# Use of Individualized Learning Plans:

## A Promising Practice for

# DRIVING

# College and Career Readiness Efforts

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**Findings and Recommendations from a Multi-Method, Multi-Study Effort**

National
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Citation Suggestion:

Solberg, V.S., Wills, J., Redmond, K., & Skaff, Laura. (2014). *Use of individualized learning plans as a promising practice for driving college and career readiness efforts: Findings and recommendations from a multi-method, multi-study effort* (ISBN: 1-933493-46-1). Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a 2007 Education Commission of the States (ECS) report[1] documenting a growing state interest in using Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs), the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) commissioned a five-year research study to determine whether ILPs should be considered a promising college and career readiness practice and whether and how youth with disabilities are participating in these efforts. The research began in 2008 with a cooperative agreement awarded to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth).

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of ILP research and technical assistance activities that were completed between 2007 and 2013. The purpose of these activities was to investigate whether ILPs should be considered a promising practice for youth with and without disabilities and to identify promising state, district, and school ILP implementation strategies. Two overarching patterns emerged during the course of the multi-study effort:

1. ILPs share a common set of characteristics, and

2. ILPs are increasingly understood to be the lynchpin tool for linking the twin goals of college readiness and career readiness.

Over the course of the overall study a working definition of a quality ILP emerged. This report's findings and recommendations build upon that definition (see pull-out box).

*Key research findings include:*

■ Thirty-eight states, including the District of Columbia, currently use ILPs as a college and career readiness strategy. Of this group 21 have opted to require all students to develop ILPs. Four other states have chosen to mandate the initiative, but only for targeted populations (e.g., for those within a certain geographic area, for those involved in a specific education track, or students deemed at risk of dropping out, etc.). There are 11 states that encourage the use of ILPs, and an additional six

## DEFINITION:

### Quality Individualized Learning Plan

■ A document consisting of (a) course taking and postsecondary plans aligned to career goals and (b) documentation of the range of college and career readiness skills that the student has developed.

■ A process that enhances the relevance of school and out-of-school learning opportunities and provides the student access to career development opportunities that incorporate self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skill building activities.

states encourage districts to use ILPs and are in the process of studying the value of mandating use of the tool. Thirteen states have not developed a position on the use of ILPs.

■ Whether states mandate the use of ILPs or encourage their use as a promising practice, there is a clear trend for launching the effort at the middle school level with nine states starting in 6th grade and 24 starting in 7th through 9th grade and ending in the 12th grade.

■ An increasing number of states have invested in online career information systems to assist students in the development of an ILP document – often referred to as electronic portfolios or ePortfolios. Students are encouraged to change the plan as they learn more about their interests and strengths. In many states, students are encouraged to keep the plan current after leaving high school as a way to manage their career development for years to come.

■ Schools are using multiple strategies to promote the use of ILPs including (a) incorporating advisory periods in the school calendar; (b) providing ILP-focused activities/curricula so students acquire skills relevant to setting and achieving goals; (c) assigning an adult mentor to the student throughout their time in school; (d) promoting family engagement; (e) encouraging students' use of online career information systems; (f) providing exposure to the world of work through site visits to workplaces and career fairs; and (g) developing internships.

■ Results of focus groups and surveys with educators, families, and students indicate that ILPs should be considered a promising practice for youth with and without disabilities. ILPs are perceived as helping youth learn the relevance and usefulness of their academic learning opportunities. There is evidence that students are selecting more rigorous courses, setting higher career aspirations, and, consequently, seeking postsecondary programs that will lead to higher future wage earnings. The evidence also indicates that youth with disabilities are choosing to pursue a regular education diploma rather than an alternative diploma in order to pursue their career goals.

■ States, particularly those that have mandated ILPs, have had to consider the connection and overlap between the ILP and the Individualized Education Program (IEP), the planning document mandated under Federal law by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for students who qualify for special education services. In states that have mandated ILPs, the primary expectation is that youth with disabilities will develop an ILP. This decision carries with it the assumption that, wherever possible, youth with disabilities will participate in a mainstream, integrated curriculum and will be able to obtain a standard high school diploma. State special education staff involved in the roll out of ILPs perceive ILPs as adding value to the IEP process by making IEP meetings more efficient and improving their overall quality. In addition, they believe that

ILPs increase cross-sector and cross-departmental collaboration, increase course taking by youth with disabilities in integrated classes, and increase their exposure to career development experiences.

The recommendations for future work related to ILPs fall within two categories. The first focuses on strategies for facilitating ILP implementation at the state, district/community, and school levels, and the second category focuses on how to verify the impact of ILPs on college and career readiness outcomes.

# Recommendations for Establishing Quality ILP Implementation

The following recommendations focus on actions that can improve current ILP efforts in schools across the country. Some are actions at the state level, while others are actions for the district or school levels.[i] Many of the recommendations also include strategies about how to expand and engage other organizations that have a stake in the broad economic imperative to ensure a key tool (the ILP) is used to promote the state's college and career readiness agenda. The recommendations that look beyond an exclusively school-based strategy come from some of the trendsetter states in which the departments of have advantageously collaborated with other departments in their states to support and expand the use of critical components of quality ILPs as a part of their broader college and career readiness youth transition agenda. Though evidence-based research is sparse regarding effec-

tive processes to ensure successful interagency collaborations, there is growing awareness that research is needed to identify the most effective collaboration strategies on the part of federal and state governments, foundations, and professional societies and membership organizations.[2]

## State Leadership: A Focus on Building and Supporting Capacity

States should consider emulating the trendsetter states by establishing a statewide interagency task force to (a) oversee continuous improvement of the ILP content and processes and (b) support the development of a multi-agency multi-year plan that identifies potential sources of funding as well as common priorities and specific departmental priorities. The purview of the work should include the following:

***Create an accountability and evaluation plan:*** In order to address a substantive and pervasive challenge, states need to demonstrate the cost effectiveness, value, and impact of ILPs. States should take the lead in designing an accountability and evaluation plan for determining whether (a) all youth are receiving access to quality ILP implementation and if (b) ILP implementation is having the intended effects on academic and postsecondary outcomes. The state has the technical capacity to annually track each student's completion of prescribed activities. As an *evaluation model*, this level of information should allow the state to monitor whether output indicators are being effectively reached—e.g., which youth are participating and whether youth are completing the prescribed activities.

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*i.* *State and district recommendations are based largely on interviews with state officials while school level recommendations were drawn from the* ILP How-to Guide.

In addition to tracking output indicators, the design specifications that the interagency task force establishes for online career information system vendors should make it possible to link ePortofolio documentation to student information system data to chart whether and what types of self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management activities are associated with academic performance. The evidence from this research leads to a hypothesis that quality ILP implementation involves youth developing self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management *skills*. Developing such skills requires a range of ILP activities that include

**Quality ILP Activities**



- Self-Exploration
- Career Exploration
- Career Planning & Management

- access to accessible assessment tools centered on potential interest areas and skills required in various occupations;

- learning how to use web-based tools such as labor market forecasts and information about education requirements for the range of careers pathways;

- development of personal qualities often called employability skills (e.g., self-motivated, being responsible, able to work in teams,) and technical know-how such as job search skills;

- development of self-determination skills (e.g. the attitudes and abilities needed to set goals and take initiative to achieve them); and

- access to work-based learning opportunities.

There is, however, a lack of empirical evidence around what constitutes quality ILP implementation. The design specifications should enable connectivity with state based data warehouses that include longitudinal data and national sources such as National Student Clearinghouse[3] data to allow states to determine whether quality ILP implementation is associated with entering and successfully completing a postsecondary program as well as employment data to determine income gains. In addition, design specifications should consider guidelines for selecting an online career information system that builds off of the Alliance of Career Resource Professionals standards[4] and in all instances includes specific universal design[5] prescriptions in order to insure that ILP activities are accessible to youth from diverse abilities, experiences, and primary languages.

As an *accountability strategy* for use at the school and district level, the design specifications for online career information systems should ensure that these systems provide a data dashboard for each school and district that offers a disaggregated list of the percentage of youth completing AP courses, work-based learning opportunities, leadership and youth development programs, connecting activities in their community or college settings, and family career development

activities. Such a dashboard would allow districts and schools to evaluate whether they are creating the learning opportunities necessary to maximize college and career readiness efforts. It would also allow states to allocate resources in ways that support efforts to improve the quality of district/school ILP implementation efforts.

***Developing communication and marketing materials:*** There is a need for materials that provide local education agencies and other relevant organizations with a way to communicate the critical need to increase college and career readiness outcomes for all youth. The material needs to effectively inform students, families, teachers, business leaders, and community based organizations about the value and nature of ILPs and ways they can be engaged in ILP processes. The communication and marketing materials should help establish acceptance and buy-in from key stakeholders that research shows are of critical importance.[6]

***Creating tools to promote capacity to implement quality ILPs:*** Using the ILP How-to Guide as a template that provides resources from states and national organizations that have supported the development of ILPs, it is recommended that states create an array of support materials by (a) identifying activities that can be used to create grade-level or competency-based level ILP curriculum aligned to common core standards and career readiness standards developed in concert with workforce development departments and vetted by the business community; (b) providing materials for engaging families based on consultation with parent organizations and evidence-based research for such engagement; (c) developing strategies that districts can use to mobilize work-based learning and community connecting activities based on consultation with

employer organizations; and (d) offering recommendations for how to evaluate the impact of ILPs on district and school outcomes.

***Establishing a two-pronged demonstration strategy:*** The first should focus on schools and the second should expand the types of sites and institutions to test the materials that research has identified as being important for an individual to develop the career management skills needed for success throughout life. There are multiple ways to support the financing of such demonstrations including tapping federal funds set aside for states to promote capacity development through grant-in-aid programs. Efforts should be made to blend multiple funding streams.

■ The focus on schools: Competitive grants should be offered to school districts for the purpose of addressing the core ingredients that have been identified as needed for whole-school and fully inclusive ILP efforts. States can use the demonstration sites as an opportunity to (a) test the most effective ways to provide exposure to the career development skills indicated in the quality ILP definition; (b) assess the value of different approaches to advisory periods and access to mentors; (c) develop and refine professional development resources; (d) facilitate improvements in online career information system contract specifications for vendors to ensure that the resources are being used to their fullest extent by school educators and to enable districts and schools to evaluate the impact of ILP implementation on academic and future postsecondary outcomes; (e) test evidence-based

strategies for engaging families including strategies to enable them to participate in ILP activities such as annual student-led parent-teacher conferences and, for youth with disabilities, (f) examine strategies to improve the IEP processes as a result of ILP participation; (g) gather stories from youth, families, and educators about their experiences in using ILPs to further refine future communication materials; (h) provide districts and schools with support in linking to the business community to increase the range of available work-based learning opportunities for youth with and without disabilities; and (i) provide support to districts and schools to connect with youth-serving organizations in order to coordinate ILP efforts.

■ The focus on communities: All transition age youth can benefit from exposure to the components identified in the definition of a quality ILP. A demonstration that builds upon the individualized plans used by multiple federally supported programs, particularly for those targeted to vulnerable populations, is encouraged. Through the work of the cross-departmental task force, a demonstration project could be developed to establish a planning process and adaptation materials centered on developing a year-round strategy to engage vulnerable populations (e.g. dropouts, youth with disabilities, youth involved in foster care, and youth engaged with the juvenile justice system). These demonstration projects could focus on youth developing self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skills; assess the

variables needed to provide the targeted populations with additional supports; and test program design features to adjust to the setting or youth circumstance such as youth attending alternative schools or schools managed by the juvenile justice system.

The value of both demonstration projects cannot be underestimated. These sites should provide opportunities for communities, districts, and school leaders to collaborate through joint planning efforts, sharing of materials, and blending funding from multiple sources to successfully serve a broader range of youth under the rubric of a state's college and career readiness agenda.

## Creating a Tiered System for ILP Professional Development

Professional development should be offered in a manner that provides specific development opportunities designed for

■ district/school leaders (e.g., superintendents and their staff and principals and assistant principals);

■ district ILP curriculum development and implementation teams;

■ school ILP implementation teams; and

■ other professionals involved in career development services.

States should seek input from practitioners in the field in developing the plans. State interdepartmental and cross-departmental teams should review state supported professional development offerings centered on the components identified in the definition of a quality ILP to de-

termine what, if any, professional development opportunities exist for the four tiers of stakeholders noted above. The review should include an emphasis on the needs of general and special educators, guidance counselors, and workforce development professionals involved in transition services (e.g. vocational rehabilitation counselors, IDEA funded transitional coordinators, youth service providers working for youth programs funded by the array of WIOA Titles). Professional development resources developed by national organizations representing these stakeholders should also be reviewed to assess their compatibility with the plans the state is using.

***District Actions:*** District teams that include members from each school involved in ILP implementation should be established to help launch and track ILP work. These teams can also serve as a sounding board for the district to provide input to state and even nationally sponsored professional development opportunities. Specific ILP resources that districts should consider developing include (a) tailored communication materials that describe the nature and value of ILPs to key district and school stakeholders; (b) grade-specific ILP curriculum that adheres to universal design for learning standards; (c) processes to facilitate and monitor family engagement; and (d) processes to collaborate with other organizations to develop year-round opportunities for youth.

***School Actions:*** Each school should create an ILP professional learning team that uses a project management system to identify the ILP activities to be conducted at each grade-level, timelines for when these tasks will be conducted, and specific tasks that need to be completed in order to successfully execute each activity. Key actions for the ILP team include

- communicating with key stakeholders at their school (educators, counselors, administrators, family, students, community) in order to establish whole-school buy-in;

- establishing a timeline for completing grade-level ILP activities;

- developing a list of tasks that need to be completed in order to ensure successful implementation of each ILP activity;

- scheduling professional development activities to be provided to educators and families throughout the academic year;

- facilitating a school level dialogue on when and how to implement ILPs;

- identifying a range of ILP activities that engage families, including student-led parent-teacher conferences; and

- designing strategies to ensure that youth with disabilities and youth with significant disabilities are fully included in ILP activities.

## Recommendations for Assessing the Impact of ILPs

The evidence garnered from the multiple studies is primarily based on the perceptions of key stakeholders in the ILP process—youth, families, school personnel, and state and district officials—from a combination of interviews, focus groups, and surveys (quantitative and qualitative). While the conclusions were that ILPs should be considered a promising practice, experimental research is needed to determine whether engaging in ILPs improves college and career readiness outcomes as is discussed below.

