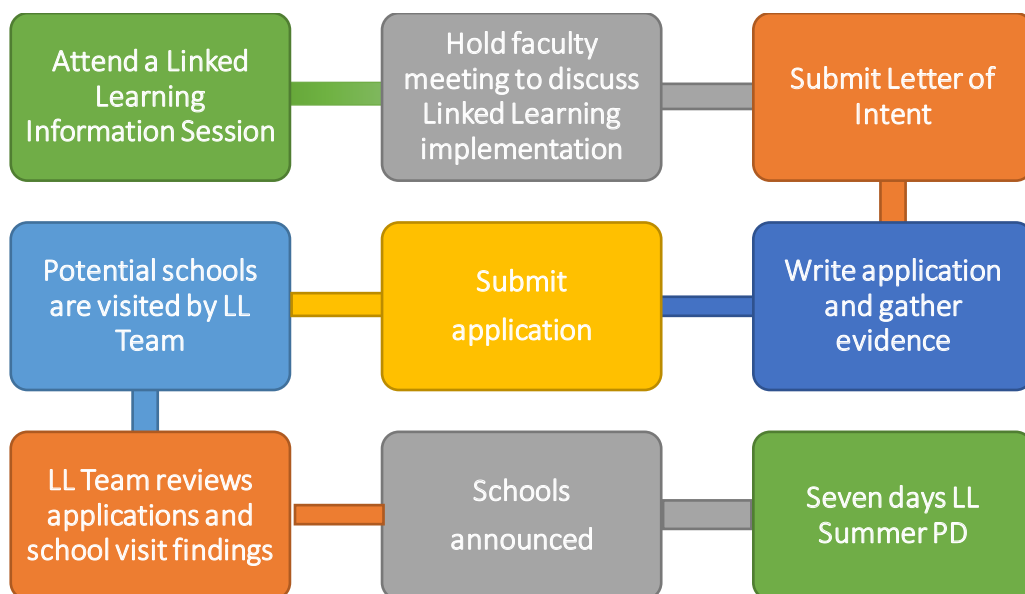
To ensure practitioners’ voices are heard, all potential pathways must demonstrate teacher support for and commitment to developing a pathway that best meets the needs of the school and students. This is accomplished through the following processes:

- School/SLC representatives attend a Linked Learning information session
- School/SLC holds a mandatory faculty meeting to discuss Linked Learning implementation
- Three-fourths of the school team must attend four onboarding orientation meetings

Collaborative Design Development and Planning

In addition to demonstrating teacher support for the approach, each potential site must complete an application and provide supporting evidence of readiness to implement the approach. Evidence includes a school matrix for the current and upcoming school year that shows plans for all students to enter cohorts and enroll in Advisory, and common planning time for teachers. The potential pathway must also submit a professional development schedule for the current year. After submitting an application, the district team schedules a school visit to conduct classroom observations, focus groups with students and teachers, and to meet with school leadership. The district team also reviews student and teacher survey data. Using a readiness rubric (see Appendix A), the district team assesses the potential pathways’ commitment to Linked Learning and readiness for implementation. Figure 1, below, outlines the onboarding process for interested schools or SLCs. Importantly, to be identified as ready to join the district’s Linked Learning approach, teachers must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding that they are entering a process that will require ongoing collective learning and shared commitment. For those schools and/or SLCs that the district deems as not ready, the district provides recommendations for future readiness and encourages them to re-apply the subsequent year. In 2015-16, thirty-nine school teams applied to create a Linked Learning pathway; 11 were identified as ready.

FIGURE 1: LAUSD LINKED LEARNING APPLICATION PROCESS



Source: Los Angeles Unified School District, Linked Learning Office

SUPPORTS

The LAUSD Linked Learning Office is responsible for developing supports and creating a system to assist in cohering district and pathway learning goals for students. Pathway support is focused on the core components of Linked Learning that signal a shift from traditional practices towards integrative and collaborative practices. These supports include: Linked Learning coaching, a work-based learning coordinator, and professional development opportunities that emphasize key elements of the approach (e.g., industry panels, senior portfolio defense, project-based learning, work readiness skill and competency development).

Linked Learning Coaching

Linked Learning relies heavily on pathway teachers' abilities to collectively implement projects that effectively integrate academic and technical learning with real-world learning opportunities. As such, teachers and partners need the skills and resources (e.g., partnerships, common planning time) to plan, execute, reflect on, and adjust pathway curriculum. This is a particularly tall order for new pathways and pathway teachers who must simultaneously learn about the approach, develop new skills, and establish new relationships and connections with teachers and other adults within and beyond the school. To better support new pathways and teachers, the Linked Learning Office provides resources and guidance through a Linked Learning coach.

