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The Work-Based Learning Experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning Pathways

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The Work-Based Learning Experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning Pathways

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Benjamin John Gertner

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Work-Based Learning Experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning Pathways

by

Benjamin John Gertner

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor John Rogers, Chair

Linked Learning is a school reform model for K-12 education, primarily high school, designed to make school engaging through real-world, hands-on learning that integrates college and career preparation. Linked Learning is an equity-focused approach with a focus on the achievement of underrepresented groups such as African Americans, Latinos, students with disabilities and English Learners (ELs) (LaFors and McGlawn, 2013). The core components of Linked Learning are rigorous college-prep academics, career technical training, work-based learning, and comprehensive support services.

This study investigates the role of work-based learning (WBL) in the development of ELs in Linked Learning high schools. Through interviews with six Linked Learning principals and five WBL coordinators, this study explores their beliefs about the purpose of WBL for supporting EL students. It investigates the WBL opportunities and systems of support that exist for ELs in Linked Learning high schools. These practitioners had considerable experience with designing a school program to incorporate WBL experiences throughout students' high school careers, using the ConnectEd WBL Continuum as a guide (ConnectED, 2012).

Each Linked Learning school staff member participated in a one-on-one, semi-structured interview that lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. One principal interview was conducted over Zoom and one interview included both the school principal and coordinator at the same time. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded to explore the themes that emerged. For the participants in this study, the most important purposes of WBL for ELs were exposure to careers, development of skills, and building social capital. They tended to feel that the purposes for ELs were the same as for all students, although they did emphasize the how WBL could support EL students' communication skills and help them build self-confidence. When asked to consider which conditions need to be in place for impactful WBL for ELs, the most salient that participants cited were integration of WBL into the school curriculum, staffing support at the school, and the role and mindset of industry partners. As with the purposes, these conditions were believed to apply for all students, not just ELs. For the EL population, specific supports like bilingual TAs and language scaffolds were cited as important. Participants shared that despite many of these conditions being within their control, competing priorities, reduced district support, and staffing challenges were barriers to developing high-quality WBL experiences for all EL students.

The dissertation of Benjamin John Gertner is approved.

Patricia Gándara

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John Rogers, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

DEDICATION

For my powerful and loving wife, Maria, and our two adorable daughters, Hannah and Elizabeth. This could not have been possible without your incredible patience, understanding, support, and unconditional love. We have gone through some challenging times since I started ELP, and you have been with me every step of the way. I am grateful that this chapter is ending and that we can spend more time together.

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CHAPTER I: PROBLEM STATEMENT

Roosevelt Story – The Context for this Study

In March of 1968, students from five high schools on the Eastside of Los Angeles, after months of organizing, took action to pressure the school board to make changes to improve their education. Armed with a list of 38 demands to improve academics, leadership, facilities and student rights, these students, mostly Mexican American, built a movement whose impact is still felt. Southern California has long been a center of both unequal schooling and the struggle for educational justice. The injustice of segregated schools for Mexican Americans in Orange County led to the historic *Mendez vs. Westminster* decision in 1947 that was a precursor to the more well-known 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. While separate but equal has been discredited and many of the changes the walkout leaders demanded have been implemented, de facto segregation and unequal educational outcomes persist.

Years of school reform efforts at the federal, state, and local levels have not erased achievement gaps that persist between students of color and their white counterparts and between students living in poverty and affluent students. The California educational system continues to produce uneven results for English Learners. While some are making progress to fluency in English, a majority do not meet the criteria for reclassification as fluent English proficient. In 2010 in California, 59% of secondary school English Learners were classified as "Long Term English Learners," defined as being enrolled in U.S. schools for six years or more without reclassifying as fluent English proficient (Olson, 2010). On the 11th grade administration of the 2019 Smarter Balanced Assessment, 7.83% of English Learners met or exceeded the standard in English Language Arts and 5.01% met or exceeded the standard in math, which compares to 57.27% overall in ELA and 32.24% in math. Standardized test scores correlate with graduation

rates, where English Learner rates in California fell behind the overall population at 68.7% in 2019 compared to 84.5% overall (California Department of Education, 2020). Even more stark, the difference in Cohort Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements between the overall population and English Learners in 2019 was 50.5% compared to 25.7% (California Department of Education, 2020). While the term English Learner (EL) is a construct that by definition includes lower achievement on tests and course grades, it is worthwhile to examine why years of reform efforts have not led to better results for ELs in California.

Problem Statement

Linked Learning is a comprehensive framework for education that seeks to make learning relevant and engaging, preparing all students for college and career, with a focus on underrepresented groups such as African Americans, Latinos, students with disabilities and English Learners (LaFors and McGlawn, 2013). The core components of Linked Learning are rigorous college-prep academics, career technical training, work-based learning, and comprehensive support services. This study investigates the role of work-based learning (WBL) in the development of ELs in Linked Learning high schools. Through interviews with Linked Learning principals and WBL coordinators, this study explores their beliefs about the purpose of WBL for supporting EL students. It investigates the WBL opportunities and systems of support that exist for ELs in Linked Learning high schools. Interviews with principals and school staff who coordinate WBL examine to what extent the specific needs and interests of ELs are considered in developing WBL experiences. Finally, this study looks at the collaboration between school leaders and support systems to ensure equitable access to WBL for ELs.

Linked Learning has the potential to be part of the solution to the problem of EL underachievement. Linked Learning is a high school reform model that was developed to

increase student engagement by integrating career technical education (CTE) and WBL with academic coursework. From its inception in the 2000s, Linked Learning's champions have highlighted its equity agenda and the goal of improving underrepresented student outcomes in areas such as graduation, college credit attainment and test scores (Oakes and Saunders, 2008).

To grow Linked Learning while ensuring quality and fidelity to the model, the California Linked Learning District Initiative (LLDI) was started in 2009 to seed the Linked Learning framework in districts across the state of California, demonstrating a promising way of to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps, as well as to eliminate tracking. Soon after, a program of pathway certification was developed to guide progress and provide a seal of approval to achieving programs (Warner et. al., 2016). Throughout, Linked Learning has been studied by evaluators to demonstrate impact and tell stories of successful pathways around the State. Unfortunately, there is evidence that in many cases, ELs do not have access to the full Linked Learning model and there is a lack of understanding of how well they are being served by Linked Learning programs (Mendoza, 2016).

Existing Gaps in the Research

There is limited understanding of the impact of WBL for ELs in Linked Learning schools. Evaluations of Linked Learning schools have shown that they have had more success with the earlier stages of the WBL continuum (Linked Learning Alliance, 2012), and that a relatively small proportion of students have more intensive, sustained WBL experiences in high school. In addition, research has hinted that WBL opportunities are not provided equitably, reproducing tracking in a different context. While districts are starting to consider the specific needs of ELs in developing WBL opportunities, this work is in early stages and would benefit from a closer examination of the educator perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic created more

challenges for EL students as many struggled to stay engaged in school while working to meet the financial needs of families who were most heavily affected by the economic impact of the social distancing measures (Reed et. al., 2022). This historic event has opened an opportunity to learn from educators on the ground how they are thinking about supporting marginalized students.

Research Questions

This study examines the perspectives educators in the development of ELs through the WBL component of the Linked Learning high school reform model. Educators have varied understandings of youth development, college and career readiness, and their roles and responsibilities in this area. This study seeks to shed light on ways that policymakers and school officials might expand opportunities and what supports are needed to provide access for ELs.

This study is based on interviews with educators at six Certified Linked Learning sites with significant EL populations within a single large, urban school district.

1. What do Linked Learning school principals and support staff believe is the purpose of WBL in the development and support of ELs?
2. What essential conditions (learning opportunities, staffing, and systems) do principals and support staff believe are needed for ELs to have access to impactful WBL?
3. To what extent do principals and other support staff feel that essential conditions exist for ELs to learn in an impactful way in the context of WBL? From the perspective of principals and support staff, who should be responsible for ensuring these conditions are in place?

Overview of the Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design, with the primary data collection method being interviews. Because the research questions call for the in-depth perspectives of school principals and support staff, a qualitative design was appropriate to provide meaningful data. A qualitative design has allowed more space to explore the unique beliefs and experiences of each individual subject (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In addition, it has provided the opportunity to probe for more details as participants make meaning. For example, this study explores with educators what they see as their responsibility for positive youth development.

This design fits the research questions because they are focused on the subjects' experiences and beliefs. Although a survey could provide useful data, narrative data would be hard to capture through a survey and was best obtained through direct conversations. Since the goal of this study was to elicit views and opinions, a focus group would have limited perspectives given the tendencies of groups to conform and agree, so interviews were more likely to yield a diversity of perspectives (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of this study is that it was restricted to a small sample of Linked Learning high schools. Because the goal of the study was to explore WBL in Linked Learning high schools, it was important to limit the study to high school programs that follow this model. Since the literature is inconclusive about the impact of Linked Learning, this study explores the qualitative differences in the beliefs and experiences of educators in Linked Learning schools. Including a comparison population from comprehensive high schools would have been outside the scope of this study, but some preliminary conjectures may be possible.

Significance of the Study

This study is of value to school and district leaders, and to Linked Learning policymakers and support organizations. By elucidating the beliefs and experiences of Linked Learning principals and support staff regarding WBL for ELs, this study sheds light on aspects of the Linked Learning framework that have supported these students as well as missed opportunities. Given that Linked Learning is a comprehensive school reform model with many components, it is important to know which aspects of the framework are most impactful for historically underrepresented students. A focus on WBL shines a light on the component of the Linked Learning framework that is arguably least well-understood.

Summary

Although Linked Learning has demonstrated some promising results in areas such as credit completion and graduation, there are concerns about the perpetuation of inequities that the model was intended to counter. For example, ELs are sometimes excluded from the full pathway experience because of curricular requirements and the mindsets of key institutional agents (Mendoza, 2016). WBL opportunities often go to the highest-performing students while their less academically successful peers seek paid work experiences on their own that can be a barrier to their education (Fletcher et. al., 2020). There is great promise in aspects of the Linked Learning framework for supporting the development of marginalized students. If the goals of Linked Learning are to prepare students for college and career and to close achievement gaps, it is important to gain a better understanding of the ways that educators are aligning the programmatic offerings of their schools with the needs of marginalized students like ELs and their beliefs about the purpose these efforts.

The following chapter includes a summary of the literature focusing on three primary bodies of literature: (1) The complex history of tracking in education, particularly Southern California; (2) The purpose of work-based learning within education; and (3) The experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning pathways, with a focus on work-based learning.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Part I: The Complex History of Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning and the backlash against tracking

Work-Based Learning (WBL) has a complicated history in public schools, especially in our local context of Los Angeles, California. Under various names, WBL has long been associated with tracking. Students who were not on a college track were put into vocational classes that were designed to prepare them for careers that did not require a college education. Historically this made more sense when the median years of education completed in 1900 were 8.0 (Snyder, 1993). As it became more typical for young people to stay in school through high school, tracking students between vocational education and college preparatory education became more common as a way to expand who was being served by schools, although it was being challenged as early as 1915 because vocational education was limiting potential and preserving an unjust industrial order (Dewey, 1915). In the decades to come, this tracking was sometimes based on racialized notions of intelligence and was justified with claims that certain groups did not possess the intellectual aptitude for challenging academic work (Oakes et. al., 1997). Although many think of segregated schools in the Jim Crow South, California also has a long history of separating students and providing them with very different levels of education (Torres, 2012).

At times this tracking has been imposed on entire populations based on race, ethnicity, or national origin. An acute example of this is the Mexican schools that emerged in the 1910s through the 1940s to serve the children of rural farm workers that provided inferior facilities, substandard resources, and overcrowding (Arias, 1986). These schools existed in urban areas in the Southwest and West, including Pasadena, where a segregated Mexican school was created in

1914 at the behest of white parents (Torres-Rouff, 2012). These Mexican schools emphasized vocational education, preparing male students for farm or factory work and female students for sewing and washing, while deemphasizing academic subjects, sometimes with the explicit approval of state education authorities (Torres-Rouff, 2012).

Tracking in public schools has a long history that persists to the present day. Tracking has been justified over the years with rationales that aligned with the thinking of the time. Although generally couched in terms that speak to appropriateness, ability, or skill level, tracking within and between schools has always been both a product and cause of racial discrimination. The tiering of students is closely tied to a fixed view of ability and intelligence that labels certain students as failures incapable of academic achievement (Oakes et. al., 1997). Students who educators perceived as not having innate academic ability were tracked into vocational classes that would prepare them to be productive members of society (Lewis and Cheng, 2006). Tracking has also been associated with segregation.

In Los Angeles, data from the late 1960s demonstrated huge disparities in student outcomes such as graduation and college-going between high schools that align with the percentage of white vs. Black and Latino students. The difference in both opportunities and outcomes was a primary motivation for the 1968 Eastside Walkouts (Bernal, 1998; Gutierrez, 1996). Amongst the 36 demands that the walkout leaders presented to the School Board was mixed classes. The 1968 demands are part of a long history of resistance to the type of tracking based on racist ideas about inferior intelligence and culture associated with Latinos (Ochoa, 2008). Students argued that their culture has worth and should be a subject of study in their education (de los Rios et. al., 2015).

Although opportunities and outcomes for Latino students in Los Angeles improved since the 1960s, achievement gaps and school-based tracking have persisted, and efforts to counter this tracking have had uneven results. Segregation persists and has increased in many areas, particularly for Latino students (Gándara and Aldana, 2014; Orfield, 2009). Latino students continue to be denied access to college preparatory curriculum (Torres, 2012). One of the challenges with these efforts is that it is not easy to pinpoint the cause of tracking and of lower expectations for Latino students. Since the sources of discrimination can be subtle and complex, legal- and policy-based remedies are not straightforward (Noguera, 1996). What is clear is that the contrast between academic and vocational tracks is still associated with academic achievement. Whatever side of the debate researchers fall on, they do not argue with the premise that the higher achieving tracks are focused on college preparation, and that the vocational classes tend to be for students who are not going to college because of lower academic achievement and potential. While some have argued that this tracking is pernicious and discriminatory, others have stated that tracking can benefit historically underperforming groups if it opens more opportunities for advanced classes (Loveless, 2016). Vocational education has not traditionally been viewed as appropriate for high achieving students who are being groomed for college.

In recent years, there is a deep questioning and challenge to this tracking, not only because students of color are disproportionately put on the lower, vocational track, but also because high-achieving students might also benefit from exposure to career pathways in high school. More recent research suggests that even as college-going rates have doubled since 1980, the wages of young workers have decreased (Orellana el. al., 2020). Although people with a college degree on average earn much more than those with just a high school diploma, there are

still many college graduates who are unemployed or underemployed. High schools can do more to better prepare these students.

Efforts to Reintegrate Academics with Vocational Education

As high school graduation rates have increased along with college-going rates, there are still major challenges with college persistence and the youth labor market, pushing workforce development and career pathways into focus. This movement has not always been motivated by racial equity or social justice concerns as much as a mismatch between industry workforce needs and the career preparation that students are receiving (Giloth, 2019). Preparation for careers and supporting economic growth have long been priorities of the educational enterprise. Despite this, the model of secondary education has not changed much as the economy and industries have changed drastically.

With a goal of aligning secondary education with the needs of the economy while promoting equity and countering tracking, career academies have emerged since the early 1970s as a viable alternative to the dichotomy of college for all vs. vocational education. Models like the National Academies Foundation (NAF), started in 1982, and California Partnership Academies, started in 1984, have operated with the goal of engaging students in theme-based, industry-aligned learning that would put them on a path to continuing education and a meaningful and well-paying career (Fletcher, Dumford, et. al., 2020, Lanford and Mruco, 2018). There are now around 500 California Partnership Academies (CPA), and they are seen as a model for educating “at-risk” students. CPAs serve students from grades 10-12. They have shown better outcomes on the California High School Exit Exam, A-G completion, and high school graduation rates. Research has not been able yet to isolate the key factors in the success of CPAs, since they include career-themed instruction, a small community with sustained

relationships, and student outcome requirements to retain CPA status (Lanford & Tierney, 2015). Regardless, these models have inspired other school reform initiatives such as Linked Learning, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Efforts to support career pathway models at a national level have been sporadic and inconsistent, suffering from competing priorities and a lack of long-term commitment. In 1994, the School to Work Opportunity Act (STWOA) was passed by Congress as a response to the growing feeling that the United States was losing its competitive edge over rivals like Japan and Germany, encapsulated in the 1983 Department of Education report, A Nation at Risk. The areas of focus of this law were incorporating career-based activities in school, work-based activities such as job shadowing and internships, and connecting educational institutions to employers (Neumark, 2005). Over the course of this initiative, $1.85 billion was spent, but the efforts were not well coordinated, and support ended with the Bush Administration in 2001 (Hamilton, 2019). In California, the STWOA was implemented through Local Partnerships without significant coordination. The evaluation of the effectiveness of these partnerships was inadequate and not always focused on the most important post-secondary outcomes (Neumark, 2005). Without a solid evidence base, it is hard to know which components of efforts like STWOA were successful and why. It is also unclear from the research whether improving outcomes for marginalized groups was a priority in these efforts and how outcomes were impacted for different subgroups of students.

There is considerable but not compelling research on the effectiveness of Linked Learning (Warner et. al. 2016; Warner et. al., 2015; LaFors & McGlawn, 2013). There are also more specific studies of ELs in Linked Learning pathways and how they might be marginalized

within a model that was created with an equity agenda (Mendoza, 2016; Habrun, 2016). These studies include observations and interviews of high school students, teachers, and administrators.

WBL has been one area of focus for school reformers and researchers for many years. The STWOA of 1994 aimed to address concerns brought to light in a 1990 report that young people were not connecting their schooling to potential careers, and that school was not providing them with the types of skills and complex knowledge needed for 21st century careers (US General Accounting Office, 1990). This federal program was implemented by states through local partnerships and suffered from a lack of consistent evaluation and evidence of effectiveness (Neumark, 2005).

Emerging several years after the end of the STWOA in California, the Linked Learning Framework brought a comprehensive view of high school reform, incorporating college and career readiness. Linked Learning emerged in California in the 2000s with characteristics like career academies, small learning communities within high schools that integrate academic and vocational curricula in a particular industry sector (Lanford and Maruco, 2019). The California Linked Learning District Initiative (LLDI), initially funded by the James Irvine Foundation in 2009, included a mix of urban, rural, and suburban school districts spread around the state of California (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Since that time, the model has grown beyond the initial nine districts in California to many more in the state and across the country (ConnectEd, 2016; Tovar, 2020). The primary goal is to counter the tracking that has been so prevalent in the educational system over the years (Oakes and Saunders, 2008). Historically, low-income Latino and African American students have often been placed into a vocational track without access to rigorous, college-preparatory courses, shutting off the option of pursuing a higher education after high school (LaFors and McGlawn, 2013). Ending unequal conditions in

schools was one of the demands of the 1968 walkouts in the Eastside of Los Angeles (Solorzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valmonte, 2011).

The college and career readiness framework of Linked Learning is grounded in an equity agenda that includes knowledge, skills, productive dispositions and behaviors, and education, career, and civic engagement (Darche and Stam, 2012). Linked Learning, as a comprehensive framework, incorporates the integration of rigorous academics and CTE, WBL, and comprehensive student support services. All these elements are interconnected. In Linked Learning, the definition of WBL is broadened beyond the traditional out-of-school experiences like job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships, to include any industry partner involvement, including in school-based experiences such as in curriculum development and feedback on class projects (Hamilton, 2020). This way, there is meant to be a close relationship between what students experience in and out of the classroom.

As a comprehensive framework that is designed to engage students in college prep through high-interest industry themes, the Linked Learning model consists of four elements: college-prep academics that provide all students with the A-G course requirements for University of California / California State University (UC/CSU) admission, a sequence of technical classes that leads to industry recognized certification, a continuum of WBL experiences, and comprehensive student supports that help students to access and be successful in the pathway (Saunders, Hamilton, Fanelli, Moya, & Cain, 2013). Students in a Linked Learning pathway take a sequence of at least two CTE classes that lead to industry-recognized certification. For example, students in an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) pathway may take a series of networking courses that prepare them for the Cisco Networking certification exam. This

type of certification can be attractive to employers who are looking for candidates with proven skillsets (Hamilton, 2019).

Linked Learning is designed to prepare all students for college and career rather than tracking students based on perceived potential. This means that in Linked Learning pathways, students are expected to graduate from high school ready for college and with skills that will lead to successful careers. Students engage in Project-Based Learning (PBL), which incorporates real-world skills and content from the pathway theme. Students also have WBL experiences that are meant to inspire and motivate students while preparing them for the workplace. There is a WBL continuum in Linked Learning pathways that starts with Career Awareness and Exploration and leads to Career Preparation and Training (Darche et. al., 2012). Students start with shorter and more varied experiences in the freshman and sophomore years, such as guest speakers and field trips to industry work sites. They move on to more intensive and focused experiences in the junior and senior years, such as internships, pre-apprenticeships, and school-based enterprise (Mcnulty et. al., 2012). The theory is that students who might otherwise have been disengaged will find relevance and motivation through these real-world learning opportunities. There are some promising data that this theory may be playing out in practice (Warner et. al., 2016).

Research provides mixed but somewhat positive results on whether participation in Linked Learning pathways lead to improved graduation rates. An early study examining data from 50 Linked Learning pathways in 2013 established a significant overall positive difference in graduation rates between Linked Learning pathways and comparable non-pathway schools (Saunders et. al., 2013). The authors cite an earlier study that looked at outcomes from 13 pathways around California from the 2007-2008 school year. Those pathways had 98% of their seniors graduate that year; however, no attempt was made in the study to create a comparison

group nor were subgroup data provided. These early studies showed promise but could not claim definitive improvement in graduation rates for Linked Learning pathways. This would require a more rigorous research design.

Reports point to more substantial gains for graduation rates in Linked Learning pathways when compared to similar student populations. In a report from the UCLA Institute for Democracy Education and Access (IDEA), 83% of students who entered as freshmen graduated in 2010 compared to 75% statewide. Similarly, in 2011, approximately 85% of students who entered as freshmen four years earlier graduated compared to 76% of students statewide. This study assumes that Linked Learning pathways are closing gaps in graduation rates since they serve a higher proportion of Latinos and African Americans than the overall state high school population (Saunders, Rogers & Terriquez, 2013). This early data from the Linked Learning initiative warrant follow-up, although this report does not share data for English Learners.

The most reliable graduation rate data have emerged from evaluation reports for the Linked Learning District Initiative. A quantitative study published by the federal government revealed outcomes of students in Linked Learning Certified Pathways (LLCP) compared to similar students not in LLCPs, with a focus on schools in the Linked Learning District Initiative (LLDI) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Overall, graduation rates were negligibly higher in the LLCPs, 89.5% vs. 89.3%. Disaggregated data were not provided in this report, and the difference was not significant. If a stated goal of Linked Learning is to increase graduation rates, then continued research and analysis is warranted. Since the equity agenda is central to Linked Learning, it is important for subgroup graduation rates to be investigated to determine if Linked Learning implementation correlates with improved rates for traditionally marginalized groups such as ELs.

As Linked Learning evolved, annual reports were published that provided more data over time. SRI International was contracted by the Linked Learning Alliance to conduct ongoing evaluation of the California Linked Learning District Initiative (Guha et al, 2014; Warner et al, 2016). In the fifth-year report, there was evidence that students in LLCPs were accumulating more credits (Guha et al, 2014). In the seventh-year evaluation report, the authors found that LLCP students had a 5.3 percentage point higher 4-year graduation rate than similar students in traditional high school programs (Warner et. al., 2019). This held true for students with low prior achievement, Latino, and female students. There were not enough data to make any conclusion about LLCP graduation rates for students with high prior achievement, ELs or African Americans. Clearly there are promising data regarding the relationship of Linked Learning to graduation success, but the results for ELs are not clear.

Youth apprenticeship has also received more interest in recent years as another way to integrate academics with vocational education. Most jobs today require some training beyond high school and many young people with only a high school education are unemployed or underemployed. Apprenticeships are a way to improve the job prospects of young people who do not go on to a 2- or 4-year higher education institution. Youth apprenticeships involve hands-on work experience and related classroom instruction. While some states have embraced apprenticeships, there is still no federal definition of apprenticeship and many states, including California, do not have their own state-level definition of apprenticeship (Baddour and Hauge, 2020). Apprenticeships have been more commonly offered for young adults, but there is some momentum in recent years to expand apprenticeship opportunities at the secondary level. Apprenticeship is an example of career training, the highest level of the work-based learning continuum (Linked Learning Alliance, 2012). In a high school apprenticeship program, young

people typically work at a job site for a number of hours while attending school, continuing their apprenticeship after high school graduation, often while taking community college classes (Tatum and Camacho-Craft, 2019). This approach allows young people to earn an industry-recognized certification while earning money, advancing their education, and gaining valuable work experience.

The need to rethink the college-for-all vs. vocational education dichotomy that has left millions of students without adequate career pathways has been thrust into the spotlight with the developments of the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic impact of the pandemic was felt disproportionately by young people of color, with many lacking good short-term options or long-term career prospects. Policymakers are pointing to examples that can be scaled up to meet an increasing need. Recent research from the U.S. Department of Labor indicates that 30 percent of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 do not enroll in any post-secondary education, severely limiting their career prospects (U.S. Bureau, 2020). The Centers for Applied Science & Technology (CAST), a network of charter schools in Texas, is a similar model to Linked Learning, where students are placed in job shadowing, internship and/or mentoring opportunities in local high demand, high wage industries with a goal of developing their skills, social capital, and experience for their resumes (Goodman et. al., 2021). While there does appear to be more interest in funding career pathways, the consensus is lacking on which models are most promising, and, which benefit the marginalized students the most. Identifying promising models starts with defining what constitutes quality WBL.

