

# Law and Justice Pathway for High School Students

## A Proven Reform Model



The mission of ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career is to support development of Linked Learning pathways by which California's young people can complete high school, enroll in postsecondary education, and embark on lasting success in the world of work, civic affairs, and family life. Linked Learning is a reform model that transforms students' high school experience by bringing together strong academics, demanding technical education, and real world experience to help students gain an advantage in high school, postsecondary education, and careers. With Linked

Learning, students follow industry-themed pathways such as Law and Justice. This integrated approach helps students build a strong foundation for success in college and career—and life. Research demonstrates the Linked Learning approach improves academic outcomes for students at all achievement levels, but especially for at-risk students, a primary target for ConnectEd's work.

ConnectEd is working in California to develop district-wide systems of career-focused high school pathways, including Law and Justice. Law and Justice pathways address two key education and workforce development issues:

- **An Unacceptably High Drop Out Rate and Lack of College and Career Readiness:** California's high schools are not working for large numbers of young people. Almost a third of new ninth-graders drop out before graduating. Another third finish high school but lack the academic and technical readiness to succeed in

college or career.

Only a third of high school students in California graduate on time and transition easily to postsecondary education and lasting career success.

- **Lack of Diversity in Legal and Law Enforcement Careers:** The composition of the U.S. legal profession is severely lagging in racial and ethnic diversity. Although race-ethnic minority groups comprised about 35 percent of the U.S. population in 2010, lawyers of color make up less than 15 percent of the legal profession. There is a need for educational programs, starting in high school, that raise awareness about opportunities and prepare students for success in the law and justice fields.

Law and Justice Pathways are a proven approach to addressing these issues. High school students participate in a



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multi-year program of study that focuses on the legal, law enforcement, government, and protective services fields. These Pathways provide a more engaging learning experience for students, leading to higher graduation rates and better preparation for college and career.

The Law and Justice program of study is a unique hybrid strategy for raising student achievement. It includes an academically rigorous curriculum, utilizes problem and project-based learning, and delivers academic and technical courses through thematic integrated projects. It also features a work-based learning component, such as a pro bono legal clinic or another career exposure sequence, that gives students real world, career-related experience. A distinguishing feature of the curriculum is its deliberate integration of fields that have traditionally been separate:

- (1) law and law enforcement, (2) law and social justice, and (3) academic and career technical education.

ConnectEd’s largest current geographic focus in California is in nine school districts (urban, suburban, and rural) with high school enrollments of at least 5,000 students and at least 30 percent of students who are eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program. By targeting these districts, Law and Justice pathways also create a diversity pipeline into the legal fields and help to address the lack of minority representation in the law and justice workforce.

The Law and Justice curriculum meets California and national academic standards as well as career technical education standards. Students learn and

apply knowledge and skills that are essential in the field of law and justice, such as effective writing, and analyzing primary sources and legal documents. Students develop complex problem-solving and critical thinking skills and also research and explore different professions in the U.S. law and justice system.

For more information about the Law and Justice curriculum, contact Penni Hudis at [phudis@ConnectEdCalifornia.org](mailto:phudis@ConnectEdCalifornia.org) or Eliza Fabillar at [efabillar@edc.org](mailto:efabillar@edc.org). To learn more about Linked Learning visit ConnectEd’s website, [www.ConnectEdCalifornia.org](http://www.ConnectEdCalifornia.org). □