## Document that Quality ILP Implementation Results in College and Career Readiness

From this body of research, a proposed theory of change is that

1. youth who are provided with access to quality ILP implementation will establish a career readiness identity, and

2. youth who develop a career readiness identity will

    a. perceive school as more meaningful and useful to helping them achieve their career and life goals; successfully pursue more rigorous in- and out-of-school learning opportunities; and

    b. demonstrate better college and career readiness outcomes such as increased academic performance (grades, attendance, test scores), increased enrollment in and completion of postsecondary training and education programs, and higher wage earnings when they enter the world of work.

Experimental research methods using randomized control groups should be used to assess each element of the theory of change. Furthermore, it is recommended that the methods be replicated for youth of different age groups, different settings, and different achievement levels (e.g., middle grades, entering high school, exiting high school, attending alternative schools, youth with significant disabilities who spend the predominate amount of time in resource rooms and/or continue in extended years programs,

youth with high incidence disabilities and significant disabilities, etc.).

An important question regarding youth with disabilities is whether engaging in a quality ILP process results in obtaining a regular diploma. This has tremendous implications for future workforce outcomes if youth with disabilities are able to successfully complete the high school requirements needed to enter a two-year or four-year postsecondary education program, as currently 74% of jobs in the US typically require a high school diploma or equivalent and beyond.

## Document How Family Engagement in ILPs Affects College and Career Readiness

There is reason to believe that engaging families in their children's career development activities may improve students' academic success. Using experimental methods, it would be possible to demonstrate whether schools' engagement of families in ILPs results in higher positive regard for the school and its educators, higher aspirations for their children's future careers, and increased academic outcomes (grades, attendance, and course rigor).

There is an especially important research question related to whether engaging families of later elementary age youth in quality ILP implementation would increase the number of youth pursuing STEM careers. Research indicates that in order for youth to successfully pursue professional STEM careers, they need to complete algebra before entering the 10th grade and calculus before they graduate from high school.[7] While it is understood that not all youth will pursue a STEM career, nor should they, an important question is

whether engaging families in ILPs prior to middle school increases families' efforts to support their children's math test scores. Many families may not understand the implications of entering middle school with strong math skills. By empowering families with this information, it is possible that more of these youth would be able to enter middle school more prepared to successfully complete algebra in their first year of high school.

### *Validate What Constitutes Quality ILP Implementation*

The evidence from this research leads to a hypothesis that quality ILP implementation involves youth developing self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skills. Developing such skills requires access to a range of ILP activities that include (a) accessible assessment tools centered on potential interest areas and skills required in various occupations; (b) learning how to use web-based tools such as labor market forecasts and information about education requirements for the range of careers pathways; (c) development of personal qualities often called employability skills (e.g., self-motivated, being responsible, able to work in teams) and technical know-how such as job search skills; (d) development of self-determination skills (e.g. the attitudes and abilities needed to set goals and take initiative to achieve them) and (e) access to work-based learning opportunities. What is missing is clear empirical data indicating what constitutes quality ILP implementation and, more specifically, what grade-level domain skills are most optimal. For example, what career development skills should (a) middle school youth develop in order to take advantage of their high school learning opportunities; (b) 9th grade students develop to maximize their high school academic performance; and (c) 11th grade students develop to ensure they enter and successfully complete a postsecondary training program or degree? In addition, data is needed about how quality implementation varies across settings (i.e., in school or in applied learning sites in the community).

## Who Should Act Upon These Recommendations?

A wide array of stakeholders have an interest in improving the use of tools such as ILPs. National associations that have supported ILPs and states individually or collectively can support the advancement of ILPs. Foundations concerned with youth transitions also have a role to play in promoting personalized learning and helping to identify promising practices for preparing all youth to be college and career ready. Multiple federal agencies have a responsibility to support building capacity in states and the provider community within their missions. Several of the agencies that have a direct interest in improving the transition from adolescence into adulthood could support the type of research efforts suggested. Attention should be given to testing effective ways to collaborate in the implementation process itself. This recommendation is derived from research centered on assisting youth with disabilities in becoming college and career ready, which reflects that understanding how to collaborate is a substantive and challenging issue.[8]

ODEP and its partners should consider developing an outreach plan targeted to the national organizations, foundations, federal government agencies, and advocacy groups to advance the next steps associated with the proposed research agenda.

# Achieving College & Career Readiness Using ILPs

Over the last 20 years, education reform efforts have increasingly focused on secondary and postsecondary-level institutions due to growing evidence that youth exiting from high schools are not adequately prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education programs or participate in the labor market in a fashion that would ensure they could obtain a living wage. Consequently, a variety of social and economic forces have pushed education reform efforts forward in all states, including but not limited to the following:

## What's Driving the Need for College and Career Readiness Efforts?

*Fueling reform efforts has been the recognition that the nation can ill afford to ignore youth who drop out of school. Using a number of longitudinal studies and national surveys, researchers estimate the impact of what they refer to as "opportunity youth" (youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market)[9] graduating or dropping out of school without the academic and employability skills needed to enter a postsecondary education program or transition directly into the world of work. This research indicates that an estimated 6.7 million out-of-school, non-working youth in this country between the ages of 16 and 24 collectively reduce the tax base across their lifetimes by $1.56 trillion while adding an estimated $4.75 trillion in social costs.[10] Not surprisingly, data from the Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that income levels rise and unemployment rates fall as educational attainment levels increase.[11]*

*Students leaving school without the skills they need to begin working or to continue their education present an important challenge to the future of our country's global competitiveness. In addition, the recent economic circumstances in the U.S. have led to a closer examination of the alignment between the investments being made in education and the skills that students will need to be competitive in the 21st century global economy.[12] Improving educational attainment among secondary students in the U.S. is seen as a key factor in the nation's economic recovery.[14]*

*While workforce readiness is a challenge for all youth, it is particularly problematic for youth with disabilities. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) now publishes labor market participation information on youth with disabilities on a monthly basis. The following statistics represent a common pattern from this source. Youth with disabilities are almost twice as likely as their peers without disabilities to be unemployed. Only 20% of adults with disabilities are employed compared to 69% of the general population, and youth with disabilities are twice as likely to be unemployed as adults compared to the general population (12% unemployment rate versus 6%, respectively).[15]*

- increasing the rigor and relevance of curricula;

- reducing dropout rates;

- increasing the issuance of standard high school diplomas; and

- improving accountability systems to ensure that all students receive a quality education.

Reform strategies in most states include

- adopting college and career readiness goals for all secondary students;

- joining forces across states to develop/ refine the Common Core State Standards;[16] and

- promoting the use of evidence-based practices in classrooms and beyond to engage students in the learning process.

College and career readiness has been embraced as a central theme in most states' education reform efforts. To achieve the goal of making sure high school graduates are college and career ready, the development of learning plans that are tailored to the individual learner has emerged as a popular strategy. The terms "personalized," "individualized," and "differentiated" have similar meanings, but represent different—and critical—aspects of a learning plan.[17] The key point is that motivation and learning potential are optimized when youth are engaged in learning plans that are

- personalized and shaped around the youth's self-defined career and life goals, interests, values, and skills;

- individualized by enabling each youth to develop a plan for the academic and

out-of-school learning opportunities they intend to complete; and

- differentiated by providing the accommodations and other supports youth will need to successfully engage in those learning opportunities. As a service delivery model, the focus of this approach supports the development of a network consisting of mentors, guidance counselors, and/or case managers, and representatives from community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and businesses to create learning opportunities that enable youth to create a plan for how they will prepare to make a successful post-school transition, whether that be in relation to postsecondary training or education or directly entering the world of work.[18]

Organizations such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP),[19] the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO),[20] American School Counseling Association,[21] and Achieve,[22] have all advocated for a more individualized and personalized approach to education and career planning as a key strategy of education reform. NASSP argues that improving academic achievement demands a more personalized school environment that includes making students' career and life aspirations and interests known to educators, who are then able to demonstrate appreciation and support for those aspirations and interests. Achieve,[23] an education advocacy organization sponsored by the CCSSO and the National Governors Association, also promotes a personalized plan for "high school graduation and beyond," with the primary focus being on helping students in the 8th grade select courses that will prepare them with the

academic skills needed to successfully complete a postsecondary degree.[24]

In searching for promising college and career readiness practices, it was evident that many states were beginning to adopt the ILP as a key strategy. In 2007, the ECS[25] released a report detailing the rise in states' use of a personalized strategy for enabling youth to become more engaged in how they approached their high school learning opportunities.[26] They found that 21 states had enacted policies and implementation strategies that directed schools to ensure that high school-age youth were engaging in the development and annual review of an ILP.

## History of ILPs

The first articulation of a state-initiated ILP policy began with Utah's State Office of Education in 1972, which required students in secondary school to have a Student Education Plan (SEP).[27] However, calls to more effectively individualize and personalize education stretch back more than a century. Over 100 years ago, Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University, voiced concerns that too many students were dropping out of school because they saw no connection between their studies and their post-school lives.[28] Subsequently, the roots of career development in the United States began as a vocational guidance movement that was initiated by the publication "Choosing a Vocation" by Frank Parsons in 1909.[29] Parsons espoused that youth need to engage in self-exploration to identify their interests, values, and skills and then explore career opportunities to identify those that match those personal characteristics. To support youth in defining their occupational interests, career education activities began being integrated into the school curriculum and evolved over the following decades. They gained the support of educators and theorists in the 1960s when the Federal government became more active in supporting education and training programs as a part of President Johnson's War on Poverty ini-



Youth engage in career exploration activities.

tiative. Included in this effort was the creation of a Career Guidance and Counseling Office in the then Agency of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which helped spawn a Career Education movement that strongly influenced the Federal vocational education laws and brought an array of efforts to reinvigorate career development efforts both in and out of schools. Career guidance was also a part of the workforce development programs that emerged from the Johnson era.[30] The War on Poverty agenda also included the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which articulated specific efforts to close the skills and achievement gaps experienced by low-income and other vulnerable youth and ultimately facilitate equal access for all American children.

During this same period there was increasing focus on individualizing the educational experiences of youth with disabilities. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was the first Federal mandate that involved individualized programming to support the academic needs of youth with disabilities by formally mandating an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students receiving special education services if their disability adversely affected their educational performance.[31] Later reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), IEPs remained the backbone of education plans for youth receiving special education services, and transition plans in the IEP was mandated for youth starting at age 14.[ii]

In 2004, the IDEA reauthorization added language that directed schools to prepare a transition IEP by no later than when the student reaches age 16. In addition, it also requires that during their final year of high school, a student receiving special education services should be provided with a personalized "summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals."[32] This Summary of Performance (SOP) is intended to be informative to individuals and professionals who may work with students after they leave school.

Job training legislation, including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), have incorporated an individualized and personalized approach to workforce development as part of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). An ISS is completed for each youth receiving WIA-sponsored services and focuses on the design of a tailored employment plan that is responsive in part to the youth's interests, values, and skills.[33] In addition, the various iterations of vocational education legislation, including the current 2006 Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act has promoted individualized and personalized learning opportunities for youth completing CTE courses and helping youth design their course-taking plans to align to one or more career pathways. Additionally, CTE programs have focused on workforce readiness skills due to the concerns voiced by employers.[34]

ii. IEPs are initially developed when a student is found eligible for services under IDEA and are updated annually, with input from school personnel, along with the student and family, becoming an essential component of meeting a student's unique learning needs. The essential elements of the transition IEP are to include age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, and employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills and the transition services needed to assist the youth in reaching these goals.

# ILP Research Overview

In response to a 2007 Education Commission of the States (ECS) report[35] documenting a growing state interest in using Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs), the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) commissioned a five-year research study to determine whether ILPs should be considered a promising college and career readiness practice and whether and how youth with disabilities are participating in these efforts. The research began in 2008 with a cooperative agreement awarded to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth). ODEP's interest was also fueled by a desire to know whether ILPs could be used as a way to promote and assess the impact of the *Guideposts for Success*, a research-based framework developed by NCWD/Youth in collaboration with ODEP.[36] The *Guideposts* framework reflects what research identifies as key educational and career development interventions that make a positive difference in the lives of all youth, including youth with disabilities. These include

- school-based preparatory experiences;
- career preparation and work-based learning experiences;
- youth development and leadership;
- connecting activities with needed supports necessary for fulfilling community inclusion; and
- family engagement.

In conducting the research on ILPs, efforts were made to use a wide range of research methods that included policy analysis, action research, surveys, focus groups, and interviews. (See Appendix for details on the multiple studies, their purposes, methods used, and outputs.)

The initial phase conducted in the first two years of research consisted of an ILP policy analysis among the states identified in the ECS report. An initial review of the state websites indicated seven states were early adopters and that all districts were expected to be engaged in implementing ILPs. A substantial number of other states identified by ECS had passed laws and/or regulations but were in the early stages of piloting or had target dates to begin implementation at a later date that would influence the research strategy.

Using Policy Attributes Theory,[37] researchers conducted an analysis of the seven states in order to select the four states to include in the study that would receive technical assistance. The ILP policy language was analyzed according to

- the year in which the ILPs were initiated,
- state-sponsored resources to support implementation, and
- what offices within a state department of education were involved in the design and implementation of the ILP initiative, including the primary offices established to develop and coordinate the overarching substantive reform issues as well as the officers responsible for Career and Technical Education, Special Education, and School Counseling.[38]

State officials were interviewed using a structured protocol, and a seven-member team was assembled that rated the quality of the informa-

tion received, and, through a consensus-building process, Louisiana, New Mexico, South Carolina, and Washington were ultimately invited to participate in the study. State officials from these four states were asked to nominate school districts that they deemed were effectively implementing ILPs. District officials were then asked to identify schools that were effectively implementing ILPs, and these schools were invited to participate in the research activities as well as to receive technical assistance. Fourteen schools were identified and agreed to participate. Twelve schools participated throughout the entirety of the study. Participating schools received modest stipends to help offset the cost of staff participating in the annual institutes in the first four years, and to help minimize the burden of gathering information from school sources and arranging focus groups and participation in surveys of students, families, and staff.

During Years 1 and 2 the project activities focused on understanding the context and strategies used to implement ILPs. An in-depth analysis of the four states' ILP policies identified how the ILP fit into individual state reform efforts and how this strategy fit into a mutually supportive intersection between federal and state youth agendas.

The bulk of these initial efforts focused on how schools were engaged with ILPs and on identifying any emerging promising practices or results. Mixed methods were used including student surveys and focus group interviews with families, educators, and students.[40] Based on results from surveys and focus groups, Year 3 efforts included more in-depth interviews with youth with disabilities to learn about the nature of their experiences with ILPs and how they are encouraged to learn about goal setting and career deci-sion-making. *An ILP How-to Guide* to support district and school ILP efforts was also developed in Year 3 in response to multiple requests from staff in the 14 study schools.[41] The schools were concerned that, as ILPs were becoming popular, there were not enough activities they could use with youth for a full year of implementation. While the creation of the *Guide* was not anticipated, its development proved informative for refining the next steps in the research agenda.

