introduction

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Ph.D.

introduction

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Ph.D.

Equitable access to high quality career-themed high school pathways requires that school staff and all pathway partners work in concert to address each student's developmental needs, skills, strengths, interests, and aspirations. To this end, effective student supports are designed to reach beyond the academic domain, to meet all students where they are, scaffold their engagement with a standards-based curriculum, and address their learning and personal youth development needs. This guidebook continues an exploration of integrated student supports for universal college and career readiness that we began in *Equitable Access by Design* (2016) *(https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications/equitable-access-design-conceptual-framework-integrated-student-supports-within-linked)*. That earlier report introduced a conceptual framework for implementing a system of comprehensive and integrated student supports that provides equitable access to a coherent, student-centered program of learning via Linked Learning pathways in high schools. This work is intended as a companion to Marisa Saunders' excellent and

widely used *Linked Learning: A Guide for Making High School Work (https://ampersand.gseis.ucla.edu/marisa-saunders-new-book-examines-successes-of-linked-learning-in-high-schools/),* published by the University of California, Los Angeles in 2013. The chapters that follow offer 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.

Background

FROM THE "SHOPPING MALL HIGH SCHOOL" TO LINKED LEARNING

To fully comprehend the revolutionary reconceptualization of high school teaching and learning represented by the following chapters, one has to consider the high school as Arthur Powell and his colleagues found it in 1985 (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). In a five-year study of American secondary education, Powell and his fellow researchers concluded that the typical American high school had come to resemble a shopping mall in terms of variety, choice, and neutrality about whether and to what extent youth as "consumers" learned in them. They describe a cafeteria-style education where youth could choose a college-bound pathway that offered rigorous deeper learning opportunities, but more often than not, were steered into pathways that led to nowhere. They described schools characterized by a day of disconnected experiences as students moved from uninspired academic classes—where teachers focused on content delivered in a standard one-size-fits-all pedagogical style—to vocational courses that were often disconnected
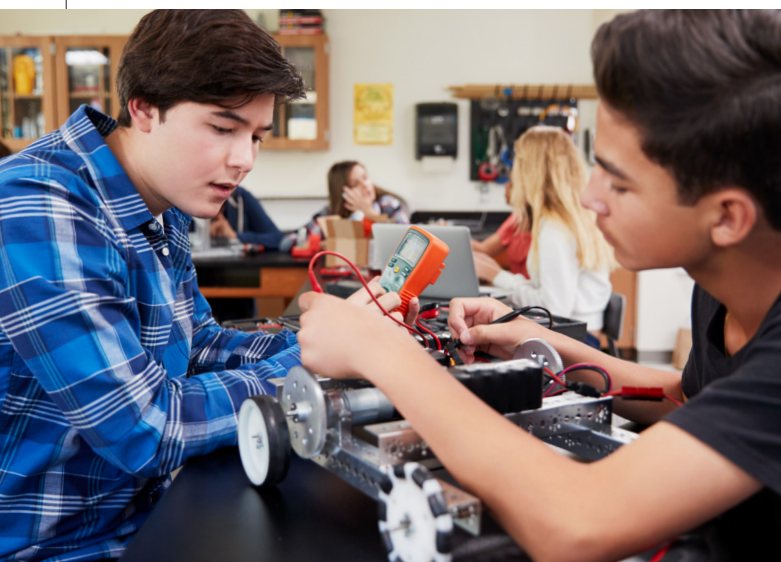
from professional or industry standards, to afterschool experiences that were likewise divorced from what was happening in classrooms. The result for most students was an incoherent educational experience that served only to exacerbate inequality among groups, with particularly dire consequences for youth from low-income minority families.