Defining Quality Work-Based Learning

One of the challenges with scaling up models of WBL that will most benefit marginalized students is that the term can mean so many things, and a common definition has not been

established. It is worthwhile to understand the various activities that have fallen under the umbrella of WBL and to arrive at a working definition for this research project. The primary consideration in defining WBL is whether to use a broad or more limited definition (Hamilton, 2020). The broad definition is promoted by Linked Learning. In this conception, WBL includes any learning activities that link industry to school. This includes activities that fit within the narrow definition, such as job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships, which are generally conducted outside of the high school campus at a work site. The broader definition includes activities that link industry to the classroom, including projects in which industry partners plan curriculum with teachers. It also includes industry partner feedback to students while they work on projects and on their culminating presentations. At various levels, policymakers have attempted to define WBL, generally falling somewhere on the continuum between the broadest and narrowest conceptualization.

States have developed formal definitions of work-based learning in recent years. 28 State Education Agencies (SEAs) have formal definitions of WBL, 14 SEAs have informal definitions, and nine SEAs have no formal or informal definitions. The most common theme in these definitions is workplace experience, followed by knowledge and skills development and employability skills (Giffin et. al., 2018). State labor departments are much less likely to formally define work-based learning, but do frequently have a formal definition of apprenticeship, which aligns with the federal definition. Apprenticeship tends to include formal certification by a state agency within an industry sector, 2,000 hours of work experience, and a mix of classroom and workplace learning (Giffin et. al., 2018). In addition, national organizations that focus on work-based learning often have their own definitions. While these also vary, the most common themes are outcomes for students such as knowledge, skills and

career options, the connection to the classroom, a continuum that builds in time and intensity through high school, and the prioritization of authentic work experience (Giffin et. al., 2018). In all these cases, there is a common theme of extending beyond the classroom with authentic workplace learning that connects back to classroom learning.

With these themes in mind, WBL can also be defined by different models. Post-secondary models of WBL include apprenticeship, clinical placements, internships, school-based enterprise, and service learning & community-based learning (Rodriguez et. al., 2016). These models align with the narrower definition of WBL in that they require a significant, intense experience that involves authentic workplace skill development. At the high school level some of these models are much less common, such as clinical placements, but there are examples of high school students engaged in school-based enterprise, such as the Credit Union branch at Lincoln High School in Los Angeles (Southern California Public Radio, 2014). Service learning can be considered work-based learning if the work contributes to the community while students engage in authentic work, such as volunteering with a community-based organization, as students gain some of the same skills as in an internship, such as teamwork, communication, and responsibility (Hamilton, 2020). Whether we define WBL by characteristics or by model, there is a consensus that the examples with more exposure to authentic workplace environments and working conditions are more likely to support youth development.

For the purposes of this research project, WBL, following Hamilton (2020), is defined more narrowly as "learning that occurs in an actual workplace, not simply learning about work." Although there is a benefit to career speakers, career interest surveys and the like, transformative WBL happens in authentic work environments. Linked Learning is a comprehensive school reform model that incorporates WBL as a key component. WBL in Linked Learning follows the

continuum from career awareness and exploration to career preparation and training (Linked Learning Alliance, 2012), all with a goal of countering tracking. This means that WBL in Linked Learning is not just for the students who are not going on to higher education after graduation. It is for all students (Oakes and Saunders, 2008). This idea that all students have access to the full program is a key concept in the Linked Learning model. In the traditional California high school, some students take a college preparatory curriculum and others are tracked into courses that only satisfy the high school graduation requirements. In the Linked Learning high school, all students are provided the UC/CSU A-G course sequence. Similarly, in a traditional high school, CTE pathways and work-based learning are provided to students who are not on the college track so that they can have other options after graduation or may be offered as electives for college-bound students. In the Linked Learning high school, all students have access to a sequence of CTE classes and continuum of WBL in ways that are integrated with rigorous college-prep curriculum (LaFors and McGlawn, 2013). Thus, a core idea in Linked Learning is that all students benefit from the integration of college and career preparation.

Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning

WBL in Linked Learning has developed with characteristics that build on the history of WBL and attempt to fit the component into the broader framework. In Linked Learning pathways, WBL requires certain elements. First, direct, systematic employer and community input that makes the learning experiences more authentic and links the classroom with the world of work. Second, there is an expectation of a depth of experience that goes beyond the exploratory nature of career speakers, job shadowing and similar work-related but short duration experiences. Third, in Linked Learning, WBL should have an academic and/or career technical curriculum connection (Darche et. al., 2009). At the same time, the reality of barriers to off-site

opportunities means that in Linked Learning, WBL can happen on campus through experiences such as simulated workplaces, school-based enterprises, social enterprises for learning, and Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSO). To increase equity and access to WBL, it has been recommended that schools find ways to pay students for these learning experiences (Darche et. al., 2009). Without compensation, WBL opportunities risk becoming a luxury for students who can afford to work without pay, thus excluding some of the students who would most benefit from access to high quality, high salary career pathways.

Linked Learning, as an equity-based framework, incorporates integrated student supports as a central component, so that all students can have access to the full program (Ruiz de Velasco et. al., 2016). While this goal is still elusive, it helps policymakers and practitioners to know what is needed. The community school model, like Linked Learning, is based on the premise that schools are situated in a broader context and that the lines between the school and community should be blurred. In community schools, resources are brought onto campus to serve students and families in a trusted environment. Additionally, parent engagement is central in community schools, with the understanding that parents are empowered when they have the knowledge to support their children's path to college and career (Valmonte, 2011). For WBL to be successful in a Linked Learning school, the community must be included. Industry partners must be connected to offer WBL placements. In addition, community-based organizations can offer WBL opportunities that complement private industry. (Maier et. al., 2017) Other CBOs can offer supports that enable students to successfully participate in WBL experiences. For example, integrated student supports for WBL promoted by the National Academies Foundation include pre-interview and résumé supports for students, and applicant feedback and coaching post-interview (Ruiz de Velasco et. al., 2016).

In Linked Learning, WBL fits under a rubric of hands-on learning. This Deweyan idea of linking academics and application has a long history without widespread adoption (Rogers-Chapman and Darling-Hammond, 2013). To integrate WBL in a coherent way, schools might need to adjust their assessment systems. Performance assessments have proven to be a more authentic way of measuring the impact of WBL experiences for students, and fit nicely with other components of Linked Learning, such as project-based learning (PBL). In LAUSD, for example, Linked Learning pathways implement a senior portfolio defense that involves a reflective presentation of learning to a panel of educators, industry partners, and sometimes parents and classmates. This portfolio often incorporates evidence from WBL experiences in demonstrating that the graduate has mastered the pathway outcomes (Maier et. al., 2020). The LA HI-TECH/Snap Inc. program coordinated by the Career Ladders Project (CLP) is an example of the type of hands-on learning that Linked Learning promotes. In this program, high school students were connected with Snap, Inc. through the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and CLP, gaining hands-on experience in the technology industry (Career Ladders Project, 2018). These types of model programs have shown promise, but they suffer from small scale and limited duration that depends on temporary funding sources such as grants. Moreover, selective criteria of WBL opportunities can exacerbate inequalities when program designers do not prioritize equity and access.

A theme this literature review will explore in more depth is the danger of WBL being another opportunity that is unequally provided. A recent case study of a majority African American career academy (Fletcher and Haynes, 2020) demonstrates through interviews that this is a real issue. As CTE courses now tend to have more academic content than in the past, and industries like information technology and engineering gain more prominence in CTE, there is a

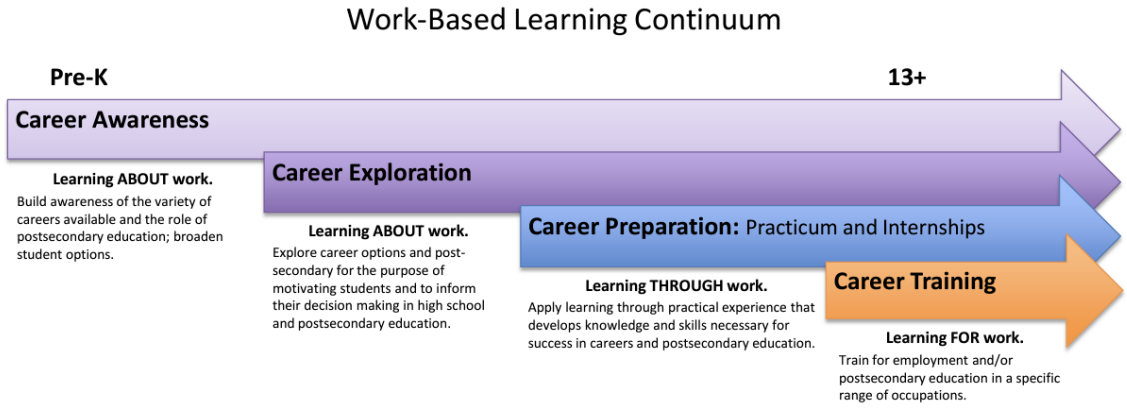
risk that students who are not perceived as being academically strong will be denied access to CTE and WBL, just as they have been denied access to college preparatory courses. In this case study, students indicated in interviews that the school was tracking them into the college prep and traditional programs, and that WBL was part of the career academy program that was open to the college prep students. Consequently, the traditional students did not participate in WBL.

Definition of Work-Based Learning

This study explores the perspectives of educators at certified Linked Learning high schools in a large urban school district. The Linked Learning Alliance, a California-based organization, defines work-based learning as follows:

> Work-based learning is an instructional strategy that is essential in preparing all students for success in postsecondary education and careers and is a core component of the Linked Learning approach. The primary purposes of work-based learning are to expose students to future options and provide opportunities for skill development and mastery over time. All work-based learning experiences involve interactions with industry or community professionals that are linked to school-based instruction. These learning experiences are intentionally designed to help students extend and deepen classroom work and to make progress toward learning outcomes that are difficult to achieve through classroom or standard project-based learning alone. The term "work-based" does not mean the experience must occur at a workplace or during the standard "workday." A continuum of work-based learning experiences stretches from kindergarten into adulthood. Stated most simply, the stages of work-based learning can be described as:

- Learning ABOUT work.
- Learning THROUGH work.
- Learning FOR work.



(Source: Linked Learning Alliance, 2012)

Work Not Related to School

The discussion of workplace experiences in this literature review has included opportunities brokered by schools and connected to the classroom curriculum. Many young people work during high school in jobs that they find with no involvement from their school and that have no intentional connection to their classroom work. Research has investigated the educational outcomes of students who work during high school to determine whether there is a positive or negative correlation between working and educational outcomes, indicating that there may be some impact on educational outcomes from high school employment. Research has shown that youth work is quite common, especially for those 16 and older. Earlier studies from the second half of the 20th century drew inconsistent conclusions about whether there were more positive or negative outcomes for high school students who worked, although long hours did tend to be associated with worse educational outcomes (Entwisle et. al., 2000). Other studies

have tended to support the idea that some work during high school is associated with positive educational outcomes if it is of moderate intensity (Staff and Mortimer, 2007). Employment has not been associated with any impact on academic grades (Warren et. al., 2000), although intensive work can be a risk factor for dropping out (Staff et. al., 2020), especially for disadvantaged students (Lee and Staff, 2007), as well as alcohol and drug abuse (Mihalic and Elliott, 1997; Mortimer et. al., 1996). In a direct comparison of the outcomes of students with jobs related and not related to school, the findings showed that it was the students with work unrelated to school who had better educational outcomes (Hamilton and Sumner, 2017). This may reflect that schools are underinvesting in finding high-quality work placements, given that students in school-brokered jobs did not report that these jobs were better than did students who found jobs on their own.

Part II: The Purpose of Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is connected to broader discussions about the purpose of education, particularly the movement to incorporate WBL in an anti-tracking agenda. One framework, proposed by Gert Biesta (2009, 2020), distinguishes between three functions of education, qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Certainly, in the case of WBL, a common stated goal is to qualify students for college and careers through the certifications, skills, and experiences they will gain. Likewise, socialization is assumed to happen in WBL experiences through mentorship and the hands-on experience of being in an authentic workplace environment that is often quite different from the classroom and presumably close to what students will experience in their careers after high school. Many initiatives in education involve connecting students' career interests to their education, and work-based learning is considered an essential component of motivating students by finding relevance to the real world and their future in their

education. In Biesta's conception, subjectification refers to the process of becoming a subject, of discovering one's individual identity and place in the world. In this sense, efforts to personalize education by aligning with students' individual talents and interests places a particular value on subjectification.

While Biesta's framework for considering the purpose of education is useful, others have considered factors that do not fit neatly into his three categories, or at least deserve separate consideration. For example, while preparation for college and career are seen frequently in school and district mission statements, preparation for civic engagement and active participation in democracy are worthy of consideration (Rogers et. al., 2012). Although leaders generally agree that preparation for civic engagement is an important goal of public education, it receives minimal attention in California school districts (Rogers et. al., 2020). Linked Learning has potential to support this purpose, where opportunities like internships could have a civic learning component if it were built into the design (Cain, 2012; McCoy et. al., 2011). Others explicitly connect civic engagement to personal development, arguing that schooling must provide projects in which students experience for themselves meaningful forms of work that illuminate qualities about themselves, that underscore the nature of collaboration, and that contribute to transforming the world (Rehm, 1989).

Regarding countering tracking, more recent thinking on WBL emphasizes that the career focus can be a basis for broader learning without constraining students' career paths (Hamilton, 2020). There is a questioning whether school-to-work and similar initiatives are at odds with the college for all approach (Anderson & Nieves, 2020). This idea that vocational education should be expanded at comprehensive schools rather than by separating out non-college-bound students

has a lengthy history (Goodlad, 1972; Goodlad, 1979). WBL can benefit all students, whether they are college bound or not.

Regardless of a student's academic history or educational plans, there is potential for WBL in the areas of human fulfillment and youth development. As a key aspect of WBL, mentoring has the potential to build on and help develop the various forms of capital or funds of knowledge that students bring from their home and community, also referred to as Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005; Liou, Martinez, & Rotheram-Fuller, 2016; Murillo et. al., 2017; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012). Industry mentors are often assigned to students as part of an internship and can help those students to connect the assets they bring, such as linguistic and navigational capital, to the workplace context. When connected with the community school model, WBL can build students' social capital and connect them with institutional agents who can develop their social network (Galindo et. al., 2017; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Similarly, with the potential to develop a web of supportive relationships, WBL can be part of a positive youth development model (Flanagan et. al., 2020). With many WBL experiences students learn to be more independent and develop their personal agency (Kundu, 2017).

Models of Work-Based Learning

The extant models of WBL reflect the diverse missions of the schools that provide them. The work–study program in the Cristo Rey Network of high schools is based on corporate placements, which align with their mission of preparing low-income students for success in college and beyond (Bempechat et. al. 2014). From their 9th grade, students spend a full day in a work-based placement, with transportation and compensation provided. Similarly, the 4-H model of WBL emphasizes positive youth development, including hopeful future expectations (Callina et. al., 2014; Ferrari et. al., 2008). In the Big Picture model, the subjectification of Biesta's

conception is prioritized. Each student is treated as an individual and creates a plan based on their interests, talents, and needs. (Bradley & Hernandez, 2019). Big Picture students intern one or two full days a week with mentors in their chosen field and complete projects that connect their interests to the real world (Hernandez et. al., 2019). At High Tech High School in San Diego, juniors complete an internship based on their interests that can involve going to a work site after school two days a week or an entire academic school day weekly (Behrend et. al., 2014). At High Tech High, work-based learning connects students to the adult world both inside and outside of school, hitting all three of Biesta's purposes through the development of qualifications, socialization, and subjectification (Neumann, 2008).

Civic engagement does emerge as a stated purpose in some work-based learning programs. For example, Faces for the Future includes civic-focused internships and internships as a way of exposing students to careers that involve civic engagement and community transformation in the health industry (Cain, 2012).

Part III: English Learners and Work-Based Learning

English Learners in California

In a state with a large immigrant population, a significant proportion of California K-12 students are classified as English Learners (Umansky, 2018; Santibanez & Umansky, 2018). Although there are well-documented advantages to bilingualism (Gandara, 2018), student outcomes for English Learners have historically been poor when compared to the overall population (Hill et. al., 2019; Murillo & Lavadenz, 2018; Lavadenz, Armas, Murillo, & Jáuregui Hodge, 2019). Despite investments and mandates for increased English language development time, there is still a significant Long Term English Learner population in California schools, defined as students who have not reclassified as fluent English proficient within five years of

entering school (Olsen, 2010). As of 2019, LTELs made up about 38% of the overall EL population in the state (English Learners, 2021). EL students, especially immigrants, are often raised to value hard work, but paying jobs can compete with school and interfere with their education (Gandara, 2008). Thus, for low-income students, work-based learning opportunities such as unpaid internships that require a significant time investment without financial reward may not feel worthwhile.

Outcomes and Structural Challenges for English Learners in Linked Learning Pathways

Over 40 percent of California students speak a language other than English at home, and almost half of those students are classified as ELs (Hill et. al., 2019). Research investigating EL college preparation is somewhat limited but does provide some ideas about what is behind these gaps. Tracking, deficit-based thinking on the part of educators, and limited access of students to social capital in the form of college-bound peers and supportive institution agents are cited as some of the factors (Murillo and Lavadenz, 2020). Recent efforts in California to institute a more equitable funding approach have not yet delivered the intended results. Research indicates that school districts are not targeting enough Local Control Funding Formula dollars to ELs or with strong alignment to research-supported practices (Lavandenz, Armas, et. al, 2019). “Research shows that having aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005), access to advanced courses (Adelman, 2006), college counseling (Hurwitz & Howell, 2014), supportive relationships with institutional agents such as counselors (Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and navigational support (McAlister & Mevs, 2012) promote college readiness and enrollment” (Murillo and Lavadenz, 2020). Linked Learning has the potential to be part of this solution, as the model addresses all these components. Unfortunately, there is evidence that in many cases, ELs do not have access to the

full Linked Learning model and there is a lack of understanding of how well they are being served by Linked Learning programs (Mendoza, 2016).

As graduation rates have increased in California, the push to increase expectations for students has led to a focus on college readiness. There are many ways to measure college readiness. Studies of Linked Learning's impact have looked at completion of college preparatory (A-G) requirements, college preparatory GPA, postsecondary enrollment and 4-year university enrollment. More recent research is examining an additional metric, post-secondary persistence. In the area of college prep requirements, LLCP students in every subgroup have completed more requirements on average (Warner and Caspary, 2017). For other metrics, the results have been uneven. One promising statistic is that low prior achievement, EL and African American students have seen increased rates of 4-year college enrollment, particularly African American students (Warner and Caspary, 2017).

While graduation and readiness are important metrics, given the stated Linked Learning goal of college and career readiness for all students, studies have also focused on college attainment as indicators of pathway effectiveness. In the 7th year evaluation report of the Linked Learning District Initiative, ELs accumulated 11.7 more credits and one more college prep requirement than their EL peers in traditional high school programs. The researchers were unable to make firm conclusions about EL college enrollment and persistence, both in community college and 4-year institutions (Warner et. al., 2016). Despite considerable research on the effectiveness of the Linked Learning model, there is little understanding of the outcomes of English Learners in Linked Learning or CTE pathways and their transition to higher education, which can hinder our understanding of what works at the high school level (Nunez et. al., 2016).

The data for college enrollment and persistence, therefore, are promising, but not conclusive, whether for overall LLCP populations or for ELs.

Community college is the next destination after high school for many Linked Learning certified pathway students although there has been some increase in 4-year enrollment compared to non-pathway graduates (Warner et al, 2017). However, outcomes for community college students in general have been quite poor. A recent report found that 19 percent of California community college students who list transferring as a stated goal can successfully do so within four years (Johnson and Mejia, 2020). These outcomes vary depending on student background and the college they attend, amongst other factors, with students from under-resourced high schools and those with parents without a college education having lower transfer rates (Taylor and Jain, 2017).

There is considerable interest in whether graduating from a LLCP could better prepare students to complete community college and successfully transfer to a 4-year university, but not much research to support this. In a 2019 study that tracked pathway students through two years of community college, there was no evidence that LLCP students overall or in any subgroup had better outcomes in community college (Warner et al, 2019). The authors of this evaluation study point out that since 4-year college going rates are higher for LLCP graduates, it is possible that the lower achieving students matriculated to community colleges (Warner et al, 2019). Qualitative studies are starting to explore student experiences in college and how well they felt that their Linked Learning pathway prepared them (M. Saunders, personal communication, December 5, 2019). More of this type of research could help policy makers and educators to better understand what type of high school experience and preparation are most likely to set up ELs to attend and persist in college.

There is an inherent conflict between English Language Development and access to pathway electives that many Linked Learning pathways face. ELs may be enrolled in LLCPs at relatively proportional rates as the overall population, but they don't always access the full range of course options (Guha et. al., 2014). For example, in many school districts, ELs are required to take an English Language Development (ELD) class in addition to their grade-level English Language Arts class. Because space in a student schedule is limited, this additional course must take the place of another class, often an elective. Given the mandates to offer ELs additional ELD courses, ELs are often pulled out of pathway electives to fit the intervention courses in their class schedule (Mendoza, 2019). In a Linked Learning pathway, students are expected to take a Career and Technical Education (CTE) class for at least two years, to develop career-readiness skills within a specific industry sector. Because English Learners have this additional ELD class, they may not be able to take the CTE class and are therefore shut out of a major component of the Linked Learning experience.

The Experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning Pathways

Studies have started to explore the experiences of ELs in high school and how they are treated differently and denied access to the same opportunities in Linked Learning pathways. ELs are sometimes denied access to the core CTE curriculum in a Linked Learning pathway and do not get access to the same college preparatory coursework and counseling support as their non-EL peers. Language development through contextualized instruction could be incorporated into the CTE and other content-area coursework so that EL students have access to the pathway and support to acquire English at the same time (Mendoza, 2019).

Another case study at a large, urban high school in Southern California focused on Latino EL students in a media academy (Habrun, 2016). This study also found that a significant number

of EL students at levels 1 and 2 were denied access to Linked Learning and college-prep curriculum. Thus, despite the ELs students reporting in focus groups and interviews that they felt supported as part of a learning community and prepared for college, a large group of their peers were left out of this community. These students may feel disenfranchised by policies and choices that adults make, such as the programming of classes by counselors. ELs may need extra time and support to acquire academic language. At the same time, they can benefit from having access to the full academic program of their Linked Learning pathway. Not enough is being done to find ways to integrate these two needs so that English Learners are not marginalized (Mendoza, 2019). There have been efforts, such at University of California Curriculum Institute, which was designed to create classes that would infuse industry themes into academic classes (UCCI, 2019). However, these courses have not been widely adopted by Districts.

Linked Learning can build social capital and college aspirations while helping ELs to overcome barriers. In areas like college-going culture, college aspirations and knowledge, access to work-based learning, and student support, some Linked Learning schools provide an environment and resources that meet the needs of EL students (Martinez & Mendoza, 2020). A supportive environment where students are encouraged to break boundaries between school and community can be especially valuable for ELs (Achinstein et. al., 2016; Maier et. al., 2017; Linked Learning, 2021). Work-Based Learning is one vehicle for bringing the community into the school and the students into the community.

Given that Linked Learning is a holistic model that aims to make learning relevant by connecting careers to high school academic content, there is an assumption that students are developing non-cognitive skills that will help them to be successful in the future. Work-based learning may help students to develop Community Cultural Wealth that they bring with them

(Murillo, Quartz and Del Razo, 2017). High schools can build on students' aspirational capital, but they can also have the opposite effect (Teller, 2016). Linked Learning high schools can build on students' CCW through WBL, connecting them to professionals who can inspire them and help them to see a path to a future career and how to navigate that path, building on their aspirational and navigational capital. Given the mixed outcomes for Linked Learning graduates, it can be argued that this potential has not been harnessed consistently or effectively enough to make a significant difference.

English Learners and Work-Based Learning

WBL opportunities have the potential to change the way students are taught and to meet the specific needs of ELs, and in particular, newcomers. They can provide a chance to earn money while students learn English and progress in their education. These experiences can also make available strong models of English and opportunities to use English in meaningful ways. Since many newcomers arrive after the typical age of a new high school student, WBL opportunities can increase the comfort level of students who are older than their grade cohort about staying in school, allowing for flexible schedules while providing exposure to career opportunities and the future job market. In addition, given the importance of institutional agents and social capital for EL students (Achinstein et. al., 2016; Stanton-Salazar, 2010), WBL can expand the number of adults in students' lives to guide, nurture, teach, and monitor their progress (Gandara, 2008).

