



Personal Learning Plans (PLP)

Description of Request:

Off and on for the past few years Vermont DOE staff and some State Board members have talked about implementing student Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) in the State's schools. Some people have questions about their effectiveness and there are a variety of opinions about what a Personal Learning Plan really is – what does it look like? How does it get developed and implemented, etc. Before going further with the discussion, key staff would like to know “what is known” about PLPs and their effectiveness. Interestingly, in the capital city of Montpelier, the school district has used them for several years and often gets national press about their efforts and results.

Policy Implications – Depending on the results of the RDR, department staff may pursue the topic further, which could result in statewide policy regarding PLPs for all Vermont students.

Research Questions:

1. Student Personal Learning Plans (PLP) – Is there research on the effectiveness of PLPs on overall student performance, including academic achievement, increased graduation rate, lowered drop-out rate, and reduced behavioral and disciplinary problems?
2. Are there processes and components of PLPs that yield better results than others?
3. What is known concerning how best to implement PLPs at the elementary and at the secondary level?

Key words and search strings used in the search:

- PLPs
- Personalized learning plans
- Personal learning plan
- Effectiveness of PLPs
- Personalized learning environment
- Individualized instruction
- Individual education
- One-on-one instruction
- Personal learning environment
- Community-based learning
- Personalized learning at the high school

Search databases and websites represented below:

- What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
- The Campbell Collaboration <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/>
- The National High School Center <http://www.betterhighschools.org/>
- Center on Innovation & Improvement <http://www.centerii.org/>
- National Dropout Prevention Center/Network www.dropoutprevention.org/ndpcdefault.htm
- ERIC Digest <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
- Google and Google Scholar www.google.com

Report:

Attached is a list of articles, research studies, and books related to the Vermont's research questions about Personal Learning Plans (PLPs). Personalized learning plans are for all students and incorporate their strengths, weaknesses, and personal aspirations in making their schooling experience more relevant to their lives and ultimately more academically successful. We have also included references related to community-based learning and personalized plans for at risk groups. Note that little rigorous research was found on the effectiveness of personalized learning or PLPs as requested in Question 1.

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REL Northeast and Islands

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Question 3: Overview and Components

Association of Personalized Learning Schools and Services

http://www.theaplus.org/personalized_learning.html

This site gives an overview of what personalized learning is, why they think it is vital for public education system, how it differs from other educational models, what programs use its approach, and its origin. Scroll down for: “The key components that, when utilized together, distinguish the Personalized Learning approach as a unique educational model within the California public school system are as follows:...”

Questions 2 and 3: Research brief with many online resources and references

Personalized Learning at the High School (The Principals' Partnership)

www.principalspartnership.com/personalizedlearning.pdf

Two main questions are addressed in this research brief:

- How can principals and teachers launch a school-wide effort to create a personalized learning environment at the high school level?
- How do Personalized Learning Plans (PLP) aid in creating a more student-centered learning environment?

Scroll down for: “Keefe and Jenkins posit six basic elements as constituting the culture and context of personalized instruction” for the list of elements. Links to many online resources and references responding to the two main questions are also provided.

Questions 1: Research Brief (Dissertation)

Goal-oriented personal learning plans and their effect on student aspirations regarding post-secondary education by Welsh, Shannon L., D.Ed., Boston College, 2005, 133 pages; AAT 3173684
“A small suburban high school implemented personal learning plans through an advocacy program with the belief that, as a result, students would become empowered about planning for their lives after high school and raise their aspirations regarding post-secondary education.

This mixed-methodology research study used three methods of data collection to analyze the effectiveness of this initiative. These included observation of student advocacy groups, an aspirations survey, and review of student developed personal learning plans. Triangulation of these three data sources enabled the researcher to investigate the relationship between student aspirations and planning for life after high school as well as the extent of change in aspirations as a result of that planning.

The data from all three sources support a correlation between the implementation of personal learning plans in advocacy group and positive changes in student aspirations. All data sources show an increase in student aspirations as a result of planning for life after college.”

Questions 1, 2 and 3: Research brief

Changing Systems to Personalize Learning: Introduction to the Personalization Workshops by John Clarke (2003)

www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/changing_systems/introduction/introduction.pdf

This paper, written for the previous Regional Educational Laboratory contract, begins with a vignette of a student going through a school day without interacting with teachers or students and, despite efforts at engaging learners, without receiving personalized instruction. The paper goes on to include the following and more:

- A section on the developmental needs of young adults (p 5);
- A graphical analysis of Interactions in Personalized Learning (p 11) that identifies and then describes six school practices that evoke or respond to six developmental needs of students.;
- A discussion of “What is a personalized high school?” (p 19);
- and how it affects student achievement (p 23: “Furthermore, schools adopting three or more of the following “restructuring” practices scored higher than more conventional schools”);
- A section on “Why change the whole system?” (p25, with outcomes from one study of systemic change: “A recent study by Linda Darling Hammond, Jacqueline Ancess, and Susanna Ort (2002) testifies both to the difficulty of personalizing high school systems and to the promise of systemic change for improved learning outcomes.”);
- Criteria for aligning high school systems to personalized learning (p 37); and
- Examples of schools personalizing learning in the Appendix, with contact information.

Questions 1, 3: Research Brief

Improving Learning in Year 9: Making Use of Personal Learning Plans By Kate Bullock and Felicity Wikeley (1999)

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=3&sid=7c669a72-05b6-4d33-9ff4-5063bd5047a0%40sessionmgr9>

SUMMARY: This paper takes an evaluative look at an action-planning initiative which aimed to improve pupils’ learning in Year 9. The cornerstone of the process was a one-to-one discussion between pupils and tutors, which focused on their short- and long-term goals and identified targets for improvement. After the dialogue, a personal learning plan was written by the pupil. This was used to monitor development and to inform activities related to Records of Achievement in Year 10.

