

# Section A. ILP Overview



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## Individual Learning Plan Framework (Revised 2020)

The individual learning plan (ILP) is a student-directed academic and career planning tool that personalizes academic and training pathways beginning in middle school. The ILP is a living electronic portfolio that is required to follow each student from Grade 6 to Grade 12, and is accessed through the ILP electronic platform. In the ILP platform, students access curriculum-based ILP activities and compile their activity results and self-reflections. During ILP sessions, teachers and counselors deliver the supporting curriculum through lessons aligned with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards for student mindsets and behaviors. These standards support academic, career, and social-emotional development through the following ILP activities:

- Self-exploration of values, interests, strengths, and competencies
- Exploration of college and career opportunities
- Planning and goal setting for participation in coursework, training, experiences (e.g., work-based learning) and other supports toward progress along career pathways

Each district's ILP program is defined by its ILP curriculum and the process the district adopts to deliver lesson plans, facilitate student planning, and monitor students' progress towards academic and career goals (see ILP Process & Curriculum). Central to the ILP process are conversations between students and educators who deliver the ILP lessons (ILP session guides) to help students make meaning from the activity results, set goals, and discuss strategies for achieving the goals. Ongoing training in the ILP process is critical for educators.

Both the 2016 Secondary School Regulations and the state's career readiness action plan, PrepareRI, identify the ILP as the backbone of personalization and relevance of a student's education. By the 2020–21 academic year, all middle schools and high schools will have either adopted an ILP system from the state-vetted menu or developed their own ILP system and curriculum model that meets the state's expectations and aligns with the needs of the student population.

## The Purpose of ILPs

The ILP activities for self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning, when implemented in a high-quality manner, help to develop foundational mindsets, behaviors, and competencies identified by ASCA standards for career development, academic development, and social-emotional development (ASCA, 2014; Solberg, 2019). Figure A1 highlights the most critical ASCA standards supported by the ILP process. The ILP program supports (a) development of student mindsets that lead to increased engagement and ownership of educational experiences, (b) understanding of and participation in challenging educational and training pathways to meaningful careers, and (c) development of strategies for setting and achieving academic and career goals. When these

development objectives are met, students are more likely to graduate with a meaningful degree and persist toward college and career goals (Conley, 2012; Rumberger, 2011).<sup>1</sup> [ILP Infographic Resource](#)

**Figure A1. Theory of Action for Student Development Outcomes and Pathway Outcomes Resulting From High-Quality ILP Implementation**

Components of High-Quality ILP Implementation	Student Development Outcomes	Pathway Outcomes
<b>When the ILP process is implemented in a high-quality manner...</b>	<b>... then ILPs can support the development of these mindsets and competencies in students ...</b>	<b>... and lead to these outcomes that scaffold progress along a career pathway.</b>
<p>“High-quality” means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ILP as a process of guided student reflection</li> <li>• Ensure buy-in with communications strategy</li> <li>• Develop academic and technical opportunities</li> <li>• Training to develop ILP <i>process</i> experts</li> <li>• Dedicated classroom periods</li> <li>• Continuous improvement in Year 1</li> </ul>	<p>Outcome ①: Foundational Mindsets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand relevance of education to current and future lives.</li> <li>• Develop sense of belonging and identity aligned with academic success.</li> <li>• Develop self-belief and self-confidence.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieve greater student engagement in and ownership of educational careers.</p>
	<p>Outcome ②</p> <p>Understand full range of educational and training opportunities and supports and how they connect to meaningful careers.</p>	<p>Participate in challenging educational and training pathways to meaningful careers.</p>
	<p>Outcome ③</p> <p>Develop academic and career goal setting skills and strategies for achieving the goals.</p>	<p>Graduate with college and career readiness credentials.</p>
		<p>Pursue and receive college or training credentials toward meaningful career pathways.</p>