English Learners and Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning Pathways

Although research on WBL specific to ELs is limited, there is some understanding of important considerations to reduce barriers to WBL for marginalized students in general (Warner et. al., 2020). When designing WBL opportunities, schools have found success by intentionally

targeting harder to reach students such as students with disabilities and ELs, providing them with information one on one (Chen et. al., 2019). In addition, pathways have made a priority of giving exposure to a broad range of career opportunities within an industry sector, to avoid limiting the appeal of these experiences (Hester, 2019). Research has demonstrated more success with WBL opportunities that are linked to the identity of students. For example, female students in health pathways tended to gravitate more to work-based learning opportunities, which suggests that student identity should be considered in the development of WBL opportunities (Bonilla, 2019). Similarly, social networks can be a major influence on the choices that students make and the success of school programs, which can shape the development of opportunities to build on students' existing networks (Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012; Rincón et. al., 2020).

Evaluations of WBL in Linked Learning

Whereas one of the criticisms of earlier efforts to integrate college and career preparation in high school was the lack of quality evaluation (Neumark, 2005), Linked Learning was from its beginnings evaluated over seven years with rigorous methodology. As part of the James Irvine Foundation funded Linked Learning District Initiative (LLDI), SRI was contracted to release annual evaluation reports, starting in 2010 (Adelman et. al., 2012; Caspary & Warner, 2017; Guha et. al., 2014; Harris et. al., 2019; SRI International, 2011; Warner et. al., 2015; Warner et. al., 2016; Warner et. al., 2020). These reports were based on evaluations of the outcomes from the initial 10 districts in the LLDI. In the 7th year report, evaluators found that no district was able to systematically document the frequency and quality of WBL experiences. They also found that the most common experiences were at the lower end of the WBL continuum, field trips and guest speakers (Warner et. al, 2016). In the 4th year report, evaluators found that only a third of

12th graders in Linked Learning pathways reported participating in an internship (Guha et. al., 2014).

The evaluators cited the need to create more opportunities and to document them systematically with an eye on equity. Because of inconsistent funding and district support, this had not happened in any of the 10 LLDI districts (Warner et. al., 2016). When it comes to the most marginalized students, the outcomes were worse, and the evaluators found several reasons for this. First, low-income students are less able to afford to participate in unpaid internships, and districts struggled to find funding to subsidize these experiences, leaving many pathway students seeking paid jobs unrelated to school. Second, many students were busy in the summer recovering credits in summer school and could not take the time for a summer internship. Finally, undocumented students often lacked the paperwork to meet the requirements for work permits, and thus many internships were out of reach (Warner et. al, 2016). This points to the need for integrated student supports that start with the goal of all students participating in high-quality WBL and then systematically address the barriers to that goal.

Characteristics of Successful Work-Based Learning Programs

Given the potential of WBL to support young people's development in many ways, great care must be given in the design of such programs. Some principles that have been developed include supporting entry and advancement in a career track; providing meaningful job tasks that build career skills and knowledge; offering paid work-based learning opportunities, with wages provided either through the employer, provider, or combination of the two; developing strong partnerships with business and other community stakeholders; identifying target skills and how gains will be validated; rewarding skill development; highlighting linkages to career pathways either through future employment opportunities or future education and training opportunities;

supporting college entry, persistence, and completion; and emphasizing positive youth development and providing comprehensive student supports (Cahill, 2016; Showalter & Spiker, 2016). To achieve this, resources are needed.

Schools, industry, and the public and non-profit sectors all have a role in creating the infrastructure to achieve successful WBL. Part-time coordinators in the industry sector can bridge between the school and WBL partners (Saunders & Chrisman, 2011). This can include workplace supervisors, who play a critical role in mentoring students and helping them achieve the goals of the program and must be thoughtfully selected and receive proper training (Kenny et. al., 2015; Hamilton, 2021). These mentors can also foster social ties that help students to advance to careers (Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012; Rincon et. al., 2020). Governments, especially at the state level, can help to create the infrastructure to connect schools with industry. They can provide incentives to industry to provide more work-based learning opportunities. Additionally, states can develop better data collection systems to track progress (Hauge & Parton, 2016; Hauge, 2018).

Reducing barriers to participation in WBL is essential. Some of the barriers identified include limited space, GPA and coursework requirements, and complicated application procedures (Warner et. al., 2020). An equity agenda compels policymakers and practitioners to work to remove these barriers and to intentionally target harder to reach students. For example, in one Oakland health pathways program, WBL opportunities were offered specifically to students with disabilities (Chen et. al., 2019). To serve a larger and more diverse group of students, WBL opportunities should give exposure to a broad range of career opportunities within an industry sector (Hester, 2020). These WBL opportunities should align not only with

diverse academic backgrounds but also identities. For example, some careers appeal more to males or females, and so consideration should be made so that balance is found (Bonilla, 2020).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed some of the research on Linked Learning, English Learners, and work-based learning. This review included studies that have investigated (1) The complex history of tracking in education, particularly Southern California; (2) The purpose of work-based learning within education; and (3) The experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning pathways, with a focus on work-based learning.

Linked Learning has promise for improving outcomes for minoritized students, but to date progress of Linked Learning EL students has not been significantly better than ELs in comprehensive high schools. Studies have highlighted the experiences and perspectives of EL students in Linked Learning high schools and some of the obstacles they face (Mendoza, 2016; Habrun 2016; Mendoza, 2019). Existing scholarship does not address some critical issues that this study will explore. Specifically, this study focuses on one component of the Linked Learning model, WBL. It extends existing Linked Learning scholarship by including the perspectives of educators who develop WBL opportunities and work directly with students. School officials' perspectives demonstrate how they see the purpose of work experiences for high school students. It then explores how these beliefs shape the way they approach seeking out opportunities and developing them to meet the specific needs of ELs, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Linked Learning is a comprehensive school reform model whose aim is to prepare all students for college, career, and civic engagement. It has been designed as an equity-based framework that seeks to counter the tracking of students into college and vocational tracks.

Linked Learning is designed to accomplish this through three related components: (1) integration of college-prep and career technical education, (2) work-based learning and (3) integrated student supports. Based on prior models like career academies and California Partnership Academies, Linked Learning pathways began to emerge across the state of California around 2008, with growth fueled in large part through private funding, in particular the James Irvine Foundation. The Irvine-funded Linked Learning District Initiative (LLDI) included a significant evaluation component led by SRI, and there have been other smaller studies of Linked Learning's impact over the years. These studies have shown some potential in Linked Learning to improve graduation rates and to support some historically marginalized student subgroups, but the data have not been compelling in all areas or for all subgroups. Nonetheless, there are qualitative studies that seem to support that aspects of the Linked Learning experience can be rich and meaningful for students and can promote college readiness.

The education of ELs in California continues to be an area of disappointment, as many students are unable to reclassify, graduate or continue their education after high school. Linked Learning has the potential to be a model that can be supportive for EL students. For example, the work-based learning component can connect EL students to mentors and can help them see a path to a high-quality career through their education. In addition, experiences like WBL and project-based learning provide opportunities for EL students to develop their English language skills through collaboration and presentations of learning. Despite these possible benefits, ELs have not always benefitted from the opportunities of pathways. One issue is the scheduling conflicts of State requirements for additional English support classes with the Linked Learning expectation of additional CTE classes. Another issue is low expectations that school staff sometimes have for ELs, whether conscious or not. Modern CTE courses can be quite

academically rigorous, and students benefit from integrated student supports, but pathways often rely on schoolwide supports that are not tailored to the needs of EL students, such as support to prepare for work-based learning opportunities or support with the presentation of projects and portfolio defense.

We can shift our thinking about how Linked Learning can benefit ELs. Rather than seeing EL students as having deficits, these approaches can help us to see their experiences and culture as assets and can challenge schools to think of ways to affirm students' identities. At the same time, studies have shown that an assets-based mindset should not ignore issues of oppression. There are economical and societal issues that present real obstacles to ELs. In addition, the schools themselves have sometimes erected barriers by limiting access to the types of opportunities and encouragement that has the potential to improve ELs' high school experiences.

In conclusion, this literature review has demonstrated that Linked Learning's promise has not yet been realized. By exploring the beliefs and experiences of educators, we can reflect on some of the struggles of Linked Learning schools while lifting the approaches that have supported some ELs to thrive and develop in ways that are productive and aligned with better odds at success after high school.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Linked Learning is a high school reform model that was created to increase student engagement by integrating career technical education (CTE) with academic coursework, providing opportunities for work-based learning, and integrating student supports to ensure that all students can succeed with high expectations. There is research showing that despite Linked Learning's stated equity goal, English Learner (EL) students are frequently denied access to key components of a Linked Learning high school's program such as work-based learning (WBL) and are subjected to lower expectations and counseling that does not push them to aspire to continue their education beyond high school, nor provide the needed information to successfully do so (Mendoza, 2019, Habrun, 2016). In practice, many EL students are denied access to such opportunities and are forced to choose between working to help their families and staying enrolled in school. Those who can continue with their education are often unable to fit the CTE classes that are at the core of Linked Learning pathways into their schedules due to other requirements and competing policies (Mendoza, 2019). In addition, they are sometimes not given the same counseling as other students and may not be encouraged to pursue a college education.

This study examines how educators view the purpose of WBL and how these beliefs influence how they create opportunities for students. In addition, this study explores how educators think about ELs in the development of WBL opportunities and the supports needed for ELs to access them. This study is primarily based on a sociological conceptual framework.

Research Questions

This study examines the perspectives of educators in the development of ELs through the WBL component of the Linked Learning high school model. Educators have varied understandings of youth development, college and career readiness, and their roles and

responsibilities in this area. This study seeks to shed light on ways that policymakers and school officials might expand opportunities and what supports are needed to provide access for ELs.

1. What do Linked Learning school principals and support staff believe is the purpose of work-based learning in the development and support of English Learners?
2. What essential conditions (learning opportunities, staffing, and systems) do principals and support staff believe are needed for ELs to have access to impactful work-based learning?
3. To what extent do principals and other support staff feel that essential conditions exist for ELs to learn in an impactful way in the context of work-based learning? From the perspective of principals and support staff, who should be responsible for ensuring these conditions are in place?

Research Design and Rationale

This study used a qualitative research design, with the primary data collection being interviews. Because the research questions call for the in-depth perspectives of members from the three groups, a qualitative design was more likely to provide meaningful data.

A purely quantitative design would not have made sense for my phenomenological research questions because they are more related to beliefs and experiences (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Because the implementation of Linked Learning is inconsistent and every student in a Linked Learning high school has unique experiences, it would be challenging to find a large enough sample who had the same experiences in high school that a quantitative design could produce and useful findings (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). For example, within a Linked Learning high school, some students may have participated in an internship, job shadowing experience, mentorship, and/or college access program, while others in the same school may

have been part of none of those opportunities. A qualitative design allowed more space to explore the unique experiences of each individual subject (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In addition, it provided the opportunity to probe for more details as participants made meaning. For example, I explored with subjects what they saw as their moral responsibility.

This design fit my research questions because they are focused on the subjects' experiences and beliefs. Although a survey could have provided useful data for this, I was interested in narrative data that would be hard to capture through a survey and would probably be best obtained through direct conversations.

Study Population and Sample

The data for this study comes from eleven interviews conducted with educators at six different Linked Learning high schools in a large, urban school district in California. Of these six schools, all but one were Linked Learning Gold Certified pathways. As of October 2022, there were 24 Gold Certified pathways in the State of California, so at the time of this study, the schools included were amongst the most highly rated of the more than 600 pathways recognized by the Linked Learning Alliance.

Six of the educators interviewed were school principals and five served as work-based learning coordinators at their schools. Two of the coordinators were in their role full-time, and three were part-time coordinators with other responsibilities. Two of the part-time coordinators were teachers who were released for part of the day from their teaching duties. One coordinator was full-time out of the classroom, serving also as a coordinator for English Learner programs at the school. Of the 11 educators interviewed, three were Latino, two were Asian, and six were white.

Gaining Access to Participants

The Administrator of the Linked Learning office sent an email to the Linked Learning high school principals summarizing my study and encouraging the principals to respond to the short survey that I sent. I sent a short survey to all 41 Linked Learning high school principals that was created in Qualtrics and had a unique link for each participant (APPENDIX B). After several follow-up emails, I received 13 total survey responses. I reviewed the survey responses to determine which principals I wanted to follow up with for interviews. I chose to interview principals who indicated that a relatively high percentage of their students participated in WBL. I also selected principals who had been at their school for at least two years and indicated that they differentiated WBL preparation and experiences to meet the needs of ELs. I asked the principals whom I interviewed to refer me to their staff members who coordinated WBL; I sought one staff member per school.

The schools I selected were mostly Linked Learning Gold Certified, except for the continuation school, which was relatively new to Linked Learning and had not yet been certified. The other two schools had Gold Certified pathways. After interviewing staff at three schools, I determined that more data would be needed, especially since the three schools had very different characteristics. I then reached out to three more schools, which I selected because they were all Gold Certified and were known to have strong programs. I had a personal connection to the coordinators at these three schools. I first contacted the coordinators of these three schools instead of the principals, and the coordinators provided support with scheduling interviews with the principals at their schools. From the time that the survey administration was completed, it took about three months to schedule all the interviews.

Linked Learning Schools in the Study

Below I provide a brief overview of each school. The school names are pseudonyms, as are the names of the educators.

Dry River High School is a continuation school; it is a small school adjacent to a comprehensive high school that is designed for students who have not been successful in a traditional high school setting and need to catch up on credits to graduate. The student population varies throughout the year, with somewhere between 50 and 100 students at any given time. Students are predominately Latino, with a small African American and white population. English Learners make up about 10% of the overall student population. The school was led by Principal Janet, who had been in her role at Dry River for the past seven years. Dry River did not have a full- or part-time work-based learning coordinator, but Janet said that her office technician did some of the paperwork. Dry River had a pathway in arts, media, and entertainment but tailored the career focus to each student's interests.

Science High School is a small pilot school with about 600 students in an ethnically diverse, densely populated urban neighborhood. The student population was around 90% Latino, with a small white, Filipino, Asian, and African American population that made up most of the remainder. About 6% of the students were English Learners. The principal was Sofia, and she was formerly a teacher at the school. The coordinator, Jon, was a biology teacher at the school, and he taught full time while being released from some of his teaching duty to coordinate work-based learning. Science High School had two CTE pathways, one in engineering and the other in health and medical sciences.

Fame High School is a small pilot school with about 450 students in an ethnically diverse, densely populated urban neighborhood. Like Science High School, the student

population was around 90% Latino, with a small Asian, African American, Filipino, and white population making up the remainder. The English Learner population made up about 24% of the overall student population. The principal of Fame High School was Eleanor, who was formerly a teacher at the school. She had a full-time, dedicated work-based learning coordinator named Kristine, who was hired into the role about seven years prior. The school had two CTE pathways, one in acting and the other in production and managerial arts.

Healthcare High School is a medium sized pilot school with about 700 students located in a heavily Latino working-class suburb. The student population was over 99% Latino. The English Learner population was about 6% of the overall population, and about 60% of students had been reclassified as fluent English proficient, meaning that they were formerly classified as English Learners. The principal of Healthcare High School was Matthew. He had a full-time, dedicated WBL coordinator named Brendan, who had been hired recently. The school had two pathways, one in patient care and one in biotechnology.

Hospital High School is a large magnet high school in a working-class urban neighborhood located right next to a major research and public hospital. Healthcare High had a student population of approximately 1,500. The student population was predominately Latino and around 10% Asian, with a small white, Filipino, and African American population. English Learners made up only 2% of the student population. The principal of Hospital High School was Jose; the coordinator, Luna, worked as a teacher and was released from some of her teaching duties to allow time to serve as coordinator. Hospital High School had one Linked Learning pathway in patient care, which started in 10th grade and had a small cohort of students in Grades 10-12.

Finally, Central High School is a large, comprehensive high school in an ethnically diverse, densely populated urban neighborhood. The overall student population was 1,100. The ethnic breakdown of the student population was around 70% Latino, 10% white, 10% African American, with a small percentage of Asian and Filipino students. English Learners made up about 10% of the overall student population. The principal of Central High School was George; he had a WBL coordinator, Brittany, who also served as English Learner coordinator. Central High had three Linked Learning pathways, one in acting, one in child development, and the third in new media.

Summary of Schools and Subjects in Study

School Name	Principal Name	Coordinator Name	Student Population	Pathway(s)	Certification Level
Dry River High School	Janet	NONE	50-100	Arts, media, and entertainment	None
Science High School	Sofia	Jon	600	Engineering / Health and Medical Sciences	Gold
Fame High School	Eleanor	Kristine	450	Acting / Production and Managerial Arts	Gold
Healthcare High School	Matthew	Brendan	700	Patient Care / Biotechnology	Gold
Hospital High School	Jose	Luna	1,500	Patient Care	Gold
Central High School	George	Brittany	1,100	Acting / Child Development / New Media	Gold

Data Collection Methods

I conducted six principal interviews and five coordinator interviews, for a total of 11 interviews: principals and support staff. I originally intended to do about half that number, but through discussions with my dissertation chair, determined after five interviews that it would be helpful to have more data. These interviews were semi-structured. The interviews almost all took place in-person at the school site of the educators. One interview was done via Zoom and the rest were in person.

If the interviews were conducted in person, they were recorded on two electronic devices, a Blue Yeti connected to a MacBook Pro, and my cellular phone, an iPhone 12 Pro, using the built-in microphone. I tested my hardware and settings well in advance to make sure everything was working well in case I needed to order anything. This was done by interviewing a colleague who had experience as a Linked Learning principal. That interview data was not included in this study. I also tested my equipment immediately before travelling to my interview locations. For the interview conducted over Zoom, I used the built-in recording feature and saved to the computer. I used Otter.ai automatically transcribe the interview and then reviewed the recording with the transcript to edit for accuracy. I obtained the consent of each participant prior to starting the recording by having them complete an electronic consent form. I also reminded the participants at the beginning of the session that I was going to be recording. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes and each participant received a $25 Amazon gift card sent to their email afterwards.

The interviews helped me answer different research questions from my study. For research question 1, I asked each participant to think about the learning opportunities associated

with work-based placements, both in terms of skills but also knowledge and dispositions that can serve youth development, including individual educational and career trajectories, as well as their civic identity. Open-ended questioning allowed for subjects to share their ideas regarding the learning opportunities associated with youth work. The interview format generated a diversity of perspectives would not have been as likely in a group interview or focus group (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Within the school official populations, there were two subpopulations: school principals and support staff. I held a separate interview for each except for one school where the interview was combined. I started with the principals except for one school where I knew the coordinator and interviewed them first. I expected that video conference would be the preferred setting for the interviews, although I wanted to hold them in person, and most participants were open to this. If the interview was in-person, I used the recording equipment described and used Otter.ai for transcription. The interviews took place mostly in the late afternoon after work hours, although a couple were in the summer when school was not in session and took place in the middle of the day. I usually took about 5 – 10 minutes to chat informally before starting the interviews.

Data analysis methods

After each interview, I wrote my own reflective journal to capture my thinking while it was fresh from the session. I used Otter.ai to generate the transcripts and corrected through listening to the recordings for my data analysis. As I was reviewing and correcting the transcripts, I wrote annotations for key passages. After reviewing each transcript, I wrote a reflective memo.

I started to code the interview data using a deductive coding scheme with categories that aligned with my conceptual framework while also staying open to new codes that emerged inductively. I tried using MaxQDA coding software to assist me with the process but ended up using Google Docs to create an outline of the themes. My approach to the inductive data analysis was to seek to find patterns, running through the transcripts multiple times to refine the categories. I went through several passes to develop grounded categories that emerge from the interview transcripts. Recognizing that some data did not fit neatly into categories, I also sought to highlight stories to enlighten, more than to give reductive summaries.

Positionality

I know that as a principal and colleague, some school officials may not have felt comfortable sharing negative feedback on their experience. I was upfront about my position at the school while emphasizing that I was a graduate student at UCLA. I made it clear to participants that this was a research study and that I was seeking honest answers, even if they may be critical of the school district or the public school system in general. It was challenging because I wanted to make them more comfortable with me as a principal and as a researcher. I tried sharing my own experiences to spur their thinking. There was a balance that needed to be struck that helped my subjects to feel comfortable with me and my role, gave them ideas of the types of things that would be helpful to share, but also kept things open enough that they could be authentic in their responses.

I explained to participants that policymakers want to do a better job of serving students and need to hear what is not working well. Although I recognize that my position might have been a barrier to getting the full picture from subjects, I think that it could also have been an advantage, because subjects might have seen that I had the power to make change. Participants

might have been more willing to share ideas that they thought might be put into action. In addition, I offered a thank you gift card to my subjects, a $25 Amazon card.

Ethical issues

I do not expect harm coming to my subjects from my interviews. To protect my subjects, I used pseudonyms for their names as well as the high schools where they work. There is the possibility that harm could come to the high schools where my subjects worked if the responses cast a poor light on those programs. I offered to share my transcripts with participants to make sure that they are comfortable with what they said, but no one asked to see the transcript.

Because of my position as a principal, there is a potential for ethical conflicts when it comes to advancement in the district. I might have had the motivation to adjust my findings or discussion because of concerns that would not be well received by my superiors in the district. I could be concerned if the study did not sit well with someone in the school district who makes personnel decisions that could affect me. Although this was not a primary motivation, I was aware the potential for an ethical conflict existed. I was not really concerned about how my study would be received by such people. I did not censor my study because of concerns from someone in a position of authority.

Reliability and Validity/Credibility and Trustworthiness

My greatest threat to credibility in my study was bias. I was very careful about not just selecting data that fit my existing theory, goals, or preconceptions, and selecting data that "stand out" to me. I countered this risk of selecting only favorable data in two primary ways: being systematic and transparent. Systematic methods were followed at every step of the research design, data collection and data analysis. In the research design, I chose methods and instruments that were most likely to yield honest responses from my subjects. I sought narratives as opposed

to specific answers to questions. These narratives provided rich data that might be more open to interpretation rather than to questions that might have led my subjects in a particular direction. In the data collection, I was systematic in how I introduced myself and my topic, and how I made my subjects comfortable with me and answering my questions. I used the same script for this purpose for every interview. I tried to be a good listener and to be clear about my approach to interviewing. In terms of data analysis, I used a more inductive approach, allowing the data to define the categories rather than trying to fit the data into pre-established categories. I tried using coding software to help with this process but ended up settling on creating an outline in Google Docs. I have tried to be clear in my write up about the methods that I have used to code the data.

Transparency also helps to counter threats to credibility through researcher bias. I try to be clear in my writing about my professional interest and motivation and the beliefs I had going into the study that might have influenced my methods of data collection and analysis. I wanted to have the subjects conduct respondent validation through member checks, but this did not occur because it was difficult to even find the time to interview my subjects. Member checks would have helped to ensure that I recorded their thoughts the way they intended. Transparency is also required with the research methods, so I am publishing the instruments I used and the data analysis methods. I have tried to be clear about when I think that the data confirmed my biases and when it challenged them. This type of reflection is good practice for doing better analysis and it also helpful for the reader.

Reactivity is also a major concern for my study's credibility. I have already touched on the ways that my position as a high school principal could have influenced my subject's responses. I have considerable experience with this in my everyday work. Because I am in a position of authority and have the power to make decisions that affect people's jobs, I often

sense that people are careful about what they say to me or may tell me what they think I want to hear. I have learned that it is incredibly important to build trust so that people can be open and honest. Of course, this depends on my ability to build trust and varied from person to person. Because of this, I also needed to be aware of and be transparent about how I might influence my subjects during the data collection phase. The goal was not to eliminate this influence, but, if possible, to reduce it and to be reflective and open about it in my reporting.

Study Limitations

Because I have qualitatively explored the perspectives of educators on the topic of the purpose and impact of WBL for ELs, the sample size is necessarily relatively small. Because the data I collected is primarily narrative and subjective, this study's generalizability is limited. This study is restricted to schools in a large urban school district in California, and it is important to be clear that this is a specific context with its own unique history and development. I spend some time in my dissertation situating the study in the local context so that the reader can understand the way that Linked Learning and WBL have developed. Because we are coming out of a global pandemic, it is also important to situate the study in that context. In some ways, the pandemic has exacerbated and amplified issues that were already present and, in some ways, it has created new challenges and opportunities.

Conclusion

This study explores the perspectives of educators on the topic of youth employment and youth development. The study population is principals and support staff who facilitate WBL in Linked Learning high schools. This study's research questions address the views of educators on the potential of WBL for youth development, including preparation for college, career and civic engagement, the goals of the Linked Learning model. Through a qualitative research design that

incorporates semi-structured interviews, I collected data from this population that I analyzed to understand how their views about the purpose of WBL influence the types of opportunities they sought and the ways they developed them. It also probes how school officials thought about creating WBL opportunities for ELs that meet their needs and provide the appropriate supports. This focused inquiry WBL-based learning within the Linked Learning model to maximize the benefit to EL students while serving the interests and goals of employers and educators.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, PART I

The Purpose of WBL for EL Students

This chapter will share the study's findings related to Research Question 1, based on the responses of the 11 interviews conducted with principals and coordinators at Certified Linked Learning high schools in an urban school district in California. My subjects generally agreed on the purpose of work-based learning (WBL). When asked specifically about the purpose for English Learners (ELs), they gave similar responses. In other words, the purpose of WBL that the principals and coordinators envisioned for all students applies to English Learners (ELs) as well. In addition, the educators emphasized the specific learning and developmental needs for ELs in considering the purpose of WBL for that subpopulation.

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of the study and the research questions. I then discuss at length what educators said about the overall purpose of WBL for students, highlighting the most frequent responses. Finally, I expand on two of the purposes of WBL that subjects most frequently cited in reference to the EL population.