In the second phase, the research shifted from determining whether ILPs should be considered a promising practice for youth with and without disabilities to understanding the characteristics of quality ILP implementation. In the second phase of the research new members were also added to the research team—Social Dynamics and their partner organization Altarum—who joined the study in 2009. Together with NCWD/Youth and their partner organizations, the joint work plan for the remaining years of the initiative was developed. The research included

- going deeper and wider to assess perceptions of students, families, and educators regarding the value of ILPs;

- gaining a better understanding of how ILPs were used throughout the school year;

- identifying what strategies were successful in linking ILPs and IEPs; and

- understanding the tracking and monitoring of ILPs at the school, district, and state levels

Throughout this period, an active review of existent and emerging research occurred and was synthesized with the developing evidence from this multi-faceted study.

Theory and research support the potential of ILPs to improve college and career readiness outcomes. By helping youth become aware of the course taking plans needed to enter and successfully complete desired postsecondary programs that enable them to realize self-defined career and life goals, engaging in ILPs is expected to result in youth selecting into a more rigorous course schedule. By engaging in a more rigorous course schedule, ILPs therefore, hold promise for helping youth develop the academic skills needed to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. A presumed critical mechanism in this process is that youth identify a number of desirable career and life goals by being provided access to quality self and career exploration activities. By learning more about these desired career and life goals, youth are better able to explore the postsecondary pathways necessary to pursue those goals and to seek out volunteer and paid work-based learning opportunities. This enables them to engage in more in-depth career exploration. By learning about the nature of their selected career opportunities, youth are able to identify the range of leadership and other development opportunities that will result in their developing the employability skills needed to enter those careers. Further exploration of postsecondary opportunities help youth identify the range of connecting activities needed to make the journey from high school into adulthood. Finally, ILPs have tremendous potential to engage families in career exploration by creating opportunities to share results and ideas about their child's career exploration activities.

Other theoretical support on the potential promise of ILPs comes from a seminal meta-analysis of career development research.[42] In this meta-analysis, the investigators evaluated the com-
ponents of career interventions and found that written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, world of work information, building support networks, and modeling/vicarious experiences were associated with stronger developmental outcomes. The magnitude of the effect size increased greatly as more of these components were added into a single intervention. ILPs have the potential to integrate all of these components. Many of the ILP activities engage youth in written exercises designed to help them articulate career and life goals as well as identify their intentions for completing courses and other out of school opportunities. Assessments are often used to provide students with individualized interpretations regarding how their interests, skills, and values connect with the world of work. World of work information is provided by exploring the content of careers youth find interesting. This information often includes critical skills and activities as well as the postsecondary pathways needed to prepare for these careers. Modeling and vicarious learning opportunities are available when ILPs are conducted in classroom settings with an engaging educator who can create authentic discussions related to their exploration process.

Finally, the potential promise of ILPs is the degree to which youth are able to perceive the relevance of high school courses and postsecondary degree programs to helping them achieve desired career and life goals. Experimental research has verified that interventions designed to increase the relevance of coursework result in increased effort, performance, and interest in the course.[43]

In 2011-2012, the research team launched an update focused on the expansion of ILPs across the country because several states implemented ILPs during the intervening two years based

on information garnered in the initial follow up to the ECS study and through the development of the How-To Guide. A 50-state web review was conducted that focused on information regarding implementation such as expanded ILP related guidelines, resources for schools, professional development, cross-division collaboration within state agencies, as well as cross-departmental boundaries collaborations. A comparative case study conducted in nine states identified from the 50-state web review followed this. Subject matter experts (i.e., those with experience in conducting evidence-based research and familiar with both general and special education promising practices) conducted interviews with state and district officials representing staff responsible for overall ILP implementation and special education directors to learn about their ILP implementation experiences in the nine states using protocols developed by the research team. Interviews were also conducted with the four states that had been a part of the study, and protocols were developed to also include school leaders.



Youth employed at a variety of worksites.

## ILPs Should Be Considered a Promising Practice for Youth

*A context for defining results:* The purpose of the study, which used multiple research approaches, was to assess whether ILPs should be considered a promising practice; it was not intended to evaluate how well schools were implementing ILPs or to determine a causal connection between ILPs and student outcomes. The impressions and evidence that emerged from the study are primarily based on the perceptions of key stakeholders in the ILP process—youth, families, school personnel, and state and district officials—from a combination of interviews, focus groups, and surveys (quantitative and qualitative). Focus groups were conducted with educators, families, and students in the first year and educators and families in the third year. Surveys were conducted with students in the first year and with educators and families in the third year. In addition, an assessment of student course-taking patterns and interviews with state and local education officials were conducted.

In the first year, 53 focus groups were conducted among students, families, and educators from the 14 participating schools (representing 104 youth, 67 family members, and 101 educators). The confidentially recorded conversations followed a structured interview protocol and were professionally transcribed and de-identified. The method for analyzing focus group data[44] relied on teams of coders and a consensus-building model for addressing discrepant observations.[45] Ultimately, results indicated that many youth, families, and educators perceived that ILPs created a more personalized environment in which youth

- created stronger relational connections with their family, teachers, and peers;
- selected into a more rigorous course schedule; and
- engaged in a wide range of career exploration activities.

Specifically, the results indicated that often both families and youth believed that ILPs resulted in more engagement in course and educational planning and more of a team effort among educators and school counselors in supporting the student's academic needs. Some families reported that ILPs resulted in "richer" conversations with their children about their career and life goals and interests. Families in states that conduct student-led parent-teacher conferences and ILP meetings in conjunction with ILP development often reported that this resulted in better communication with teachers. A number of families, educators, and students reported that ILPs resulted in youth selecting more rigorous courses. Several educators also reported that ILPs resulted in better communication with families. Some students also reported that ILPs resulted in their considering new and different career options, establishing better connections with family and teachers, and increasing their academic aspirations toward college goals. Finally, students also reported that engaging in ILPs resulted in their deciding to stay in school rather than dropping out and that they enjoyed the student-led parent-teacher conferences.

These results were replicated and expanded

during the third year of the study. A total of 1,400 family members[iii] and 525 educators responded to an online survey about their perceptions of ILPs, and focus group discussions were held at participating schools.[46] Averaged survey results (combining ratings for youth with and without disabilities) indicated that 85% of the families and 67% of the educators felt that the ILP process was a valuable experience for youth that assisted them in their transition into further education and careers.

Focus group respondents included 101 families and 83 educators from 10 of the 14 participating schools. Among the favorable comments provided by families and educators were that ILPs resulted in youth becoming more aware of their future career and educational options, which enabled them to develop better future planning and goal-setting skills and receive more guidance for exploring postsecondary education and career opportunities. In one educator's view, the ILP process instilled a stronger belief in the positive potential of all youth. Finally, some educators felt that ILPs helped to increase community and family involvement in ensuring the success of youth after high school.[47]

**Comments from focus group respondents included:**

*"The kids that we get have never been spoken to about college even being an option, or guided as to how they get through it. So when they dive into that, all of a sudden, it's kind of 'Oh, I can do that? Really?' The whole concept of their future changes."* —**Educator Focus Group Participant**[48]

*"We get to learn about some of the students bet-ter and learned about their hobbies. I got one girl that loves plants and wants to learn all about plants. I didn't have any idea that's what she wanted to do. I got one that wants to travel to Australia and I didn't know that, so I've learned things about students personally and that's one thing I like about the ILP."* —**Educator Focus Group Participant**[49]

*"I don't know that the process actually changed what classes my girls would take, but it definitely gave them a sense that they had chosen this, that they had decided this, that they had set goals around this. It wasn't, you know, 'oh, here it is, the first grade check and I'm getting a C, oh, that's okay.' It was, 'I had written a goal that I was going to get an A-minus or better and I'm not there and I'm the one that did this, I'm the one that said this.' The ownership and responsibility piece I think is greater for my girls because they lead this conference, they tell me what they're going to do, [and] I listen, basically."* —**Educator Focus Group Participant**[50]

*"I love it. For my students, it has been their roadmap. It gets them focused and maps out what they need to take in order to prepare for careers and college."* —**Educator Focus Group Participant**[51]

During Year 1, students responded to an online survey that consisted of the following:

- quantitative items related to the extent to which they perceived themselves as having access to *Guideposts*-related activities, ILPs, and a range of resiliency/ social emotional learning indicators (i.e., goal setting, motivation, self-efficacy,

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**iii.** *Only parents and/or guardians responded to the survey.*

career decision-making readiness, and stress/distress); and

■ open-ended questions related to career decision-making.

Using a sample of 558 students, a path analysis was generated in order to evaluate whether self-reported access to the *Guideposts*-related activities and engagement in ILPs was associated with three key outcomes—academic, social/emotional, and decision-making—through its impact on goal-setting, career and academic self-efficacy, and motivation.[52] The items for the *Guideposts* measure were developed based on activities described in the *Guideposts for Success* publication and were verified by working with ODEP officials and NCWD/Youth staff in order to insure the items accurately reflected each of the five *Guideposts* areas, respectively. In addition to the five *Guideposts* areas, a sixth dimension assessed the degree to which youth perceived that they were engaged in ILPs. The measure was validated using confirmatory factor analysis with a racially diverse sample of 1735

youth representing the 14 schools selected to engage in the ILP research and technical assistance.[53] Results of the path analysis indicated strong effects between the *Guideposts* measure and goal setting ($\beta$ = .59) and career search self-efficacy ($\beta$ = .58). Career search self-efficacy, goal setting, and academic motivation were each associated with academic self-efficacy that in turn was associated with higher recorded grades, lower reported distress, and more career decision-making readiness.

The goal setting items measures the degree to which youth actively identify goals and seek out learning opportunities to develop the skills needed to achieve those goals. The motivation items measure the degree to which youth perceive attending school as meaningful, relevant, and enjoyable. The academic self-efficacy items measure the degree of confidence youth have in relation to performing a range of academic tasks. The results suggested that engaging in ILPs may facilitate development of a self-regulated learner who seeks out learning opportunities that maxi-

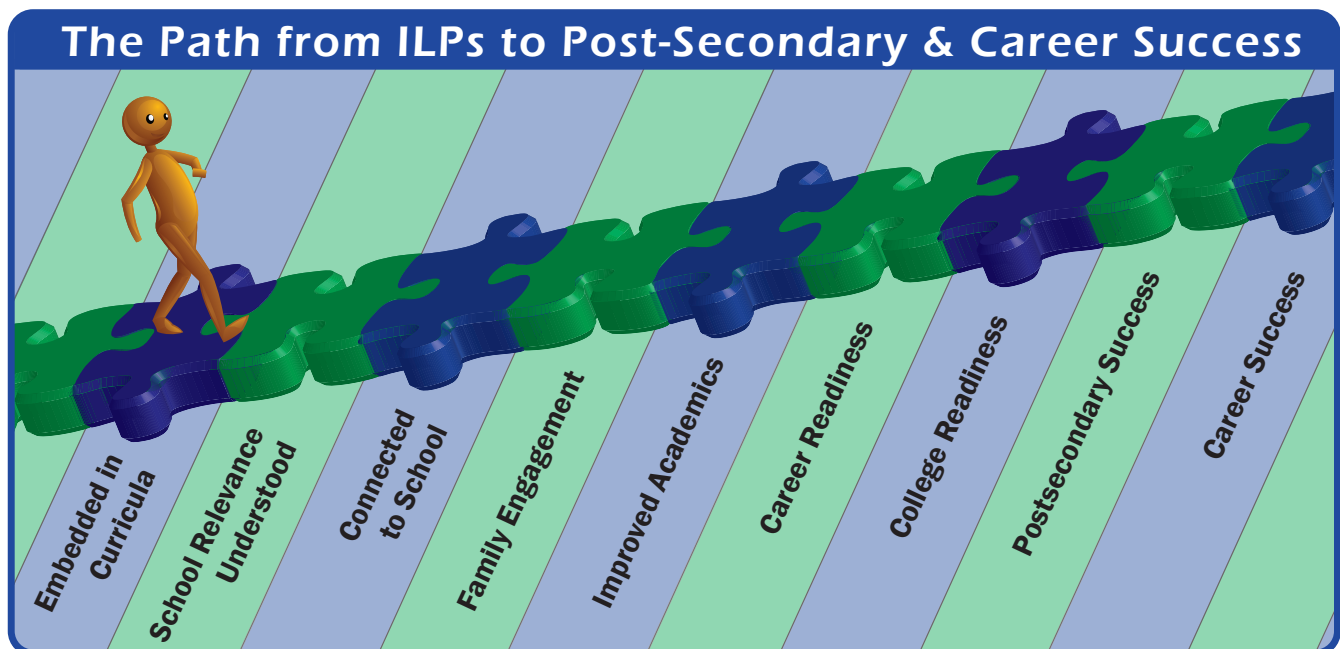## The Path from ILPs to Post-Secondary & Career Success



Embedded in Curricula • School Relevance Understood • Connected to School • Family Engagement • Improved Academics • Career Readiness • College Readiness • Postsecondary Success • Career Success

Table 1: **Career Identity Patterns Based on Marcia's Model**

| Achieved | Moratorium | Foreclosed | Diffuse |
|---|---|---|---|
| Decided on one or more Career Goals | Considering Among Career Options | Decided on a Career Goal | No Identified Career Interests |
| Evidence of Active Career Exploration | Evidence of Active Career Exploration | No Evidence of Career Exploration | No Evidence of Career Exploration |

mize the likelihood of achieving their career and life goals. This results in youth perceiving school as being more relevant and thereby contributes to their being ready to learn how to learn the skills needed to succeed in school.

These findings resulted in a theory of change related to how ILPs support college and career readiness, which can be posited as follows: ILPs support career readiness efforts by

- enabling youth to develop career goals that are commensurate with their interests, skills, and values and pursue academic courses and postsecondary training and degree programs needed to enter those careers; and

- encouraging youth to pursue out of school learning and work-based learning opportunities to continue developing their workforce readiness skills.

Establishing career and life goals support college readiness efforts by encouraging youth to select into and perform at a higher level in a more rigorous academic course schedule that is aligned to helping them pursue those goals. In sum, it is hypothesized that efforts to improve career readiness will encourage and enable youth to become college ready.

