

Practice Brief:

Building Capacity for Linked Learning Pathways: A Guide for School Counselor Educators

June 2017

This practice brief is intended to be a practical tool and resource for school counselor educators interested in integrating principles and practices of the Linked Learning approach into graduate level school counselor preparation programs. In addition, the conceptual framework for aligning comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCPs) with the Linked Learning approach has implications for practicing school counselors. The lessons learned, core features, capacity building, curriculum integration, research partnerships, and needs included in this practice brief were drawn from a thorough review of the literature, informal interviews, and faculty participation in professional development.

Rationale

The purpose of integrating principles and practices of the Linked Learning approach into the CSULB school counseling program is twofold. First, several school districts across California are currently or in the process of implementing the Linked Learning approach to preparing students for career and college. As a result, it is critical that CSULB pre-service school counselors are prepared to effectively work in schools implementing the Linked Learning approach as practicum students, fieldwork interns, and job applicants. Second, there is a lack of literature describing the role of school counselors in Linked Learning implementation. As a result, CSULB school counseling faculty have participated in professional development, conducted a review of the literature, developed partnerships with local school districts, provided school counselor training opportunities, and established a research agenda. These efforts have contributed to the establishment of a baseline understanding of how school counselor educators can integrate the Linked Learning approach into their programs; and how practicing school counselors can align their CSCP with the Linked Learning approach.

Lessons Learned

A review of the literature indicates a lack of understanding of the role of school counselors in the implementation of the Linked Learning approach. This gap was reflected during informal interviews conducted with school counselors working in schools implementing the Linked Learning approach. Overall, five of the six schools visited appeared to implement strong pathways; and for the most part, school counselors implemented some components of a CSCP. However, one school appeared to implement strong pathways aligned with the Linked Learning approach, implemented a CSCP aligned with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model for school counseling, and aligned the CSCP with the Linked Learning. Although there is a lack of understanding of the role of school counselors in the implementation of the Linked Learning approach in the literature and in many schools, the potential impact of CSCP and Linked Learning alignment is clear.

Core Features ASCA National Model and Linked Learning Approach

School counselors support the academic, social-emotional and career development of all students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model for school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012). Components of the National Model include a program Foundation (e.g., mission statement, program goals), Management (e.g., assessments and data collection tools), Delivery (e.g., school counseling core curriculum), and Accountability (e.g., data analysis, program evaluation; ASCA, 2012). According to ASCA, “collaborating with students, families, educational staff and the community, the school counselor works to ensure all students develop an academic and career plan reflecting their interests, abilities and goals and includes rigorous, relevant coursework and experiences appropriate for the student” (ASCA, 2013, p. 1). The ASCA National Model aligns with the Integrated Student Supports component of the Linked Learning approach. Integrated Student Supports include (a) supports for academic learning, (b) supports for technical learning, (c) supports for workplace learning, (d) support for the development of students’ college and career knowledge, and (e) support for social and emotional learning (de Velasco, Newman, & Borsato, 2016). Because of the natural alignment between the ASCA National Model, role of the school counselor, and Integrated Student Supports, and the lack of literature addressing this alignment, a deeper understanding of CSCP and Linked learning alignment is needed. As a result, the CSULB school counseling faculty conducted

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capacity building efforts focused on the Linked Learning approach.

Capacity Building Around Linked Learning Approach

The CSULB school counseling faculty participated in professional development and exposure to the Linked Learning approach over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year. The purpose was to develop a knowledge base of the Linked Learning approach and obtain resources to develop training and teaching materials for pre-service school counselors and in turn, practicing school counselors. Capacity building around the Linked Learning approach was accomplished in the following ways:

1. The school counseling faculty attended a full day Long Beach Unified Linked Learning experiential site visit at a local high school. Faculty learned about pathways, met the administration and school counseling team, and participated in a student panel and school tour focused on the integration of career pathways into the school curriculum.
2. The school counseling faculty attended the Linked Learning Convention in Oakland, California January 23-25, 2017. Some of the themes of sessions attended include (a) the development, implementation and expansion of pathways, (b) successful strategies for implementing the Linked Learning approach from exemplar districts across California, (c) dual enrollment, (d) equity in the Linked Learning approach, and (e) research related to Integrated Student Supports.