Purpose of WBL for General Population and for ELs

Some of my subjects responded with more detail to the questions about the purpose of work-based learning for ELs. The purposes of WBL cited by my subjects can be organized in two circles, one which represents the general student population, including ELs, and one which represents ELs specifically. The smaller circle representing EL students would be circumscribed by the larger circle (Figure 1).

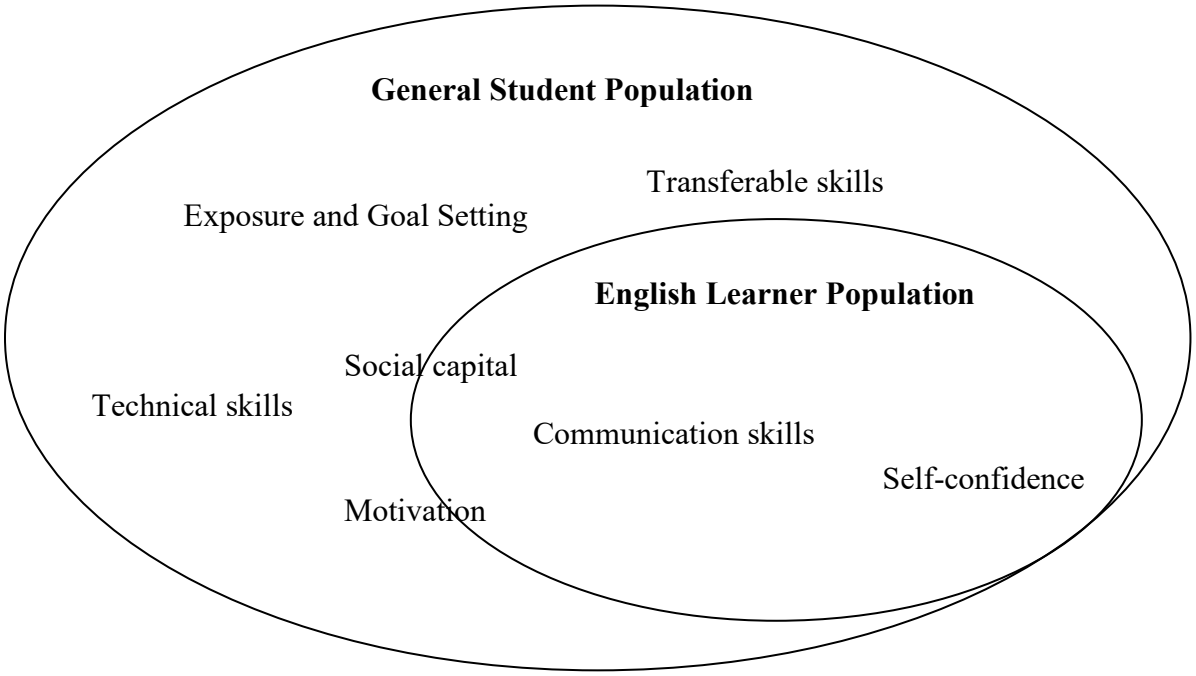


Figure 1

None of these purposes are exclusive to one group of students or another. It is more of a matter of priorities and emphasis. The diagram shows that some subjects cited transferable skills, exposure and goal setting, and technical skills when asked about the purpose of work-based learning. When asked specifically about the purpose of WBL for ELs, some subjects mentioned self-confidence and communication skills. Social capital and motivation were purposes mentioned for students in general and again by some subjects as being of particular importance for English Learners.

The Purpose of Work-Based Learning for All Students

Overview of Purposes Cited

The most cited purposes of WBL for students in general, and for ELs specifically, were exposure, identifying career and educational goals, motivation, and transferable skills. The first three of these terms are all connected in that exposure can help a student to identify careers that

they may not have known about otherwise, which in turn can motivate them to do well in school and continue with their education.

Exposure to Industry and Careers

Exposure is used here in to mean providing access to a particular experience that students may not have had in the past and would not have without the intervention of the school. This could include introduction to unfamiliar career options, visits to new work environments, interaction with professionals at a work site, or opportunities to learn from guest speakers talking about their careers. Exposure was a frequently cited purpose for WBL. When subjects mentioned exposure, it was usually to career options, but coordinator Jon also mentioned exposure to the same material being learned in class from different sources and touchpoints, that could give a better understanding.

Exposure to Unfamiliar Careers

The theme of exposure to aspects of the industry sector that students may not be familiar with was cited in six of 11 interviews. For example, coordinator Eleanor described the value of students interacting with individuals in a range of professions:

> I think that's important for them to interact with people. So that they know … this is a real job, because when we're growing up, what are the jobs we hear about: doctor, lawyer, firefighter, policeman, teacher. We know those jobs, but I think especially in the 21st century, moving into the 22nd century, a lot of jobs that we're preparing our students for aren't created yet. And so, we need to constantly interact with those people to make what we do here at school meaningful. So, I think that's really our vision for work-based learning is to give the students opportunities, exposure, and then ultimately a connection with school and work.

Principal Matthew also mentioned this idea of exposure to unfamiliar careers in the context of the working class, industrial community where his school is located:

> Work-based learning is kind of the extension of giving them opportunities to see things that maybe kids that are [in] more affluent neighborhoods, that have parents or relatives that already do that kind of work, they see it already—and our kids, they get to see, unfortunately, a lot of blue collar professions, especially in a place like Huntington Park, which is very industrialized with Vernon right next door. And we see most of my families that work at those, at those factories down the streets. So, for me, work-based learning is really a gap closer, you know, in terms of meaning to give them opportunities to see what's out there, and not just what they see on TV with a doctor and a nurse.

For coordinator Kristine, the goal of bringing in guest speakers from different careers to advisory classes is to "open their eyes and show them all the different jobs that exist out there that they probably don't even know exist."

In summary, whether because of geography, media consumption, or other factors, several of the educators I interviewed described how they see WBL as an opportunity for students in their schools to learn about careers that they had not been exposed to before.

Connecting Exposure to Classroom Learning

Several subjects commented that it is relatively easy to bring guest speakers to interact with students, whether in-person or virtually, but guest speakers are not as meaningful if their presentations lack connections to classroom learning. For instance, coordinator Luna shared a reflection on how an experience could have been more impactful if planned differently:

> We had so many guest speakers last year because it seemed kind of like the low-hanging fruit, like, "Oh, look, we have all these guest speakers from all these organizations. Let's

just have them speak at our Wellness Wednesdays or during our advisory period." But it wasn't really connected to what the students were learning in the classroom. And so, it was kind of like a missed opportunity.

Brendan also referred to guest speakers as the "lowest-hanging fruit." This is not to say that this experience is not valued. To the contrary, it was the most common WBL experience offered. The insight that multiple subjects gave is that guest speakers are of more value when they are connected to other aspects of the educational program and are not just stand-alone, decontextualized experiences.

In sum, WBL was seen as a way for students to learn about new career options, and the value of this exposure was increased when it was connected to classroom learning or started a relationship with a mentor that could lead to other opportunities. Principals and coordinators often thought about multiple purposes simultaneously. For example, principal Janet would link mock interviews to informational interviews so that students had the opportunity to get feedback from a professional on their resume, job application, and interviewing skills. These interviews also exposed students to professionals working in areas of interest, offering opportunities to learn more about how people come to pursue a particular career and what this career is like.

Identification of Career and Educational Goals

Identifying career and educational goals means that students make plans beyond high school. Career and educational goals are together because of the close connection between careers and the education needed to qualify for them. Several subjects shared their hopes for students to continue their education after high school. They believed that WBL experiences can help students understand what educational trajectories they need to follow to pursue their chosen career.

The goal of identifying career and educational goals was cited by seven of 11 interview subjects. Sometimes they described how a student learns of a career they might not have known about and, therefore, decides to pursue it. Sometimes educators spoke of how WBL experiences can help a student to decide that they do not want to pursue a career that they thought they were interested in, which could save them years of investment in education in the wrong area.

Some interviewees conveyed the importance for students of identifying career goals and connecting those goals to what they are learning in their classes. They also talked about the value for students of knowing what to anticipate when they leave school and begin working. Principal Sofia described a common issue with students: that they do not see the relationship between what they learn in school and what they experience when they start their careers:

> I want to bridge that gap because I think it allows students to make a more informed choice to develop those technical skills and then really get an idea for, "Okay, maybe this is something I really want to do, or maybe it's not something I really want to do"

Six of the seven educators who cited identifying career goals as a purpose of work-based learning echoed the same idea of students making an informed choice, of experiencing what a career would really be like early on so they can decide if it is what they want to pursue in the future. The career the student is exposed to might not be unfamiliar, but the young person may not understand what it is really like beyond what they have seen through media or entertainment. When students have the chance to experience a career, they may reassess their original, naïve view. Coordinator Jon noted that students may say, "Maybe I need to reconsider… I saw this TV show, and I thought it'd be like that, but this is very different."

Development of Social Capital

The connection to professionals for the purpose of mentoring and building social capital was a commonly cited purpose for work-based learning. I define social capital following Stanton-Salazar (2011), highlighting the relationships with institutional agents that can be mobilized to attain other resources.

Social Capital Through Mentor Relationships

Four of my subjects spoke directly about how industry mentors can build social capital for students through their interaction. Principal Sofia brought up the imposter syndrome as a barrier to students feeling like they belong in educational and professional settings. The imposter syndrome, sometimes referred to as the imposter phenomenon, is described as an experience of intellectual phoniness amongst high-achieving people who feel that they do not belong (Clance & Imes, 1978). The term was first used primarily in feminist scholarship to characterize a particular experience of some high-achieving women but has in recent years been used extensively in the scholarship about higher education and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. The population at Sofia's school, where 97.5% of the student body receives Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, very much fits that description, so without WBL they might not see themselves fitting into the types of careers aligned with her school's medical and engineering pathways.

Sofia highlighted how mentors can help students feel like they belong and advocate for them:

> I'm very intentional about ensuring that the mentors or the individuals that are involved with our school are people who might come from similar backgrounds or look like our kids or perhaps were English language learners themselves. So, all those things play a

part in helping a student overcome that imposter syndrome, which is a huge barrier to not only feeling like they belong somewhere but having an advocate on their side that's already in the space that they want to, hopefully someday occupy.

Matthew described the process whereby a mentor can inspire a student and the potential of professionals to provide students with access to a professional network:

> So that's what I see and work-based learning opportunities. It's just an opportunity for them to get out of the little bubble here and see what else is out there and maybe it'll pique their interest. Maybe there'll be a supervisor there that will eventually act as a mentor that hey, look, you know what? I went to this school and, if you're interested, if you like what I do, I could show you the ropes, but eventually you still need the paper, right? You need the credentials in order sometimes to get the job.

Social Capital Through One-Time Interaction

Although single-interaction WBL experiences were sometimes referred to as "low-hanging fruit" or similar terms by interviewees, principal Matthew commented that even a one-time contact can have a profound impact on students. The idea of mentors looking like and having a similar background to the students came up in several interviews. For example, Matthew said:

> It's not always a teacher, or the principal that's going to persuade a student to be passionate about something. Like the cool uncle. I tend to say that a lot, 'I am your dad, but the cool uncle over there…' which will be like a guest speaker or someone [who] will come in, … they will say the exact same thing in terms of messaging that we have been saying to them over and over again. But that guy…, whether he drove in the nice car, or he has some sort of slideshow presentation showing how his life has evolved over time...

That is what the kids will be like, 'Whoa, the cool uncle has told me, that is what I can do.'

Matthew's reflection gets into the idea of credibility and the power that professionals coming from the outside can have as figures who the students might pay more attention to than the teachers or administrators that they see every day.

Critical Skills Development

WBL can support the development of critical skills, including transferable skills and positive social skills (Rogers-Chapman & Darling-Hammond, 2013). *Transferable skills* is a term that is used in reference to skills like creative problem solving, conflict resolution, communication, and teamwork. *Positive social skills* include self-respect and reliability. These critical skills contrasts with technical skills that are specific to a career. Several subjects brought up this difference and tended to emphasize the development of critical skills over hard skills as a purpose for work-based learning. One reasons for this is that students often change their mind about their career plans after high school or may not even be interested in a career aligned with the industry sector of their school pathway. Another reason is that it takes longer to develop hard skills to a level needed in a specific profession, so in the relatively short time of a WBL placement, it is more realistic to focus on transferable skills and social skills like communication, collaboration, appropriate dress, customer service, and punctuality.

Transferable Skills

The development of transferable skills more generally was also a commonly cited purpose of work-based learning, brought up by two principals and three coordinators. Transferable skills are contrasted with technical skills, which are skills that are specialized to a particular industry sector. Earlier in this section, I addressed how interviews highlighted

communications skills as being of particular importance to English Learners. There are other transferable skills that came up in interviews as being developed through WBL. Principal Sofia cited the development of technical skills in the industry sector of her pathway as a priority, since she feels that these skills will allow students to advance more rapidly in their career and save time and money on their education. More commonly expressed by my subjects, though, were transferable skills that are not specific to one industry sector and can prepare students to be successful in college and be applied to different careers.

Two principals and three coordinators that I interviewed called out these transferable skills as perhaps more important than the technical skills connected to the specific industry of their pathway. Because Linked Learning schools are aligned with a career pathway, sometimes people assume that their main purpose is to prepare students for careers in that industry. Fame High School coordinator Kristine expressed a more common attitude of the educators I interviewed that the purpose of their pathway is to prepare students for college and a future career, not specifically a career related to the theme of her pathway:

> The skills they learn in our pathways are so valuable and to for me, one of the goals of work-based learning is helping them understand transferable skills and their strengths, and how what they're learning downstairs in theater connects to what they're learning their academics connects to the skills needed to be successful in college, and, in their first job, wherever that may be.

Principal Matthew felt that the transferable skills are more important as a purpose for WBL at the high school level. He said this is because it is more realistic to develop some basic habits like professional dress than a high level of technical skills in the time given to a WBL experience:

> Kids really need to learn soft skills, they don't need to learn the hard skills in an internship or a little job shadow, they're not going to learn that in 20 hours or 20 weeks, they're going to learn some basic skills that I feel they need to be able to survive a workplace environment, or at least give them the foundation of learning, like, I do need to dress a certain way.

Matthew did not necessarily place a higher value on transferable skills than technical skills for career readiness, but rather his point was that the amount of time that students can spend in a WBL experience is not enough to go deep with the technical skills needed for a competitive career. These transferable skills can also help students to be ready for college, which Matthew stated was his primary goal for his students. Unlike the vocational education models of the past, Matthew's goal is not for students to go straight to work after high school, but rather to benefit from the exposure, goal setting, transferable skills development, and so on, as they are motivated to continue with a post-secondary education.

His coordinator, Brendan, conveyed a similar belief about the importance of transferable skills:

> We believe that even if your student isn't interested in health care, but comes to our school, they will become more knowledgeable about professionalism and ways to advocate for themselves after high school in a way that others probably won't through regular high schools.

In another example of similar beliefs being espoused by the principal and coordinator, both Hospital High School interviewees shared the importance of five Cs that have been developed by their partner hospital where students complete their primary work-based learning experience in their senior year. These five Cs are like the familiar four Cs of 21st century skills,

Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity, with the addition of Culturally Responsive Community Members. Principal Jose emphasized how these are skills that will prepare students for success in college, not just in one specific industry or career.

The Purpose of Work-Based Learning for English Learners

The purposes elucidated in the previous section are important to ELs as well. Exposure, goal-setting, and social capital were cited by my subjects as important both for all students and for ELs specifically. Some mentioned issues like imposter syndrome as being especially pertinent to ELs. In addition, according to some interviewees, there are motives for promoting work-based learning that are particularly, or even uniquely, relevant to the identities and needs of EL students.

My interviewees implicitly discussed various aspects of ELs' identities that relate to the purpose of WBL. Based on their responses, I have identified three dimensions of ELs' identities: *linguistic capability and related educational needs*, *immigration status*, and *economic and class status*. Only the first dimension is directly connected to language proficiency. The second and third dimensions reflect the fact that ELs often are, or are assumed to be, recent immigrants, sometimes lacking citizenship status, with limited economic resources.

One of the most cited purposes of WBL specifically for ELs was transferable skills and habits, including communication skills, professional dress, self-advocacy, and collaboration. Other frequently cited purposes were building self-confidence and motivation to achieve. Just as the purposes that subjects described for all students are also applicable for ELs, softs skills and self-confidence are also relevant to students who are classified as fluent English proficient. However, the emphasis is different for ELs in that communication skill development includes learning the nuances of the English Language. Self-confidence for EL students also emphasizes

confidence in their use of the English language and, in some contexts, the belief that their fluency in another language can be an asset.

Communication Skills

The purpose my subjects discussed that is most clearly connected to the linguistic dimensions of ELs is the development of communication skills. This idea was mentioned by three principals and two coordinators. There are multiple aspects to communication skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as non-verbal communication. Subjects described how WBL provides opportunities for EL students to practice their communication in authentic contexts with varying audiences. Coordinator Jon discussed how the language demands of different contexts vary greatly:

> For English learners, in addition to some of these core skills, is practice with communicating in these different settings, and the code switching that goes along with that, because the communicating that they do at home, versus the classroom, versus a workplace or professional setting, is going to change and in some cases, rather drastically, and they may not have all of the same supports present in each situation.

Hospital High School principal Jose highlighted the value of public-facing jobs where students need to code switch and understand the nuances of language to communicate effectively in a professional setting:

> You need to translate the language of the worksite to a public person who needs assistance and is not fluent in that language, maybe fluent in English, but not fluent in the language of the office, right where they're at. I think that that's when they're most challenged and most effective at learning the nuances of English.

Dry River Continuation principal Janet described how real-world situations can increase engagement and help EL students to see the English language proficiency connection. She explained that the acquisition of English tied to real-world application is more "seamless" than classroom learning because it is built into the experience. Healthcare High School principal Matthew also called out the importance of WBL in providing real-world language practice for ELs, especially in writing and speaking, whereas students may not feel that they need to use English in their daily lives in their community. This was a point also made by Fame High School principal Eleanor in describing the diverse neighborhood around her school:

> The only time our English Learners need to speak English is at school. They literally can step outside. They don't need to speak a word of English at all, in any part of this town. They can eat, shop, do laundry, whatever, in Spanish, or Korean or Bengali. Almost everywhere they go. So, what I want our teachers to be able to do with this set of teachers who are strong at EL instruction is to be able to connect, how can you use the English language in your everyday life, work-based learning, authentic real-world situation?

Like principal Jose, principal Eleanor conveyed the idea that the real-world contexts of off-campus WBL experiences can provide EL students with a reason to develop their English skills and situations that allow and or prompt them to use English to communicate. Principal Jose described how students can begin to see their bilingualism as an asset:

> [WBL] makes their bilingualism a lot more relevant or a lot more important, not just telling you that it's going to be important when you graduate, but actually living in the worksite. And having the advantage as opposed to maybe feeling disadvantage at a high school where everyone speaks English and it's not as valued as it is in a worksite.

According to my subjects, when EL students move out of their comfort zones through WBL placements, they had more opportunity to develop the critical skills that would transfer to success in college and career, in particular communication skills.

Self-Confidence

The idea of language and culture as assets links to the second primary purpose of WBL for ELs that was cited by my subjects, self-confidence. Although all students might benefit from building up their self-confidence, according to my subjects, ELs in particular struggle with this. Hospital High School coordinator Luna mentioned different areas where EL students tend to lack confidence, such as presenting their work and communicating their needs. This ties to the imposter syndrome that Science High School principal Sofia mentioned, where EL students can see themselves in a professional setting and believe that they do not belong there. Principal Janet emphasized that ELs will develop the confidence to apply for jobs or college through their WBL experiences.

Healthcare High School coordinator Brendan told a powerful story about a group of newcomers who gave a presentation to a panel of industry professionals. The presentation was based on a project that the students did in school. The school allowed the students to present in Spanish, and the panelists were bilingual in English and Spanish. According to Brendan, the newcomer group "outperformed the kids who spoke English." The panelists were able to give feedback to the group in Spanish. Brendan said, "I think it was probably one of the most empowering moments I've seen in Linked Learning where a student can feel validated when they continually feel like second class in the student population." In this case, WBL broadly defined gave the students the chance to excel in a school-related task in a way that traditional schoolwork

often does not. Because of the way the project was designed, the EL students were able to collaborate and present to a bilingual audience, so they felt valued and empowered.

Educators at Linked Learning high schools spoke about the value for EL students of being placed in new contexts where they could achieve outside of the traditional classroom setting. As Central Comprehensive High School coordinator Brittany explained, seeing professionals in the workplace with similar backgrounds, who are also not native English speakers, can give EL students the confidence to "put themselves out there." Similarly, Brendan talked about how internships are "a great way for the shy student to constructively work their way out of their comfort zone." WBL placements can put EL students into unfamiliar, possibly uncomfortable situations. Educators argued that when there are structures in place to support ELs' success in these settings, students can develop self-confidence.

Motivation to Achieve in School and Continue Education

Motivation was one of the most frequently cited purposes for WBL for ELs, mentioned by one principal and four coordinators. According to Science High School coordinator Jon,

> If they can see that connection between what they're learning and where they want to be, and actually get a chance to put that into practice. I think that's a really valuable experience. I think it's an inspiring and motivating one as well. And I think it makes them more likely to want to be in school and to be committed to it and just increases their chances of, I think, having the future that they want to have.

Motivation in school can be an especially important issue for Long Term English Learners, who have not made adequate progress in their English language development with at least five years in the U.S. education system. This is a subgroup that coordinator Brittany felt can benefit from WBL experiences:

> So, for those students who are still in the program, because of low reading skills sometimes or maybe haven't taken this test seriously. A lot of times these work-based jobs and programs give them the motivation to work harder in class, and to then pass the test and essentially reclassify out of the program, but it just gives them something to look forward to and do outside of just the regular bell schedule.

An underlying belief implied in this statement is that motivation is an important factor in student success, and particularly of importance for ELs if they are to reclassify as Fluent English Proficient. Reclassifying is not an accomplishment of inherent value to most ELs but being placed in extra English classes because of not reclassifying can feel discouraging. Brittany pointed out that WBL experiences can spark something in EL students who might have become disengaged from school.

The same purpose of motivating EL students to stay in school was framed in a different way by principal Matthew, who emphasized the potential of the relationship with mentors at WBL placements to motivate EL students in their education:

> So, if you've got a mentor who's like really catering, what they do, and how they do it with a kid that is maybe an EL kid, the EL kid gets motivated, saying, "Man, I gotta go back to school. When I'm at school, I've got to be able to really focus on these things, because it's the stuff I need to do over here. And I need to make sure … my mentor, my boss… that I'm working on these things. Because I actually do admire what he does, or she does, and I want to be there someday."

Similarly, principal Janet recognized the importance of motivating her students, since they had not been successful in a traditional school setting. This was particularly true for the EL. As a principal at a continuation school, Janet also drew an explicit connection between self-

esteem and motivation, assigning a critical role to mentors in fostering self-esteem and motivation in her students. Principal Janet saw that her students may not have experienced strong instruction or benefitted from the type of support they needed to be successful. This would sometimes negatively impact their self-efficacy, as she explained:

> And so, we ask the mentors to be empathetic and patient with our students since our student population isn't really self-motivated. They have low self-esteem. They have a very deficit mindset and so on. We ask that our mentors help in those areas.

These interviewees felt that motivation is a hugely important for students to be successful, and that WBL experiences can motivate students who have not been successful in school and who have not had educational experiences that met their needs in the past.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ideas that subjects articulated regarding the purpose of work-based learning were consistent and coherent. One of the purposes logically leads to another, and they all share common traits, which is based on the overall purpose that all subjects expressed of preparing students for success in college and career. There is a conviction held by my subjects that the WBL component of Linked Learning provides opportunities that traditional schooling does not, and that can be of substantial benefit to ELs in key areas such as language development, communication skills, self-confidence, goal setting, and motivation.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, PART II

The Essential Conditions of Impactful Work-Based Learning

This chapter will share the study's findings related to Research Questions 2 and 3, based on the responses of the 11 interviews conducted with principals and coordinators at Certified Linked Learning high schools in an urban school district in California. In the interviews, subjects shared many ideas about essential conditions needed for impactful work-based learning (WBL) for English Learners (ELs). They also had a range of views regarding the extent to which those essential conditions exist and whose responsibility it is to ensure that they do.

In this chapter, I begin with a summary of the essential conditions for impactful WBL that my interviewees shared, going into more detail with key examples from the interviews. I organize the essential conditions based on the stakeholder group they apply to: school staff, industry partners, all students, and English Learners. For each of the stakeholder groups, I highlight one to two conditions that interviewees mentioned.

The chapter then moves to a consideration of what educators said about the extent to which the essential conditions exist. First, I summarize how interviewees responded to questions about whether the essential conditions they described existed in their school and district and whose responsibility it was to ensure that they did. Finally, I share my subjects' responses in more detail.

The questions asked were intended to give the educators the license to take their experience and knowledge and to think about possibilities beyond their current constraints, and then to think about what would be needed for those possibilities to become reality. Like the responses about the purpose of WBL, I categorize the responses in this chapter as essential

conditions that are important for all students and those that are important specifically for English Learners.

