TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF LINKED LEARNING PATHWAYS

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During the era of standardized testing in California, Central High School District (CHSD-pseudonym) had created a single course of study that all students were expected to follow to maximize results on state exams. This single course of study was not relevant to a large majority of the students who graduated from the district and they were not prepared for life after graduation. The new accountability system has allowed CHSD to expand the course of study that is being offered. The district has several programs that follow the Linked Learning model which uses project based learning to pair core academic courses with career technical education standards. This mixed methods action research study was conducted during the spring semester of 2018 with the purpose of determining senior students’ perceptions of the Linked Learning programs and identifying the components they found most important and relevant. Forty senior students who were enrolled in a Linked Learning program completed an online questionnaire and six students participated in a semi-structured interview. The information from these two sources was triangulated and the findings of the study showed that students had a positive perception of the program and that project based learning resulted in a relevant and engaging course of study that taught them valuable soft skills. Upon completion of the data analysis, a committee reviewed the findings and developed an action plan to support the expansion of the Linked Learning program model across the district.

Keywords: Linked Learning, career technical education, course of study.