Evidence to support career readiness as a driver of college readiness comes from a mixed methods analysis of student responses to open-ended items about their career exploration and decision-making experiences that was used to identify their career identity. The career identity classification was then compared to validated instruments measuring a range of social emotional skills.[54] A total of 1625 youth from the 14 high schools included in our ILP study responded to the online survey. A modified grounded theory strategy was used to assess open-ended responses to a range of career development questions. Participants were identified as having either an (a) achieved, (b) moratorium, (c) foreclosed, or (d) diffuse career identity pattern. Achieved career identity patterns were assigned to youth who identified career goals based on evidence of having engaged in active career exploration. Moratorium career identity patterns were assigned to youth who reported that they were considering more than one career goal while providing evidence that they were actively engaged in career exploration. Foreclosed career identity patterns were assigned to youth who identified strong commitment to a career goal but offered little or no evidence of having engaged in career exploration. Diffuse career identity patterns were assigned to youth who did not indicate a career goal and who indicated no interest or past experience in career exploration. Table 1 highlights the categories of career identity.

Results indicated that about 40% of the youth with and without disabilities, respectively, were classified with achieved or moratorium career

identity patterns. By comparing the four career identity patterns to a range of social emotional learning indicators, the results indicated that youth classified with achieved and moratorium career identity patterns recorded more self-determination in relation to academic self-efficacy, motivation to attend school, less stress/distress, and more engagement in goal setting that youth classified as either foreclosed or diffuse. Youth classified as having achieved and moratorium career identity patterns were able to describe detailed characteristics of the careers they were interested in pursuing, the range of courses they needed to complete in high school, postsecondary options, and other work-based learning opportunities they were engaged in or intended to pursue in order to make a more reasoned career decision (moratorium) or to continue developing the skills needed to successfully pursue the career (achieved). As a promising practice, engaging in quality ILP activities is believed to facilitate career readiness by helping youth identify career goals, explore the nature of their careers and postsecondary options, and encourage them to explore both in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities, especially work-based learning opportunities.

## Summary

The absence of a randomized control design in our study precludes a definitive research finding that ILPs are causally linked to college and career readiness indicators. Focus group responses from families, educators, and youth and subsequent survey responses by families and educators, however, strongly suggest the importance of engaging in ILPs. Respondents felt that ILPs were associated with youth selecting more rigorous courses as the result of helping them become aware of career and educational opportunities. It is further posited that ILPs facilitate career readiness skills that then motivate youth to become more college ready because ILPs help youth become aware of the relevance and utility of postsecondary training and educational attainment in helping them pursue self-defined career goals.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that quality ILP implementation involves a continuous, dynamic process. As the research moved from the initial review of what was happening in schools, it became possible to identify components of what needs to be included in a quality ILP. One component of a quality ILP is that the ILP process be student-driven and updated regularly to reflect changing interests and goals. One positive consequence of being student-driven is that youth become responsible for selecting their courses and make more of an effort in those courses. Another component of a quality ILP is documentation by the youth of career goals, course-taking plans, postsecondary goals, and skills and work-based learning experiences that he or she needs.

Another conclusion that can be derived from this research is that quality ILP implementation supports three complimentary outcomes: career readiness, college readiness, and workforce readiness. ILPs are typically designed to support youth in becoming career ready by offering them opportunities to develop self-exploration skills through the use of career interest, skills, and values assessments, and career exploration skills by learning how their unique pattern of interests, skills, and values are aligned with a range of career opportunities. Career exploration also can support college readiness outcomes by helping youth become aware of the middle and high school courses they need to complete, as well

as the postsecondary training and education programs that will enable them to enter their selected careers. Finally, ILPs can support workforce readiness by helping youth identify a range of out-of-school and work-based learning opportunities that support their employability. These processes are similar for both youth with and without disabilities as ILPs and transition plans associated with IEPs share a common purpose of preparing youth to make successful postsecondary career and life transitions by personalizing both their education and workforce readiness experiences.

## Challenges

There were a number of challenges to conducting the research that should be noted. While it was intended to evaluate the relationship between ILPs and course taking patterns, creating a measure of course-taking rigor proved extremely difficult. In addition to working with an array of student information systems, the naming conventions used to refer to different courses made it impossible to be confident that the appearance of a similar course name matched the same level of rigor. The problem was further compounded by schools providing "paper-based" ILPs that contained small amounts of information and proprietary online systems that were unable (or unwilling) to provide the ePortfolios in a format that could be analyzed.

# ILPs Should Be Considered a Promising Practice for Youth with Disabilities

Throughout the research, considerable effort was made to collect a parallel set of data related to educators, families, and youth with and without disabilities in order to identify what addition-

al types of supports and accommodations, if any, are warranted to assist youth with disabilities in becoming successful in the world of work. There is evidence that ILPs should be considered a promising practice for serving youth with disabilities, as well as evidence indicating that it is critical to support educators and families of youth with disabilities as they may feel less confident in how to support career development efforts.

When discussing ILPs for youth with disabilities, one major issue is differentiating between the nature of the individualized learning plan and the IEP transition plan created at or before age 16. A key difference is that ILPs are authorized or encouraged by the state while IEPs and the transition plans within IEPs are mandated as a civil right by federal legislation as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In many ways the two plans are complementary in that ILP activities, which occur regularly and often begin before youth reach 16, can allow youth and their families to be more actively involved in designing their transition plans. The research suggests that almost 90% of the states ILP processes begin in middle school or earlier. The plans are different in that the scope of information needed to complete the transition plan of the IEP, namely use of assessment data to support identification of a postsecondary plan and development opportunities to support the youth's ability to implement that plan, is a subset of the range, intensity, and quality of ILP activities. When regularly implemented throughout the academic year and across academic years, ILPs expose youth with disabilities to a range of self-exploration and career exploration activities that should assist the youth in identifying career and life goals commensurate with their interests, skills and values. These interests, activities, and
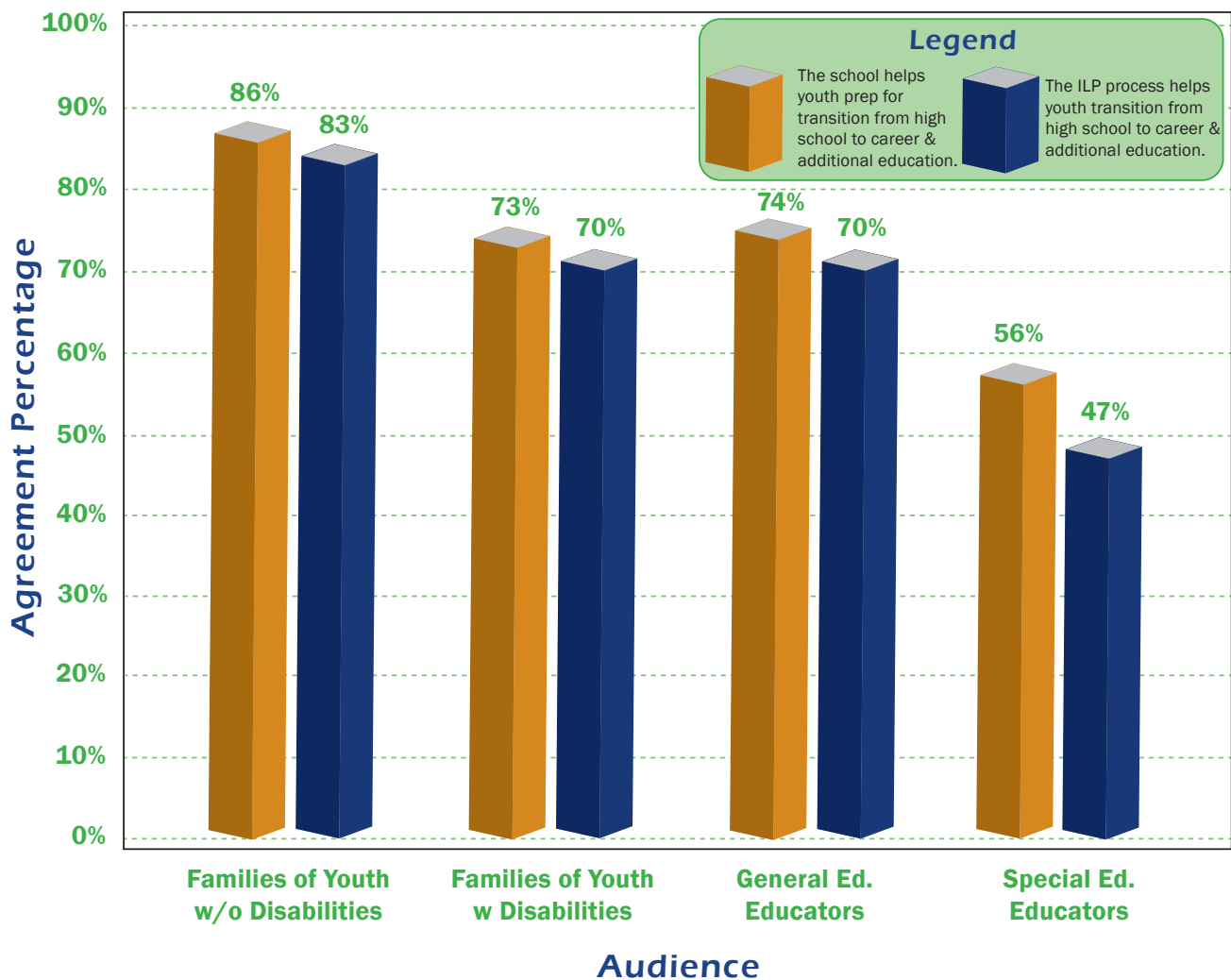
goals can be reflected in a transition IEP's Summary of Performance. By learning about the nature of the academic and postsecondary courses and programs needed to pursue those goals, youth with disabilities and their families should be in a stronger position to advocate for both accommodations and access to work-based learning opportunities that will further their readiness to make successful postsecondary transitions.

Focus group responses representing 33 families of youth with disabilities from 10 of the original 14 schools indicated that ILPs helped their children set individualized goals which resulted

in youth becoming more engaged in efforts to successfully pursue them.[55] One family member noted that by defining their own postsecondary goals, they felt their youth could see "their own progress" and "were automatically encouraged that their goal is achievable."

Interview responses from state and district special education officials indicated that ILPs contribute to making IEP meetings more efficient and improved the overall quality of the IEP meetings.[56] They believed that the quality was improved because youth and their families were able to advocate more strongly for academic ac-

Figure 1: **Perceived ILP Value Among Families and Teachers**



**Legend**

The school helps youth prep for transition from high school to career & additional education.

The ILP process helps youth transition from high school to career & additional education.

| Audience | The school helps... | The ILP process helps... |
|---|---|---|
| Families of Youth w/o Disabilities | 86% | 83% |
| Families of Youth w Disabilities | 73% | 70% |
| General Ed. Educators | 74% | 70% |
| Special Ed. Educators | 56% | 47% |

Y-axis: Agreement Percentage
X-axis: Audience

commodations that support the academic course and career plans identified in the ILP. Many families also believed that ILPs allowed them to be better able to advocate for work-based learning opportunities that helped the youth develop the employability skills needed to support their desired career and life goals.

Individual comments (shown below) from special education officials provided added perceptions of the ways in which ILPs were beneficial for youth with disabilities.

*"The postsecondary portion of the IEP begins at age 13 because the ILP process starts at about that age for our state, so we wanted to align the ILP process with our transition planning processes. All students have an ILP because everyone has a postsecondary Transition Plan."* **—Special Education Official**

*"We are now talking in 8th and 9th grade meetings about Transition Plans and [ILPs] in a more organized fashion."* **—Special Educator**[57]

*"[Schools] develop a 6th–12th [grade] system of advisement for all students through systematic, comprehensive, and developmental advisement."* **—Special Education Official**

In addition, the ILP was perceived to help special education educators learn about the nature of transition planning and the terms of meeting transition compliance standards. "[The ILP] helps to inform transition planning in terms of outcomes and meeting transition compliance."[58]

A number of special education officials also commented that the ILPs help youth with disabilities to create their IEP Transition Plans. One special education official noted that ILPs enable youth

with disabilities to "realize earlier what college and career requirements are for a desired post-school outcome so that they can be better prepared to participate in their Transition Plans." Another special education official also reported that ILPs "made us place a greater focus on transitioning the kids," and another pointed out that "pairing student interest with course selection guides a student more effectively based on their skills and interests through career exploration." ILPs were also felt to facilitate self-advocacy skills for youth with disabilities. As one special education official noted, "we have special education students taking the lead in their own IEP conferences."

Another comment related to the view of special education officials was that "engaging in ILPs contributes to an increase in students graduating with a standard high school diploma and to creating an 'awareness' that college is an option."[59] One official reported that with the implementation of ILPs, "the impact has been on all areas of teaching and learning, … but of particular note [is] … the focus on graduation with a regular diploma for all students." Additional comments were that they saw more youth with disabilities "pursuing a standard high school diploma than the past few years" and that "the ILP is giving some direction for students toward completing high school."[60]

*"[The] ILP and IEP are working together better than ever before…there can be different answers from the student in different documents and now there has to be a discussion about what to put in the IEP and how to proceed. It creates conversation about students' real interests."* **— Special Education Official**

While evidence supports the contention that ILPs

should be considered a promising practice for youth with disabilities, there were mixed reports about the effectiveness of ILPs among families of youth with disabilities, special education educators, and their general education peers. It is likely these mixed reports reflect the increased complexity associated with helping youth with disabilities prepare to make successful post-high school transitions. The nature of the discrepancies in experiences between the general education and special education educators and families was found in a follow-up survey with 12 of the original 14 schools participating to evaluate attitudes about the degree to which ILPs were perceived as helpful in preparing youth for their post-high school careers, selecting into a postsecondary training/education program, and in preparing youth to make successful post-high school transitions.[61] The figure below compares the percentage of adults who responded "agree" or "strongly agree." Among the 88 families of youth with disabilities who responded to the survey, 70% reported that they felt the school was helping their child to be better prepared for the transition from high school to a career or further education, and 73% felt that the ILP process specifically was helpful in transitioning youth to a career or further education. In comparison, a larger percentage of families of youth without disabilities responded that ILPs were helpful (86%) and prepared youth for transitions (83%). A larger discrepancy was found when comparing the perceptions of educators regarding the value of ILPs; 56% of special education educators versus 74% of general educators reported that ILPs were helpful and 47% of special educators versus 70% of general educators reported ILPs supported positive transitions.

In addition to offering positive ILP experiences,

focus group responses from families of youth with disabilities included a range of concerns about the value of ILPs.[62] Many families reported that the ILP and IEP plans were not related to one another and were not sureg how they could complement one another. One factor that seemed to contribute to this perception was that the ILP advisor and IEP administrator were not collaborating with one another. Some families were concerned about their being a strong emphasis on completing a college readiness set of core courses in order to meet increased graduation requirements, which they felt can be difficult for students with disabilities. For many of the families, algebra represented a tremendous "obstacle" because the added accommodations and time needed to pass this course made it difficult to advance to other courses required to pursue a desired career goal.