Essential Conditions for Impactful WBL for EL Students

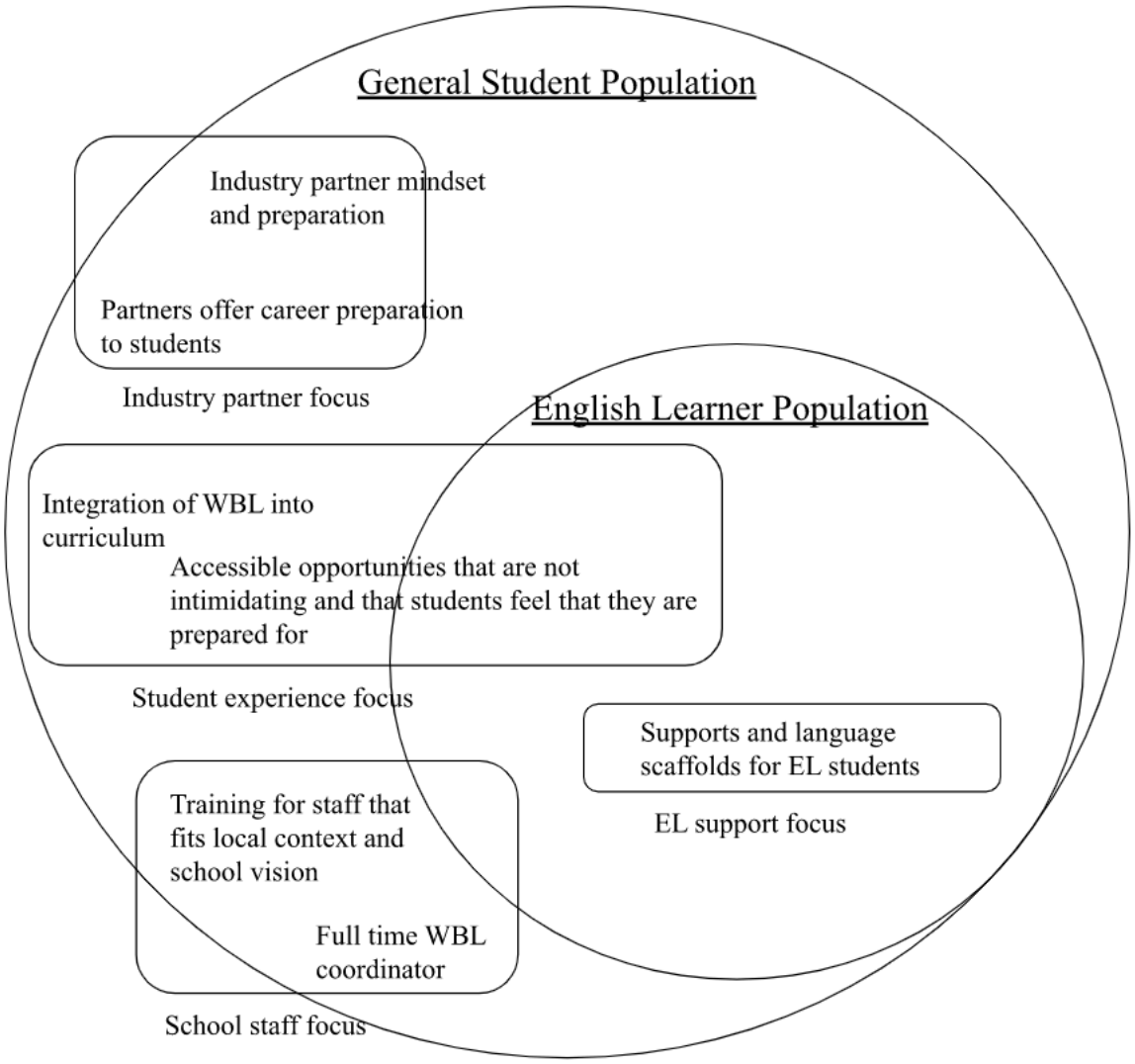


Figure 2

Figure 2 provides a visual of the way I have organized my subjects' responses. There are two circles. The larger circle includes the conditions that are important for all students and the smaller circles include those that are important specifically for ELs. In addition, conditions are

grouped according to the stakeholder group of focus. All the conditions discussed were considered essential for ELs to have access to impactful WBL. Some are more about the student experience, some involve industry partners more, some involve school staff more, and some involve the types of scaffolds and supports that EL students need to be successful. Each of these groups will be discussed in this chapter.

Student Experience Conditions

The most common essential conditions mentioned by my subjects relate to the integration of WBL in the curriculum and the creation of accessible WBL opportunities. Both conditions have in common a prioritization of accessibility. The educators interviewed in this study tended to argue that although there is great value to the traditional WBL experience at a worksite with a rigorous application process, this benefit only extends to the limited number of students who can participate. Many students, especially English Learners, have been excluded from those traditional opportunities.

Integration of WBL into the Curriculum

In Chapter 2, I discussed the definition of WBL and highlighted, following Hamilton (2020), the distinction between a broad and narrow definition of WBL. Hamilton chooses to define WBL as experiences that happen in an actual work site, and excludes experiences like guest speakers and careers days, calling them, "work-like experiences." Most of the principals and coordinators implied in interviews that they adopted a broader definition. In particular, the idea that WBL should be integrated into the classroom curriculum stood out as a critical component of the Linked Learning approach as communicated by these educators. The subjects highlighted several reasons why this is an essential condition of impactful work-based learning. In this chapter, I summarize these reasons as follows: access, purpose, and career readiness.

These categories emerged from analysis of responses that included discussion of the integration of WBL into the curriculum.

Access to Work-Based Learning. *Access* means that all students can participate in the experience because it is part of their regular school program. Several subjects spoke about how integration of WBL into the curriculum provides access to all students, since there are so many barriers to ensuring that the entire student population can participate in learning at a work site. ELs were taken into consideration by at least one of the interviewees in making this point because they may have more barriers to participation in WBL outside of the regular school day. Coordinator Brendan said he considered project-based learning to be the most impactful aspect of Linked Learning, and that his priority was to incorporate components of the WBL continuum into the projects. “If you get something from me out of this, it's what is Linked Learning? It's not all the continuum. It's how the continuum works around those projects.” The continuum that Brendan was referring to is the WBL continuum developed by ConnectED. Linked Learning schools are expected to provide students with a range of WBL experiences that build over students’ four years of high school. Students learn about work in the earlier stages of career awareness and exploration, then learn through work and for work in the later stages of career preparation and training (Linked Learning Alliance, 2012).

At Healthcare High School, coordinator Luna worked with industry partners to have them do a consultancy with teachers on the projects they were planning for students. This ensured that the projects were more authentic to what students would experience in the workplace. In addition, industry partners worked with students as they were completing projects and gave feedback to the students on their final projects.

There are many barriers to students participating in WBL off campus, particularly when this occurs outside of regular school hours. Some of the barriers to participation outside of the regular curriculum that subjects mentioned include transportation, family obligations, students' need to work to earn money, lack of confidence, and a lack of interest or motivation. From the industry partner perspective, respondents shared additional barriers, including workplace liability and related safety issues.

Coordinator Luna said that when opportunities were presented, students often did not take advantage of them, even if they were paid. She said that the school staff were looking into understanding the reasons for this and realized that the often would share opportunities without following up with students to see if they applied, and to understand why or why not. She added that building opportunities into the curriculum ensured that the school could curate the experience and that students at least got some exposure to WBL.

Connecting Classroom Learning to Careers to Create a Sense of Purpose. *Purpose* means that the work students are doing in class is more relevant because of real-world application and connection to students' academic and CTE classroom learning. Study participants shared that high quality WBL enables students to make connections and see the purpose of classroom learning to their future career plans. Some of the interviewees commented that students see more purpose for what they are doing in school when they can see possible real-world applications through WBL experiences. This point was made by coordinator Brittany, who gave the example of the connection between their teaching career pathway CTE classes and the hands-on experiences that students get going into classrooms to work with elementary students:

> I would say a lot of it happens in their pathway courses, I know the teaching career academy, they work a lot around young childhood development. And so, then when they

go into the classrooms, they're seeing it in person, what they've learned about in the classroom.

Coordinator Luna also spoke about the importance of connections between WBL and classroom curriculum:

> We had so many guest speakers last year because it seemed kind of like the low hanging fruit like, oh, look, you know, we have all these guest speakers from all these organizations… speak at our wellness Wednesdays or during our advisory period. But it wasn't really connected to what the students were actually learning in the classroom. And so, it was kind of like a missed opportunity.

This was a common point made by subjects—those one-off opportunities, which tend to be at the lower end of the WBL continuum, were easier to set up, but without the extra work of connecting them to the classroom curriculum, they were less impactful. Specifically, coordinator Luna described a series of speakers from a local hospital who spoke about cancer education. The school did not connect the presentations to anything that the students were learning in class. Moving forward, she said that she wanted to focus more on quality than quantity, "how it is connected to what the students are actually reading and studying and learning in the classroom."

Principal Eleanor discussed how theater projects like designing a set had a practical outcome that students could see and then assess what worked and what should have been done differently:

> One year, we designed, *James and the Giant Peach* was one of our productions. And the design was beautiful. And then when they designed it, they were like, "Oh God, this is not gonna hold the weight of this many people on top of the peach." And then it was a matter of, like, "Oh, gosh, we got to solve this problem. Like, the design was beautiful,

but we've maybe miscalculated the ability for it to hold the weight of six people on top, right?" So, it's moments like that, where the students are really seeing the skills of school being translated into the world of work.

This principal also sought off-campus work-based learning opportunities, but there were not enough for every student to participate. As a result, she highlighted the school's theater company as the main vehicle for WBL because of the barriers to finding the number of opportunities needed off campus. In addition, as demonstrated in the quote above, she emphasized that the integration of projects that involve the work that professionals do in the industry might show students the value of the classroom learning they were doing.

Building Students' Career Readiness. *Career readiness* is one of the primary goals of Linked Learning and the integration of WBL in the curriculum means that students have ongoing preparation rather than short-term out-of-school experiences. Respondents asserted that a long-term focus on career readiness makes both classroom instruction and WBL experiences more impactful. The classroom experiences are grounded in real-world application and the WBL experiences are scaffolded through the classroom preparation. In addition, coordinator Luna shared that for maximum impact, students should have structured opportunities to reflect on WBL experiences afterwards. For example, she talked about students reflecting on cancer researcher guest speakers and connecting their presentations to what students were learning in their CTE medical classes.

Although a broad goal of Linked Learning generally and WBL specifically, career readiness is also one of the focused goals of the integration of WBL and curriculum that was cited by subjects in interviews. The real-world nature of WBL makes curriculum more relevant and engaging. According to multiple participants, the classroom curriculum can provide a

vehicle for students to acquire skills that will help them be successful and gain valuable skills from their WBL experiences. For example, principal Eleanor spoke about the 9th grade CTE acting class where students got coaching and feedback that prepared them to be successful in the theater company later in high school, which was designed to prepare them for a professional theater company. Similarly, the coordinator at the same school spoke about how career readiness was "baked in" to all the classes, especially pathway (CTE) classes, where they discussed professionalism and expectations of the workplace. In the examples from Fame High School, CTE class curriculum created the conditions for students to be prepared for their future WBL experiences.

The question that emerges here is whether CTE curriculum should be considered WBL or preparation for WBL. My subjects did not make such a clear distinction between the two. One of the interviewees addressed this issue directly, defending the broad definition of WBL, because, as he argued, WBL experiences that were disconnected from the curriculum were not as impactful if they are not connected to classroom learning. The connection to classroom learning might involve "either a review of the event or reflection of the event." In this way, the classroom curriculum was enriched through the WBL experiences, and the WBL experiences were made more impactful through the classroom curriculum. This coordinator was referring to job shadows and workplace tours when he made these comments and went so far as to say that he would no longer seek WBL opportunities if the classroom connections were not in place.

Providing Appropriate Opportunities

A second commonly cited essential condition is providing appropriate opportunities for students. According to interviewees, these are WBL experiences that are not intimidating and that students feel that they are prepared for. As with Vygotsky's (1978) definition of the Zone of

Proximal Development, the types of WBL experiences that could be considered appropriate are those that are more challenging than what students can do independently, but not so challenging that a student cannot be successful under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peers. This idea was directly addressed by four of my 11 subjects but was cited indirectly by others. Respondents tended to link the importance of appropriate opportunities to ELs more than the integration of WBL and curriculum. Tying back to the purpose of building self-confidence in English Learners through WBL, subjects argued that EL students are more likely to participate and succeed in WBL opportunities when they feel prepared for the level of expectation.

Volunteer Opportunities

The internship is often promoted in Linked Learning as an essential experience for all students, but for some students, an internship can feel overwhelming, and a less intensive experience might feel more approachable. For example, coordinator Jon asserted that an internship might feel intimidating to English Learners because of the level of commitment and the expectations of the type of student that the partner is looking for. Often, he explained, an application would require a minimum GPA, letter of recommendation, and a letter of interest. Jon said that hospital volunteer opportunities, on the other hand, might "lower the stress levels and the expectations a little bit." Because of this, he believed that they got a higher proportion of ELs in the volunteer opportunities. He could not confirm this because of a lack of available data, a point addressed in the next section.

Alignment to Student Interest

Career pathways can provide a focused program for students, but several interviewees pointed out that they know that most students will not pursue the industry sector of their pathway as a career. Principal Eleanor made the point that WBL opportunities might feel more obtainable

to students if they align with their interests, which might not always fit neatly within the industry sector of their pathway. Eleanor said that for this reason, her school sought out a broad range of opportunities beyond the theater and acting focus, including sports, law, office work, and health care.

Although not strictly WBL, dual enrollment is a key component of Linked Learning and was mentioned in the context of WBL. Fame High School had a partnership with a local community college. Kristine said that school staff made sure that students were encouraged to take classes that match their interests, even if they were not in the Arts, Media, and Entertainment industry sector of the school.

This approach drove the WBL model at Dry River High School, where the smaller number of students allowed principal Janet to seek out internships for each student that were a match for their stated career interests. Janet was trained by Big Picture Learning in their Leaving to Learn model, in which students receive academic credit through internships by getting creative about how content is embedded in the WBL experience. She said that this approach was harder to pull off for a traditional district school versus a charter school because of all the rules that they must follow. For this reason, she followed what she calls “Leaving Through Interest.” She stated:

> That is what I do, which is our typical internship, so my kid wants to do child development, I put him in an elementary school or a preschool. My students want to work with the government, I put them with the councilman that's willing to help me. My students want to learn about what job opportunities there are for artists. I put them with my local art studio internship, or they get their internship here and they work with muralists here, because I have muralists that work with my design-based learning. So, at

the end, when the teacher or the art resident needs help, we hire art interns to help with the mural production as well.

Each school has its own context and model, and this type of individually curated experience might not be possible at a bigger school. It is one way that the continuation school made WBL accessible and less intimidating to students.

In the context of the Hospital High School, Principal Jose explained that he wanted to find WBL opportunities that matched well with each student's interests. Although Hospital High School did not have the staffing capacity to curate WBL experiences at the level of the Dry River High School, they sought a broad range of opportunities so that students had choice and could match their interests. Jose shared:

> I think they are differing forms of experience for the kids, and one can reach one type of kid and other one can reach another type of kid... I want to have as many choices for them as possible so that everyone has an opportunity to choose something that fits for them.

Cultural and Linguistic Relevance

Fame High School had its own theater company on campus to make WBL more accessible. To make these experiences less intimidating to ELs, they also chose theater productions that were relevant to Spanish-speaking ELs so that they would want to participate. Coordinator Kristine said:

> We did a show called *Into the Beautiful North*. It also followed a young girl and immigrants from Mexico traveling into the States that better reflect our population and allows for Spanish-speaking students to be part of our productions. And because

> historically, it's been difficult, sometimes, to get a lot of our English language learners involved in our in-house work-based learning, which is our play productions.

WBL was made accessible through layers of thoughtful structure which addressed the barriers that the school had identified over the years. Transportation, liability, and scheduling were barriers to students, so the school brought WBL to their campus through their production company. Language and unfamiliar subject matter were barriers to English Learners, so school leaders selected culturally relevant plays with Spanish-speaking parts that were more accessible to EL students.

Conclusion

In sum, the integration of WBL and curriculum was the most cited essential condition for impactful work-based learning, not necessarily more for ELs than students in general. To the extent that EL needs were a consideration in this condition, it would be that they would especially benefit from the access, purpose, and career preparation that this integration supports.

Industry Partner Conditions

Industry partners are the next area of consideration for creating the essential conditions for impactful WBL for ELs. While educators made accommodations to allow for WBL to be integrated into the curriculum at their school sites, they also worked to deepen their industry partnerships so that these partners could have a more meaningful role in the school program. Industry partner mindset and preparation was cited as an important condition for WBL by four principals and two coordinators. Partners offering career preparation to students is a condition that was cited by two principals and three coordinators.

Industry Partner Vision and Priorities

The alignment of vision for WBL between the partner and the school was something that several interviewees mentioned as an important condition for success, especially for ELs participating in WBL. There needs to be an understanding about what type of student the partner will be working with and what the partner's role is. A couple of subjects described how some partners expected to get students who already demonstrated a high level of skills and required very little management, but that is not the reality for most students, especially ELs whose language skills might not be what a partner would be used to. This is where it is essential that the partner have a vision for equity and diversity.

Such an equity vision might be realized through mentors who look like and have similar background experiences to the students. Coordinator Jon cited the diversity and representativeness of the mentors as a strength of one of Science High School's key partners. He said that the local hospital recently had started a medical school, and that the medical students overall had racial and ethnic backgrounds more like Science High School's student body than he thought was typical of a medical school. The partner needs to know what kind of student they are getting so that they are not surprised by the student's needs and skill set, and so that they know how to work with that student. Providing this information in a timely way can also help to build trust between the school and industry partners. Principal Eleanor described how trust is important to a strong partnership, "To know that an English Learner is coming your way, they may or may not be able to speak a bunch of English, but they have skills, and we wouldn't send you a person who didn't have the skills."

Although it is difficult for schools to find WBL opportunities for students, interview subjects noted that the schools need to have expectations about internship placements for

partners, or the opportunity might not be a good fit. Eleanor explained that student interns do work for a partner, and the school should not feel bad expecting the partner to make some effort:

> I think often we think of it as like our partners are doing us big favors by being with us and providing a service for our students, but our student in return, as an intern, is providing a service for that. And so, they also need to be trained about how to work together with us to help them with that.

Another principal, Jose, made much the same point about industry partner expectations.

> A lot of times people who take in interns assume that they have all the skills, especially the language skills, and they don't want to repeat themselves. They're thinking they're gonna get support. … An understanding that it's a symbiotic kind of relationship where you're going to have to do some investing of your effort and time. It's not going to be an additional assistant.

One trade-off to being clear with potential industry partners about the current skills and learning needs of student interns they would be receiving is that some partners might decide not to work with a school. If they are expecting high school interns to be low-maintenance, low-cost labor, they may not want to work with a school who expects them to support the language development of their high school interns during the WBL placement, for example.

Subjects had some specific ideas of what the training for industry partners should look like. According to some subjects, this training should include an understanding of the type of language support that ELs might need in a workplace setting. For this training to happen, there needs to be good communication between the school and the industry partner. Principal Matthew argued that this is one of the important roles of a WBL coordinator, to serve as a liaison between the school and industry partner.

Although most of respondents' comments about training emphasized that the industry partner should be called on to educate teachers and students about the industry, at least one subject explained that this training needs to go in the other direction as well. Principal Matthew said, "We need to do a consultancy for the industry partner to help them understand instruction and how to support the needs of the students they are working with."

Because industry partners usually do not have a background in education, they may not understand the best ways to support the students they are working with. Without explicit training, they may not know that some students are ELs because it may not be immediately apparent when meeting them. Jose highlighted the importance of partners knowing how to support EL student interns:

> Making sure that the workplace supervisors understand that even if they are speakers, even if they speak the language, conversational English, that they may not know, the nuances of, of a worksite the language in other words at the worksite or just cultural connection.

The insight that students might not be familiar with professional language and other workplace expectations could also apply to students who are not ELs because cultural differences are not always dependent on language. The issue can be especially acute for ELs who may be from a different cultural and linguistic background that their industry mentors and may not have the experiences that the industry partner takes for granted.

Industry Partners Offer Career Preparation at the School Site

The second most discussed essential condition for impactful WBL with an industry partner focus is partners offering career preparation for students at the school site. Rather than expecting the school to do all the preparation and to wait until the student leaves campus to meet

the industry partner, subjects shared several ways that partners can work with students on campus to help prepare them for WBL experiences, whether such activities take place on or off campus. There is a diversity of activities that fall under this umbrella, including resume writing, cover letters, job applications, mock interviews, role playing, and project-based learning.

Eleanor discussed competitions, dual enrollment, and other programs through local colleges as some of the ways that partners can be involved in career preparation. She also described how adjudicators from local theater organizations came and gave feedback on the theater productions that the students do. What all of these activities have in common is that partners are coming to the campus so that all students get exposed to the training.

Coordinator Luna shared how Hospital High School invited the liaison, Sammy, from their primary industry partner to present to the students in the CTE class. Sammy spent time making sure the students knew what the experience would be like and what was expected of them. She showed videos to the students that gave them a sense of what they would be doing. As with Fame High School, these lessons happened at the high school campus rather than the WBL placement site, so that students had more of a sense of what they would be doing even before they left campus. What made this possible is that the school had every student in the pathway participating in this WBL program, so it was more feasible to have classroom presentations like this because they were relevant to every student.

Coordinator Brittany from Central Comprehensive High School explained that pre-COVID, one of the industry partners would come twice a year to work with students on resumes and other job skills. These lighter touches would prepare students for more intensive experiences, both through the learning and through the exposure to the industry partner that lowered the anxiety around the WBL experience. Similarly, her principal, George, mentioned

that professionals came into classes at Central and advised students what to expect on the job. In these ways, the students felt more prepared and at ease when they started their internship or other WBL experience.

School Staff Conditions

Staffing was cited by educators as an essential condition for impactful WBL for ELs. Five interviewees mentioned training for staff that fits the local context and the school vision and five also mentioned the funding of a full-time WBL coordinator with the right experience and preparation.

Full-Time Dedicated WBL Coordinator

Having a dedicated coordinator to oversee WBL can make a huge difference for a Linked Learning pathway. This is something that educators in all types of schools brought up, from continuation schools to pilots, to magnet. Hiring a designated coordinator communicated a powerful message about the importance of dedicating substantial resources to these priorities.

Personalizing Experiences for Students. At Healthcare High, principal Matthew described the importance of his full-time WBL coordinator: “I think his position should be a position that every school should have, if we're really serious about making our students not just college ready, but career ready.” Principal Janet said that no matter how big or small a school is, a dedicated coordinator is essential. As described earlier, her school, Dry River, had a low student population, and they leveraged that fact to personalize WBL so that each student was matched with an experience that aligned with their career interests.

Developing Relationships with Staff and Partners. Fame High School principal Eleanor talked about how having a full-time coordinator position also allowed this person to get to know the rest of the school staff well, so that the coordinator could become familiar with the

curriculum and projects. The coordinator would then use this knowledge of the projects to seek out industry partners who aligned with the curriculum and projects, and also to find WBL opportunities that aligned with the focus of the school. In this way, schools can go beyond superficial connections between the pathway theme and the WBL they offer to realize the condition of integration of WBL with the curriculum.

Certainly, the work of seeking out new partnerships and fostering existing relationships is a commonly held priority for Linked Learning pathways and according to Hospital High School principal Jose, part of the core work of a WBL Coordinator:

> Only because finding opportunities takes so much time and effort. And even after you find opportunities, you still have to vet the opportunities to make sure that decisions are going to be a safe one, and that their experience is going to be meaningful. So, there's a lot of visits to the site, interviews, discussions with the personnel there, making sure that they have policies and routines available in place.

Principal Matthew talked about how he just does not have the time needed to do the work of a WBL coordinator himself. He said that although a school principal is often involved in setting up these partnerships, it is too time-consuming for a principal to maintain these partnerships on an ongoing basis:

> I want my own work-based learning coach… It's a nice thing as a principal to go into the chamber of commerce and shake hands and do that. But that's in itself, another job... It's not like I can go off campus half day over and over again and meet my district responsibilities. We need funding for people that will support work-based learning at a school site, but not someone that's going to be one person for 12 schools. That's just not fair.

Developing new partnerships is one of the many areas that falls to a principal by default unless there is another person who is assigned the roles and responsibilities of coordinating partnerships with outside organizations and businesses.

Gathering Data to Set Goals and Monitor Progress. One of the essential conditions mentioned by a few educators is access to high quality data for monitoring access to WBL. Several mentioned that the district data system has been hard to use to track how many students were participating in each type of WBL experience. They also said that it can be challenging to document all the experiences that are happening, since some are set up by classroom teachers and may only involve their own students. Science High School Principal Sofia and her coordinator Jon asserted that the need to keep track of WBL experiences increases the importance of schools staffing a full-time WBL coordinator. A coordinator can make sure that teachers are sharing when they provide opportunities to students and that these experiences are memorialized in the district's data platform. Sofia asserted that the data can then be used to set targets for improvement, particularly for equity purposes, such as ensuring that ELs are participating in WBL.

Staff Training

Beyond having sufficient staff in place, such as a full-time WBL coordinator, another vital condition for successful WBL for ELs is ensuring that staff receive quality professional development. Coordinator Kristine said that this training needed to be appropriate for the student population and the local context of the school, including the industry sector that the pathway belonged to.

