



ANNOUNCEMENT

Contact: Curtis Richards
202-822-8405 x 163
richardsc@iel.org

IEL Launches Longitudinal Study of Individualized Learning Plans as a Bridge to Graduation & Career Development

November 10, 2008, Washington, D.C.—The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) announces the launch of a longitudinal research and demonstration project to understand the effectiveness of individualized learning plans as a high school reform strategy.

One of the rapidly increasing high school graduation requirements in the United States is that all students must have individualized learning/graduation plans (ILP). Yet, no information is available regarding the significance of such plans on the course of study available for students, including students with disabilities, nor their effect on post-school outcomes for these youth, including work readiness or career development choices.

More than 20 states now require that all students have ILPs to address gaps that employers have identified between traditional academic preparation and the requirements of the globally competitive economy, and to better align the education system with state identified economic development and workforce development needs.

Through IEL's National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) and in partnership with the Center for Education and Work (CEW) at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, this study will: (1) examine how these planning tools, ILPs, are actually being used; and (2) identify promising practices associated with state requirements for the implementation of individualized learning plans. Beginning in the spring, researchers will review ILP data of more than 5,000 sophomores and seniors and follow them through the four-year project to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the planning tools.

After an extensive review of the most active states, the following states and schools were selected for participation in this groundbreaking research project based on their innovative strategies and commitment to career development:

- **Louisiana:** Promising practices identified include an online management system that supports exploration of career pathways. The state was recognized as having a longstanding, well-established individualized learning plan program. Louisiana also has adopted standards and benchmarks for the program, and an established training and professional development program. The state monitors implementation of the plan in each Louisiana parish on a rotational, five-year basis. Planning for

Louisiana's Five Year Education Plan starts in the 6th grade, with implementation beginning in the 8th grade. The state uses an online system called "LA ePortal" to manage the process. The ePortal allows students to take various career inventories and career pathway assessments, prepare for academic assessments, and learn about postsecondary options. Louisiana schools participating in the study include: Anacoco High School in Vernon Parish, Loreauville High School in Iberia Parish, and Parkway High School in Bossier Parish.

- **New Mexico:** Promising practices include the "Next Step Plan," which is the state version of an ILP that is completed in the 8th grade and updated annually. The final plan includes both a graduation plan and postsecondary plans. Evolving from the PK-20 education initiative, there is a large warehouse of data and evaluation methods to assess for quality of the plans. New Mexico schools participating in the study include: Bernalillo High School in Bernalillo, Eldorado High School in Albuquerque, and Las Cruces High School in Las Cruces.
- **South Carolina:** Promising practices identified include substantial financial support for program implementation and a state level leadership council that provides oversight and labor market feedback to educators and state policymakers. The state legislature has appropriated funds to hire and train a large number of career specialists, who are to assist South Carolina guidance counselors in working with students to create the state mandated Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). The state requires that students create an IGP every year starting in the 8th grade. Each student has one-on-one interaction with a guidance counselor or career specialist to develop their plan. By the 10th grade, students select a concentration of study that is focused on a career cluster curriculum available at his or her high school. South Carolina mandates the use of KUDER, an online student portfolio system to manage the program. South Carolina schools participating in the study include: Fort Dorchester High School in North Charleston, Gilbert High School in Gilbert, Goose Creek High School in Goose Creek, and Orangeburg Wilkinson High School in Orangeburg.
- **Washington:** Promising practices identified include a two-step planning system that includes a robust curriculum, strong state level support (both financially and in professional development), and a strong connection to career pathways. Washington has also developed partnerships with state universities to evaluate the program. Each Washington student is required to complete a "High School and Beyond Plan." This plan was based on the idea that all students should benefit from the type of planning found in an individualized education plan. The plan is based on a six-year curriculum program that starts in 6th grade and progresses through high school—educating students about career clusters, financial management and postsecondary education options. Washington schools participating in the study include: Chelan High School in Chelan, Grandview High School in

Grandview, Mt. Spokane High School in Mead, Options High School in Bellingham, and Timberline High School in Lacey.

The four-year longitudinal study is supported under a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). For the last seven years, IEL has been the home of an ODEP technical assistance center, the National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth. IEL's mission is to increase the capacity of individuals and organizations to work together across boundaries, leading the way to improved results in the learning and development of *all* youth—pre-K through post-secondary. IEL pursues its mission through inquiry and action in three areas: 1) Developing and Supporting Leadership; 2) Connecting Schools, Families, and Communities; 3) Resolving Policy/Practice Barriers. IEL is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization established in Washington, DC, in 1964, with affiliated programs in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Please visit the Web site at www.iel.org to learn more about IEL and its current work.

For more information about this study, contact Curtis Richards at the Institute for Educational Leadership at 202.822.8405 x163 or richardsc@iel.org and visit www.ncwd-youth.info.

###