*"Special education kids... learn different, and they process different.... You have to pick the areas where they will be successful."* **—Family Member**

Families did report that ILPs helped to push their children to achieve their goals and take courses that are more challenging. One family member reported that their school staff actively sought leadership opportunities and designed career exploration activities for youth with disabilities.

Some family respondents expressed concerns about whether ILPs resulted in youth with disabilities setting unrealistic goals.

*"When we do sit down, we talk about her career goals and we'll talk about her grades now and we also talk about alternate (careers)... There are other avenues she can think of, like a vet assistant. So she is trying to help her focus on*

Figure 2: **Hypothesized Relationships Among Quality Learning Experiences, Self-Determination, and Academic Success**



Revised model depicting relationships among quality learning experiences, self-determination, and academic success. Note: Standardized coefficients are shown. Note that dotted lines indicate hypothesized, but insignificant, relationships. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. Reprinted with permission from the *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals.*
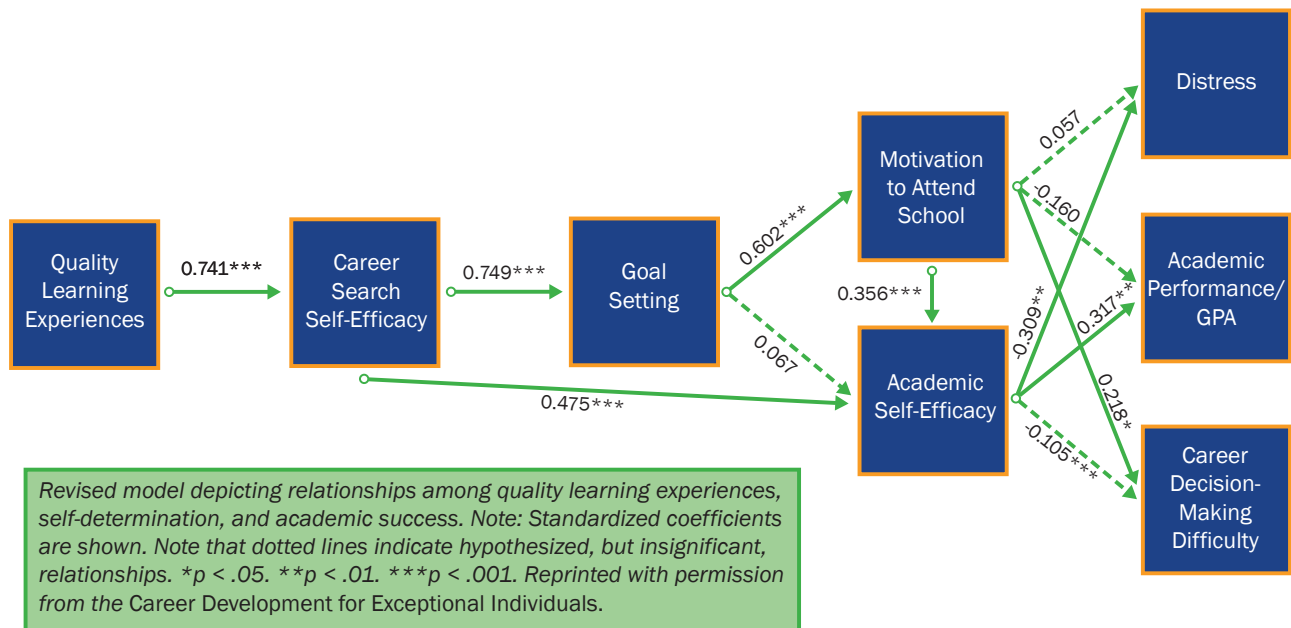
if you can't do this then we need to broaden the base. [My daughter] does understand that it is a possibility." — **Family Member**

Family respondents also noted the complexity of establishing career goals for many youth with disabilities.

"Yeah, [student] is ADHD, non-attentive ADHD. So he doesn't have executive function. He has it, but it's not as fast as say someone who does not have ADHD. So his peers can plan better than [student] can plan. So we talk daily about our goals, daily goals. Son, what do you have to do today? Today is Tuesday; what's normal for you on Tuesday? It's Monday; what do you have to do on Mondays? Mondays, he has band practice, and he has this and then Tuesday, he has Man Choir, and so we do that daily. ... My son wants to continue his music and make it his career. So we talk about using that to go forward in his life. Well, in order for you to get to be a professional

musician, you have to achieve these milestones; how are we going to get to those milestones, and how long will it take us to get to those milestones. So, with a kid with ADHD and executive functioning issues, you have to remind them or help them come up with tools for reminders." — **Family Member**

The complexity of the career development process for youth with disabilities was further evidenced in the path analysis evaluating whether self-reported exposure to *Guideposts* activities influenced academic, social/emotional, and decision-making readiness through its impact on a range of self-determination/social emotional learning skills.[63] Using a racially diverse sample of 135 youth with high incidence disabilities, the path analysis results indicated that unlike the previous study of predominately general education students,[64] reported exposure to the *Guideposts* activities impacted on goal setting indirectly through its direct effect on career search

self-efficacy. This indicates that development of self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skills may be an important factor in helping youth with disabilities establish career goals. Alternatively for youth from the general sample, reported exposure to the *Guideposts* and engaging in ILPs resulted in strong pathways to both goal setting and career search self-efficacy. While both studies found that academic self-efficacy was predicated by motivation to attend school and academic self-efficacy was associated with higher recorded grades and better social/emotional functioning, for youth with disabilities, the pathway from academic self-efficacy to career decision-making was not significant. More concerning, a significant pathway between motivation to attend school and decision-making difficulty was found indicating that as youth with disabilities experience school as more enjoyable and meaningful, they report more career decision-making difficulty.

In a secondary analysis of this data, regression analysis was used to evaluate which *Guideposts* indicators were associated with a range of self-determination/social emotional learning indicators for youth with disabilities.[65] A total of 115 youth with disabilities from the 14 study schools completed the online survey that included 10 *Guideposts* subscales and one engagement in ILPs subscale. Five of the *Guideposts* subscales addressed activities that all youth need in order to optimize their college and workforce readiness skills and five that addressed the same *Guideposts* themes (academic preparation, career development and work-place learning, youth development and leadership, connecting activities, and family engagement in career development) but described activities specific for youth with disabilities. Confirmatory factor analysis was used

to validate the *Guideposts* subscales related to disabilities.[66] Stepwise regression was used on this data to determine which subset of the 10 *Guideposts* subscales and engagement in ILPs subscale was most associated with each self-determination/social emotional learning indicator. These indicators included academic self-efficacy, career search self-efficacy, academic motivation, academic stress, psychological/emotional distress, career decision-making readiness, and connections with family, peers, and teachers. Family involvement in supporting their child's career exploration and development was associated with the largest number of indicators. Youth who perceived their families as being engaged in their career development activities reported higher career search and academic self-efficacy, stronger connections with peers, and lower ratings for both academic stress and psychological/emotional distress. Youth development and leadership was associated with higher ratings for academic self-efficacy and motivation and better connections with teachers and peers. Connecting activities was associated with higher ratings for career search and academic self-efficacy, more engagement in goal-setting, and lower ratings for psychological/emotional distress. Youth who reported more engagement in ILPs reported stronger motivation to attend school.

*Guideposts* subscales that involved activities specific to students with disabilities were also found to predict the self-determination/social emotional learning skill indicators. Family involvement with disability specific issues was associated with students reporting more academic stress and psychological/emotional distress. Connecting activities specific to disability related issues was associated with higher career search self-efficacy and more engagement in goal set-

ting. Career preparation and work-based learning experiences specific to addressing disability issues was associated with higher academic motivation and stronger connections with teachers. School-based preparatory experiences related to disability specific issues was associated with higher psychological and emotional distress and engagement in ILPs was associated with higher academic motivation.

This study offers further evidence that the career development process for youth with disabilities is more complex than for youth from the general population. Youth who reported more access to career preparation and work-based learning activities specific to their disability reported higher academic motivation and better connections with their teachers. For youth from the general population, career preparation and work-based learning were associated with higher reported career search self-efficacy and engagement in goal setting. This indicates that career development activities may not translate naturally into intended career development outcomes for youth with disabilities. And, while it is promising that youth perceptions of family engagement in the career development process was found to have general benefit on a range of self-determination/ social emotional learning indicators (including career search self-efficacy), there was also more academic stress and distress found when youth reported more family engagement in career development that was related to their disability.

While the process of supporting youth with disabilities to become career ready may be more complex, the end result of what constitutes "career readiness" likely shares more common features among youth with high incidence disabilities and youth without disabilities. As a follow up study, interviews were conducted with 34 youth with high incidence disabilities from 10 of the high schools receiving technical assistance support. The purpose of the interviews was to further explore the nature of becoming career ready.[67] The results indicated that 14 youth were classified with achieved career identity patterns indicating that they had identified career goals derived from having actively engaged in career exploration. Another 14 were classified with foreclosed identity patterns indicating that they had also identified career goals but offered no evidence of having engaged in career exploration. Examining the differences between the achieved and foreclosed career identity patterns offer a number of observable characteristics that should be considered indicators of "becoming career ready." Unlike youth classified with foreclosed career identity patterns, youth classified as achieved were able to identify two to three career goals and were able to clearly describe plans for pursuing these careers that included both short-term academic goals as well as post-secondary training or degree programs. Furthermore, youth classified with an achieved career identity were able to reflect on how their career goals were related to their personal interests and skills and could describe details of the job skill requirements. These youth were also able to describe the range of past, current, and future work-based learning opportunities that would support further workforce readiness skill development. One conclusion drawn from this study of youth with high incidence disabilities was that their pattern of characteristics appeared consistent with youth that were engaged in self-determined and self-regulated behavior. Self-determination shares a range of characteristics being proposed to serve as an indicator of becoming career ready: engaged in choice making, problem solving, decision making, goal setting and

attainment, self-advocacy, and demonstrating self-management skills.[68] Self-determination also shares many characteristics related to self-regulated learning which can be referred to as the degree to which one is able to optimize their development and level of functioning by engaging in self-regulated, goal-driven behavior.[69]

It is important to emphasize that this data was collected with youth representing high incidence (e.g., learning, behavior) disabilities. The results indicate that while the process of becoming career ready may be more complex, the defining characteristics associated with becoming career ready appear generalizable across youth populations. A reason why ILPs can be considered promising practice for youth with disabilities is that educators can adapt the ILP process in ways that can more effectively support the more complex nature of career development among youth with disabilities.

The challenge of these processes becomes paramount when discussing youth with significant (e.g., cognitive and/or multiple) disabilities. One family member who participated in a focus group discussion related to ILPs expressed the frustration of discussing "careers" in a traditional manner.

The traditional concept of "career" has not been a useful one for youth with significant disabilities who have relied upon choosing occupations (or more likely having it chosen for them) based on others perceptions of their ability to complete specific job tasks with little expectations that they can participate in a career that presumes a range of duties and advancement opportunities. However, more recent conceptualizations of "career" refer more and more to the place or context in which one would like to work. By organizing the world of work into 16 career clusters,[70] youth, family, and educators are able to explore these different contexts as well as the wide range of occupations that are available within these career contexts. Aspirations for becoming a medical doctor, for example, lies within the Health Science cluster and involves a range of occupational opportunities associated with training programs and two-year and four-year college degrees. From the perspective of self-determination, the goal is to enable youth to demonstrate a preference (i.e., volition) for the types of work they may be interested in pursuing but also the context in which the work occurs. From this perspective, quality ILP implementation for youth with significant disabilities would provide access to accessible interest, skills, and values assessments that would allow them to identify preferred integrated career settings and the types of tasks they may enjoy performing within those settings. Once identified, the ILP process would involve an active coordination among family, educators, and the business community to find work-based learning opportunities that are commensurate with those preferred settings and tasks.

District officials have noted correctly that one important challenge for conducting ILP activities with youth with significant disabilities is the need for accessible assessment tools.[71] Online career information systems often use instruments that are not appropriate for a range of youth populations who may struggle with reading or may never have had exposure to a given occupational title. The National Secondary Transitions Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) offers a transitions assessment toolkit called the Age Appropriate Transition Assessment Toolkit that describes a range of ways to help youth identify their career setting preferences and career goals.[72]

While more challenging for youth with significant disabilities, this perspective of creating learning opportunities that enable youth to engage in self-determination and designing work-based learning opportunities in the community to allow youth opportunities to work in career settings that are commensurate with their preferences is very consistent with the ecological developmental framework that is embedded in the World Health Organization's *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health.*[73] From this perspective, level of functioning among individuals with disabilities is optimized when learning and support opportunities are designed to facilitate the capacity to develop one's interests and skills. The ILP facilitates this process by helping adults design these opportunities in relation to the youth's career setting preferences or their expressed career goals.

## Summary

ILPs should be considered a promising practice for youth with disabilities. ILPs offer youth and their families an opportunity to engage earlier and to be more proactive when developing the IEP transition plan, which is federally mandated to begin no later than when the child turns 16. While the participants represented youth with high incidence disabilities, there was evidence that in comparison to the general population of youth, career exploration and work-based opportunities and the development of self-determination/social emotional learning skills were not translating naturally into career decision-making readiness or career search competence. While qualitative survey responses and interviews about career decision-making processes indicate that characteristics of becoming career ready appear the same for youth with and without disabilities (e.g., career goals formed through active career exploration), the path analysis indicates some concern that self-efficacy beliefs are not influencing career decision-making readiness and, more concerning, that enjoying school may have a negative impact on readiness to think about their occupational futures. Future efforts are needed to ensure that adults (educators and family) maintain high expectations for their possible futures by encouraging youth to consider a wide range of career opportunities. ILPs can support youth with significant disabilities by offering accessible assessment tools that allow them to express a preference for work tasks and career settings and then designing work-based learning opportunities that are commensurate with those tasks and settings.

## Challenges

Two important challenges that surfaced early in the study were that some of the districts classified students with IEPs as including both students with disabilities and youth who were classified as gifted and talented. While it is understood that there are many gifted and talented students who also have disabilities, this did not appear to be the case for these districts. In addition, the analyses indicated that the youth engaged by the schools were those with predominately high incidence disabilities. Therefore we are unable to generalize our results to populations of youth with more significant disabilities.

The results indicated that since the project began there was a sizable increase in the number of states who passed legislative statutes directing schools to engage in ILPs or were publically endorsing their use. Currently, 38 states and the District of Columbia engage in or endorse ILPs.[74] Of these, 30[75] have legislative language that *requires* the use of ILPs.[76] The remaining eight states have chosen to encourage the use of ILPs, giving school districts the discretion to adopt ILPs. Figure 3 displays the rate of state use of ILPs since 1996.