The district currently provides a half-time coach for each of the district's 44 pathways. Coaches are focused on providing guidance that is tailored to pathway needs. The coach helps guide high-quality implementation through classroom observations and feedback. Importantly, the coach plays a key role in connecting Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and Next Generation Science Standards to the specific learning objectives of each pathway. Coaches relied on the *Behaviors of Learning and Teaching (BLTs) Framework* developed by ConnectEd (Available at: https://casn.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/resource_files/behaviors_of_learning_and_teaching_continuum_v6_0611201414-08-13-01-00-34..pdf). They identify and address professional development needs, demonstrate instructional practices aligned to CCSS, develop instructional lessons aligned to the standards, and model the integration of content literacy and technology across all subject areas as outlined in the CCSS. The BLTs, for example, identify English Language Arts and Mathematics standards that align with learning that is collaborative, student-directed,

outcome-focused, relevant, rigorous, and integrated. In their work with pathway leadership, the coach also assists in identifying and utilizing school-level autonomies that support the implementation of core components (e.g., scheduling, curriculum, and assessment).

Assessment is a key area in which the district provides support through coaching. District coaches work with pathways to develop authentic, pathway specific assessments of students' readiness for college, career, and civic life. Coaches assist pathways in moving towards a performance-based instructional model that can more accurately reflect the complex thinking and performance that are necessary in the real world. With support from district coaches, teachers develop performance tasks and senior projects, establish implementation standards for high-quality, performance-based assessment through the development and refinement of common rubrics for scoring performance tasks, and backward-map the integrated curriculum to expected learning outcomes.

Because assessments may be operationalized differently across pathways, coaches work with each site to ensure that students' learning and growth expectations are reflected in locally designed assessments. The Senior Portfolio Defense—a rigorous and demanding demonstration of students' growth and development learning throughout their four years in the pathway—has become a key element of this local and authentic system of assessment. Similarly, coaches guide teachers in the broad use of the District Student Graduate Profile—developed by the Linked Learning Office in collaboration with all stakeholders—to influence day-to-day classroom instruction. The Profile outlines what every LAUSD student should know and be able to do upon graduation, and complements exam-driven state and federal accountability systems (as defined by the CCSS), while also identifying knowledge, skills, and attributes that each pathway aims to develop (e.g., how to develop individual professional growth plans, learn how to collaborate, think critically and creatively, participate in civics, and to communicate persuasively). With the assistance of Linked Learning coaches, teachers and administrators come to understand how the Profile is consonant with the pathway and Linked Learning outcomes, aligns with A-G, demonstrates students' social and emotional learning, and complements all district and state mandates.

Coaches also assist pathways in preparing for Linked Learning certification—a goal that the district anticipates will happen by Year Three of implementation for each pathway.

Coaches meet with pathway lead teachers and administrators on a regular basis to discuss and monitor the pathway's progress toward certification and continual growth.

Work-Based Learning Coordinators

Coordinators play an important role in furthering expected learning goals for students attending pathways. Coordinators work with school leaders and teachers to assist in brokering real-world learning experiences including field trips, guest speakers, practice interviews, job shadows for lower classmen, and paid internships, service learning, apprenticeships, and professional training programs for juniors and seniors. Coordinators also work with school staff to identify industry partners and community members to serve as panelists for portfolio defenses. Work-based learning coordinators are not only focused on aligning these opportunities with the theme of the pathway, and the particular needs of students and the community in which the pathway is situated, but work to coordinate work-based learning efforts districtwide and to ensure the equitable distribution of opportunities across and within pathways.

Professional Learning

In addition to providing coaching and work-based learning coordination, the Linked Learning Office also provides professional learning opportunities that further teachers' knowledge of the approach, and enables teachers to learn from others' experiences. Professional development has focused on key elements including instruction, project-based learning, portfolio and defense, mastery learning and grading, theme integration, dual enrollment, work-based learning, and the creation of advisory boards. While these learning opportunities focus on Linked Learning elements, the aim is to guide teachers understanding that Linked Learning is not only a process that supports an engaging and collaborative learning environment but also meets other district, state, and federal requirements. Professional development activities enable pathway teachers and leaders to connect Linked Learning to these other priorities. Teachers learn from their colleagues, the district team, and from other pathways how Linked Learning, for example, can ensure that consistent, coherent services are provided to all English Learners as outlined in the district's *English Learner Master Plan*. Similarly, professional learning clarifies the expectations for effective teaching that are described in the district's Teaching and Learning framework and how Linked Learning meets these goals.



Professional development opportunities also provide a space to remind pathway teachers and leaders that the needs of students, families, and the community may change over time and modifications must be made to accommodate these changes. Professional learning opportunities, coordinated by the district, contribute to building a community of practice within each pathway where teachers and leaders can establish norms and protocols and create shared learning and understanding. The district plays a key role in assisting each pathway in establishing these spaces and in helping each pathway to reflect on their practices in an ongoing process of continuous program evaluation and improvement.

