

Case Study 2: Program Options and Articulation, Linked Learning Academies, Community College CTE, and related Industry Sector Workforce Development

Introduction

A recent review of Linked Learning certification applications has suggested a need for postsecondary articulation; college and career planning, and coordinated sequenced scaled work-based learning. While Linked Learning Academies each focus on a broad industry sector and often introduce students to a variety of career options associated with that sector, community colleges offer a variety of specialized programs that lead to certificates and degrees, in addition to transfer pathways for students desiring or requiring a four year degree. These specialized programs in turn are often offered exclusively by a regional community college which may not be the service area college of the Linked Learning Academy. Finally, while there are a wide variety of presentations of pathways, there is often confusion at the intersection of high school and community college, about the definitions of pathways; for instance, are they a course of study; are they college pathways aligned with industry standards?

Research Question

What are the implications for Linked Learning Academy graduates as they transition to community college, and prepare for college and career success?

Methodology

CLP will document Linked Learning Academy connections to community colleges and CSUs, review college catalogs to determine relevant programs of study; and collect where available pathway maps that connect high school Linked Learning Academy programs of study to community college programs of study through to stackable certificates, degrees and/or transfer programs.

As a pilot, we completed an extensive review of the 4 Linked Learning Academies in the Sacramento City School District, and we documented over 64 programs in the Sacramento City College system that were relevant to each of the four Academies. More specifically, for the Health Professions High School, a single industry (HSMT) academy, students could choose from 19 programs of study, in addition to transfer to 4 programs of study at CSU Sacramento.

Findings

We documented that 30 Linked Learning Academies lead to as many as 100 community college programs of study, in addition to transfer preparation to CSU. While high schools may have a broad introduction to an industry sector as part of their curriculum, few have established clear and efficient pathways for students to follow beyond high school into community college, and there is little evidence that students take advantage of matriculation or counseling services in the community college that would enable them to complete a program of study within two years.

In addition, community colleges have CTE certificates that may be developed based on faculty interest, or short term CTE certificates driven by a particular employer, but it is critical for students to complete a program that includes academic development and ability to move into higher career opportunities. Finally, most community college programs have limited employment level data, as well as capacity to provide employment. While there are others responsible for employment, there are no uniform proxies and indicators of a well-aligned program that enable a program to review and improve their ultimate outcome: college and career success of their students.

Next Steps

Based on the number of industry sectors selected, the Program options process will be refined to assure that community college programs have active industry engagement, are current, well mapped and aligned to current industry demand -- and to assess the status of formalizing those programs in terms of industry standards and certification, pathway design and where appropriate that their certificates are "stacked," as well as nested within the longer degree and transfer structure. And that the colleges are sharing and exchanging such pathway design and development with their Linked Learning High School partners.

Program pathways and programs of study will be reviewed for essential components that provide a complete picture for students, faculty, and industry.

CLP will also connect these sites to others in their region and in the k-12 and community college systems who are conducting similar work (these are usually not focused on Linked Learning Academies), such as the CTE Collaboratives, Economic and Workforce Development Initiatives, and other state level sector initiatives. CLP will work with larger scale industry representatives so that we can better understand the relationship of industry expectations and employment to future development and potential.