The approaches to ILP implementation vary from state to state. While many states encourage ILP use among all students, others do not. For example, four states (Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Texas) require ILPs for specific regions or populations. Illinois targeted Chicago Public

## Figure 3: **States Using ILPs**
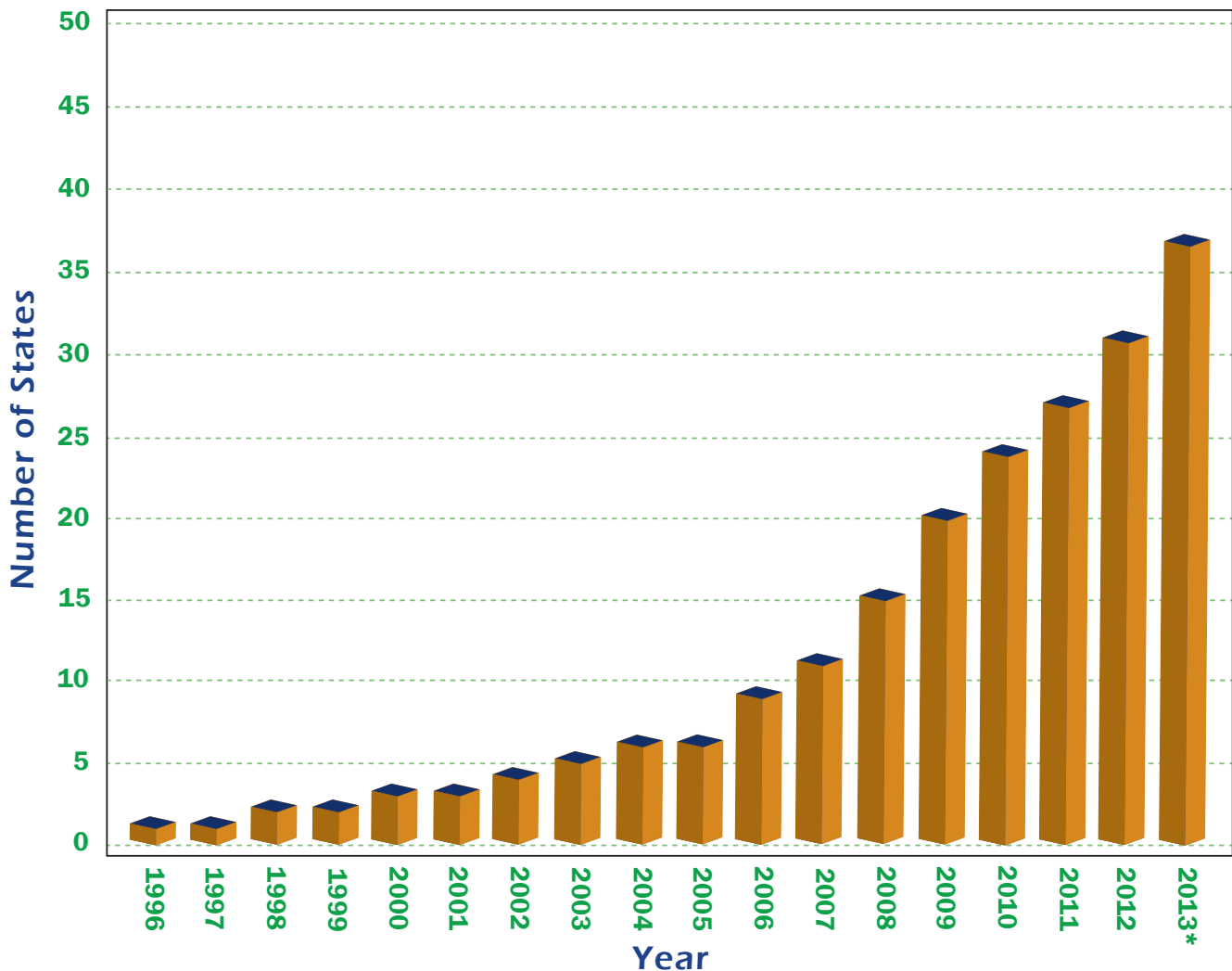


*Dates were not available for Ohio or North Dakota, so these states were included in the 2013 count.*

# Table 2: States Using or Requiring Individualized Learning Plans as of January 2014

| State | State Name for the Individualized Learning Plan |
|---|---|
| Alaska | Personal Learning and Career Plan (PLCP) |
| Arizona | Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) |
| Colorado | Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) |
| Connecticut | Student Success Plan (SSP) |
| Delaware | Student Success Plan (SSP) |
| D.C. | Individual Graduation Portfolio (IGP) |
| Florida | College and Career Planner (not a state requirement) |
| Georgia | Peach State Pathways: Education and Career Planning Tool |
| Hawaii | Personal Transition Plan (PTP) |
| Idaho | Student Learning Plan |
| Illinois | Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (not clear about state requirement at this time) |
| Indiana | High School Graduation Plan (HSGP) |
| Iowa | 8th Grade Plan |
| Kentucky | Individual Learning Plan (ILP) |
| Louisiana | Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) |
| Maryland | Individual Academic and Career Plan |
| Massachusetts | Individual Career Plan (in development; planning a pilot; no state requirement) |
| Michigan | Educational Development Plan (EDP) |
| Minnesota | Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (currently under development) |
| Missouri | Personal Plan of Study (PPS) |
| Montana | Big Sky Pathways (BSP) (not a state requirement) |
| Nebraska | Personal Learning Plan (not a state requirement) |
| Nevada | 4-Year Academic Plan |
| New Jersey | Personalized Student Learning Plan (in pilot phase; not a state requirement) |
| New Mexico | Next Step Plan (NSP) |
| North Dakota | Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (not a state requirement) |
| Ohio | Individual Academic and Career Plan (IACP) (not a state requirement) |
| Oregon | Education Plan and Profile |
| Rhode Island | Individual Learning Plan (ILP) |
| South Carolina | Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) |
| South Dakota | Personal Learning Plan |
| Texas | Personal Graduation Plan (required for students at-risk of dropping out) |
| Utah | Student Education Plan (SEP) and Student Education Occupation Plan (SEOP) (not a state requirement) |
| Vermont | Personal Learning Plan (PLP) (in development; not currently required by state) |
| Virginia | Academic and Career Plan |
| Washington | High School and Beyond Plan |
| West Virginia | Individual Student Transition Plan (ISTP) |
| Wisconsin | Individual Learning Plan (ILP) |

## Figure 4: **Snapshots of State ILP Policies**
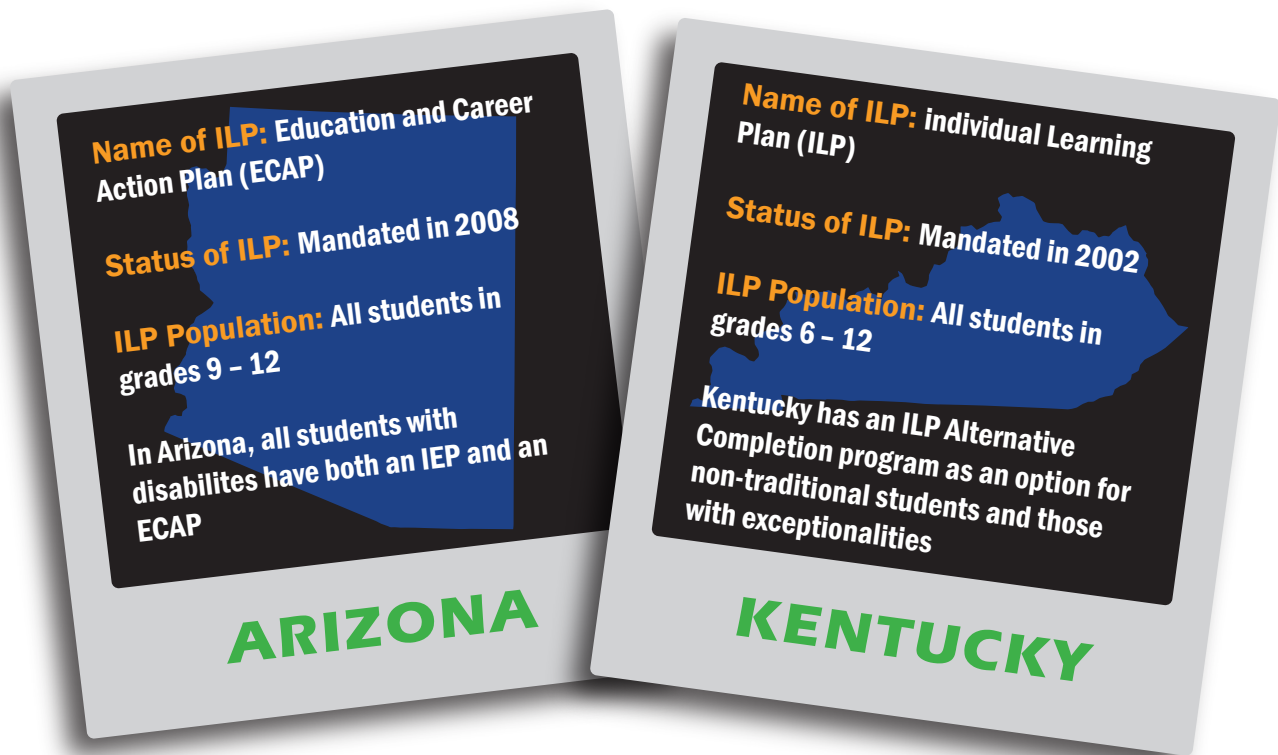


School students only and Massachusetts and Texas limit ILPs to students in CTE programs of study and students deemed at risk for dropping out, respectively.

While containing a range of similar attributes, ILP implementation varies across states. As an illustration, Figure 4 displays snapshots of how ILPs have been implemented in Arizona and Kentucky. ILP implementation differs with respect to when they begin, the name of the ILP, the degree to which districts and schools have autonomy in how they implement ILPs, and advocacy related to whether and how youth will disabilities will be included.

Another recent (2013) example of the continuing expansion of ILP use is found in Wisconsin. The governor asked for all the key agencies involved in education and workforce development to jointly develop a plan of action to promote college and career readiness. Officials in the state found the *ILP How-to Guide* and incorporated the lessons from that resource into the recommendations sent to the governor and state legislature.

In Wisconsin, an economist used data comparing the large numbers of adults who would be leaving the employment sector over the next decade compared with the small numbers of youth who were in the education pipeline.[77] The rationale was that unless Wisconsin youth are more engaged in academic and career planning then the overall competitiveness of the Wisconsin labor force was in jeopardy. Within months of the Sullivan report publication, Wisconsin added ILPs to their biennial budget.

In relation to the use of ILPs for youth with disabilities, many states encourage, if not mandate, the use of ILPs and equal access to ILP activities for all youth with IEPs. For example, in Connecticut "students with disabilities [are] integrated into the [ILP] process and have access to students with and without disabilities as well as adults in the advising/mentoring component."[78]

States have chosen various ways of handling the coordination of IEP and ILP efforts. In many states, there is no specific policy language indicating how the IEP and ILP should be aligned. In those states that do clarify the relationship, variations include, but are not limited to

- giving districts and/or IEP teams the autonomy to decide how to manage or align IEP and ILP documentation and

- requiring components of a youth's ILP to be incorporated into the IEP.[79]

In some cases, states have attempted to ensure alignment between IEPs and ILPs by including special education personnel in the development of ILPs for youth receiving special education services.

In identifying how many states were engaged in ILPs, it was evident that a number were actively involved in designing strategies to support ILP implementation efforts at the district and school level. Consistent with research on implementation,[80] it was clear that states were beginning to view the need to mobilize districts and schools in coordinated ILP efforts and those efforts required a range of resources. In addition to the four original states, Louisiana, New Mexico, South Carolina, and Washington, in-depth interviews were also conducted with state and local district officials in nine additional states,

Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. These states were identified during the web-based review of state's use of ILPs and were deemed to be engaged in a range of promising ILP implementation efforts. This was followed by a comparative case study conducted in nine states identified from the 50-state review. The case study generated themes derived from interviews conducted with state and district officials representing staff responsible for overall ILP implementation and staff responsible for special education to learn about their ILP implementation experiences in the nine states. For the four states that had been a part of the study, the protocols were developed to also include school leaders.

Themes that emerged regarding state and district officials' beliefs about ILPs as a promising practice have been shared in earlier sections of the report. This section specifically focuses on identifying state, district, and school level implementation strategies that may increase the quality of ILP programs and activities.

ILP Implementation strategies included the following: (a) establishing whole-school buy-in for implementing ILPs; (b) providing access to online career information systems; (c) providing access to professional development; (d) locating or designing ILP curriculum; (e) strategies for including youth with disabilities; (f) dedicating a time in the school day for ILP implementation; (g) family engagement in ILPs; and (h) assessing ILP outcomes.

## Whole-School Buy-In

State and district officials indicated that whole-school buy-in was necessary for schools to en-

gage in quality ILP implementation.

*"Everyone needs to buy into it and incorporate it into the curriculum and provide the time for school personnel to build lesson plans that incorporate ILP requirements. It needs to be part of the curriculum, not solely delivered by counselors. College counseling and other things take up a lot of time; there isn't enough planning time for counselors alone to deliver ILPs."* **—District Official**

This strategy was indicated in the first year of the project as well when it was noted that student to school counselor ratios were such that personalized and continuous attention was not possible.[81] Subsequent focus groups with educators were also consistent about the need to engage in whole-school implementation.

*"We had a complete buy-in of the ILP process from the principal, vice-principal, and key staff members within the group itself. With this buy-in, we've had a positive situation. We've had teachers who are serving as advisors. When a child signs up in the 9th grade, they are assigned an advisor that follows that child all the way through until senior year.... That advisor, ideally, has become a mentor to that young gentleman or lady in their search for careers and what they are going to do when they leave high school."* **— Educator[82]**

The whole-school model for ILP implementation allows school counselors, special education supervisors, and CTE administrators to serve in the role of coordinators of ILP implementation with educators serving in the role of an ILP mentor/coach who meets regularly with a small group of youth.[83] Creating smaller mentoring groups also facilitates the school's ability to use ILPs to or-

ganize annual student-led parent-teacher conferences. These conferences were reported by youth, families, and educators to be an extremely valuable experience.

