



Aligning + Leveraging Resources: Connecting Industry Partners with OUSD's Linked Learning Educational Goals + Strategies

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QUESTION

How can communication between Oakland Unified School District teachers and Bay Area industry partners be facilitated to promote the Linked Learning instructional approach?

ISSUE

Oakland Unified School District's career academies and pathways are the foundation of its work-based learning strategy, known as Linked Learning. This instructional approach provides students with the resources and skills necessary to succeed in college, career and life. Students enrolled in OUSD career pathways graduate at a significantly higher rate than students who are not enrolled (84% compared to 58%).

During the 2012-2013 school year, only 42% of OUSD 10-12th grade students were enrolled in career pathways. The district has made it a goal to have 100% of high school students enrolled in career pathways or academies. In order to achieve this, **schools need to find ways to form stronger connections with Bay Area firms and businesses.** Working directly with industry partners is critical to the Linked Learning approach, as this is how students gain professional experience that will help prepare them for their future careers. However, forming meaningful connections with industry partners has been a struggle for educators and administrators who are already overworked and lack connections outside of education.

Regional economic development planners are also interested in the ability of local schools to produce a skilled and educated work force. According to Plan Bay Area, the number of jobs in the Bay Area is expected to grow by 1.1 million between 2010 and 2040. **Educating Bay Area residents to be able to access and fill these jobs will be essential to ensuring an equitable and vibrant economy.**

METHODS

Both educators and industry partners were surveyed to better understand their successes and challenges in collaborating with one another. Additionally websites that could serve as sources of inspiration for the design of an educator/industry partner collaboration website were closely studied.

FINDINGS

Educators and industry professionals struggle to connect on meaningful collaboration projects.

- According to a 2012 survey conducted by OUSD's Linked Learning office, 86% of teachers report wanting support in connecting with industry partners.
- Industry professionals also report having little idea of how to connect with students for collaboration projects.

**I have no idea how to begin
[working with students]
because I do not have access
to interested students.**

-Local industry professional

LESSON

Educators and industry partners need a convenient and easy-to-use system through which they can connect and collaborate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a Web-Based Platform that Connects Educators with Industry Partners and Serves as a Collaboration Tool

- Industry partners will be able to post projects for educators to select from. They will briefly describe their projects and the type of collaboration they are seeking from students. Educators can then search for projects that align with their content and standards. *(Inspiration: Donor's Choose, donorschoose.org)*
- Industry partners, educators and students will be able to easily communicate with one another before, during and after a collaboration project. To increase the frequency of interaction between students and industry partners, each project will have a "project wall" on which all parties can post and receive feedback on project updates, photos, drafts, questions and new information. *(Inspiration: ConnectEd Studios, connectedstudios.org)*
- Educators will be able to post profiles that industry partners can search. These teacher profiles would include information such as school location, subject(s), grade level(s) and content topics covered. Educators would also be able to highlight past projects they've collaborated on and the types of experiences they would like for their students in the future. This would give industry partners the ability to find a class whose location and/or content expertise best fits their project. *(Inspiration: Y-PLAN National Fellows Bios, y-plan.berkeley.edu)*



Connect to Existing Websites

- To bolster the success of this collaboration platform, it will be designed so that it can be housed on an existing website, such as the Center for Cities and Schools Y-PLAN site or the OUSD Linked Learning site. This will allow it to build on the success and stability of an existing program and potentially use current users of that site for a test pilot.