At Fame High School, principal Eleanor said that this professional development was centered around the Linked Learning Gold Certification standards, which provided a framework

for the coordinator to work with the staff in thinking about what these standards would look like in the school's local context. Eleanor shared that the context included the demographics of the student population, the language needs of the EL students. She said that contextual information was used to inform the ways that WBL opportunities were scaffolded and designed to support their language learning. At Hospital High School, coordinator Luna emphasized the importance of common planning time for teachers to address the language needs of EL students.

English Learner Conditions

Although all the aforementioned conditions support English Learners, there is an additional factor that is especially important for ELs—support and language scaffolds for EL students.

Teacher Assistants

A couple of the schools in this study, Science High School and Fame High School, extended the support of teacher assistants (TAs) to CTE classes, whereas, in other schools, such staff were typically assigned to math and English classes with large cohorts of EL and special education students. These educators recognized that English Learners benefitted from TAs who could help translate difficult technical language and could work with groups of EL students within a class when they needed additional support.

Master Schedule and Student Access

Another important condition to support high quality WBL is a flexible school schedule. Several the interviewees mentioned that they had a schedule with more class periods than the traditional six, which allowed for EL students to have access to mandated language support classes as well as the CTE classes. Alternatively, one school had LTEL students fulfill some graduation requirements through an online program so that the students could still take CTE

classes and an EL support class. These educators recognized that mandates could create barriers to access for EL students (Mendoza, 2016) and so they adjusted to remove those barriers.

Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally and linguistically appropriate content is another aspect of supporting EL students that a couple of interviewees brought up. An example of culturally relevant context was the plays that the students read and produced at Fame High School, such as *Into the Beautiful North*, which includes themes of immigration and Spanish-speaking roles.

Another example of cultural and linguistic responsiveness that was discussed was staff who speak students' home language and provided materials in their language with images of people who look like them. Central High School principal George shared:

> "I think having a person speak that language that the student speaks is a tremendous help gives them a sense of confidence. If there is that barrier, they're able to quickly translate and support the student, whatever the situation may be."

Fame High School coordinator Kristine also discussed the importance of materials that would help the students to feel represented:

> More staff that are speaking the native language of English language learners, who are making sure that they have full access to all the materials, you know, that language support, more pictures of people who look like them, and stories of, you know, English language learners, who then got on to different careers that they're seeing themselves represented.

The Extent that Essential Conditions Exist and are Within the School's Control

This section of the chapter addresses the actual reality of current conditions and who is responsible for assuring that the necessary conditions are in place for ELs to have access to impactful WBL.

Many respondents noted competing priorities that make it hard for them to focus on doing Linked Learning well, including WBL. Several subjects mentioned that their district did not have a position with the title of WBL coordinator, but regardless some educators found a way to open a position to do the work of a WBL coordinator. In addition, the right skill set for coordinators was hard to find in candidates because it was a new position and there were no programs and minimal training designed for WBL coordinators. Another theme was that district support was reduced once a school attained Linked Learning certification. In other words, the more a program developed, the more the school district expected the school to be self-sustaining so that the district could reassign staff to other schools that were in earlier stages of development. On more positive notes, several interviewees said that the district provided training for teachers in how to incorporate the theme of the pathway in their instruction.

In considering who should be responsible for ensuring that the conditions for impactful WBL for ELs are in place, I organize the most common responses into *district responsibility* and *school responsibility*. Respondents generally asserted that the district should be responsible for most WBL conditions. This view may be a function of the way questions were asked and the context of the educators focusing on the conditions that they feel are beyond their control, since they had already put into place conditions that they felt were within their purview.

Systemic Conditions

Competing Priorities

Several systemic conditions made it difficult for Linked Learning high schools to offer impactful work-based learning to English Learners. The condition that the most people mentioned was competing priorities. All public schools in California are held accountable to the same set of measures on the California School Dashboard. Proponents of Linked Learning have spent considerable energy to study and promote efforts to improve student outcomes on those measures, particularly for underrepresented groups such as English Learners (Guha et al, 2014; Warner et al, 2016). Yet, educators in Linked Learning schools also are working to advance other learning goals that are not reflected in the current state accountability system.

Hospital High School principal Jose expressed frustration from the competing priorities and lack of emphasis on metrics that Linked Learning prioritizes, including through the work-based learning component:

> I think that one of the things that is said often by different people, and I agree is that what doesn't get checked doesn't get done. And the district has definitely made it clear that they want graduation rates, you know, A through G [college entrance requirements], attendance, SBAC [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, a standardized test]. But hardly ever do you hear CTE, career tech participation, or experiences as one of the variables used to look at a school site and evaluate its effectiveness or the services it provides to students."

As a result, Jose explained that he sometimes feels "like I'm doing a lot of work." He continued:

> I'm investing a lot in the pathway, but I'm still being asked about graduation rates, what's happening with intervention? What's happening with attendance? What's happening with... all of those things, and so, you risk a lot really, by investing your time, your funds, your resources on that, and then still have to respond to the other expectations.

For this principal, because of district policies, WBL felt like an add-on to an already full list of expectations, and one whose fruits were not much acknowledged.

Linked Learning schools placed additional requirements on students that other schools did not. These additional mandates could be challenging to meet because the district and the students did not always understand why these requirements existed and what their value was. More than one principal expressed that it would be helpful to have accountability tied to WBL so that there was more recognition for a school's efforts in that area. They felt that they were doing extra work that was not acknowledged while still being held accountable for all the same measures as non-Linked Learning schools that did not put much effort into WBL. Principal Matthew explained how he felt that standardized tests were overemphasized while efforts specific to the Linked Learning approach were unnoticed:

> The Smarter Balanced is but one subset of data. I don't even think that's what makes us a successful school. I think there's some other cool things that we can really measure. That really is what we're much more proud of than Smarter Balanced tests. It's just, "Yeah, okay. We do that so you guys can leave us alone to do what we really think is the real work, which is things like senior portfolios and defense.

One thing that schools were doing to address this challenge with competing priorities was to find ways to make the components of Linked Learning more manageable. For example, Healthcare High School coordinator Brendan said that instead of trying to organize projects for

every student, in every class, at every grade level, the school might instead create a focused, high-quality experience for a smaller number of students that involved fewer classes and teachers. Schools may have chosen WBL experiences that were less time-consuming to coordinate, avoiding activities like Informational Interviews in favor of consultancies where industry partners gave feedback to teachers on projects they were planning. Several respondents described how they were thinking about ways to make the many district and Linked Learning expectations manageable. They said that some WBL experiences are more valuable, and they were learning to pick and choose rather than trying to do everything.

Capacity Building

The way that Linked Learning was implemented in this district, schools opted into the Linked Learning model. In the past, a school had to identify a design team that would take the lead in launching a pathway, attending training, and creating a plan. In return, the district offered professional development and some staffing support in the form of itinerant positions that were assigned to new pathways. There were two types of positions. One was the Linked Learning Coach and the other was the Linked Learning Work-Based Learning Coordinator. These positions were funded, hired, and supervised at the central district office and then assigned for one day a week to support a pathway.

As a pathway developed and attained certification, the district Linked Learning office would begin to reduce the level of support. Gold Certified Pathways would no longer be assigned the itinerant support. The logic was that they were now self-sustaining and did not need the extra help, so those positions could be repurposed at new or struggling pathways that needed more guidance. Four of the participants in this study cited the model of reduced support for high-performing pathways. For three of these participants having less support was difficult and they

emphasized how they were funding their own school-based staff to make up for the lost support. One respondent pointed out something that he felt was positive about less district involvement at his school, which is that the school had more autonomy.

The problems connected to this reduced support include fewer professional development opportunities and reduced capacity to develop and sustain partnerships. When a school became Gold Certified, according to principal Sofia, the professional development was limited to specific staff members rather than the entire faculty. This means that a small number of staff were expected to bring the learning back to the rest of the team, which did not always happen. Principal Sofia implied that this is a change they were adapting to, but that it did mean that many teachers were not getting as much direct training from the district.

The second problem with reduced support from the district was that the capacity to develop and sustain relationships was reduced, so schools had to find ways to foster these partnerships on their own. According to coordinator Brendan, this would be true even for schools who did still have itinerant support because the amount of time the coordinator was assigned to each school was not sufficient. According to coordinator Luna, her principal learned that if he wanted the support of a WBL coordinator, he would have to seek it out on his own.

Development of Work-Based Learning Position

Lack of Appropriate Job Title. Although the district was reducing the support to centrally funded itinerant coordinators for Linked Learning certified schools, the district had not created a mechanism for schools to hire their own coordinators. There was no school-funded position available, so schools needed to be creative if they chose to hire someone for the role of WBL coordinator. For example, principal Eleanor said that when they decided to hire someone several years before, they had to create a contract and treat the coordinator as an independent

contractor. Fame High School had to go through an involved procurement process in which they solicited bids and had to score proposals prior to selecting the coordinator, rather than just posting a job vacancy.

Healthcare High School principal Matthew hired his own coordinator with the official job title of school counselor even the coordinator was not doing typical counselor work. This bending of policy was worth it to Matthew because having a WBL coordinator full time at the school allowed him to set up the PBL consultancies with industry partners, teacher externships, and other teacher PD opportunities. If a school had enough funding and was willing to be creative, they were able to hire someone full time, even if this staff member's job title did not exactly match their actual job description.

Some schools did not have the funding to hire a full-time WBL coordinator, or at least had not prioritized this position enough to make the funding available, so they assigned staff members part time to do the WBL coordination work. For example, George had his magnet coordinator and small learning community lead teachers doing the WBL coordinator work. Jose released a teacher half the day to serve as Linked Learning coordinator, with WBL being one area of responsibility. Both acknowledged that this approach limited their capacity compared to a full-time, dedicated WBL coordinator.

Coordinator Skill Set. The inability to hire a WBL coordinator had changed recently when the district created a school-based work-based learning coordinator position for the 2022-2023 school year. Despite having the option to purchase the WBL coordinator position, a couple of participants shared that the right skill set for coordinators was not easy to find. As Matthew said:

> You need someone that really understands EL, that will understand, how do we put together effective professional development to support ELs. But to support the idea of work-based learning, I don't know, that's a special person, you know. I don't even know that person really exists.

The challenge of finding a strong candidate for WBL coordinator is especially great when a school was looking for someone who had a solid understanding of high-quality instruction for ELs and was also knowledgeable about WBL. Matthew's coordinator made a similar point, that most people who could do the job of WBL coordinator either had industry experience or education experience, but not both. He pointed out that there was no book to tell you how to be a WBL coordinator. Coordinators needed to find a framework like the WBL Continuum and use that as a guide. Coordinator Brendan said that usually schools had to choose between someone with instructional expertise and someone with experience at building relationships and partnerships.

Training for WBL Coordinator. The sense of improvisation was true at the Hospital High School as well, where Jose said that Luna was self-taught by looking at the needs of the school and its students, together with the principal. Eleanor said something similar. The school bought a WBL coordinator before the role existed and the training didn't exist, so the coordinator trained herself. Just as educators said that they are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist, they were needing to fill a position, WBL coordinator, that had only just come into existence and for which training, and guidelines were limited.

Training was another essential condition that subjects brought up, asserting that there is some district support for incorporating the theme of the pathway into their instruction, which was critical. Jose mentioned that the district did hold professional development (PD) for the teachers

about incorporating the theme of the pathway. On the other hand, Luna shared that the PD that the pathway does was homegrown because the district mostly provides PD to the CTE teacher only. This approach reinforces Sofia's point about PD being limited to specific staff members but not the whole faculty. When the district only trains a few staff, Sofia said that they could share their knowledge with other teachers. At Central High School, the CTE teachers could share their industry expertise with the academic teachers. At the same school, the WBL coordinators trained themselves by knowing what is needed and looking out for opportunities. Again, at Central, the WBL coordinators had other job responsibilities and were assigned part-time to coordinate WBL.

In sum, the educators I interviewed were thoughtful about how they navigated competing priorities and bureaucratic institutions to work within a system that does not always facilitate or recognize innovation. There seemed to be a learning progression for Linked Learning schools where they arrived at some of the same conclusions independently, such as the realization that investing in a WBL coordinator and supporting their professional development was essential for the school to offer the types of high-quality, impactful experiences that would help propel students to post-secondary education and fulfilling careers.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSSION

When school campuses closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and students had to adapt quickly to a new model of distance learning. Students also were immediately affected by the pandemic. Beyond the fear of getting sick and the reality of losing family members, many students were forced to seek employment as family members were unable to work due to illness or job cuts. This pattern was particularly common in working class, immigrant communities.

As a high school principal, one of my priorities was keeping students connected to the school. Our leadership team spent hours calling families of students who were not logging into the learning management system, not turning in work, and not joining Zoom sessions. Looking at attendance data, we saw that it was English Learners (ELs) who had the most absences. We started making phone calls to families to see how we could re-engage students. Often, when we were able to reach someone, the answer was that the child was working because someone in the family had lost their job or was unable to work for health reasons

This made me think about the work-based learning (WBL) that we were offering at our school. WBL is one of the core components of the Linked Learning approach, which integrates rigorous college-preparatory academics with career readiness through industry-themed pathways that provide comprehensive student support to ensure that all students graduate ready for college, career, and civic engagement. WBL is provided to students in Linked Learning high schools through experiences that start with career awareness and exploration, advancing to career preparation and training. Our WBL program did not help students meet the intense financial pressures of the pandemic, since it was rare that students were connected with paid work through the school, especially work within the industry sector of their pathway. Students, particularly

ELs, were finding work so that they could earn money that their family needed. Students were struggling with financial hardship, loss of family members, isolation, and lack of connectivity that interfered with them engaging with school. Beyond the immediate financial need, we questioned whether the students who historically struggled the most, including ELs, were being prepared for the transition to life after high school. This situation raised questions about what we could do to better align the Linked Learning approach with the needs of our students so that they could stay in school and be prepared to continue their education after high school.

This chapter starts with a summary of the findings from this study. I then move into a consideration of how the collected data can inform the responses to my research questions. I start with a consideration of the purpose of WBL for EL students and then address the essential conditions for impactful WBL and whose responsibility it is to ensure those conditions are in place. This is followed by an examination of patterns in the data. I then discuss the implications of my research for various stakeholders, followed by some limitations and suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings

This study explored the perspectives of high school principals and support staff at certified Linked Learning pathways in an urban school district in California. Linked Learning is an equity-focused approach to education that started with high schools in nine California districts in the mid-2000s and has since grown to over 600 pathways in 18 states, including some middle and elementary schools. In California, pathways are also sometimes called academies, and each is distinguished by a career-based theme that aligns with one of the 17 CTE industry sectors in the state. Pathways can be stand-alone small schools or programs within a larger school. The

approach includes four components: rigorous academics, career technical education, work-based learning, and comprehensive support services.

The goal of this study was to better understand how study participants think about the purpose of WBL and what conditions are needed for WBL to have a positive impact for EL students. Through interviews with six principals and five coordinators, I learned that school leaders who had the most success with WBL thought about how to integrate it with the rest of their instructional program so that all students could benefit. The relationship between industry partners, school staff, and students was the most important aspect of WBL. Respondents reported that they were bringing the industry partners onto campus, having them work with teachers and students, and doing as much as possible to integrate WBL experiences with classroom learning.

The types of careers that Linked Learning schools focus on are not the manual, blue collar jobs of the past. Of the pathways in this study, three had a health and medical sciences focus, one of them adding a second engineering pathway, one had a theater and production focus, and one school had multiple pathways with a new media, teacher preparation, and a design focus. All these programs were preparing students for careers that require education beyond high school, often at least a bachelor's degree. The educators in these programs spoke about exposure, goal setting, motivation, and overcoming imposter syndrome as they strived to build students' self-confidence and critical skills, including transferable skills like communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork, and positive social skills like self-respect and reliability.

The Purpose of Work-Based Learning for English Learners

Linked Learning is meant to counter tracking and close opportunity gaps for historically marginalized students. Respondents envisioned Linked Learning exposing students to career

opportunities and connecting them to social capital. They hoped that students would feel motivated and encouraged by the experiences and relationships gained through Linked Learning pathways and would parlay this inspiration to pursue post-secondary education and fulfill careers beyond. They saw WBL specifically as a vehicle to give students a purpose for what they were learning in school to increase engagement and improve all kinds of outcomes.

My study asked what educators considered to be the purpose of WBL for ELs. According to the Linked Learning Alliance, the primary organization that promotes and fosters the approach, the overall purpose of Linked Learning is to prepare all students for college, career, and civic engagement (Darche and Stam, 2012). WBL is one component of the Linked Learning approach, along with rigorous academics, career technical training, and comprehensive support services like counseling, advisory classes, and supplemental instruction that build and scaffold student competencies. Perhaps because an equity focus is built into the Linked Learning design (Oakes & Saunders, 2008), many of the purposes of WBL that participants highlighted apply to all students. It is therefore difficult to speak about the purpose of WBL for ELs as separate from the purpose for all students. It is also difficult to distill responses to just one purpose of WBL for ELs. Study participants had a range of ideas about how WBL helped students to achieve the overall goals of Linked Learning, and how this might be different for ELs.

Most respondents emphasized exposure to possibilities after high school that would motivate students to continue with their education. They also spoke about specific skills they wanted students to develop through WBL experiences, skills they might not gain in traditional academic or CTE classes. For EL students, WBL was seen as an opportunity to learn in a context outside of the traditional classroom where they might see their bilingualism and biculturalism as an asset, something that would be an advantage in the job market.

Work-Based Learning Contributions to the Overall Goals of Linked Learning

School staff emphasized exposure to careers as a priority. They strived to connect possible career options to classroom learning to make what students studied more relevant. Participants also highlighted the identification of career and educational goals through WBL as an important purpose for all students, including ELs (Cahill, 2016; Showalter & Spiker, 2016). Moreover, through these WBL experiences, educators hoped to build students' social networks to help them develop social capital that would support their continued education and entry into high quality careers (Galindo et. al., 2017).

Gain exposure to careers. Most of the communities in this study were working class immigrant areas that included industries with a range of jobs from low wage service jobs and manual labor to high wage professional work. Some of the communities were solidly working class, close to industrial areas where the most common jobs were manual labor and did not require an education beyond high school. The preponderance of students at all the schools qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. In all schools, respondents felt that their students were not exposed in their personal lives to a range of professional careers that require a college education, so these educators saw the importance of providing exposure through their schools.

Educators that I interviewed viewed WBL as a vehicle to expose students to unfamiliar careers. Sometimes students had heard of a career but had not experienced first-hand what it would entail. WBL could provide the opportunity to decide if a career was something that a student really wanted to pursue. For example, at Science High School, coordinator Jon talked about students realizing that a career they had seen on TV and thought looked interesting ended up not being as appealing when they were exposed in person through school brokered WBL.

Typically, WBL involved seeing firsthand a career that a student might only have a vague idea about or not even know existed at all.

Learning about unfamiliar careers. Study participants often seemed to subscribe to a logic model that assumed that when students have career goals, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated in school. The connection between real-world learning and student motivation has some support in the literature (Warner et al., 2016). Often, students did not have the opportunity to learn about careers that might excite them and so they did not really have goals beyond finishing high school. Some respondents saw WBL as a vehicle to expose students to careers they had not heard about previously through their family or their community. In addition, study subjects explained that WBL could expose students to careers in industries they had heard something about, but for which they were not familiar with the specific types of jobs available. By bringing professionals to the campus and taking students to professional work sites, educators hoped that students would acquire a better idea of a range of career options that would be available to them after high school, many of which would require them to continue with their education at a college or university (Kenny et. al., 2010).

Identify career and educational goals. Respondents claimed that through this exposure, students saw the trajectory they would take if they were to pursue a particular career. This means that they became familiar with the requirements to get an entry-level job in that industry and how they could advance to a higher-level position within that career path. Participants felt that these goals propelled students to achieve in high school so that they would be accepted and successful in an institution of higher learning that would provide them with the credentials needed to achieve their career goals. Much of this understanding came from the interaction with the professionals in the workplace, or when the professionals came to the school site.

Alignment with Conceptual Framework

Before collecting data, I hypothesized that certain experiences in the ConnectED Work-Based Learning System Continuum (ConnectED, 2021) were more relevant to the question of purpose and would be more frequently cited by Linked Learning principals and coordinators. I predicted that the most prevalent experiences mentioned would relate to Purpose, Relevant, and Preparation. The experiences that I focus on from the WBL System Continuum are in the Student Experience section. The highest level of the Continuum is Transforming. Table 1 shows the descriptor for the Transforming level of each of the areas of focus in the Student Experience section of the Continuum.

Table 1: Transforming Characteristics of the areas of focus in the Student Experience

Area of Focus	**Transforming Characteristics**
Purpose	All pathway students participate in a continuum of WBL as an integrated part of their preparation for college and career.
Outcome-Focused	Students are assessed against an identified set of student learning outcomes connected to the graduate profile and- specific professional and industry standards.
Relevant	The experiences provided are relevant to the student's career interests, individual learning needs, and the pathway theme.
Integrated	WBL is integrated into the student's academic and technical curriculum and is a planned part of the Program of Study for the pathway.

Varied	WBL experiences involve a variety of tasks, opportunities to work with multiple adults, and opportunities to work in individual and group settings – without compromising the depth of the experience.
Preparation	WBL is prefaced by preparation of the student in class through developmentally appropriate experiences with the academic, technical, and applied workplace skills needed to ultimately succeed in an internship.
Interaction	Provides opportunities for the student to interact directly with professionals from industry and the community in two-way interactions and over an extended period.
Reflection	WBL engages the student in reflection and analysis throughout the experience and after it concludes to link the experience back to the student learning outcomes and forward to career and post-secondary options.
Assessment	Students are assessed against a set of student learning outcomes, college and career readiness standards, and context-specific professional standards. Students are asked to demonstrate what was learned from the experience by documenting learning during the experience and presenting at the end to teachers and those with whom they have worked.

(Source: WBL System Continuum)

The data generally confirmed my predictions about which areas would be emphasized most by study respondents. Exposure and goal setting align most closely with "Relevant" on the continuum, where the experiences provided are relevant to the student's career interests,

individual learning needs and the pathway theme. The importance of the relevance of WBL to students' interests was most pronounced in principal Janet's responses and was present in most of my participants' comments. The repeated emphasis on integration of WBL that I heard from respondents supports the Purpose section on the continuum. The idea of Preparation came up frequently as well, especially for ELs. For example, coordinator Luna and coordinator Jon both discussed how ELs benefit from preparation for WBL opportunities and from opportunities that feel accessible to their abilities.

Connection between career opportunities and classroom learning. Students often complain that what they are learning in school is not interesting or does not relate to something they want to do in their lives. Respondents hoped that by making explicit connections between classroom learning and WBL experiences, students would see the purpose of what they were learning in class and would be more motivated to excel in their academics, so they would continue with their education to achieve their career goals.

Development of social capital through mentoring. School staff were very thoughtful about the types of industry partners they were looking for, and who would serve as mentors to their students. They sought mentors who understood students' backgrounds, learning needs, and experiences. This idea of mentors recognizing and building on students' strengths is supported in the literature (Liou et. al., 2016). Gamez (2017) also found that what she called relational capital emerged as an important component in the success of Latino mentors. This included shared experiences, extension of family to include the mentee, and code switching, which can be facilitated by shared cultural background. Participants hoped that the mentors of students attending the schools in this study would stay in contact with students so that they could help them navigate beyond high school and into their career, building their social capital.

Critical skills development

Although the purposes for WBL educators shared all apply to EL students as well, there are some areas that educators felt are especially important purposes for ELs. This is because of what these educators have seen as patterns in the mindset of ELs, their developmental and learning needs. Specifically, ELs may be bilingual or even trilingual but are classified as ELs because their English language proficiency has not reached the level identified by the state of California as necessary to be re-classified as fluent English proficient. Respondents saw WBL opportunities as providing environments where ELs could thrive and use their language skills as an asset. At the same time, WBL provided a real-world context where ELs had to use their English to communicate with the public or coworkers. This could help them to better understand the nuances of the English language needed to communicate effectively.

Transferable skills. Transferable skills are critical skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Respondents shared their view that ELs may benefit from developing certain transferable skills in more authentic contexts where, for example, they can practice communication and collaboration in English with adults outside of their family or school. Respondents expressed that WBL provides a context for the development of these transferable skills in a way that is different from in the school setting. School staff try to simulate the work environment at school through models like project-based learning (PBL) that can engage students in collaboration with a purpose, where they need to communicate with their group members, using creativity and critical thinking to solve novel problems.

Transferable skills can be applied to multiple careers, which is important since students may change their minds about what they want to do after high school. Students may not have enough time in a high school WBL placement to develop the technical skills needed for an entry-

level job in their chosen career industry. These technical skills are defined as the specialized skills that are specific to an industry. Students might need to develop technical skills through their CTE classes, dual enrollment, or college classes after high school, whereas getting some exposure to the types of transferable skills needed for a career is more realistic.

Transferable skills align with what the Linked Learning WBL System Continuum (ConnectEd, 2021) refers to as "Outcome-Focused" student experiences. The Linked Learning approach emphasizes the graduate profile, a set of student outcomes developed at the district and school level to unpack college and career readiness and identify measurable goals for students to achieve (Adams & Kaul, 2020; Kaul, 2019, Thompson et. al., 2020). A graduate profile has been defined as "the skills, competencies and mindsets necessary for young people to be ready for success in college, career, and civic life" (Stearns, 2021). In general terms, the student outcomes defined in district and school graduate profiles emphasize the transferable skills that can be critical to college and career success but may be de-emphasized in test-based accountability systems (Darling-Hammond et. al., 2010; Rice, 2011). Linked Learning schools operationalize the measurement of student achievement of the graduate profile through activities like the senior portfolio and defense, during which graduates reflect on their high school experience and share artifacts of projects and other experiences, including WBL, that support their mastery of the skills in the graduate profile (Maier et. al., 2020).