Gaining whole-school buy-in relies on a communication plan that helps education leaders, educators, and students and their families understand the nature and role of ILPs as helping to improve college and career readiness outcomes. Because many education leaders are weary of another initiative, communication materials and orientation sessions must clearly explain how ILPs support efforts to increase the number of youth who are preparing for and will be successful in pursuing postsecondary training and degree programs. This can be achieved by providing a theory of change that links ILPs to student engagement in pursuing more rigorous courses as well as focusing on improving skills that are aligned to the common core indicators such as reading, writing, mathematics, and science skills. Schools that are dealing with at-risk populations need communication materials that explain how engaging in ILPs can improve attendance and learning outcomes. High performing schools need to understand that graduating with the skills to enter college will not result in college attainment unless youth have clear and valued career goals that support their intentions to graduate from college. In between these two groups of students, ILPs will help the average student understand the relevance of completing a more rigorous set of courses to helping them achieve their career and life goals. Whole-school ILP implementation affords schools the ability to provide attention to these different groups of youth.

The ability to establish whole-school implementation is facilitated by designating a time for ILP

activities. Use of advisory periods or block scheduling were two strategies used by many schools to create smaller groups that allowed for a more mentoring/coaching relational base to emerge.

## Access to Online Career Information Systems

State and district officials indicated that schools need access to online career information systems. Schools that previously used paper ILPs reported that moving to an online career information system with a personalized ePortfolio was a tremendous asset in helping them implement ILPs, helping all staff understand the value of ILPs, and in engaging families.[84] During the course of the project, schools that were previously using a paper portfolio to document ILPs were introduced to an online system, and focus group feedback from some educators indicated that they felt the online format allowed for more accessibility and facilitated family engagement. In addition to providing access to a range of self and career exploration tools, many systems include a range of career planning and management activities such as resume and cover letter development and access to work-based learning opportunities. An ePortfolio documents the activities that youth complete and the preferences that youth indicate for different careers and postsecondary education options.

Online career information systems were mentioned by some state and district officials as an effective means of engaging families in career development activities. Officials indicated that they were able to provide family members with login information to access their child's ePortfolio as well as sharing career assessment results.[85] However, providing access to online career in-

formation systems was voiced as a concern by all state and district officials with some states opting to purchase one system for the state and others struggling with how to support districts to purchase access.

## Access to Professional Development

State and district officials indicated that many state directives to engage in ILPs were not accompanied by funding support. School educators often mentioned needing access to ongoing professional development to learn how to more effectively assist youth with their ILPs, particularly for youth with disabilities.[86]

*"Once they understand it and see the value, there is buy-in. Initially, no one ever said it was a bad idea. People were intimidated by having to learn how to access it. Professional skills made them anxious. Once everyone got familiar, no one questioned its value or worth. ... There are people who weren't too into it and now are utilizing it fully and made it a part of the process."* **—District Official**

Many state officials indicated that access to professional development was being leveraged through cross-sector and cross-division collaborations that emerged because ILPs were found to have broad appeal throughout the state. State and district officials noted that two levels of professional development were needed—one that focuses on helping education leaders understand the value of ILPs and another that focuses on helping educators engage in using online career information systems to implement the district's ILP curriculum. Ongoing professional development can also serve as a communication tool in order to explain how ILPs should

complement the transition plan within the IEP. Moreover, regular professional development can enable general and special education educators to learn how to more effectively support the transition needs of youth with disabilities.

## Access to ILP Curriculum

In order to create a whole-school approach to implementing ILPs, it is necessary to provide access to an ILP curriculum. One state – Kentucky – has established ILP curriculum for each grade level that is designed to promote their college and career readiness goals. Both youth and educators voiced frustration that they did not have access to a wider range of ILP activities and a request was made by the 14 schools participating in technical assistance for NCWD/Youth to create an *ILP How-to Guide*. The *How-to Guide* was specifically designed to help educators find ILP related curriculum as well as offer a method for how to support districts in designing grade-specific ILP curriculum that would support youth development in relation to the common core writing and math standards.[87]

## Inclusion Support

State and district officials have noted the need to reaffirm a no excuses model that clearly communicates that all youth must be included in ILP implementation efforts. While some officials commented on the difficult challenges of finding accessible self-exploration activities and assessments for youth with significant disabilities, other officials indicated that addressing such challenges is part of their job. States have begun to establish ILP implementation language that explains how ILPs complement the transition plan within the IEP. And, some have clearly indicated that the ILP results should be used to

guide the IEP related transition planning. Some states have formally affirmed that youth with disabilities are to be fully included in ILP implementation. Connecticut, for example, has provided a clear articulation regarding the interrelatedness of ILPs, IEPs, SOPs, and 504 plans.[88] A number of officials remarked that engaging in ILPs was breaking down long-established silos between special education and other education divisions.

## Family ILP Engagement

State and district officials perceive the ILP as an effective opportunity for engaging and connecting with families. Some states have contracted with career information system vendors in a manner that provides families with access to their child's ILP. Families have reported that the student-led parent-teacher conference has led to increased aspirations for their child's future career opportunities and has resulted in increased esteem for the educators in their school.[89]

## Assessing ILP Outcomes

While State and District officials indicated the importance of assessing whether ILPs are resulting in improved college and career readiness outcomes, to date there has not yet been concerted State efforts to conduct such an evaluation. This is concerning since it is well established that the ability to sustain the implementation of innovative policies is dependent on having clear data that demonstrates its value;[90] ILP implementation therefore must be associated in some manner with helping the state reach its college and career readiness goals.

**Summary**

States are increasingly passing legislation directing the use of ILPs or encouraging schools

to use ILPs. While most states include youth with disabilities in their ILP efforts, there are some that do not, while others allow waivers for youth with significant disabilities. More recently, state ILP implementation efforts are making it clear that ILPs are for all youth with no opting out for youth with disabilities. Interviews with state and district officials indicated that there is a preference for engaging in whole-school implementation whereby all educators engage ILP activities with small groups of youth. There is a recognition that online career information systems with an ePortfolio are necessary for quality ILP implementation, and there is concern and a lack of consensus as to whether and how to provide one system for the whole state or to support districts financially in purchasing their own licenses. Professional development is critical to successfully implementing ILPs, and some states are creating cross-sector and cross-division collaborations that allow for a more concerted and cost-effective method for delivery. Many districts recognize the need for having an ILP curriculum that outlines grade-specific ILP activities. ILPs offer a unique opportunity for schools to engage with families and the online nature of the ILP allows schools to support families in becoming more deeply involved in their child's career development activities. To date, there does not appear to be a concerted effort among states to create an evaluation strategy to assess the degree to which ILP policies are helping states meet their college and career readiness goals.

## Challenges

There were no substantive challenges encountered in the conduct of the research though there were disappointments that many schools did not have in place the needed tools to assess if students' course taking decisions were improved due to instituting the ILP. It was also not possible to identify what type of school based/classroom activities are the most useful for students acquiring the needed competencies to be both college and career ready upon graduation from high school. These disappointments simply highlight the multiple implementation challenges that exist for reform efforts such as attainment of college and career readiness for all youth in the state.

Based upon the interviews conducted with state officials during the review of all 50 states' efforts, all recognized that implementation would be iterative. There are common themes that schools, districts, and state departments officials are grappling with including

- harnessing the power of technology at all levels of the education enterprise to promote the personalized learning on the part of students and support the institutional goals;

- modifying the crowded school calendar to include time for personalized planning and learning on the part of students;

- establishing an effective mix of curricula content over multiple years of ILP progression including community-based learning experiences;

- ensuring that youth needing more intensive time and access to additional supports to acquire the competencies are given the tools and opportunities to do so;

- sorting through effective ways to provide all school staff with the professional knowledge required to contribute to the initiative; and

- finding ways to track the benefits of the ILP tool for all students based on common indicators throughout the whole state.

An additional set of challenges were identified that also present opportunities. To have quality ILP processes, schools and districts found the need to tap the resources and expertise from other stakeholders ranging from

- families
- community businesses

- regional workforce development organizations and postsecondary institutions, and

- community-based support organizations working with vulnerable populations, such as youth with disabilities.

The recommendations that follow address these challenges and opportunities.

**Youth work on electronic portfolios as part of their individualized learning plans.**

# Recommendations

From the evidence garnered in the overall study, which builds upon prior research from a broad array of professional disciplines (e.g., guidance and counseling, career and technical education, workforce preparation, and youth development), a definition of a quality ILP emerged (see pull-out box).

The recommendations that follow are intended to promote quality ILP implementation. The first set of recommendations focus on. strategies for facilitating ILP implementation at the state, district/community, and school levels, and the second set focuses on recommendations for how to verify the impact of ILPs on college and career readiness outcomes.

## Recommendations for Establishing Quality ILP Implementation

The following recommendations focus on actions that can improve current ILP efforts in schools across the country. Some are state level actions while others are for the district or school levels. Many of the recommendations also include strategies about how to expand and engage other organizations that have a stake in the broad economic imperative to ensure a key tool (the ILP) is used to promote the state's college and career readiness agenda. The recommendations that look beyond an exclusively school-based strategy come from some of the trendsetter states in which the Departments of Education have advantageously collaborated with other departments in their states to support and expand the use of critical components of quality ILPs as

> **DEFINITION:**
>
> **Quality Individualized Learning Plan**
>
> ■ A document consisting of (a) course taking and postsecondary plans aligned to career goals and (b) documentation of the range of college and career readiness skills that the student has developed.
>
> ■ A process that enhances the relevance of school and out-of-school learning opportunities and provides the student access to career development opportunities that incorporate self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skill building activities.

a part of their broader college and career readiness youth transition agenda and is informed by research focusing on implementing innovations in organizational settings.[91]

### State Leadership: A Focus on Building and Supporting Capacity

States should consider emulating the trendsetter states by establishing a statewide interagency task force to

■ oversee continuous improvement of the ILP content and processes and

■ support the development of a multi-

agency multi-year plan that identifies potential sources of funding, as well as common priorities and specific departmental priorities.

This work should include the following:

***Creating an accountability and evaluation plan:*** In order to address a substantive and pervasive challenge, states need to demonstrate the cost effectiveness, value, and impact of ILPs. States should take the lead in designing an accountability and evaluation plan for determining whether (a) all youth are receiving access to quality ILP implementation and (b) ILP implementation is having the intended effects on academic and postsecondary outcomes. The state has the technical capacity to annually track each student's completion of prescribed activities. As an *evaluation model*, this level of information should allow the state to monitor whether output indicators are being effectively reached—e.g., which youth are participating and whether youth are completing the prescribed activities.

In addition to tracking output indicators, the design specifications that the interagency task force establishes for online career information system vendors should make it possible to link ePortofolio documentation to student information system data to chart whether and what types of self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management activities are associated with academic performance. The design specifications should enable connectivity with state based data warehouses that include longitudinal data and national sources such as National Student Clearinghouse[92] data to allow states to determine whether quality ILP implementation is associated with entering and successfully completing a postsecondary program

as well as employment data to determine income gains. In addition, design specifications should consider guidelines for selecting an online career information system that builds off of the Alliance of Career Resource Professionals standards.[93] ACRP is the organization that online systems belong to and sets guidelines for the quality and functioning requirements of online career information systems. It is important that the universal design[94] principles are adopted to ensure that ILP activities are accessible to youth from diverse abilities, experiences, and primary languages.

As an *accountability strategy* for use at the school and district level, the design specifications for online career information systems should provide for a data dashboard for each school and district that offers a disaggregated list of the percentage of youth completing AP courses, work-based learning opportunities, leadership and youth development programs, connecting activities in community or college settings, and family career development activities. Such a dashboard would allow districts and schools to evaluate whether they are creating the learning opportunities necessary to maximize college and career readiness efforts. It would also allow states to allocate resources in ways that support efforts to improve the quality of district/school ILP implementation efforts.

***Developing communication and marketing materials:*** There is a need for materials that provide local education agencies and other relevant organizations with a way to communicate the critical need to increase college and career readiness outcomes for all youth. The materials need to effectively inform students, families, teachers, business leaders, and community based organizations about the value and nature

of ILPs and ways they can be engaged in ILP processes. These materials could be modified and disseminated by state officials, administrators, and teachers. The communication and marketing materials should help establish acceptance and buy-in from key stakeholders that research shows are of critical importance.[95]

***Creating tools to promote capacity to implement quality ILPs:*** Using the *ILP How-to Guide* as a template that provides resources from states and national organizations that have supported the development of ILPs, it is recommended that states create an array of support materials by (a) providing materials for engaging families based on consultation with parent organizations and evidence-based research for such engagement; (b) developing strategies that districts can use to mobilize work-based learning and community connecting activities based on consultation with employer organizations; and (c) offering recommendations for how to evaluate the impact of ILPs on district and school outcomes.

**Quality ILP Activities**

Self-Exploration

Career Planning & Management

Career Exploration

***Establishing a two-pronged demonstration strategy:*** The first prong should focus on schools and the second should expand the types of sites and institutions to test the materials that research has identified as being important for an individual to develop the career management skills needed for success throughout life. There are multiple ways to support the financing of demonstrations including tapping federal funds set aside for states to promote capacity development through grant-in-aid programs. Efforts should be made to blend multiple funding streams.

1. ***The focus on schools:*** Offer competitive grants to school districts for the purpose of addressing the core ingredients that have been identified as needed for whole-school and fully inclusive ILP efforts. States can use the demonstration sites as an opportunity to (a) test the most effective ways to provide exposure to the career development skills indicated in the quality ILP definition; (b) assess the value of different approaches to advisory periods and access to mentors; (c) develop and refine professional development resources; (d) serve as test sites for improving online career information system contract specifications for vendors to ensure that the resources are being used to their fullest extent by school educators and to enable districts and schools to evaluate the impact of ILP implementation on academic and future postsecondary outcomes; (e) test evidence-based strategies for engaging families including strategies to enable them to participate in ILP activities such as annual student-led parent-teacher conferences and, for youth with disabilities, strategies to improve the IEP processes as a result of ILP participation; (f) gather stories from youth, families,

and educators about their experiences in using ILPs to further refine future communication materials; (g) provide districts and schools with support in linking to the business community to increase the range of available work-based learning opportunities for youth with and without disabilities; and (h) provide support to districts and schools to connect with youth-serving organizations in order to coordinate ILP efforts.

2. *The focus on communities:* All transition age youth can benefit from exposure to the components identified in the definition of a quality ILP. A demonstration that incorporates the indicia of a quality ILP into the individualized plans used by multiple federally supported programs, particularly for those targeted to vulnerable populations, is therefore recommended. Through the work of the cross-departmental task force, a demonstration project could be developed to establish a planning process and create the materials needed to engage vulnerable populations (e.g. dropouts, youth with disabilities, youth involved in foster care, and youth engaged with the juvenile justice system). These demonstration projects could focus on youth developing self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skills. These projects should also consider assessing the variables needed to provide the targeted populations with additional supports and test program design features to adjust to the setting or youth circumstance such as youth attending alternative schools or schools managed by the juvenile justice system.