In contrast, the Linked Learning approach joins together rigorous college-prep academics, a challenging career, or profession-themed curriculum that meets industry standards, and an opportunity for students to apply classroom learning through work-based or other real-world experiences in their communities. Beyond this defining core, however, Linked Learning encapsulates a broader and clearly transformative vision for the American high school. The clear thrust behind the Linked Learning design standards is an ambitious goal to retool the high school of tomorrow into an American institution that prepares all students for both college and career—not one or the other (California Department of Education, 2010). The approach encompasses many of the research-based strategies endorsed by the U.S. Education Department for creating "next generation high schools" that provide students with rich, student-centered coursework and hands-on experiences aligned to postsecondary and career-readiness standards (ED, 2016). It also recognizes that "educating the whole student requires rethinking teaching and learning so that academic content and students' social, emotional, and cognitive development are joined not just occasionally, but throughout the day" (Aspen Institute, 2019). This new vision recognizes that, more than ever, education is the key to social and economic mobility.
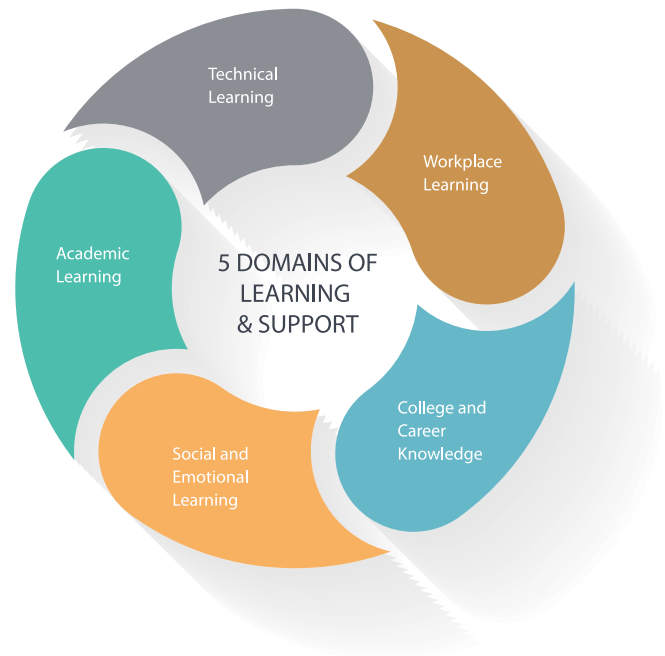
As education analyst David Conley has aptly summarized it, "success in the future will be much more a function not simply of what people have learned but of what they are capable of learning. Schooling will truly need to be about enabling students to learn throughout their careers. Creating lifelong learners…will become an increasingly critical and compelling goal of education" (Conley, 2014, p.20).

Advancing Equity through Comprehensive and Integrated Student Supports

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Equitable access to high-quality Linked Learning pathways requires that school staff and all pathway partners work in concert to address and support each student's individual developmental needs, skills, strengths, interests, and aspirations. To this end, effective student support programs are designed to reach beyond the academic domain, to wrap around and remove academic and non-academic barriers to learning, "increasing students' chances to succeed in school and expanding students' opportunities for positive youth development" (Child Trends, 2014).

Comprehensive student supports build or scaffold student competencies in five domains of learning and support:

Technical Learning

Workplace Learning

Academic Learning

5 DOMAINS OF LEARNING & SUPPORT

College and Career Knowledge

Social and Emotional Learning

Supports for Academic Learning ensure that all students, regardless of their academic background, are supported to graduate from high school with a level of academic competence that prepares them for postsecondary education. Whether they plan to attend college or workforce training programs after graduation, students need key academic content knowledge and cognitive skills, such as problem solving and critical thinking, to continue learning after high school.

Supports for Technical Learning ensure that all students have the technical skills and knowledge to complete the requirements of specific career-themed pathways, to successfully engage in work-based learning experiences, and to prepare for high-skill, high-wage employment in those fields.

Supports for Workplace Learning provide students with tools to engage in successful work-based learning experiences by advancing their knowledge of career opportunities, workplace etiquette, and job site expectations. Both the National Academy Foundation (NAF) and the Linked Learning Alliance promote a "work-based learning continuum," which recognizes that workplace learning is a continuum of educational strategies that require scaffolding of student supports well before a student may be ready for engagement in a workplace (National Academy Foundation, 2012).

Supports to Advance College and Career Knowledge help students and their families to develop realistic expectations and an understanding of the college application process, financial aid opportunities, the long-term benefits associated with college completion, and the demands of a specific career. The approach recognizes the interplay between college and career. Students' decisions about postsecondary education are shaped at least in part by their interests and goals for the future. As Carnevale and colleagues suggest, "[a] student's choice of career is the primary motivation for going to college. Helping students connect their college studies with their future careers captures this motivation and increases graduation rates" (Carnevale, Hanson, & Gulish, 2013, p. 48). Beyond that, Elisabeth Barnett cites research suggesting that "… students who enter college with a clear career goal in mind are likely to experience a more positive adjustment" to postsecondary education (Barnett, 2016, p. 10).

Supports for Social and Emotional Learning foster the development of mindsets, social and emotional skills, and adaptive behaviors. These encompass intrapersonal qualities, such as self-management and growth mindset, as well as interpersonal qualities such as conscientiousness, or social awareness. Extensive research evidence shows that social

and emotional competencies predict positive adult outcomes and that they can be shaped in response to educational interventions and life experiences (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Farrington et al., 2012).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INTEGRATED SUPPORTS?