Many respondents spoke about transferable skills as important to the language development of ELs, which makes sense because transferable skills play a critical role in effective communication. Standardized tests do not always measure skills like communication, collaboration, advocacy, creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking. Performance assessments can complement traditional standardized assessments by promoting deeper learning

and higher order thinking skills, assessing the types of competencies often called out in graduate profiles (Guha et. al., 2018). Research supports the benefits of performance assessments, of which the portfolio defense is one example, to ELs in the development of communication and presentation skills (Maier et. al., 2020). In the schools in this study, educators hinted that WBL was an important vehicle for the development of the skills needed to show mastery of the graduate profile.

Positive social skills. Another purpose that educators mentioned as being important for ELs is positive social skills. A couple of my respondents shared that ELs often are more likely to lack confidence and are less likely to advocate for themselves. The literature is mixed on the correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic performance (Manzano-Sanchez et. al., 2018), although studies have shown promise that career pathways and targeted career counseling can build students' sense of career and academic self-efficacy (Stipanovic et. al, 2018). Among study participants, WBL was seen to help students build their confidence, agency, grit, and self-advocacy, and to build social skills like professional dress, punctuality, and communicating with supervisors (Kundu, 2017).

Research shows that self-confidence and motivation are strongly correlated, so it is not surprising that the logic for WBL contributing to motivation is like the reasons cited for self-confidence. Whereas classroom learning can feel disconnected from a student's lived experience, WBL can help students see the connections to real-world application, which can be motivating (Kenny et al., 2010). *Motivation* is a subject of much research in education (Costello & Zozula, 2018; Farkas & Jang, 2019; Kenny et.al., 2010; Medvide & Blustein, 2010; Richardson et. al., 2012, Solian, 2017). Finding purpose in school learning supports the broader goal of students remaining in school, graduating from high school, and continuing their education beyond. Given

the disparity in educational achievement between English Learners and the overall student population, facilitating the development of purpose in education for ELs should be a priority.

Essential Conditions for Work-Based Learning

Once I established what participants felt were the purposes of WBL for EL students, I turned to an exploration of the essential conditions needed to achieve these purposes. There are two aspects to the question of essential conditions. The first is to define them and the second is to consider whether they are present. In addition, I was interested in who bears responsibility for creating those essential conditions. Participants shared efforts in place at their schools that were designed to create the conditions to expose EL students to careers, help them develop career goals, connect them with mentors to build social capital, and help develop their Transferable skills and positive social skills, such as self-respect and reliability. Participants also shared conditions that would support these efforts but were not in place. They spoke about which of these conditions were within their own control and which might be the responsibility of the district or somebody else. Respondents' insights about who they felt was responsible for creating the essential conditions for impactful WBL will lead to the implications of this study for district administrators and policy makers.

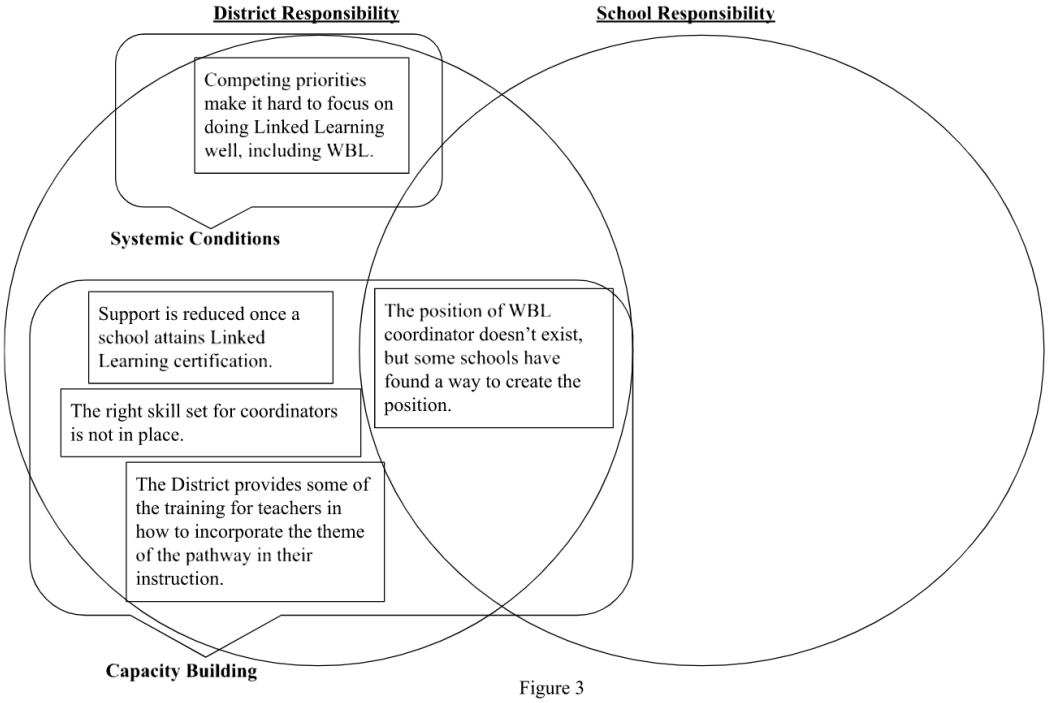


Figure 3

Figure 3 illustrates the conditions that subjects expressed are the responsibility of the District, the School, or both, where the two circles of the Venn diagram intersect. Evidently, most of the conditions mentioned are the responsibility of the district, with one being shared between the two. This may be a function of the way questions were asked and the context of the educators focusing on the conditions that they feel are beyond their control, since they have already put into place conditions that they feel are within their purview.

The callouts in the Figure group the conditions by their characteristics rather than who is responsible. The competing priorities condition is labeled under Systemic Conditions since it is based on accountability measures and policies. The other four all relate to capacity building based on staff funding and training.

Integration of Work-Based Learning into curriculum

Integration of WBL into the curriculum was one of the most frequently cited conditions for impactful WBL. Although traditionally we think of WBL as opportunities that students take outside of their school campus and outside of the school day, respondents in this study repeatedly cited examples of WBL being something that students needed to be exposed to in class, during the school day, and on campus.

Providing access for all students

According to study participants, one of the primary reasons for the integration of WBL into the curriculum is to provide access to all students. There were many barriers to participation in WBL outside of school, such as transportation, scheduling conflicts, liability, and financial need. Because of these challenges, participants spoke about the importance of bringing WBL to the students. Educators felt that it was important to link these experiences to students' classroom learning, so that school felt more relevant. Industry partners were coming to the schools and helping teachers plan projects that were more authentic. Teachers and school staff were preparing students prior to WBL experiences and were then helping them reflect and connect those experiences to their classroom learning.

Some of my respondents spoke about the goal of creating a purpose for the classroom learning so that students were motivated to do well in class. They explained that too many students feel that classroom learning is disconnected from their own lives and do not see how school is important to their future. The lack of purpose to school was cited as an issue for EL students who may have prior experiences of low academic achievement, not passing exams needed to re-classify or courses needed to re-classify. Prior studies and state and national frameworks support the integration of WBL with classroom learning (Darche et. al., 2009; Giffin

et. al., 2018) for these reasons. The integration of WBL into the curriculum can also help to build students' career readiness. When, for example, industry partners come to a school and teach a work readiness curriculum or interview students for mock interviews that they have been preparing for in their classes, all students can build their career readiness.

Provision of Appropriate Opportunities

When thinking about the needs of ELs and other students who might feel intimidated by and unqualified for a rigorous internship, participants spoke about the need to provide appropriate opportunities for all students. Various considerations go into appropriateness. In this context, it is helpful to think about Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD; Billings & Walqui, 2018). The ZPD consists of tasks that are too challenging for students to do on their own, but manageable for students to complete successfully with the support of an adult or capable peer. Many WBL opportunities are beyond the ZPD of students, especially EL students who may have prior low academic achievement. For example, one study participant cited volunteering at the local hospital as a first step that EL students were more likely to feel prepared for. After that they would continue with a summer mentoring program and then feel ready for the hospital's internship program. Participants spoke about how they sought out experiences that would be appropriate to a student's current level of academic and social development and would help propel them to a higher level through the guidance of a mentor.

It is also important for schools to consider what the mentors do at their worksite because students may set their own goals based on what they are exposed to. We want students to set their sights high and aim for careers that offer more opportunities to advance and to earn a decent salary to support themselves and their families in an ever more costly society. Schools in this study were connecting students with professionals who had already advanced in their careers or

with early-career professionals who were aiming to advance. For example, students at Hospital High School were mentored by medical students or with the managers in the different hospital departments. Although there can be dignity in any job, the exposure to professionals in the higher end of the career ladder can help students to see what is possible.

Industry Partner Conditions

Industry partners are a key component of impactful WBL. Educators in this study spoke about the importance of choosing partners that had a mindset aligned with the school's vision for WBL. They would not choose to partner with a company that was looking for cheap or free labor from a high school student. Instead, these school staff wanted to see an investment from the partner who cared about young people's development and was willing to take the time to get to know the student and build a relationship. Potential partners needed to make the effort to learn a student's skills, assets, and learning needs and to be willing to meet that student where they were in their academic and social development.

Participants argued that industry partners should ideally come to the campus and work with students and teachers on site. They stressed that ongoing partnership led to the most impactful WBL when industry partners worked with teachers on designing projects, supported students as they were doing the project, gave feedback to students on their projects, and then offered WBL opportunities for those students outside of school.

School Staff Conditions

School staff are a critical piece of the puzzle for impactful WBL. Participants asserted that at least one staff member was needed with the skill set to coordinate WBL, and all staff at a school who support WBL in some way needed targeted professional development (PD). School staff needed to understand in depth what the WBL experiences would be like for students at their

school. By knowing what students would be expected to do during their WBL placements, teachers would know what they were preparing students for when they were implementing work readiness curriculum in their school or helping students to get ready for an internship.

Full-Time Work-Based Learning coordinator

Multiple participants mentioned that a full-time WBL coordinator was an essential condition for impactful WBL for ELs. While schools may need less support as they develop stronger programs, the most seasoned educators that I interviewed emphasized that having a full-time dedicated WBL coordinator was critical for the success of the program. School staff with other commitments could not complete the different tasks needed for true integration of WBL into the curriculum. Someone who had the time and focus was better able to build strong industry partnerships that went deeper than just sharing a program flier and encouraging students to apply. In the WBL Systems Continuum, a full-time WBL coordinator is called out in two separate sections. Having someone who was embedded at the school site who could get to know the teachers and their curriculum helped a school to improve their offerings for students. WBL coordinators were the main liaisons between industry partners and schools. Coordinators helped to set up opportunities and prepare industry partners to know what to expect from the students. They also connected teachers with partners so that teachers could understand what they needed to do in class to prepare students for success in WBL. Full-time WBL coordinators became intimate with the projects that teachers were assigning and brought in industry partners to consult on these projects. This way partners could suggest ways projects could be modified to be more authentic and aligned with what students would see when they started careers in their industry.

Districts do not always support schools differently based on their instructional model. Linked Learning schools may need a full-time WBL coordinator, but until the year of this study,

the position did not exist in the school district, so school leaders had to be creative about how they would create such a position. Even if the position had existed, schools would still have struggled to find qualified coordinators, because there were no college or university programs for WBL coordinators in California. Other states, including Alabama, Colorado, New York, and Vermont have developed certifications for WBL coordinators and have partnered with colleges and universities to offer courses for teachers and other eligible candidates to earn this certification (Advanced Certificate, n.d; Sec. 13A.12.02.16, 2021; WBL teacher, n.d., Work-Based Learning, 2022). To date, such a certification does not exist in the state of California.

The position of WBL coordinator requires knowledge of both education and industry. Candidates with skills and experiences in both areas are not easy to find. California could support the growth of a pool of qualified candidates by creating a certification with financial incentives attached. Districts could help by creating positions and ongoing training for WBL coordinators. They could also partner with universities and county offices of education to develop programs to prepare candidates to earn a certification as a coordinator and to serve in the role of WBL coordinator.

English Learner Conditions

Some of the educators interviewed considered the learning and developmental needs of ELs when they designed their program. They realized that if CTE is one of the key components of Linked Learning, then ELs should get the same type of support in CTE classes that they would get in academic classes, such as a dedicated TA. Comprehensive student support is one of the four core components of Linked Learning, along with rigorous academics, career technical training, and work-based learning. These supports should look different at Linked Learning

schools because the supports must align with schools' goals for their students (Ruiz de Velasco et. al., 2016).

Participants recognized that EL students may have to take additional courses as part of a state mandate to improve their English-language skills so that they could re-classify, and that these requirements could sometimes be a barrier to participation in the full program, including CTE classes and WBL opportunities (Mendoza, 2016, 2019). A few participants shared some of the ways that they adjusted practices so EL students would have access to the full program, such as implementing alternative schedules or finding other ways for EL students to complete requirements so that they could still take the CTE classes during the school day, as well as including CTE teachers in professional development so they could develop EL students' language skills in their classes.

Enabling the Conditions for Impactful Work-Based Learning

Impactful WBL requires the integration of industry partners, school staff, curriculum, and students. The responsibility for impactful WBL falls on all these parties. The school alone cannot develop a strong program without the support of district and industry partners. Participants spoke about some of the challenges they faced as school administrators and coordinators in achieving the multiple goals that all schools faced in addition to the goals specific to Linked Learning schools. With the existing accountability measures placed on schools, it was hard to add more measures that were not emphasized by the district.

Now more than ever, schools are under intense pressure to improve student outcomes. Post-pandemic, districts are making considerable efforts to accelerate learning and to make up for learning loss that occurred during distance learning (Polikoff, 2021). Measures like standardized tests, graduation rates, attendance, EL reclassification, and A-G completion are in

focus. Two principal participants spoke about how Linked Learning schools must put more effort into areas that have not been as valued by their school districts, or at least have not been monitored as closely. For example, students in Linked Learning schools completed senior portfolio defenses, which can be of value to EL students. Portfolio defense could feel like an extra initiative instead of an integral part of the school program because no one in the district hierarchy was monitoring what percentage of seniors completed them, let alone recognizing schools that excelled in this practice.

WBL experiences were not tracked systematically, which made it difficult for schools to set improvement goals. Consequently, educators were unable to easily keep track of the experiences that students were having and to run reports that could help them see areas of strength and growth so they could set goals for improvement. This lack of data also made it difficult to ensure that ELs were getting equitable access to high-quality WBL experiences.

Patterns related to participant role and pathway theme

The sample size of this study includes six schools, so any speculation about patterns in the responses would be preliminary. It is worth considering whether principals tend to give similar responses to each other when compared to their coordinators, or if there are other patterns in interview responses based on the location or theme of the school.

Principal and Coordinator Agreement

Although I looked for patterns or differences in the responses between principals and coordinators, this did not emerge from the interviews I conducted. More often, I heard similar responses from the principal and coordinator at the same school site, even when the interviews were conducted separately. Principals and coordinators were communicating with each other and had developed a shared vision around Linked Learning and WBL that they were using to guide

their work. For example, this communication was evident in the interviews with principal Matthew and coordinator Brendan at Healthcare High School. They both expressed a belief that the development of transferable skills like communication and self-advocacy were more important and realistic outcomes of student participation in WBL than the development of career-ready technical skills. It was also apparent in the responses from principal Eleanor and coordinator Kristine from Fame High School when they spoke about the importance for ELs of culturally and linguistically relevant content.

Differences by Theme

Since several of the schools in this study had similar industry sector themes, it is worth considering whether there were similarities or differences in how staff conceptualized WBL based on the theme of the pathway. For example, Fame High School was the only school with a theater pathway and had built out an entire WBL program using an in-house theater production company. This approach might not be as relevant to a health and medical sciences pathway, for example. Those programs tend to seek out opportunities outside of the school campus.

Two of the health-themed pathways in this study were located close to a major healthcare center and had established a partnership that allowed many students to participate in WBL off-campus at the healthcare facility. The third health-themed pathway was not anywhere near a major healthcare facility. As such, they did not have the same opportunity to establish a large-scale partnership, but they also did not have a major on-campus WBL program. Dry River

Continuation High School, following the model of personalizing WBL to the individual student, sought out off-campus opportunities one student at a time. It would not make a lot of sense to establish an on-campus WBL program. It would be very difficult to personalize on-campus experiences and connect students with different mentors to match the students' interests,

which was very important to principal Janet. The challenge of bringing so many mentors to campus separately would make the approach more difficult than sending the students on their own to meet with mentors off campus.

Differences Between Sites

As discussed in the previous section, the location of a school campus impacts the types of WBL opportunities they can offer students. Three of the pathways, Fame High School, Science High School, and Central Comprehensive High School, were in dense, urban neighborhoods with significant commercial activity and major healthcare and other industry centers. Healthcare High School, on the other hand, was in a blue-collar, industrial suburban neighborhood where most of the industry was manufacturing and did not align with the theme of the pathway of the school. The geography of the surrounding community made it a challenge to connect students with off-campus internships and other WBL opportunities within their industry sector. Finally, although located in an area removed from most industry, Hospital High School was built next-door to a major healthcare facility and was therefore able to benefit from this proximity in creating a large scale WBL program for every student in the pathway.

The location of the school must be taken into consideration when thinking about the industry sector that the pathway wants to align with, and which potential partners are near the school campus. If WBL opportunities do not exist close to the campus, then taking the approach of Fame High School and building out an on-campus WBL program might be worth considering.

Implications of the Study

Advocates for Linked Learning say that it will engage all students in an educational program that will prepare them for college, career, and civic engagement. They claim every student will be able to complete their A-G requirements for college admission while also

completing a CTE pathway that leads to industry recognized certification. In the process, students will benefit from integrated student supports and participate in a continuum of WBL experiences that culminate in a career preparation experience such as an internship.

School districts are not aligned around work-based learning for all

Some schools are not living up to the ideals of Linked Learning because the system is not set up for them to incorporate all the elements of the model. As mentioned earlier, districts often have the same expectations for Linked Learning schools as they do for traditional schools, expecting them to follow every initiative in addition to adding high-quality WBL. Without additional support or time, Linked Learning schools will struggle to be successful with implementation. Districts need to adjust the way they support Linked Learning schools, so these schools are allowed to take the time needed to approach education differently. Districts should not require Linked Learning schools to do the same things as every other school since they have a different way to achieve desired student outcomes.

School staff should be intentional about program design

It can be overwhelming for schools starting on the journey of Linked Learning to have a clear vision of what they need to do to build an impactful program for their students. This study illuminates some of the ways that educators with experience in Linked Learning thought about what was needed for students to achieve the purpose they had identified for WBL. This study can help school staff who are new to Linked Learning in thinking about ways to overcome some of the challenges they are having with improving their program and reaching more students through their WBL offerings.

Overall, participants in this study were thoughtful about the ways that they needed to create conditions for EL students to be successful and achieve the purposes of WBL that they

believed in. These educators learned lessons from years of experience in implementing the Linked Learning approach and arrived at similar conclusions, such as the realization that a full-time WBL coordinator was necessary. They also repeatedly expressed that their goal was not to prepare students for careers right after high school, but rather to inspire and motivate them to continue with their education after high school, so that the students could achieve a meaningful career. Educators at Linked Learning schools were not espousing a philosophy of tracking, but rather embraced the spirit of Linked Learning as a model that counters tracking and provides as much opportunity as possible for students to choose their own path.

Design of program of study

The four-year program of study is a starting point for school staff in Linked Learning pathways. This study points to the importance of starting with students when they are in ninth grade and thinking about their trajectory through high school and the types of experiences that they need. ELs might need specific classes and additional support. Starting in the ninth grade, classes, projects, and assignments should prepare students to do the type of work that they will experience later in high school through their CTE classes. This scaffolded approach needs to be differentiated for ELs. The alignment of the WBL experiences with careers in the industry sector of the pathway will help school staff to see what is needed to prepare students to be successful.

Development of partnerships

This study points to the importance of Linked Learning schools developing partnerships that are long lasting and deep. Some school staff take an approach to WBL in which they seek out as many partners as possible so that every student can have access to some type of opportunity. As evidenced from my respondents, if we are going to ask industry partners to support teachers with designing projects, support students with completing those projects, and

prepare students for WBL experiences, then it would be much more manageable to have a smaller number of partners who can work closely with schools on an ongoing basis. ELs at Linked Learning schools benefit from deep connections with industry partners who care about their development and who have the commitment to build their language skills and other competencies needed for success in their field.

Tailor support and accountability

District administrators have a challenge of working with many schools that each have their own unique context. In a large urban school district, there may be some schools that are following the Linked Learning approach and others that are not. Some participants explained that a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting schools does not help them to successfully implement their program model. In the case of Linked Learning schools, there are specific staffing and instructional needs that do not apply to other schools. Respondents in this study emphasized that it can be very challenging to be held accountable for all the same initiatives as other schools in addition to initiatives that are unique to the Linked Learning approach, such as portfolio defense, work readiness WBL, PBL, and CTE pathways.

District administrators can learn from this study about the importance of giving schools autonomy when possible and recognizing Linked Learning schools' accomplishments in areas that other schools may not be making efforts. Linked Learning high schools should be held accountable for the same measures as other schools that are part of a state accountability system. On the other hand, the path those schools take to improving student outcomes will look different from that of a traditional high school, and there should be some autonomy from following district initiatives that would compete with Linked Learning initiatives. For example, a Linked Learning school might need curricular autonomy to incorporate project-based learning instead of using a

district pacing plan with an adopted curriculum. Linked Learning schools should also be recognized and acknowledged for the work they are doing to support students through WBL and other initiatives. Districts can reinforce the good work that those schools are doing in areas that traditional schools may not be focused on.

Positions and funding for schools to staff appropriately

Differentiating support for Linked Learning schools might require that districts fund schools differently if they are pursuing the Linked Learning model. If every Linked Learning school needs a WBL coordinator, then perhaps that position should automatically be funded by school districts. There could be some type of expectation for the additional opportunities such a position would create for students, including subgroups such as ELs. If a school is willing to take on additional accountability measures, then they should also receive additional resources to help them excel in these additional measures. Just as a school may receive a full-time coordinator for a magnet program, the additional requirements of a Linked Learning program merit the same investment for WBL.

Policies and systems for data and accountability

The data for measures related to WBL are often difficult for schools to track because of limitations in existing data systems. California does not track some WBL experiences such as internships, job shadowing, guest speakers, and mock interviews, and until recently these WBL experiences were not tracked by most school districts. Recently districts have added the ability to input WBL experiences into student information systems but gathering and inputting these data requires considerable time and coordination.

Districts can do more to make their data systems work for Linked Learning schools. In the WBL Systems Continuum, data collection and reporting are highlighted under Defined

Indicators in the section called Systemic Conditions for Scaled High Quality Work-Based Learning. For example, it should be easier for schools to track participation in WBL experiences and to disaggregate for EL students. Currently, the task of inputting and reporting on WBL experiences is complicated and time consuming, so many of these experiences do not end up getting memorialized. Coordinators in this study spoke about the frustration of trying to capture all the experiences that students were exposed to in their different classes without a consistent approach. Reporting systems also do not work well, so schools cannot see what types of experiences they are offering and if there are equity gaps in the WBL experiences in which students are participating. Districts can invest in improving data systems so educators could easily review dashboards to see the types of experiences their schools are offering, and which student sub-groups are benefiting from these opportunities.

Professional development for school leaders

Districts need to provide professional development (PD) to principals and coordinators on WBL. In the WBL Systems Continuum, PD is cited under Educator Training in the section called Supporting Pathway Teams in Schools. In the California English Learner Roadmap (Section 3.D, Capacity Building), professional learning and collaboration time are called out as important elements for schools in supporting ELs. PD is needed so that leaders, coordinators, and teachers understand and address the needs of ELs in relation to preparing for and benefitting from WBL. In developing PD for principals about WBL and the needs of ELs, district administrators can have site leaders start with developing a vision for their school. Many Linked Learning schools have experienced staff and leaders, and PD should build on that expertise. A PD could emerge from a framework that allows schools that are starting out or striving to

improve their WBL program to apply the experience of more established pathways that have demonstrated success in integrating ELs in their WBL program.

It is important to start with asking the principals to establish a vision for their pathway, including their graduate profile. This graduate profile should drive the design of the school program since preparing students to achieve the competencies of the profile is the primary goal of the pathway (Stearns, 2021). From there, the pathway can develop a vision for WBL that, along with the other components of the Linked Learning approach, will prepare all students, including ELs, to master the competencies in the graduate profile. Principals can then start to think about what conditions are needed to achieve that vision of impactful WBL. Finally, leadership PD would provide frameworks for leaders to think about staffing, master schedule, professional development, partnerships, curriculum, and other resources they will need to achieve their vision.