Outcome ①—ILPs promote **foundational mindsets** that lead to student engagement and ownership in several ways. ILPs directly support students’ understanding of the relevance of school through the ILP goal setting process. This process prompts students to set long-term career goals and then reflect on how short-term goals, including educational goals, are necessary to reach the long-term goals. ILPs also support students’ sense of belonging, by building their college- and career-going identities. Many students simply do not otherwise see themselves as academic achievers, and ILPs can help them to break out of narrow conceptions of *what* is possible and *for whom* it is possible. The third mindset that

<sup>1</sup> References for “The Purpose of ILPs”: Arrington, 2000; ASCA, 2014; Bobek et al., 2005; Britton & Spencer, 2017; Budge, Solberg, Phelps, Haakenson, & Durham, 2010; Bullock & Wikeley, 1999; Conley, 2012; John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2011; John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2012; Locke & Latham, 2002; Phelps, Durham, & Wills, 2011; Plasman, 2018; Rogers, Creed, & Glendon, 2008; Rogers, Milkman, John, & Norton, 2013; Rumberger, 2011; Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, Mylonas, & Argyropoulou, 2015; Solberg, 2019; Solberg et al., 2018; Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012; Solberg, Wills, Redmon, & Skaff, 2014.

ILPs help support is self-belief and feelings of self-competence. When students break down their long-term goals into more manageable steps as part of the ILP goal-setting process, they are more likely to see an achievable path to their goals. ILP conversations between students and adults during ILP sessions play an important role in providing positive reinforcement to students and in providing a space to discuss strategies for overcoming educational and personal obstacles to goals.

Outcome ②—Many ILP activities are designed to promote **student understanding regarding meaningful career and college options and the educational and training opportunities and supports that make up pathways to postsecondary placement**. All students will participate in activities that explore two-year and four-year college options and the 16 career clusters identified by the Association for Career and Technical Education (<https://www.acteonline.org/career-clusters-2/>). Activities and lessons then describe the pathways that lead to these opportunities: coursework, training opportunities, and experiential opportunities, as well as supports such as tutoring resources. These opportunities include STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) coursework, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes, and opportunities for career and technical education (CTE) certification. When students understand these pathways to meaningful work, they can make coursework and training decisions in an informed way. ILPs can also introduce students to valuable out-of-school experiences, such as work-based learning opportunities (e.g., internships) that require them to develop and demonstrate workplace skills and help them to form relationships with industry professionals who can act as mentors and models (additional positive influences on self-confidence).

Outcome ③—Finally, the ILP process develops **student goal setting skills and strategies for achieving the goals**. Goal setting and monitoring of progress toward goals is inherent to academic and career success and is a process that thriving adults engage in on a regular and often intuitive basis (Locke & Latham, 2002). Yet goal setting, developing strategies for attainment, and monitoring progress toward them are skills that must be developed. When students deploy goal setting skills and strategies, they are more likely to prioritize participating in pathway opportunities, graduating with meaningful credentials, and pursuing college and/or training credentials.

#### **The Purpose of ILPs**

When the ILP process is implemented in a high-quality manner:

- Students develop mindsets that drive their **engagement and ownership of their educational careers**.
- Students are **connected to educational and training pathways** for meaningful careers, understand the prerequisite coursework and experiences needed, and are more likely to participate in them.
- Students develop **goal setting skills and strategies for achieving the goals** that are integral to sustained success during and after high school.

## ILP Process & Curriculum

A district ILP program consists of two interlinking components: the ILP curriculum and the ILP process. The curriculum is the ILP lesson content that supports student development along the ASCA standards, and the process consists of the steps for delivering the content and facilitating associated student ILP activities. Each student, beginning no later than entry into sixth grade, is required to have an ILP.