While "comprehensive" implies responsiveness to the whole child and to the arc of full youth development, the concept of integration suggests that adults must take collaborative actions to weave all the interventions and supports available in a school into a coherent educational experience for all youth. A central goal of every Linked Learning or career-themed pathway is to create a *coherent* educational experience that fully integrates the academic, technical, workplace learning, and student support enterprises of a school. There are two important aspects of integration that appear, both in the relevant literature and from practitioner experience, to be associated with positive student learning outcomes.

The first type of integration involves the extent to which student supports are conceived, designed, and implemented to support effective student engagement with the other three pathway components: academic mastery, technical knowledge, and workplace learning. Conceptually, this type of integration can be thought of as *horizontal integration* insofar as it draws attention to the way that student supports are coherently related to each component of the Linked Learning pathway.

TWO TYPES OF INTEGRATION
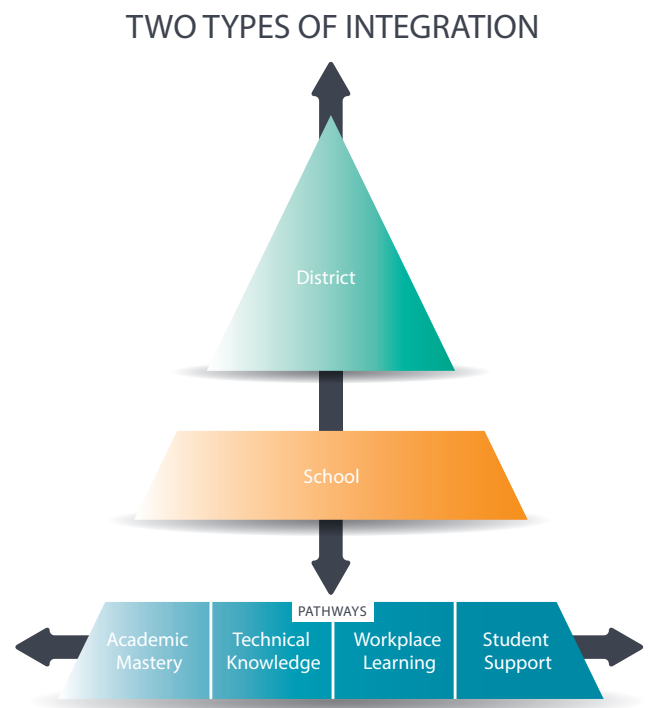
A second important type of integration involves the vertical alignment of student services offered within a curricular pathway with other school and district (or regional) strategies for achieving college, career, and civic readiness among all students. At the school organizational level, this might relate to the integration of student supports to school-wide efforts to connect with community-based resources, as for example through community school approaches or expanded learning partnerships (e.g., tutoring, or dual enrollment arrangements with postsecondary institutions). At the district level, this could relate to the integration of student supports with district-wide strategies for the implementation of the Common Core curriculum, California's A-G postsecondary requirements, blended learning initiatives, or interventions for supporting social and emotional learning among students across schools in a district.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN INTEGRATED SUPPORTS?

The case examples and profiles in the following chapters make clear that the integration of student supports is an all-hands enterprise with implications for every adult who works directly with youth. Making sure that all students have equitable access to learning opportunity requires that classroom teachers, technical instructors, and employers work and plan collaboratively on shared learning objectives. Community-based partners, counselors, and other staff who support student success must also collaborate closely with teachers and with each other to understand the academic standards and school expectations that students are expected to meet. Likewise, district and school administrators must work closely to cohere school-level efforts with districtwide goals. Finally, school practitioners remind us that parents and families also play important roles in college and career preparation. Mutual understanding among families and schools can help to leverage resources and assure a coherent learning experience across the day and year as students navigate school, community, and family environments.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Our review of how sites across California implement comprehensive and integrated student supports has surfaced three cross-cutting themes that merit close attention in the profiles that follow.

PUTTING EQUITY AT THE CENTER

Equitable access to learning opportunities that prepare all students for college and careers is an explicit system goal of school leaders in the profiled examples. The chapters that follow illustrate how educators have cultivated an equity-centered outlook as a collectively shared commitment in their schools and pathways. This commitment is most evident in the routine practice of disaggregating all student performance data by race, ethnicity, English learner, and poverty status and including these disaggregated reports in self-evaluation systems.