There is awareness within the LAUSD Linked Learning Office that integrative efforts must remain nimble and adaptable. The supports and the relationships between district coaches/coordinators and school-level leads and teachers, for example, must remain fluid in order to provide the guidance and knowledge that best assist pathway leads and staff in increasing their knowledge of and commitment to the approach while meeting the needs of their particular students and the community. Despite the effectiveness of this model to date, the goal, according to the Linked Learning Administrator, is to eventually support a new model wherein the work of teachers and leaders within pathways has a greater influence across pathways and the district as a whole. Structures, for example, could be established across

pathways that would enable lead teachers to remain in the classroom with a limited course load and serve as Linked Learning coaches at their particular site. A teacher with this hybrid role might receive intensive training by the District Office to serve as a coach at their site and as a mentor to other sites/coaches. This model would build off of the trusting and collaborative relationships that have already been established among pathway teachers and work to build and strengthen a cohesive network of pathways. The idea is to further integrate the work of pathways into the work of the district, and for the district to continue to identify new and effective ways to support the work of pathways.

REPOSITIONING THE LINKED LEARNING OFFICE WITHIN LAUSD

In addition to the integrative efforts described above, the LAUSD has moved the Linked Learning Office within its organizational hierarchy to a more central position. In 2014-15, the LAUSD moved the Linked Learning Office from the Office of Intensive Support and Intervention to the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and School Support and Assessment—signaling a drive to create better alignment between the approach and overall curricular and instructional reform strategies. Subsequent restructuring of the district (as a result of superintendent transitions) now situates Linked Learning within the Division of Instruction, and central to districtwide strategies for readying all students for college, career, and civic life.

Another signal of integration occurred in 2014-15. Since 2014-15, the district has fully funded the Linked Learning Administrator position out of its own budget—a position that was originally grant-funded. These shifts demonstrated district leadership’s commitment to the approach as a core strategy, and opened up opportunities to embed specific needs of Linked Learning pathways into the services offered through the Division of Instruction. As noted in an evaluation report of the statewide initiative, Linked Learning was soon “emphasized in major communications and fundraising efforts” and the Linked Learning Administrator was provided with “better access to key decision-makers” (Guha et al., 2014). Further, the Linked Learning Administrator, as part of the District’s Instructional Leadership team, effectively led efforts to integrate the approach within ongoing, district-wide instruction and curriculum improvement strategies. This repositioning has been critical in assisting in the alignment of evaluation rubrics and processes, such as the Pilot School Quality Review, Public School Choice Review, Linking Learning Pathway Quality Review, and WASC. It has also led

to the incorporation of the approach in the district’s Local Control Accountability Plan.

The Impact of Vertical Integration

The notion of teachers taking ownership of an improvement effort is often mentioned by researchers as a key factor in the success of the effort. Efforts succeed when teachers feel it belongs to them and is not simply imposed on them (Ogborn, 2002). Vertical integration assists in capturing teachers’ position with regard to the effort and can establish the progressive processes that enable teachers in gaining a sense of clarity, skill, and commitment with respect to the improvement effort. The onboarding processes established by the Linked Learning Office, for example, are working to establish a shared understanding of and commitment to Linked Learning among all pathway teachers. Further, the range of supports provided by the Linked Learning Office—coaching, coordinating, and professional learning—work to integrate Linked Learning goals and expectations to the overall mission and goals of the district. This integrative approach focuses on establishing relationships and moving ideas and practices that support Linked Learning implementation across the system. These efforts provide greater organizational coherence as the many layers of vertical oversight that exist within LAUSD’s large bureaucracy form greater connections between district policies, practices, and procedures that support the approach.

Efforts made by the Linked Learning Office to produce greater coherency through integrative processes have been effective. Strategically, the Office has integrated the approach by aligning Linked Learning outcomes and the district’s expected learning outcomes for all LAUSD students. In collaboration with regional partners and key stakeholders, the development of the Graduate Profile, for example, has embedded the Linked Learning approach into LAUSD priorities. This alignment has also deepened understanding of the approach both within and beyond pathways. Showcasing Linked Learning pathways that are using senior portfolio defenses or other performance assessments also works to align Linked Learning with districtwide curriculum improvement efforts, instruction, and assessment. Similarly, the Linked Learning team has worked to align the district’s Teaching and Learning Framework with a Linked Learning self-assessment process. Indeed, the Linked Learning district team created a new process and instrument that aligns the LAUSD framework with the expected progress of students,

teachers, and industry and community partners in developing the learning and teaching behaviors that improve student motivation, understanding, and achievement (relying on the Behaviors of Learning and Teaching Continuum developed by ConnectEd).