The value of both demonstration projects cannot be underestimated. These sites should provide opportunities for communities, districts, and school leaders to collaborate through joint planning efforts, sharing of materials, and blending funding from multiple sources to successfully serve a broader range of youth under the rubric of a state's college and career readiness agenda.

## Creating a Tiered System for ILP Professional Development

Professional development should be offered in a manner that provides specific development opportunities designed for (a) state/district/school leaders (e.g., Superintendents and their staff and Principals and Assistant Principals); (b) district ILP curriculum development and implementation teams; (c) school ILP implementation teams; and (d) other professionals involved in career development services.

States should seek input from practitioners in the field to develop the plans. State interdepartmental and cross-departmental teams should review state supported professional development offerings centered on the components identified in the quality ILP definition to determine what, if any, professional development opportunities exist for the four tiers of stakeholders noted above. The review should include an emphasis on the needs of general and special educators, guidance counselors, and workforce development professionals involved in transition services (e.g. vocational rehabilitation counselors, IDEA funded transitional coordinators, youth service pro-

viders working for youth programs funded by the array of WIOA Titles). Professional development resources developed by national organizations representing these stakeholders should also be reviewed to assess their compatibility with the plans the state is using.

*District Actions:* District teams that include members from each school involved in ILP implementation should be established to help launch and track ILP work. These teams can also serve as a sounding board for the district to provide input to state and even nationally sponsored professional development opportunities. Specific ILP resources that districts should consider developing include (a) tailored communication materials that describe the nature and value of ILPs to key district and school stakeholders; (b) grade-specific ILP curriculum that adhere to universal design for learning standards; (c) processes to facilitate and monitor family engagement; and (d) processes to collaborate with other organizations to develop year-round opportunities for youth.

*School Actions:* Each school should create an ILP professional learning team that uses a project management system to identify the ILP activ-

ities to be conducted at each grade-level, timelines for when these tasks will be conducted, and specific tasks that need to be completed in order to successfully execute each activity. Key actions for the ILP team include (a) communicating with key stakeholders at their school (educators, counselors, administrators, family, students, community) in order to establish whole-school buy-in; (b) establishing a timeline for completing grade-level ILP activities; (c) developing a list of tasks that need to be completed in order to ensure successful implementation of each ILP activity; (d) scheduling professional development activities to be provided to educators and families throughout the academic year; (e) facilitating a school level dialogue on when and how to implement ILPs; (f) identifying a range of ILP activities that engage families, including student-led parent-teacher conferences; and (g) designing strategies to ensure that youth with disabilities and youth with significant disabilities are fully included in ILP activities.

## Recommendations for Assessing the Impact of ILPs

The evidence that emerged from the multiple studies is primarily based on the perceptions of

Figure 5: **ILP Theory of Change**
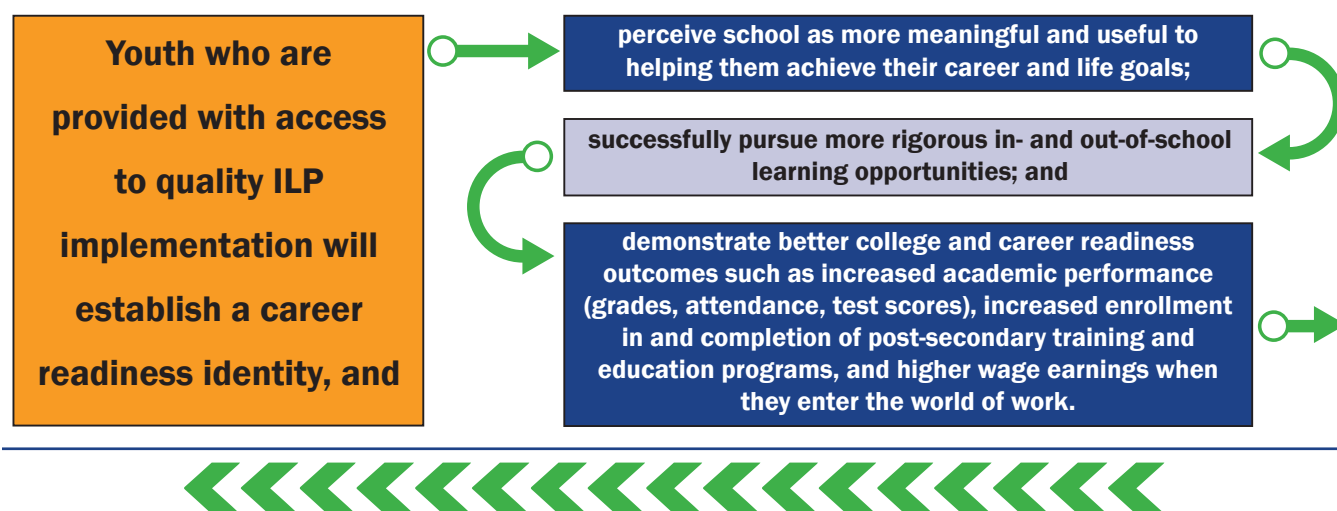
key stakeholders in the ILP process—youth, families, school personnel, and state and district officials—from a combination of interviews, focus groups, and surveys (quantitative and qualitative). While this evidence does suggest that ILPS should be considered a promising practice for youth, including those with disabilities, experimental research is needed to assess whether engaging in ILPs improves college and career readiness outcomes as is discussed below.

## Document that Quality ILP Implementation Results in College and Career Readiness

It has been noted throughout this report that the intention of the ILP research was to determine whether ILPs should be considered a promising practice for youth with and without disabilities. From this body of research, the following proposed theory of change emerged (see *Figure 5: ILP Theory of Change*, below).

Experimental research methods using randomized control groups should be used to assess each element of the theory of change. Furthermore, it is recommended that the methods be replicated for youth of different age groups, different status (e.g., middle grades, entering high school, exiting high school, attending alternative schools, youth with significant disabilities who spend the predominate amount of time in resource rooms and/or continue in extended years programs, youth with high incidence disabilities and significant disabilities, respectively), and different achievement levels.

An important question regarding youth with disabilities is whether engaging in a quality ILP process results in obtaining a regular diploma. This

has tremendous implications for future workforce outcomes if youth with disabilities are able to successfully complete the high school requirements needed to enter a two-year or four-year postsecondary education program, as currently 74% of jobs in the US typically require a high school diploma or equivalent and beyond.[96]

## Document How Family Engagement in ILPs Affects College and Career Readiness

There is reason to believe that engaging families in their children's career development activities may improve students' academic success and post-school employment outcomes. Using experimental methods, it would be possible to demonstrate whether schools' engagement of families in ILPs results in higher positive regard for the school and its educators, higher aspirations for their children's career futures, and increased academic outcomes (grades, attendance, and course rigor). Targeted demonstrations centered on how participation in an ILP affects the IEP content and outcomes have merit including interactions between families of youth with disabilities, particularly those with significant disabilities.

There is an especially important research question related to whether engaging families of later elementary age youth in quality ILP implementation would increase the number of youth pursuing STEM careers. Research indicates that in order for youth to successfully pursue professional STEM careers, they need to complete algebra before entering the 10th grade and calculus before they graduate from high school.[97] While it is understood that not all youth will pursue a STEM career, nor should they, an important question is whether engaging families in ILPs prior to mid-

dle school increases families' efforts to support their children's math test scores. Many families may not understand the implications of entering middle school with strong math skills. By empowering families with this information, it is possible that many of these youth would be able to enter middle school more prepared to successfully complete algebra in their first year of high school.

## *Validate What Constitutes Quality ILP Implementation*

The evidence from this research leads to a hypothesis that quality ILP implementation involves youth developing self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management *skills*. Acquiring these three skill domains requires a range of ILP activities that include (a) access to accessible assessment tools centered on potential interest areas and skills required in various occupations; (b) learning how to use web-based tools such as labor market forecasts and information about education requirements for the range of careers pathways; (c) development of personal qualities often called employability skills (e.g., self-motivated, being responsible, able to work in teams) and technical know-how such as job search skills; (d) development of self-determination skills (e.g. the attitudes and abilities needed to set goals and take initiative to achieve them; and (e) access to work-based learning opportunities.

What is missing is clear empirical data indicating what constitutes quality ILP implementation and, more specifically, what grade-level domain skills are most optimal. For example, what career development skills should (a) middle school youth develop in order to take advantage of their high school learning opportunities; (b) 9th grade students develop to maximize their high school aca-

demic performance; and (c) 11th grade students develop to ensure they enter and successfully complete a postsecondary training program or degree? In addition, data is needed about how quality implementation varies across settings (i.e. in school or in applied learning sites in the community).

## Who Should Act Upon These Recommendations?

A wide array of stakeholders have an interest in improving the use of tools such as ILPs. National associations that have supported ILPs and states individually or collectively can support the advancement of ILPs. Foundations concerned with youth transitions also have a role to play in promoting personalized learning and helping to identify promising practices for preparing all youth to be college and career ready. Multiple federal agencies have a responsibility to support building capacity in states and the provider community within their missions. Several of the agencies that have a direct interest in improving the transition from adolescence into adulthood could support the type of research efforts suggested. Attention should be given to testing effective ways to collaborate in the implementation process itself. This recommendation is derived from research centered on assisting youth with disabilities in becoming college and career ready, which reflects that understanding how to collaborate is a substantive and challenging issue.[98]

ODEP and its partners should consider developing an outreach plan targeted to the national organizations, foundations, federal government agencies, and advocacy groups to promote the research agenda previously discussed.

# APPENDIX:
## SUMMARY OF ILP RESEARCH PROJECT STUDIES

### Review of State-Mandated ILP Policy (2008)

#### Purpose of the Study

The ILP Research Project initially began by reviewing the relevant policies of select states that mandate ILPs. It included

- the identification of four states with ILP policies to participate in further studies (LA, NM, SC, and WA) and

- the identification of promising State practices.

#### Methods Used

- Web review and analysis of State-mandated ILP policy.

- Interviews with State administrators who oversee ILP implementation.

#### Outputs

Not applicable

### Focused ILP Policy Review & Analysis of Four States (2009–2010)

#### Purpose of the Study

This study involved the four ILP states and

- explored the extent to which states are leveraging federal and state resources to align their ILPs with other policies aimed at fostering education innovation and economic recovery and

- developed recommendations for how states could make intergovernmental investments to strengthen their performance outcomes in education and workforce development.

#### Methods Used

- Web review and analysis of ILP policy and

- Interviews with state education and workforce development staff.

#### Outputs

Journal article providing policy insights from a sample of states with ILPs and ILP policies.[99]

### ILP Technical Assistance & Research (2009–2012)

#### Purpose of the Study

Based on recommendations from the four states involved in the focused ILP policy review, 14 schools from the four states were solicited and agreed to participate in a study of ILP implementation. The schools

- participated in annual institutes and on-site focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys and

- submitted various forms of student data (demographic information, attendance rate, coursework, ILP and IEP documents, and college enrollment data).

#### Methods Used
**Quantitative**

- Surveys of students.

- Exploratory analysis of academic and demographic student data to examine differences in student performance and quality of ILP.

- Surveys of parents.

- Surveys of teachers.

**Qualitative**

- Teacher focus groups.

- Parent focus groups.

- School leader interviews.

- Student interviews.

- Technical assistance for improving ILP implementation.

## Outputs

A report examining the degree to which parents and teachers perceived their schools as providing quality ILPs for all students.[100]

An ILP implementation guide designed for schools that assist youth with college and career readiness and transition planning.[101]

An information brief for parents describing ILPs, what parents have reported about ILPs, and how parents can help their child optimize their ILP experience.[102]

An information brief for schools describing the importance of family involvement in the ILP process and how schools can better engage families.[103]

A report to identify and describe the course-taking patterns and other descriptives of students from schools that participated in the ILP Re-

search Project in the four states.[104]

An issue brief exploring the course-taking patterns of high school students and the extent to which they influence high school and postsecondary education outcomes.[105]

A paper summarizing associations between engagement in the ILP process and career development.[106]

A paper summarizing a path analysis determining how access to a quality learning environment is associated with career development among youth with disabilities.[107]

An article describing the emergence and nature of ILPs, promising practices, and challenges associated with gaining whole-school buy-in, and the potential for career and vocational research.[108]

A paper summarizing a study investigating how parents/guardians, educators, and students perceived schools' ILP practices in states with an ILP mandate.[109]

A paper summarizing a set of interviews with youth with disabilities about career decision-making processes.[110]

A paper summarizing parent and educator views on the effectiveness of ILPs for students with disabilities.[111]

A paper summarizing a study that assessed over 1,600 open-ended responses to a range of career development questions.[112]

A paper reporting a path analysis determining how access to quality learning environments is associated with career development.[113]

A paper that involves a regression analysis in which the *Guideposts for Success* and Engagement in ILP indicators were used to predict a range of self-determination indicators.[114]

An internal report providing the research team with an overview of promising ILP strategies, and the findings and implications of the ILP Project's research.[115]

## National Analysis of ILP Policy (2011, 2013)

### Purpose of the Study
This national review of ILP policy was conducted to update previously collected ILP policy information and identify where ILPs were in use, which states had mandated its use, and trends in overall ILP policy adoption. The subsequent ILP policy reviews were conducted in 2011 and 2013.

### Methods Used
Web review and analysis of ILP policy.

### Outputs
Three matrices providing state-by-state information on ILP policy, academic performance, and general education statistics.[116]

A web-based ILP policy map providing a snapshot of ILP policy details for 50 states and Washington, DC.[117]

implementation, this study explored

- reasons behind ILP adoption;
- how states rolled out the ILP policy;
- successes and challenges to ILP policy adoption and implementation;
- how the State, education leaders, partner agencies, teachers, parents, and students are engaged in the ILP;
- recommendations for improving ILP policy and implementation; and
- lessons learned.

### Methods Used
Interviews with State, district, and school education officials from 13 states to discuss ILP policy and implementation.

### Outputs
A policy brief providing insights from the ILP Research Project and recommendations for improving ILP policy implementation.[118]

A paper discussing promising practices, challenges, and recommendations based on the interviews with State and district education officials.[119]

A paper describing promising ILP trends and challenges that emerged from a policy case analysis.[120]

## In-Depth Exploration of ILP Policy & Implementation (2012)

### Purpose of the Study
To gain in-depth information about ILP policy and

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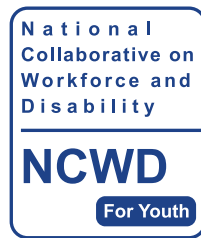
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