### *ILP Process*

Through the ILP process, students document their developmental progress along the ASCA academic, career, and social-emotional development standards through middle school, high school, and their transition to postsecondary opportunities. Local education agencies (LEAs) are responsible for adapting and/or developing an interactive ILP process that provides regular and multiple opportunities for students to reflect on and revise their ILPs during structured ILP sessions, as well as outside of sessions. The ILP process consists of the following five steps that can occur in order or, at times, in parallel:

1. **Delivery of ILP lesson plan.** The content of ILP curricula is delivered two ways: through structured lessons that the district can adapt from the state lesson model (see Section B) and through ILP activities for self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning. Each discrete lesson should be led by an ILP session guide (i.e., an adult who delivers the lesson plan and guides students through the activities) using materials such as videos or resources developed in collaboration with the district. The session guide will usually be a counselor or a classroom teacher.
2. **Student ILP activities.** ILP lesson plans are followed by the completion of related student activities embedded in the electronic ILP platform. The platform integrates a wealth of self-assessment and exploration tools that inform students and walk them through career-oriented decisions (see Table A1 for required activities and artifacts to be included). A significant portion of the ILP session time should provide space for students to complete activities and ask questions of the ILP session guide. These activities must include student goal setting activities that progress along career pathways.
3. **Guided student reflection.** This step is the heart of the ILP process. Students have the opportunity to ask the ILP session guide questions, but more importantly, the ILP session guide helps students to interpret, make meaning from, and connect results across all ILP activities. The guide also leads detailed discussions regarding the student-set long-term and short-term goals, including discussions about strategies to address educational challenges and other perceived barriers. By providing positively reinforcing encouragement and helping to reframe setbacks within a growth perspective, guides help to reinforce the relevance of educational opportunities and to promote students' sense of belonging, positive identity formation, and feelings of self-competence.
4. **Goal monitoring and strategy formulation (required semiannually, recommended quarterly).** Students' goals and strategies for achieving the goals should be addressed on a regular basis. Because semester-long goals are common (e.g., to receive a B or higher in Algebra), it is recommended that progress toward goals be revisited on at least a quarterly basis, to adjust

strategies mid-semester as needed. Interaction with ILP session guides to identify and update successful learning and behavioral strategies to achieve goals is critical.

5. **Student-led ILP conferences attended by teachers and parents (recommended).** Annual ILP conferences at which students present their ILPs to parents and teachers have been identified as a particularly promising step in the ILP process (Budge, Solberg, Phelps, Haakenson, & Durham, 2010). In this student-led meeting, students take ownership of their ILPs by presenting the results of and their interpretations of the ILP activities, their goals, and how they plan to attain them. ILP conferences are an excellent way to engage parents in the ILP process and teachers have noted how it forges connections between teachers, parents, and students (Solberg et al., 2018).

### Student-led ILP Conferences

It is recommended that at the end of each school year, students present their ILP portfolios to parents and teachers in a group setting. Schools may schedule small sessions if possible or schedule a larger ILP parent–teacher event devoted to these presentations. During each student’s conference:

- Students give parents and teachers a “tour” of their ILP using a laptop and/or other presentation tools, including assignments and artifacts that demonstrate the attainment of college and career readiness skills.
- For each of the three areas of the ILP (self-exploration, career exploration and career planning), students present the activities they have completed, the activity results, and their reflections on the results.
- Key topics to discuss include students’ strengths, career interests, relevant school opportunities that will support these interests, and postsecondary opportunities.
- Students discuss their “starting” annual goals, mid-year adjustments to their goals, how they have worked to overcome barriers to the goals, and the new goals they have identified for the coming year.
- Parents and teachers ask probing questions to reinforce the positive decisions the student has made and pose other opportunities the student might explore related to their interests.

## ILP Curriculum

LEAs are responsible for adopting and/or developing an interactive ILP curriculum that provides regular and multiple opportunities for students to learn about and practice goal setting, planning, and achievement in academic, career, and social and personal domains. Curricula are delivered through lesson plans during ILP sessions. LEAs may choose to adopt the state model (see Section B) or develop a district curriculum. Districts must indicate to RIDE whether they are using the state model or a custom model. In the case of a district curriculum, the district will need to include key information about the ILP curriculum in its implementation Success Plan (see Section D).

Districts have flexibility in designing the ILP curriculum but must meet the following requirements:

- Ensure the curriculum aligns with **ASCA student standards** for academic, career, and social-emotional development (see Appendix A).
- Integrate the **curriculum activities** for students that demonstrate progress toward academic development, career development, and social-emotional development goals (see Table A1).
- Establish process, procedure, and curriculum for students to address **academic development** goal setting, planning, and achievement in each grade level between Grade 6 and Grade 12.