Perhaps one of the most evident outcomes of vertical integration has been increased teacher understanding and interest in Linked Learning as a response to long-standing inequalities within the district. The Linked Learning Office's systemic strategy to develop teacher investment in the approach has influenced the relational changes the approach requires through teacher collaboration, shared understanding, and collective learning. As a shared endeavor, teachers are working to improve practice and learning outcomes, and create meaningful change. A recent study of approximately 200 LAUSD high school teachers and administrators implementing innovative approaches to high school education, including Linked Learning, found that almost four-fifths of Linked Learning teachers indicated that they felt they had influence in designing or establishing curricula and instructional programs at their school site. In addition, four-fifths of Linked Learning teachers reported that the approach was helpful or extremely helpful in supporting the schools' priorities (Saunders et al., 2017). Providing teachers with the opportunity to develop a clear and shared vision of desired outcomes and the time to



assess their progress toward the full impact of the approach contributes to these positive outcomes.

The activism and collaboration that marked the beginning of a shift in LAUSD's commitment to ready all students for college and career resides in the district's approach to Linked Learning implementation. The district's response to ready all students for college, career, and civic life through Linked Learning aims to provide all students with access to a rigorous, relevant, and engaging curriculum, and effective, motivating, student-centered instruction. The district's response also recognizes that teachers are more inclined to feel invested in their school, in the community, and in students' learning when they feel greater ownership, when they can influence collective practices and strategies to meet the needs of students and the community, and when they have greater degrees of autonomy within their school settings. Finally, the district's response to ready all students for college, career, and civic life recognizes that its leadership, commitment, and belief in all students are pivotal—this was made evident in 2015, ten years after the passage of the “A-G for All” resolution. At that time LAUSD re-committed to providing all students equity and access to college and career preparation through A-G, and Linked Learning was identified as a means to achieve this goal.

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Appendix A: LAUSD Linked Learning New Pathway

APPLICATION RUBRIC

Pathway Readiness Criteria	Section of the Application	Point Value
The LL information faculty meeting agenda, sign-in and teacher support signatures indicating 75% of the school staff supports bring LL to the school site	Required Evidence Checklist	_____/3
A copy of the schools current 2015-16 scheduling matrix with course titles, class periods, CTE sequence highlights (if applicable)	Required Evidence Checklist	_____/3
A copy of the projected Pathway's matrix with course titles, class periods, CTE sequence and potential teachers identified.	Required Evidence Checklist	_____/3
A list of course offerings with a short description of each elective course in a career pathway and any non-traditional academic classes.	Required Evidence Checklist	_____/3
A schedule for all PD for the 2015-16 school year (include dates, times and topics)	Required Evidence Checklist	_____/3
Please describe why you want to implement a LL Pathway at your school.	Application Question 1	_____/6
Why did you choose this industry sector?	Application Question 2	_____/6
What is your potential Pathway's mission, vision, theme and career focus?	Application Question 3	_____/6
What are your school's Student Learning Outcomes	Application Question 4	_____/3
Please describe any strategies you use to prepare students for college and career.	Application Question 5	_____/3
Total: _____/39		

SITE VISIT:

Pathway Readiness Criteria	Section of the Application	Point Value
Completion of the online student survey	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/6
Completion of the online teacher survey	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/6
School Leadership	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/6
School Culture	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/3
Classroom Visitations	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/3
Faculty Collaboration	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/6
Total: _____/30		

FOR CONDITIONALLY ACCEPTED PATHWAYS:

Pathway Readiness Criteria	Section of the Application	Point Value
75% of conditionally accepted Pathway faculty attended all four mandatory LL onboarding information meetings.	2015-16 LL Application Process	_____/6
A copy of the 2016-17 school matrix	Required Evidence Checklist	_____/3
The 2016-17 school matrix includes an Advisory period for each student	Required Evidence Checklist/ 2015-16 LL Criteria for Implementation	_____/6
Common planning time for grade-level Pathway teachers is embedded within the 2016-17 school matrix	Required Evidence Checklist/ 2015-16 LL Criteria for Implementation	_____/6
Total: _____ /21		

Overall Score: _____ /90

About the Author

Marisa Saunders, Ph.D., is a senior researcher at UCLA's Center for Community Schooling. Her primary areas of research focus on students' access to college and career preparation, secondary to postsecondary transitions, and the postsecondary trajectories of underrepresented youth. She has authored a number of publications including *Linked Learning: A Guide to Making High School Work*, *Beyond Tracking: Multiple Pathways to College, Career, and Civic Participation* (co-edited with Jeannie Oakes, published by Harvard Education Press), and *Learning Time: In Pursuit of Educational Equity* (co-edited with Jorge Ruiz de Velasco and Jeannie Oakes, published by Harvard Education Press).

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