The results of the aforementioned capacity building activities were the development of a knowledge base of the Linked Learning approach and attainment of resources to develop training and teaching materials for pre-service school counselors. In addition, the school counseling faculty learned about current practices and needs related to school counselor's role in the Integrated Student Supports component of the Linked Learning approach; and developed future plans to address gaps in the literature through research.

Integration of Linked Learning Principles into Curriculum

A comprehensive review of the literature and capacity building activities informed the integration of Linked Learning principles and practices into school counselor preparation program coursework (see summary in Appendix A). First, school counselor preparation program courses that align with Linked Learning competencies were identified. Second, Linked Learning competencies were aligned with course objectives. The third step was to incorporate content, activities, and resources related to the Linked Learning approach into each course. In addition to course integration, schools implementing the Linked Learning approach were identified for potential practicum and fieldwork opportunities for pre-service school counselors (see Appendix B).

Case Examples and Research Partnerships

Because of the lack of literature addressing the role of school counselors and the extent to which school counselors align CSCPs with the Linked Learning approach, establishing research partnership with local school districts is essential. Partnering with local school districts informs school counseling faculty teaching practices, provides training opportunities for practicing school counselors, and provides opportunities to conduct research to contribute to the school counseling and Linked Learning literature.

To initiate research partnerships and further establish a baseline understanding of school counselor's roles in the Linked Learning approach, school counseling faculty conducted informal interviews with six school counselors at five local high schools implementing the Linked Learning approach. The focus of the informal interviews was to (1) assess the extent to which school counselors in these schools implemented a comprehensive school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model for school counseling, (2) learn about Linked Learning and pathway practices at each school, and to (3) identify exemplar cases of CSCPs that align with the Linked Learning and pathway approach. All five schools implement strong career pathways covering a variety of industries, although schools varied in terms of length of implementation,

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number of pathways offered, and comprehensiveness of work-based learning and curriculum integration efforts.

In terms of school counseling, the degree to which the school counselors implemented a CSCP aligned with the ASCA National Model varied by school site. Overall, all school counselors implemented some basic components of a CSCP including being aware of or involved in their schools' pathways, contributed to master scheduling, and utilized individual student planning to support students' path to graduation, college admission, or entrance into the workforce. Only one school was considered to be an exemplar site, in that the school demonstrated both the implementation of a CSCP closely aligned with the ASCA National Model and alignment with strong pathways consistent with the Linked Learning approach. The head school counselor and the school counseling team routinely analyze school data to answer the questions, *where are we?; what does the data say?; what outcomes do we want based on our defined college and career ready scholar profile?; and, how do we get the desired outcomes?*. This process contributes to supporting students academically and behaviorally and addressing issues of equity and access to pathways. The school counselors also meet with students individually to develop students' course of study, advocate for students, and lead classroom lessons focused on career and college readiness. The school administration supports the school counseling program and the programs alignment with the pathways offered. For example, school counselors are not assigned to non-school counseling duties (e.g., administering standardized test, discipline) so they have more time to support the career and college readiness of students. The school counselors also partner with a Care Center and Career Center to offer student supplementary social-emotional and career related supports including small group counseling.

In terms of school counseling program alignment with Linked Learning pathways, the exemplar school counselors have identified how school counseling program activities that align with each of the nine Linked Learning Essential Elements. In addition, each school counselor is assigned to a pathway and meets with the pathway team regularly. School counselors, in partnership with the pathway team, also help students connect with internship opportunities connected to their pathway. School counselors use the CCGI California Colleges online program to conduct career assessments and support student's college and career planning. Overall, the head school counselor consistently collaborates with the Linked Learning Pathways Coordinator, teachers, and administration, and is intricately involved in the implementation of pathways.