- Establish process and procedure for students to address **career development** goal setting, planning, and achievement in each grade level between Grade 6 and Grade 12.
- Establish process and procedure for students to address **social-emotional development** goal setting, planning, and achievement in each grade level between Grade 6 and Grade 12.
- Establish process and procedure for students to address relevant **transition planning**, as appropriate, in each grade level between Grade 6 and Grade 12.

Districts will need to notify RIDE if their ILP system is updated or replaced in a way that affects the ILP system adherence to these requirements.

### Curriculum Activities for Students

The following curriculum activities and student artifacts must be integrated in each district’s ILP curriculum. Within each key component, there are opportunities to set goals aligned to each of the three ASCA learning domains (academic, career, and social-emotional development) and artifacts are to provide evidence of progress towards them. Districts may identify additional artifacts as evidence of student progress in addition to those in Table A1.

The ILP electronic platform options provided by the state (see Section C) should integrate each of these activities and artifacts. Districts developing their own curriculum or supplementing their ILP platform options can find many resources for supporting ILP curricula and student activities in the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability’s *Promoting Quality Individual Learning Plans Throughout the Lifespan* (<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/publications/promoting-quality-individualized-learning-plans-throughout-the-lifespan-a-revised-and-updated-ilp-how-to-guide-2-0/>). All activities should be designed appropriately for respective grade levels.

**Table A1. Curriculum Activities and Artifacts**

Key Components	Activities and Artifacts
Middle School and High School Coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting learning goals for the student based on academic and career interests and identifying required skills needed, as well as the student’s program of study aligned to the student’s secondary and postsecondary goals</li> <li>• The list of courses and learning activities student will engage in while working toward meeting local graduation requirements</li> <li>• Analyze assessment results to determine progress and identify needs for intervention and advisement</li> <li>• Document academic achievement</li> <li>• Student plan for and documentation of earning postsecondary credentials while in high school through AP courses; dual credit courses; CTE courses; preapprenticeship programs</li> <li>• Career Pathway (endorsement) identification and progress toward attainment</li> </ul>

Key Components	Activities and Artifacts
Postsecondary and Career Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying career plans, options, interests, and skills; exploring entry-level opportunities; and evaluating educational requirements</li> <li>Résumé building and updating</li> <li>Workforce readiness exam results</li> <li>Postsecondary education and/or training; Search, Identification, and Admission Requirements review</li> <li>Creating financial assistance plans for postsecondary education and/or training</li> <li>College and/or training program applications or job or military application</li> <li>Career goals</li> <li>Work experience reflections</li> </ul>
Career Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of the student’s efforts in exploring careers, including a written postsecondary and workforce goal for the student; yearly benchmarks for reaching that goal; and interest surveys the student completes</li> <li>Identification and documentation of progress with coursework necessary to pursue career options</li> </ul>
Self-Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interests and skills assessment</li> <li>Extracurricular activity goals that include documenting participation in clubs, organizations, athletics, fine arts, community service, recreational activities, volunteer activities, work-related activities, leadership opportunities, and other activities</li> <li>The student’s plans for and experiences in contextual and service learning</li> </ul>
Applied Learning Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress toward and reflection on the cross-curricular, skill-based standards students are expected to learn and acquire over the course of their K–12 education, including communication, problem solving, critical thinking, research, reflection and evaluation, and collaboration</li> </ul>

## Transition Planning

The ILP process shall ensure that all students are provided with opportunities to develop and revise transition goals that include successfully moving from middle school to high school, from school to school, and from high school to postsecondary opportunities. Involved educators, students, and their families should discuss and document the necessary supports, programs, resources, and placement to help students progress through grade levels.

Transition planning components to coordinate with the ILP program should include, at minimum, transitional goals, appropriate supports or programs for students (e.g., individualized education programs, 504 plans, English language learner programs, Personal Literacy Plans), and scheduling considerations or other pertinent information necessary to assist students in successful transitions. Postsecondary transition plans should document students’ plans after high school, including how they connect to career pathways (e.g., work, apprenticeships, technical schools, college, and/or military service) as well as any necessary postsecondary supports. District and school leaders should be included in the ILP program planning process to ensure alignment across programs.

