



## Linked Learning Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is Linked Learning?***

Linked Learning is a proven, systemic approach to college and career preparation that creates opportunities for students to grow through real world experiences. School takes on new relevance and motivates students to succeed—in postsecondary education and the workforce—following high school. When we combine college and career preparation, we put every student in a position to pursue the full range of postsecondary options, whether trade school, college or career certification programs. Each student graduates with an edge over their peers nationwide.

### ***What will Linked Learning look like at my student's high school?***

Students at each of our high schools will have the opportunity to be part of one of four “schools within a school” beginning in 2021-22 with our current 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Each school will be aligned with a leading industry sector – including business, healthcare, technology and design, and community services. Their chosen school will become a true community over the next four years, bringing together a group of peers with whom students share common interests and some core classes. Throughout their four years, students will engage in work-based learning through experiences both inside and outside the classroom, including guest speakers, job shadowing and internships.

### ***Why does Linked Learning work?***

Students enrolled in high-quality Linked Learning pathways outperform their peers in traditional high school programs. Independent research shows that compared with peers in traditional high schools, Linked Learning students:



1. Are less likely to drop out and more likely to graduate



2. Earn more college credits and certifications by the end of high school



3. Build the mindset and skills to thrive in college, career and life

When students understand the connection between education and the real world, they are more motivated to learn and succeed. Linked Learning creates a focus partnership between students, teachers and the business community, providing relevant, personalized, and real-world learning experiences.

### ***What are College & Career Pathways?***

Once students select a school, they have the opportunity to further explore a more specific pathway. Examples could include, health sciences, public service, communication, engineering, or marketing, among many others. Each pathway focus is based on anticipated growth in the specific industry area whereby career opportunities for students in our communities will be most available.

Although tailored to a narrower area of interest, pathways help students develop skills and a mindset that transcends beyond a specific industry sector or focus area. Students in all pathways will develop the competencies identified in our [NKC Schools Portrait of a Graduate](#): adaptability, communication, collaboration, integrity, empathy, problem solving, and the learner's mindset.

### ***How will this affect the classes that my student will take in high school?***

Students will have opportunities to take similar core classes as in years past. Their core classes (for example, ELA or math) will simply integrate content from their school's industry focus. Students will also take technical core classes that align with their school's industry sector, such as business, design, or education. Elective classes such as orchestra, theatre, art, physical education, global languages and journalism will continue to be an important part of each student's schedule.

### ***Will my student still be able to participate in AVID?***

Yes! All students may participate in the AVID program. The skills and support provided through the AVID program can benefit students in all pathways. AVID is offered at all four high schools and is open to both current 8<sup>th</sup> grade AVID participants and those students who would like to join during high school.

### ***My student has an IEP or 504 plan. How will this affect things?***

Student support is one of the key pillars of Linked Learning. Counseling, special education services, and all support systems will continue throughout the high school years. NKC Schools is committed to ensuring that all students have access to and are supported throughout their experience in college and career pathways. If you have specific concerns, please reach out to your student's current counselor or case manager. Our staff members are here to support families throughout this transition into high school and beyond.

### ***Will my student still be able to take advantage of off-campus programs like NCAPS, the Early College Academy, and others?***

Off-campus programs will continue to be a vital part of our students' high school choices. Programs will offer additional opportunities for students to engage in job shadowing, hands-on learning, and authentic, real world experiences to connect with their future college or career goals. Off-campus opportunities are available through all four schools within each high school.

***If virtual learning continues in some format next year, will my student be included in this initiative if they are learning from home?***

While we don't yet know how next school year might look, we are committed to providing opportunities for real-world, authentic learning for all students. As NKC Schools plans for the upcoming school year, we will continue to partner with local health officials in determining modes of learning. Look for further updates to come.

***How will my student select their school?***

Our high school teams will share more information about the student selection process as we near second semester. Students will have the opportunity to express their preferences. Individual voice will be honored throughout the process, with multiple opportunities for students to share their thoughts.

Students will be supported in many ways throughout the process. Counselors, teachers, current high school students, and each high school College & Career Facilitator will be available to support students as they make choices about their preferences. Families can expect several additional opportunities to learn more about pathways through virtual events and communication, as well as in-person events when it is safe to do so. When selections are finalized, we'll celebrate all students and welcome them to their chosen school with acceptance events in April 2021.

***My student hasn't yet decided what type of career they would like to pursue.***

As they enter high school, many students are undecided as to which field they'd like to pursue. It's common for students to have multiple, varied interests. Students will be selecting an industry theme as a lens through which to learn, rather than committing to any specific career path. Core curriculum will remain similar; students will simply learn through the lens of their chosen school. The skills that they will learn within each pathway will be transferable to any path they choose to pursue after graduation.

***What if my student changes their mind?***

While we're encouraging all students to make their chosen school home for four years, we know that interests and goals do change. In designing classes and course sequences, our high school teams have worked to ensure that students can stay on track with their peers if they decide to change schools after their freshman year.

***Will my student's high school still offer athletics, extracurricular clubs, activities and electives (encore) over the course of the four years?***

Absolutely! Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities like the arts, athletics, clubs and student organizations are a key part of the high school experience. NKC Schools believes that these activities are a critical part of student engagement in our high school communities, and we look forward to strengthening connections between the classroom and the field, court or stage.

***How are our schools and teachers preparing for this change?***

Our staff members at each high school are excited to welcome the first class to take part in this initiative! Since the development of our Portrait of a Graduate began in fall 2019, several staff members, teachers, principals and many others have been engaged in the process to prepare for this transition. Collaborating across the district, our staff members have spent many hours throughout this summer and school year working on curriculum, lessons, engaging activities, and more to ensure that students have a solid foundation beginning in their very first year.

***How can I learn more?***

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with your student's future high school. Each school has a College & Career Facilitator who will be sharing more information with your families and hosting events throughout the winter and spring. Their contact information is below, should you have additional questions or if you would like to have further conversation.

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