The informal interview process made it clear that research is needed to extend the baseline understanding of CSCP and Linked Learning alignment; and highlight best practices for school counselor educators and practicing school counselors. As a result, CSULB school counseling faculty will begin intervention research during the 2017-2018 academic year with a local school district. This research, supported by a grant for the CSU Collaborative for the Advancement of Linked Learning (CALL), will focus on supporting middle school students' career and college readiness through school counselor led classroom lessons and individual advising. In the future, a case study, including interviews with school counselors, Linked Learning pathways coordinators, administrators, teachers, and students, would allow for a comprehensive look at what exemplars do to implement effective CSCPs aligned with school site career pathways. In addition, documents illustrating systems and practices could be analyzed and described. A case study would highlight best practices and give context to the conceptual framework established from the capacity building activities described above.

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- American School Counselor Association (2013). *The professional school counselor and academic and college/ career planning*. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PositionStatements.pdf>
- Ruiz de Velasco, J., Newman, E., & Borsato, G. (2016). A conceptual framework for integrated student supports within linked learning pathways: Equitable access by design. Stanford, CA: John W. Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities. Retrieved from <https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications/equitable-access-design-conceptual-framework-integrated-student-supports-within-linked>

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Appendix A

Integration of Linked Learning into School Counseling Courses

Course	Linked Learning Principles and Practices	Activities	Timeline
COUN 507 Career and Academic Counseling in K-12 Settings	Foundations of Linked Learning; Integrated Student Supports; Linked Learning in context of career and college readiness	Lecture; Group activities; Linked Learning school counselor panel; Linked Learning site visit	First Year-Spring
COUN 607 School Counseling Practicum	Intro to foundations of Linked Learning; Integrated Student Supports; Applications of Linked Learning Principles at practicum site	Alignment of Linked Learning and CSCP; School counselor for pathway	First Year-Spring
COUN 606 Current Issues in Professional School Counseling	Linked Learning Outcomes	Analysis of current Linked Learning research; Equity issues in Linked Learning approach	Second Year-Fall
EDP 596 Program Evaluation in Education	Linked Learning Outcomes	Evaluation of Linked Learning pathways, implementation, student outcomes	Second Year-Fall
COUN 643A/644A School Counseling Field Work	Advanced understanding of foundations of Linked Learning; Integrated Student Supports; Applications of Linked Learning Principles at fieldwork site	Alignment of Linked Learning and CSCP; School counselor for pathway	Second Year-Fall and Spring

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Appendix B

Linked Learning Practicum and Internship Sites

District	Contact
Long Beach Unified	Cynthia Bater- Linked Learning/Career Pathways
Cabrillo High School	Steve Duanes-Head Counselor
California Academy of Math and Science (CAMS)	Barry Baker-Head Counselor
Jordan High School	Kimberly Johnson-Agulto-Pathway Counselor
*Long Beach Polytechnic High School	Gayle Mashburn-Head Counselor; Shannon Mulvaney-Linked Learning Pathway Coordinator
**McBride High School	Catherine Salazar-School Counselor
Sato Academy of Mathematics and Science	Gerard Maliwat-School Counselor; Mona Merlot-Principal
Norwalk La Mirada Unified	Joanne Jung-Director College and Career Pathways
Benton Middle School	Tanya Sweney-Black-School Counselor
Corvallis Middle School	Cathie Robinson-School Counselor
Hutchinson Middle School	Angela Min-School Counselor; Erika Vesper-School Counselor
Los Alisos Middle School	Sandy Vanlant-School Counselor
Los Coyotes Middle School	Debra Piazza-School Counselor
Waite Middle School	Patty Sierra-School Counselor
John Glenn High School	Lori Erbeznic-School Counselor; Sendy Engstrum-School Counselor; Todd Ferwerda-School Counselor
La Mirada High School	May Chuong-Nguyen-Counselor College and Career; Theresa Gallardo-School Counselor; Gerald Gandolfo-School Counselor; David Hallum-School Counselor; Lisa Lopes-School Counselor; Deverine Mota-School Counselor; Ila Patterson-School Counselor
Norwalk High School	Daniel Sanchez-Linked Learning Coach; Rosa Gonzalez-School Counselor; Candi Hernandez-School Counselor; Vanessa Iaquinta-School Counselor; Jerry Koppe-School Counselor; Michelle Lobendahn-School Counselor; Sonia Perez-School Counselor

Note: *Exemplar site for school counseling program and Linked Learning pathways approach alignment; **Currently supervising CSULB school counseling graduate student.