## Transferability of ILPs

ILPs must be transferable documents and must follow students when they move from grade to grade, school to school, and district to district. In addition, ILPs must be provided to students as they transition to postsecondary placements. Districts are required to establish policies and procedures that support intradistrict transfers of the ILPs, including from middle school to high school.

## Privacy

An ILP is a confidential document; levels of access to an ILP are based on the role and responsibilities of those individuals accessing the document (some sections of the ILP can be shared, such as in advisory groups, while respecting privacy as requested). Access to some sections of an ILP may be limited to the student, the family, and involved educators (those individuals providing direct educational and support services to students). LEAs are advised to follow all Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and related privacy policies in the implementation of ILPs.

## Keys to High-Quality Implementation of ILPs

While developing the ILP program (curriculum and process), districts should also plan for implementation. To implement ILPs in a successful way that yields their full benefits, districts should follow the six practices outlined below. The absence of any of these practices can meaningfully decrease your district's chances for successful ILP implementation (see Section D for complete descriptions).<sup>2</sup>

1. **Put the process of guided student reflection at the center of the ILP process.** Successful implementers of ILPs consistently point to the benefits of the relationships that form between adults leading ILP sessions and students. The guided feedback process forms the basis of this relationship. Guided reflection helps students to make meaning from ILP results and make connections between all ILP activities, as well as holding students accountable for progress towards goals.
2. **Ensure buy-in from principals, teachers, and the school community with a targeted communications strategy.** The ILP process assigns responsibility for students' career development to the broader school community. Because this a significant shift for many educators, the success of ILPs depends *first* on their understanding and belief in the purpose of ILPs. Leaders must clearly and frequently communicate the purpose and goals of the ILP process through a dedicated initiative. Families should be invested. School working committees will need to meet on a regular basis to take ownership of the school ILP process. IMPLEMENTATION ACTION [TEMPLATE](#) [OUTREACH RESOURCE](#) NEWSLETTER [TEMPLATE](#)
3. **Develop challenging academic and technical opportunities that connect students to meaningful careers.** Districts must provide students with the educational and training opportunities described in ILP lessons and identified by students' short-term goals. Academic coursework, CTE learning, and work-based learning opportunities, including internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing,

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<sup>2</sup> Also see Section D for full itemization of references supporting these recommendations.

should be accessible to all students, or the ILP program can risk being perceived as an abstract, irrelevant exercise.

4. **Develop experts in the ILP process.** Training should emphasize expertise in the process of guided reflection and individualized feedback for students. By virtue of their life experiences, all educators know what it is like to make decisions about careers and the future. Districts should build the capacity of educators to conduct critical career conversations with students that help them to set goals. Asking guiding questions that prompt students to reflect on connections between school and their future, emphasizing students' strengths, and framing challenges positively are all important components of the goal setting process for which educator training should be provided. See Sample Student Ambassador [Application](#) and [Flyer](#).
5. **Assign dedicated time for the ILP process during advisory periods or other teacher-supervised periods.** ILPs require a whole-school commitment. Very few schools have the resources to conduct one-on-one ILP sessions for all students, so counselors and teachers should team up to conduct ILP sessions in classrooms on a regular basis. Counselors might come into classrooms to support lessons, and videos can be deployed to provide ILP lesson scaffolding. There is no set rule for how often these sessions should occur, but once per semester is the absolute minimum frequency for effectiveness—some districts have ILP sessions multiple times a month. The time and classroom space devoted to ILPs should be an issue at the top of a school's ILP working committee agenda, and restructuring schedules will require strong leadership from principals and superintendents.
6. **Begin continuous improvement efforts for the ILP program in Year 1.** Because of the significant shifts in school culture and infrastructure that ILPs call for, districts and schools should anticipate a multiyear effort toward high-quality ILP implementation. By identifying data and information sources in Year 1 of implementation that can inform the continuous improvement of the ILP program, districts and schools can address implementation barriers before they become systemic issues.