

California High Schools at a Crossroads

Approximately one-third of all California high school students today drop out of school. Experts estimate that as many as another third receive their diplomas, but are unprepared to succeed in college or the workplace. Many theories have been posed about the reasons behind this sobering trend. But one thing is abundantly clear: California's one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning no longer works for too many of our young people.

We all know the consequences of failing to inspire and prepare young people for the 21st century economy. No less than California's standing as a global economic leader and the California dream are at stake.

Real-World Learning for Real-World Success

A growing number of educators and policy-makers agree that it's time for a new approach to high school education that will ignite students' passion to learn and prepare them for the challenges of college and career. Our high schools need to offer students more than one way to learn so more young people graduate with the knowledge and skills to succeed. Our students need multiple pathways to the same destination: success in college *and* career, not one or the other.

One of the most promising strategies is to integrate the best career and technical education programs with rigorous high school academic curricula. This blend ensures that students benefit from the best of both worlds. Students learn math through the lens of engineering and English composition through the lens of law and government or business and marketing. It's real-world learning that leads to real-world success.

ConnectEd: Connecting Students to Success in College and Career

The James Irvine Foundation founded **ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career** as a hub for innovative practice, policy and research to expand the number of education pathways that prepare students for college and career. ConnectEd will advance the role that academically rigorous career and technical education plays in reforming California high schools so that more students master the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in tomorrow's economy. As a result, more students will graduate from high school prepared for college and a career.

ConnectEd supports the development of high school curricula that are at once academically rigorous *and* inclusive of the range of aspirations and learning styles of California's diverse student population. These demanding programs, which will satisfy California's "a to g" requirements, connect academics with today's thriving industries and challenging career sectors, including:

- Business and finance
- Biomedical and health sciences
- Building and environmental design, engineering
- Advanced manufacturing
- Law and government
- Transportation
- Hospitality and tourism
- Communications
- Arts and entertainment
- Education and social services



ConnectEd

The California Center for College and Career

Transforming today's education
for tomorrow's economy

Models for Success

As part of ConnectEd's commitment to identify, support and expand successful, academically rigorous real-world learning programs, ConnectEd is collaborating with six model programs at high schools across California. These career and technical education programs offer coursework that reflect the demands of today's thriving economic sectors.

For example, at Health Careers Academy in Palmdale, students may spend the morning at a hospital learning to administer electrocardiograms, and then spend the afternoon in class studying the human cardiovascular system. The curriculum, which satisfies California's "A to G" requirements, culminates in an intensive clinical internship in the students' senior year. Last year, virtually every senior in the program went on to a postsecondary institution. Program graduates have also gone on to land high-paying jobs to help pay for their college education.

ConnectEd is helping programs like Health Careers Academy evaluate their success so that policy-makers, educators and parents will have an informed understanding of what makes them effective and how to offer similar opportunities to students statewide.

What We Do

ConnectEd is working to build a future where every school district in California offers young people multiple pathways to academic success. Our primary tasks are to:

- Champion the development of new pathways that offer challenging, comprehensive programs of study leading to both postsecondary and career success;
- Build and lead an alliance of partners dedicated to transforming how California's high schools prepare young people for college and career;
- Identify and evaluate innovative, effective approaches to real-world learning curricula, methods of instruction and school organization;
- Provide technical assistance to support local schools or districts that want to adopt a multiple pathways approach;
- Develop tools to evaluate the success of rigorous real-world learning; and
- Inform decision-making on high school reform by analyzing policy issues and developing options and implementation plans.

Who We Are

After helping bring attention to California's drop-out crisis through support of the Harvard Civil Rights Project, The James Irvine Foundation founded ConnectEd to bring attention to the most promising solutions to this crisis. Irvine believes that ConnectEd will play a central role in reaching the Foundation's goal of increasing the number of low-income youth in California who complete high school and achieve a college degree by the age of 25.

ConnectEd's board of directors includes Ted Mitchell, CEO of NewSchools Venture Fund and chair of Governor Schwarzenegger's Advisory Committee on Educational Excellence; Jeannie Oakes, Presidential Professor of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles; and Ramon Cortines, the former Chancellor of New York City schools and Superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Gary Hoachlander, a national expert on career and technical education, is ConnectEd's President. ConnectEd is closely affiliated with MPR Associates, one of the nation's leading education research and development organizations.