

ILPs Across the US

Overview

The ILPs Across the US interactive policy map illustrates that well over half of all states have adopted and supported students in developing individualized learning plans (ILPs) as part of the larger national education reform effort aimed at preparing youth to leave high school both college and career ready. These personalized learning strategies strive to strengthen the transition between school and college or work, while bolstering student engagement and family involvement in learning. **To date, 38 states have begun to use ILPs, with 21 of those states mandating them for use with all students.**

The US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in collaboration with the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Boston University, and Social Dynamics recently completed a five-year study on the use of ILPs. From this research the following definition of a quality ILP emerged.

A QUALITY INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PLAN IS:

- A document consisting of: (a) course taking and post-secondary 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 students access to career development opportunities that incorporate self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management of skill building activities.

As seen on the map, states have various names for their ILPs, ranging from the Individual Career and Academic Plan in Colorado to the Individual Graduation Plan in Louisiana. Despite differences in the names, states share many common best practices connected to creating the ILP document and supporting the ILP process.

Creating the Document: Most states focus their ILPs on the high school years, but many now begin using ILPs with students during the middle school years. An increasing number of states have invested in computer assisted materials to assist students in the development of the ILP document – often referred to as electronic or e-portfolios. 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.

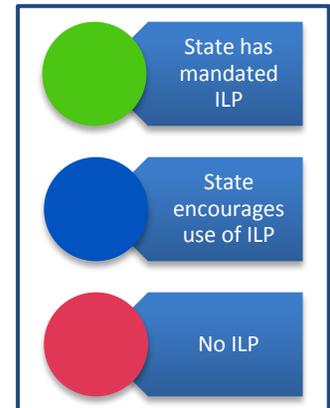
Supporting the Process: Schools are using multiple strategies to promote the use of ILPs including: (a) incorporating advisory periods in the school calendar; (b) providing ILP focused activities/curricula so students acquire skills relevant to setting and achieving

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goals; (c) assigning an adult mentor to the student throughout their time in school; (d) promoting family engagement; (e) encouraging students use of web-based career information systems; (f) providing exposure to the world of work through site visits to workplaces and career fairs; and, (g) developing internships.

Using the Map and Learning More:

You can explore what is happening in individual states by viewing the map. The states in green mandate ILPs for all students. The states in blue encourage their use, and the states in pink do not use ILPs. Scroll over a state to read the name of the state's ILP and what grade levels use ILPs. For more information regarding a specific state's ILP policy, click on the state to view a table that includes the year a state's ILP policy was put in place, the purpose of the state's ILP, and how students with disabilities are included within the state's ILP efforts.



Although names and characteristics of ILP-related policies vary by state, certain parameters were applied to identify state plans that achieved the core goals of ILPs. A plan was included in the map if it:

- Was developed, recognized, and adopted by the state education agency;
- Had an academic and career development/management component and incorporated a student's academic and career goals; and
- Involved some form of state level support (e.g. materials, guidance around what the ILP is, what activities it entails, and how it is implemented, e-portfolio, funding, technical assistance).

A state plan was excluded from the map if the primary funding for an ILP initiative came from the Federal government (e.g. GEAR UP grants) because the ILPs had not been institutionalized within the state.

State-managed pilot ILP efforts and pending ILP policies were included in the map (to the extent they could be found on the state education website) and were labeled accordingly. The information for this map was drawn from a State Department of Education web-based review and informed by the previously discussed research done by ODEP in collaboration with the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Boston University, and Social Dynamics.

Key Policy Issues

Four key policy questions have been at play as states launched ILPs. These include the following:

1. *Will ILPs be mandated or should the state only promote it as a promising practice?*

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2. *Will ILPs be available use by all students or only for certain populations?*
 3. *What grade levels will be included in the initiative?*
 4. *What supports will be provided to districts and schools from the state?*
- *Will ILPs be mandated or should the state only promote it as a promising practice? For use by all students or only for certain populations?*

Thirty-eight states, including the District of Columbia, currently use ILPs. Of this group 21 have opted to require all students 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 6 states encourage districts to use ILPs and are in the process of studying the value of mandating use of the tool. 13 states have chosen not to develop a position on the use of the ILP tool.

- *What Grade Levels will be included?*

Whether states mandate or encourage the use of ILPs as a promising practice, there is a clear trend for launching the effort at the middle school level with 7 states starting in 6th grade and 19 starting in 7th through 9th grade and ending in the 12th grade.

- *What supports will be provided to districts and schools from the state?*

In an era of limited resources, it is not surprising that a very limited number of states have provided funding to hire staff at the school level to implement the ILP initiative. State level support for ILPs has consisted primarily of professional development for existing staff on career development. Promising practices materials, developed by early adopter districts/schools and/or materials endorsed by many national networks, have been distributed to school staff and administrators responsible for ILP implementation. The national networks that have produced materials supporting ILPs include the following:

- National Association of State School Principals
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- ACHIEVE
- American Association of School Counselors (AASC)
- National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTC)

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In addition to professional development, two of the most significant promising practices include the use of advisory time in the school calendar and the use of web-based career information systems.

Participation of Youth with Disabilities

States, particularly those that have mandated ILPs, have had to consider the interconnection between the Individualized Education Program (IEP), the planning document mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for students who qualify for special education services, and ILPs. 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 department collaboration, increase course taking by youth with disabilities in integrated classes, increase exposure to career development experiences, and result in more students with disabilities graduating with a standard high diploma.

Additional Resources

[Kick Start Your ILP](#) – This resource from ODEP provides youth with information and tools so they can make the most out of their ILP.

[Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans: A “How to Guide” Focused on the High School Years](#) – This guide, created by NCWD/Y, is designed for schools, educators, and other professionals who assist youth with college and career readiness and transition planning. A key goal of the guide is to help schools develop a bridge between college and career readiness efforts through the use of ILPs and help youth achieve prosperous and productive lives. The career development activities and resources in this guide are also useful for youth service professionals in the workforce development system.

[Using Individualized Learning Plans to Produce College and Career Ready High School Graduates](#) – This brief from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y) articulates complementary policy recommendations based on ILP research for state officials, district/school officials, educators, organizations interested in supporting family engagement in schools, special education administrators and support organizations, national organizations, disability organizations, and Federal officials.