TAKING A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH TO PERSONALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORTS

Put most simply, the adults in our illustrative profiles teach students, not academic subjects. This represents a genuine revolution in how teachers identify as professionals. Traditionally, secondary school teachers obtain a subject credential and are cued to see themselves professionally as "math" teachers, "science" teachers or "language arts" teachers. The teachers, school partners, and other educators in our profiles see themselves as youth development professionals who address the education of the whole person. The chapters that follow provide fine-grained descriptions of how educators are differentiating their instructional programs and the delivery of services in response to the characteristics of the communities they serve. Their student-centered approach also characterizes the way that they respond to the needs of specific demographic sub-groups, including English learners, recent immigrants, foster youth, students with disabilities, and vulnerable youth coping with the effects of trauma, bereavement, or abuse.

ADOPTING A CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT APPROACH TO LINKED LEARNING AND TO SCHOOL REFORM BROADLY

The chapters that follow illustrate how educators and their community-based partners are taking a continuous learning and improvement approach to tackle specific problems of practice as they implement reforms over time. Two patterns are evident in this regard. First is the common practice of using locally generated performance evidence and data to support adult collaboration. This includes the practice of setting up structures, processes, and procedures to promote effective interactions among participants and to clarify the goals for student performance and success.

Common structural features include: systematized needs assessment protocols; routine practices for the identification and placement (or recruitment) of students into services; routine data collection and tracking of student progress; protocols and dedicated time for school staff, partners, and others to engage in inquiry focused on student performance and supports; and systems or protocols for devoting resources (time and human capital) to the effective coordination of services.

A second common practice across the profiles is in how educators and their partners use data for professional learning. The chapters provide illustrations of how effective schools and districts are gathering data from within their organizations, from across their partners, and from participating agencies, and using it to better understand the needs and strengths of their students and to improve their teaching and systems of supports. Leaders in these schools embrace performance data for the critical role it plays in informing cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement among all adults that work with youth at the school.

Integrated Student Supports and Problems of Practice

Each chapter that follows demonstrates how educators and their partners have tackled the integration of student supports within a specific problem of practice in the implementation of Linked Learning or college and career pathways. By contextualizing the work within specific problems of practice, we are able to illustrate *how* educators approach integrated student supports. We are also able to draw attention to *who* is involved at different stages, focusing on the roles of teachers, school staff, families, employers, and community leaders.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on teachers, employers and community-based partners working together to integrate the core elements of Linked Learning: academic, technical, and workplace learning. In Chapters 4 and 5, we look beyond the technical core and to the important role that school counselors, parents, and families play in supporting college and career readiness and success. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the district role in providing comprehensive and integrated student supports, across schools, and for groups of students who are vulnerable to school disconnection and dropping out. Finally, in Chapter 8 we profile an effort in Monterey County to promote intersegmental collaboration and integrated student supports for success in mathematics

pathways across high schools and postsecondary institutions. We conclude in Chapter 9 with a synthesis of lessons learned from our understanding of practitioner experiences across the seven profiles.

References

Aspen Institute, (2019). From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development. P.20.

Barnett, E., Community College Research Center. (2016). Building Student Momentum from High School into College. Jobs for the Future.

California Department of Education (2010). Multiple Pathways to Student Success: Envisioning the New California High School. (A report to the Legislature and Governor pursuant to Chapter 681, Statutes of 2008, California Department of Education, Sacramento, 2010).

Carnevale, A. P., Hanson, A. R., & Gulish, A. (2013). Failure to launch, structural shift and the new lost generation Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from *https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/failure-to-launch/*

Child Trends (2014). Making the Grade: Assessing the Evidence for Integrated Student Supports (Child Trends: Bethesda, MD, Publication #2014-07). Available online at: *www.childtrends.org*.

Conley, D. T. (2014). Getting Ready for College, Careers, and the Common Core: What Every Educator Needs to Know. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Farrington, C., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T., Johnson, D., & Beechum, N. (2012). Teaching adolescents to become learners. The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance: A critical literature review. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

National Academy Foundation (2012). Guide to work-based learning: A continuum of activities and experiences. National Academy Foundation, New York.

Pellegrino, J. W. & Hilton, M. L. (Eds.) (2012). Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills for the 21st century. A report of the National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. *https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13398/education-for-life-and-work-developing-transferable-knowledge-and-skills.*

Powell, A. G., Farrar, E. and Cohen, D.K., 1985. *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

U.S. Department of Education, 2016. *Using Evidence to Create Next Generation High Schools. https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/high-school/using-evidence-create-next-gen-highschools.pdf*.

About the Author

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.