Policymakers should remove barriers and provide appropriate supports

The real-world conditions that schools face can make it difficult to achieve the outcomes that the Linked Learning approach prioritizes. For example, schools are expected to offer high-quality WBL to all students without enough staffing and without an established database of industry partners. Policymakers can think about ways to remove barriers from schools and provide more support. At the state level, this may mean giving more weight to the accountability measures that Linked Learning schools are more likely to achieve. The College and Career Indicator on the California School Dashboard could be one place to align accountability with the priorities of Linked Learning since the Indicator already includes CTE pathway completion and dual enrollment, two components that Linked Learning schools emphasize.

Schools are increasingly driven by data-based objectives in every area of focus, for example graduation rates, test scores, English Learner progress, and suspensions. The California School Dashboard implemented starting in 2017 (Furger et. al., 2019) has added another measure, the College Career Indicator (CCI), which is a composite of several different measures, where certain combinations of performance are deemed to show that a student has demonstrated that they are college and/or career prepared. In the career readiness category, metrics include completion of two years of Leadership/Military Science, completion of a Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathway, Registered Pre-Apprenticeship, Non-Registered Pre-Apprenticeship, State and Federal Job Programs, and Transition Classroom and Work-Based Learning Experiences (available only to students with IEP who complete a special education certificate of completion).

In the area of staffing, policymakers can do more to create the conditions for impactful WBL. As previously mentioned, California can create a certification for WBL coordinators, working with colleges and universities to offer training in all regions of the state. Subsidies can be applied to the cost of obtaining this certification, and salary augmentation can be attached to this certification so there is an incentive for qualified candidates to pursue it. The state can create policies that promote the use of bilingual teacher assistants for CTE programs so that EL students can get additional in-class support. Bilingual TAs were a support that several participants cited as helpful for ELs because they can provide translation and other language support in classes that are often heavy in technical academic language. More broadly, California would be well-served by training more certified bilingual teachers for CTE classes.

Limitations of the study

This study focused on six certified Linked Learning pathways in an urban school district. It is based entirely on data collected through interviews with six principals and five coordinators. Since this is a qualitative study that does not take into consideration student outcomes at the schools, it is difficult to validate the responses of the study participants. It was outside of the scope of my study to assess which schools were involving the most ELs in WBL or having the most impact with the WBL program they were offering.

Since there is so much variation in Linked Learning programs across pathway theme, geography, student population, and other local considerations, it would be very difficult to generalize based on my data. There are worthwhile learnings from the interviews, but anyone who wished to take this study as a guide to how to develop an effective WBL program for a different school would need to take into serious consideration the local context of that school, and what aspects of this study would apply to this context.

Suggestions for further research

Since this study had a small sample size and the findings are based on interviews with educators at the schools, there are limited conclusions that can be drawn about how particular school-based conditions and activities are related to various student outcomes. Future studies might take quantitative data into consideration, such as the number and types of WBL experiences that ELs and all other students participate in. Future studies might also look at the correlation of WBL experiences with other student outcomes, like graduation rates, standardized test scores, college applications and matriculation, industry-recognized certification, and CTE pathway completion. Specifically, for ELs, future quantitative studies may consider whether

participation in high quality WBL in certified Linked Learning pathways is associated with improvement in reclassification rates.

Future studies might also look deeper into the question of variation based on pathway location and theme, including between schools within the same school district. Future studies could look more closely at WBL and the types of experiences that ELs are accessing compared to the overall student population in Linked Learning pathways.

Personal Reflection

As a Linked Learning high school principal, I have been interested in what I could learn from my research that I could bring back to my school. My high school is preparing to open a new wellness center that will provide various health services to students and the community. This wellness center will be managed by an established local (and federally qualified) health clinic provider. All along, I have pushed for the medical CTE classroom to be located next to the wellness center, so that students would have easy access to WBL opportunities.

Reflecting on my research and our role as a community school, it is important that the wellness center not only serve students in the community for prevention, intervention, and routine treatment. It is also important that the wellness center be a site of engagement, learning, and empowerment. Because of what I have learned from the principals and coordinators I interviewed, I recognize the importance of providing WBL opportunities on campus, especially for English learners. We are working with a local research hospital to set up a program in which their medical students will come to our campus to mentor high school students in the wellness center. We will make sure that the wellness center assign mentors who are culturally proficient with our students' backgrounds, and some who are bilingual who can be paired with our English learners.

In addition, I have been inspired by models of WBL where high school students become public health advocates. The wellness center is a powerful resource, but without outreach and cultural understanding it might be underutilized. High school students can be trained to use their language and cultural knowledge as assets to promote the services that are available in the wellness center. In doing so, these students will serve as liaisons to their classmates and advocate for health and wellness services needed by all. They can work with their peers to counter reluctance or stigmas students may feel toward some of the services being provided, such as mental health and reproductive care.

The opening of the wellness center at Roosevelt is also a great opportunity to think outside of the box with resources that come through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). As Gandara and Zarate argued in their 2014 brief (Gandara and Zarate, 2014), the LCFF funds must be utilized in a way that meets the purpose they were intended for - to serve low income, English learner, and foster youth. Can we find a way to create a program using LCFF funds that pays students for their WBL experiences related to the wellness center so that they may not have to seek paid work outside of school? Such a program would enable students to focus on their studies without having to worry about seeking a job off-campus to meet their families' needs. In these ways, WBL can be empowering for EL students, and can be a tool for them to advance to professional careers and build their own self-confidence and language skills in the process.

Tensions to Consider

Throughout this study—from the project's conceptualization to the literature review, data collection, and data analysis—there have been multiple tensions at play. I would like to say a bit about two of these tensions. The first is between deficit and asset thinking, and the second is between student self-actualization and worker development. Deficit thinking is deeply ingrained

in the way that schools have approached ELs, and its effects can be quite harmful. RQ1 of this study addressed the issue of the purpose of WBL. Respondents did not speak to the risk that WBL can be more about preparing compliant workers than about the realization of an individual's personal development. A consideration of both tensions can also help us to think about who controls the education and development of young people.

The long history of tracking some students into vocational education and others into college preparatory classes has been based on classist and racist ideas about innate ability and cultural deficiencies. This history casts a shadow over the educational enterprise. Linked Learning advocates must consider how the model and its implementation either perpetuate or push against essentializing narratives around the achievement gap that associate low achievement with particular groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, home language, and other group factors. When we think about how to support ELs in their education, it can be easy to slip into deficit thinking. The responsibility for student achievement is often placed on the individual student, and when students have poor educational outcomes, they themselves can be "blamed." For example, if we argue that motivation is important for ELs to reclassify as fluent, we should question why ELs might be unmotivated. Linked Learning schools need to take more responsibility for engaging ELs and tapping into their intrinsic motivation.

The way we think about the causes of student achievement matters because our thinking can shape how we design our educational programs, including WBL. A deficit-based approach might cause educators to develop WBL programs for EL students that neither offer rigorous learning opportunities nor expose students to high-status and well-paying jobs. An assets-based approach, on the other hand, would begin with the assumption that EL's bring unique strengths to their learning and that, with the right supports, they are capable of pursuing and being

successful in an array of professional pathways. Such an approach might ask about the personal and family knowledge and experiences EL students bring with them that schools can tap into (Rose et. al., 2019). In Big Picture Learning schools, students are asked to tap into existing networks to find internship opportunities (Fisher & Charania, 2021). When harnessed, these existing connections can lead to rich mentorship and meaningful WBL experiences.

In addition, there is a related tension connected to RQ1 and the purpose of WBL. We would do well to think about the purpose of WBL in the development of young people. Is WBL part of an educational enterprise that prioritizes young people's liberation and self-actualization, or is it a vehicle for capital to develop compliant workers? The answer to this question is most likely somewhere between the two. Indeed, it is important to think critically about whose interests are being served by particular WBL approaches.

We may be able to relieve these tensions by making WBL more culturally relevant. Rose et. al. (2019) described a community college program where students shared their own family labor histories. These students became more engaged through this process. The authors argued that if the community college was more willing to listen to students, college staff would see that students come with valuable assets and experiences as students and community members. When I think about the community where the school I lead is located, there is an entrepreneurial spirit that permeates. Students are often raised in an environment where families work together and start businesses, both formal and informal. It is a community where skills are often shared in reciprocal relationships. Hard work is valued, and resources are pooled. School leaders and other educators can think about how an entrepreneurial and collectivist culture might inform the way that WBL experiences are curated by school staff. The example of students serving as public health advocates offers one way that staff can better align opportunities to build

on the funds of knowledge that students bring. By listening to our students and their families, we can learn how their experiences inform how they think about work and careers. Working collaboratively with our industry partners, can co-create WBL opportunities that meet students' needs.

Final Thoughts

Linked Learning has the potential to provide ELs with access to real-world learning opportunities that are not widely available in the traditional high school model. Project-Based Learning and WBL can both foster collaboration and communication, connecting EL students to mentors who can help develop their language skills and motivate them to stay connected to their educational institution. In these ways, Linked Learning schools have the potential to engage and support EL students so that they can develop their language proficiency and feel successful and motivated to continue with their education.

To realize the promise of Linked Learning as an approach to high school that prepares all students for college, career, and civic engagement while resisting the tracking of traditional vocational education, school districts must attend to where existing inequities might be reproduced. For example, if WBL is treated as something extra that is done outside of school in the afternoon, on weekends, or during the summer, then many students, particularly ELs, will not have access. If the opportunities that schools develop are limited to a competitive application process, then many students, especially ELs who might benefit the most from these experiences, will be excluded.

Respondents in this study underscored that with thoughtful planning and an equity-driven vision, WBL has the potential to reach all students. It has the potential to connect students with mentors who can guide and motivate them to stay in school and strive for careers they might

otherwise not be exposed to. When key structures are put in place, such as support staff, culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum, mentors who are prepared and know how to work with ELs, and appropriate opportunities within a student's zone of proximal development, English Learners can develop their language skills and self-confidence, motivating them to continue with their education beyond high school.

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Scripts and Emails for Study

The purpose of the following survey is to learn about how Principals in Linked Learning high schools approach work-based learning, especially for English Learner students.

The survey was created by Ben Gertner, who is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at University of California, Los Angeles. Survey results will be used in his dissertation research, "The Work-Based Learning Experiences of English Learners in Linked Learning Pathways." Results will be used for two purposes. First, data collected from the survey will inform the research findings. Second, survey responses will be used to identify 2-3 principals for short interviews, to learn more about how they think about and lead work-based learning at their school sites.

The survey is voluntary and should take only about 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your consideration and thank you for all that you do!

1. Email from Administrator of Linked Learning to principals

Dear Linked Learning Principals,

Ben Gertner is Principal at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles. Ben is also in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA pursuing his Doctorate in Education. He is conducting his dissertation research on the experiences of English Learners with work-based learning at Linked Learning high schools.

Through his research, Ben hopes to shine a light on the great work happening in your schools. As principals, you set the vision and lead efforts to bring opportunities to students. We know that work-based learning is a core component of the Linked Learning model and one of the most challenging to implement well for all students.

Ben will be sending out a short survey in the next few days. This survey should only take about 5 minutes to complete. He will then follow up with a few principals to request a short interview, based on your availability.

Ben's research may help us to understand some of the best practices in work-based learning and how we can apply these practices in our own school contexts.

Your participation in the research is voluntary. I hope that you will take a few minutes to complete the survey when you receive it. Thank you for your consideration and for all that you do for your students.

Best,

Administrator

2. Email from researcher to Linked Learning principals

Dear Linked Learning principals,

My name is Ben Gertner. I am a Principal of a Linked Learning high school, Roosevelt High School in Boyle Heights. I am also a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA. I am conducting my research on the experiences of English Learners with work-based learning at Linked Learning high schools. I want to share some of the great things that are happening at your schools as we learn how to implement this model so that it benefits all students.

I am sending you a unique link to a short survey that should take about 5 minutes for you to complete. It would be so helpful to my research if you could take a few minutes to complete this survey within the next few days. Please use the link to take the survey: <INSERT LINK>

I will be following up with a few principals to arrange for a short interview, based on your interest and availability.

For now, all I am asking is for you to take a few minutes to complete the survey. Your participation in the research is voluntary.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership and thank you in advance for supporting my research.

Best,

Ben Gertner

UCLA Ed.D. Candidate

3. Script to invite principals to interview

Dear <principal name>,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my survey on the experiences of English Learners with work-based learning in your high school.

I want to share some of the great things that are happening at your school as we learn how to implement this model so that it benefits all students.

I would like to arrange for a short interview, based on your interest and availability. It should take approximately 30 minutes and you will receive a $25 gift card to thank you for your time. The interview can be conducted in person at your school site or over video conference, whichever you prefer.

Your participation in the research is voluntary and the decision whether or not to participate in the research will have no impact on your employment.

Please respond if you would be willing to be interviewed and we can find a time that works for you. My hope is to conduct the interview before the end of June.

Thank you in advance for supporting my research.

Best,

Ben Gertner

UCLA Ed.D. Candidate

4. Script to ask principals to refer me to a support staff member.

Thank you so much for taking the time to be interviewed. Principals are key in leading Linked Learning work, and your insights on work-based learning for English Learners will be incredibly valuable to my research.

As part of my study, I would also like to talk to the staff members at schools who are tasked with coordinating work-based learning and directly supporting students. At some schools this is a counselor, whereas others have the CTE Teacher or a dedicated work-based learning coordinator. Participation in the research is voluntary. Whoever it is at your school, I would very much appreciate if you could refer me to that person so that I can invite them for a short interview.

Thank you so much for supporting my research.

5. Script to contact the staff members who will be referred by principals.

My name is Ben Gertner. I am a Principal of a Linked Learning high school, Roosevelt High School in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. I am also a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA. I am conducting my research on the experiences of English Learners with work-based learning at Linked Learning high schools.

You were referred to me by your principal. I want to share some of the great things that are happening at your school as we learn how to implement this model so that it benefits all students.

I would like to arrange for a short interview, based on your interest and availability. It should take approximately 30 minutes and you will receive a $25 gift card to thank you for your time. The interview can be conducted in person at your school site or over video conference, whichever you prefer.

Your participation in the research is voluntary and the decision whether or not to participate in the research will have no impact on your employment.

Thank you in advance for supporting my research.

Best,

Ben Gertner

UCLA Ed.D. Candidate

APPENDIX B

Principal Survey about Work-Based Learning for English Learners

Background Information

Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

1. What is your age?
    1. 18-25
    2. 26-35
    3. 36-45
    4. 46-55
    5. Over 55
2. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-binary
3. How many years have you been working in education?
    a. Less than 2
    b. 3-5
    c. 6-10
    d. 11-20
    e. More than 20
4. At which school are you currently Principal?

    Short answer or drop-down response

5. How long have you been Principal at your current school?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. 1-2 years
    c. 3-5 years
    d. 6-10 years
    e. More than 10 years

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your school? Please respond to each statement from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**

			nor Disagree		
Students participate in a continuum of WBL as an integrated part of their preparation for college and career.					
The WBL experiences provided are relevant to the student's career interests, individual learning needs, and the pathway theme.					
Students are prepared for WBL experiences so that they can be successful.					
The WBL preparation is differentiated to meet the learning needs of EL students.					
My school has a WBL coordinator who is trained to support EL students and provide them with WBL opportunities that meet their needs and support their development.					

My school offers teachers, counselors and other educators professional learning that prepares them to ensure consistency and quality of WBL placements, monitoring, and assessment that meet the needs of EL students.					

7. For each type of work-based learning experience, please give your best estimate at what percentage of your students participate at least once during their four years at your high school.

	Less than 25%	Between 25-50%	Between 50-75%	More than 75%	Not sure
Workplace Tour					
Guest Speaker					
Career Fair					
Informational Interview					
Job Shadow					
Internship					
Practicum					

Certification					
Apprenticeship / pre-apprenticeship					

8. What do you believe is the purpose of work-based learning in the development and support of English Learners?

Open paragraph response

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol for School Principal Population

Research Questions

1. What do Linked Learning school principals and support staff believe is the purpose of work-based learning in the development and support of English Learners?
2. What essential conditions (learning opportunities, staffing, and systems) do principals and support staff believe are needed for ELs to have access to impactful work-based learning?
3. To what extent do principals and other support staff feel that essential conditions exist for ELs to learn in an impactful way in the context of work-based learning? From the perspective of principals and support staff, who should be responsible for ensuring these conditions are in place?

Context

- School principals of certified Linked Learning pathways a large, urban District.
- Interviews will be conducted in person if participants schedule and comfort level allows, at their school site. If participants prefer, we will meet over videoconference (Zoom).

Introduction and confidentiality statement

Thank you for being part of this discussion. I am a high school Principal in LAUSD and a student at UCLA. I am conducting research about work-based learning in Linked Learning high schools. As you know, work-based learning is a key component of the Linked Learning model.

The purpose of this interview is to hear about your experiences and opinions about offering work-based learning opportunities to students through your school. I want to understand what you believe to be the purpose of work-based learning and what types of work-based

learning opportunities you offer to your students, from career awareness and exploration to career preparation and training. I would like to know how you would describe the characteristics of a good student worker, a good partnership with the school, and the proper balance of work / school responsibilities. I'm also interested in what you as school leaders see as your moral and ethical responsibility and what sort of person you are trying to develop. For this study, I am particularly interested in the experiences of English Learners in relation to work. My goal is to help policymakers and educators to know how they can create more of these experiences for English Learner high school students and to improve the quality.

I will be referring to the continuum of work-based learning, which you may be familiar with. I am passing out a document that you can use for reference if you wish (pass out document or put link in chat).

Your identity is strictly confidential. I will be using a pseudonym for you as well as any other individuals that are named. Everything we discuss during the interview is also strictly confidential so please feel free to speak openly.

If at any time, you feel uncomfortable answering a question or do not want to answer a question, please let me know and I'll skip to the next question.

This interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

To accurately capture our discussion, I would like to digitally record it so I can later transcribe the interview. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please tell me and I'll pause the recording. Are you okay with me recording our conversation? [Pause for response]

Do you have any questions before we begin? [Pause for answer.]

Great, let's begin.

[Start recording devices or Zoom cloud recording.]

Questions

Warm Up Questions

1. Please say your name, your position, the school you lead, and how long you have been the principal there.
2. What is your favorite part about working with young people?
3. In education we talk about four types of work-based learning on a continuum. Career awareness is building awareness of the variety of careers available and the role of postsecondary education with a goal of broadening student options. Career exploration is exploring career and postsecondary options for the purpose of motivating students and to inform their decision making in high school and postsecondary education. Career preparation is applying learning through practical experience that develops the knowledge and skills necessary for success in careers and postsecondary education. Finally, career training is training for employment and / or postsecondary education in a specific range of occupations. With those in mind, what do you consider the objectives of work-based learning? You do not have to limit your response to one idea.
4. Which types of work-based learning opportunities have you offered to high school students at your schools? Let's start with career awareness and exploration.
    - Follow up: Which of these opportunistic have students had more than once and which have been one offs? How do you think about fostering relationships that will lead to regular opportunities for students?
5. What about career preparation and training?

- Follow up: Which of these opportunistic have students had more than once and which have been one offs? How do you think about fostering relationships that will lead to regular opportunities for students?

6. What strategies have you found to be more effective in developing new WBL opportunities for students?
7. What strategies have you found to be most effective in fostering relationships that help to make WBL opportunities consistent over years and potentially grow to serve more students?
8. How would you describe the characteristics of a good student worker? What do you think that employers are looking for?

    a. Follow up: Can you give me an example of a student who got a job or WBL experience through your school who you would describe as a good student worker? What made them so?
    b. Follow-up: Can you give me an example of a student who got a job or WBL experience through your school who you would describe as not being a good student worker? Why would you describe them that way?

5. What would a good partnership with an employer look like for your school and your students?
6. How would you describe the proper balance of work / school responsibilities? How did you think about this in designing and implementing the work-based learning opportunities you offered your students?
7. What do you as school leaders see as your moral and ethical responsibility when offering WBL opportunities to students?

8. What sort of person you are trying to develop through your WBL programs?
9. How do you support students who find jobs on their own to balance their work and education?
10. What do you see as the greatest barriers to students who are working while in high school? Do any examples come to mind of students who struggled?
11. What issues do you think are of particular concern for English Learners when it comes to work-based learning and youth employment?
12. How do you think about English Learners when developing, promoting, and supporting students in WBL programs?

    Final question

13. What would you like to add about high school students and work experience that you haven't already talked about?

Closing

Thank you for your time and for your responses. This information will be incredibly valuable for my study. I will be sending you an electronic gift card as a token of my appreciation. If you do have other ideas, thoughts, or questions, please feel free to contact me any time. I will send a follow up email with my contact information.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for School Support Staff Population

Research Questions

1. What do Linked Learning school principals and support staff believe is the purpose of work-based learning in the development and support of English Learners?
2. What essential conditions (learning opportunities, staffing, and systems) do principals and support staff believe are needed for ELs to have access to impactful work-based learning?
3. To what extent do principals and other support staff feel that essential conditions exist for ELs to learn in an impactful way in the context of work-based learning? From the perspective of principals and support staff, who should be responsible for ensuring these conditions are in place?

Context

- School support staff members at certified Linked Learning pathways in a large, urban school district who connect students with work-based learning and / or work experience opportunities.
- Interviews will be conducted in person if participants schedule and comfort level allows, at their school site. If participants prefer, we will meet over videoconference (Zoom).

Introduction and confidentiality statement

Thank you for taking part of this interview. I am a high school Principal in LAUSD and a student at UCLA. I am conducting research about young people who work when they are in high school. Some students seek out jobs on their own, mostly to earn money for themselves and to support their families. Other students get help from their school in finding work-based learning

opportunities that might be paid and are designed to support their education and personal development.

The purpose of this interview is to hear about your experiences and opinions about youth employment, offering work-based learning opportunities to students through your schools, and students in your schools who find work on independent of the school's involvement. I want to understand what types of work-based learning opportunities you offer to your students, from career awareness and exploration to career preparation and training. I would like to know how you would describe the characteristics of a good student worker, a good partnership with the school, and the proper balance of work / school responsibilities. I'm also interested in what you as school staff see as your moral and ethical responsibility and what sort of person you are trying to develop. For this study, I am particularly interested in the experiences of English Learners in relation to work. My goal is to help policymakers and educators to know how they can create more of these experiences for high school students and to improve the quality.

I will be referring to the continuum of work-based learning, which you may be familiar with. I am passing out a document that you can use for reference if you wish (pass out document or put link in chat).

Your identity is strictly confidential. I will be using a pseudonym for you as well as any other individuals that are named. Everything we discuss during the interview is also strictly confidential so please feel free to speak openly.

If at any time, you feel uncomfortable answering a question or do not want to answer a question, please let me know and I'll skip to the next question.

This interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

To accurately capture our discussion, I would like to digitally record it so I can later transcribe the interview. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please tell me and I'll pause the recording. Are you okay with me recording our conversation? [Pause for answer.]

Do you have any questions before we begin? [Pause for answer.]

Great, let's begin.

[Start recording devices or Zoom cloud recording.]

Questions

Warm Up Questions

1. Please say your name, which school you work at, your role, and how long you have been in your current position.
2. What is your favorite part about working with young people?
3. In education we talk about four types of work-based learning on a continuum. Career awareness is building awareness of the variety of careers available and the role of postsecondary education with a goal of broadening student options. Career exploration is exploring career and postsecondary options for the purpose of motivating students and to inform their decision making in high school and postsecondary education. Career preparation is applying learning through practical experience that develops the knowledge and skills necessary for success in careers and postsecondary education. Finally, career training is training for employment and / or postsecondary education in a specific range of occupations. With those in mind, what do you consider the objectives of work-based learning? You do not have to limit your response to one idea.

4. Which types of work-based learning opportunities have you offered to high school students at your schools? Let's start with career awareness and exploration.
    a. Follow up: Which of these opportunistic have students had more than once and which have been one offs? How do you think about fostering relationships that will lead to regular opportunities for students?
5. What about career preparation and training?
    a. Follow up: Which of these opportunities have students had more than once and which have been one offs? How do you think about fostering relationships that will lead to regular opportunities for students?
6. What strategies have you found to be more effective in developing new WBL opportunities for students?
7. What strategies have you found to be most effective in fostering relationships that help to make WBL opportunities consistent over years and potentially grow to serve more students?
8. How would you describe the characteristics of a good student worker? What do you think that employers are looking for?
    a. Follow up: Can you give me an example of a student who got a job or WBL experience through your school who you would describe as a good student worker? What made them so?
    b. Follow up: Can you give me an example of a student who got a job or WBL experience through your school who you would describe as not being a good student worker? Why would you describe them that way?

9. What would a good partnership with an employer look like for your school and your students?
10. How would you describe the proper balance of work / school responsibilities? How did you think about this in designing and implementing the work-based learning opportunities you offered your students?
11. What do you as school leaders see as your moral and ethical responsibility when offering WBL opportunities to students?
12. What sort of person you are trying to develop through your WBL programs?
13. How do you support students who find jobs on their own to balance their work and education?
14. What do you see as the greatest barriers to students who are working while in high school? Do any examples come to mind of students who struggled?
15. What issues do you think are of particular concern for English Learners when it comes to work-based learning and youth employment?
16. How do you think about English Learners when developing, promoting, and supporting students in WBL programs?

Final question:

17. What would you like to add about high school students and work experience that you haven't already talked about?

Closing

Thank you for your time and for your responses. This information will be incredibly valuable for my study. I will be sending you an electronic gift card as a token of my appreciation.

If you do have other ideas, thoughts, or questions, please feel free to contact me any time. I will send a follow up email with my contact information.

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