Findings suggested that, overall, this age group benefited from action-planning processes. Pupils gained through greater understanding of their own abilities and improved communication and planning skills. However, links between strategies for lifelong learning and the activities in Year 9 had not been made. There were different effects of the initiative for males and females.

METHODOLOGY: The evaluation approach, therefore, involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods which not only measured changes in pupils’ attitudes to constructs derived from the aims of the PLP process, but also informed tutors, coordinators and the PLP development team of ongoing, noteworthy issues. Data were collected by a scrutiny of PLP documents, focused group meetings, semi-structured interviews with all the PLP coordinators, and a semantic differential questionnaire delivered twice to the same sample of pupils, at the beginning and at the end of the PLP process in Year 9. ERIC #: EJ623976, Educational Studies, v25 n1, p19-33, Mar 1999

Examples - Reports

Questions 1 – 3

Personalized Learning in Detracked Classrooms by Delia T. Garrity and Carol Corbett Burris
(September, 2007)

<http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=9329&snItemNumber=950>

“Does personalized schooling require individualized curricula? Is it possible to provide a personalized learning environment even while holding high learning expectations for all students?”

This article featured in *The School Administrator* describes the early detracking efforts of the Rockville Centre School on Long Island and the increases in student achievement that resulted from that reform. The school moved from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction in which personalized learning experiences were essential when teaching heterogeneously grouped classes. The article also discusses Personalized Training for the teachers to prepare them for the new school system.

Questions 2 and 3

Two Schools: Two Approaches to Personalized Learning By John M. Jenkins and James W. Keefe

<http://www.smallschoolsworkshop.org/twoschoolsjmjenkins.html>

The authors describe two schools, one in Canada and one in the United States, that perhaps best exemplify current initiatives to personalize schooling and instruction. They are personalizing instruction in different ways; they are challenging students to accept responsibility for their own learning and to experience formal education differently. Each school is a laboratory for personalization.

Questions 2 and 3: Example and history of Montpelier’s CBL to PLP system

Growing Toward Systemic Change: Developing Personal Learning Plans at Montpelier High School (2000)

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=PLP&searchtype=basic&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=kw&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900019b800bea20&accno=ED445200&nfls=false

Research traced the flow of such events as faculty development, school district initiatives, state and federal policies, student experience, and systems changes in Montpelier (Vermont) High School over six years to identify patterns of activities that supported growing reform. To understand how community-based learning (CBL) for a few students laid the groundwork for what was to become personalized learning plans (PLPs) for all, students, teachers, and administrators were interviewed. The CBL effort began as faculty sought information on alternative programs to engage reluctant students and became a community vision that was validated by district policy in a strategic plan. The administration instituted a long-block schedule, and a mentoring program and CBL internship were established. CBL emerged in the form of a system-wide program for everyone. As paths of the activities converged, the CBL program expanded to include PLP. What makes the PLP program distinctive is its placement of the student's aspirations at the center of a quest: what is he or she doing here, and what is he or she learning and preparing himself or herself to do? The PLP conversation is sustained over the course of four years and dips into all aspects of the student's life. The four phases of

the innovation at Montpelier were team and individual capacity building; shaping community vision; structural alignment and adaptation; and systemic resonance.

Examples – Schools (Contacts for Question 3)

Gering Public Schools, Gering, NE

<http://geringschools.net/vnews/display.v/ART/2008/04/10/480fa115af039>

“Each eighth grade student, along with their parent, must develop a personal learning plan that matches their career options. The personal learning plan is reviewed at the completion of each high school semester to make sure our students are on track. If for some reason they decide to change their career choice, adjustments may be required in the learning plan. This learning plan will serve as a planning tool for the student and a design tool for the school to be more creative with the courses we offer to meet the needs of our students.”

Peacham Elementary School, Peacham, VT

<http://www.peachamschool.org/personallearning.htm>

“At the beginning of the school year, students set goals related to personal interests. Classroom teachers, the extension teacher, parents and community members together help students meet their individual goals. Part of each plan includes determining a way for each student to share his/her project either within the classroom, or in the wider school community.”

Tools (Question 3):

Personal Learning Profile (PLP)

Colorado Department of Education

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/plpAll_PLP_LessonPlans.pdf

“The Personal Learning Profile project, supported by the Exceptional Student Services Unit at the Colorado Department of Education, was initiated to develop materials that would support students in their efforts to develop the skills and dispositions associated to self-determination. These skills include expanding students’ abilities to understand their learning strengths and needs, name their preferences, generate long and short term goals, and identify resources that they can use to meet their goals. Through the project, a pretest, 11 lesson plans and a template for building an individual student personal learning profile were developed and field tested. These materials can be used independently, jointly or in conjunction with other curricula. While specific lessons target issues for students with disabilities, these materials can be adapted easily to support all students.”

Personalizing Education for Children: A Handbook for Early Childhood Education K-4 (1982)

Georgia State Department of Education

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=Personalizing+Education+for+Children%3A+A+Handbook+for+Early+Childhood+Education+K-4+&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=ti&_pageLabel=ERICSearchResult&newSearch=true&rnd=1212772304478&searchtype=basic

Designed to help local school systems in planning a curriculum based on growth and development occurring in children throughout the years from kindergarten through fourth grade, this guide provides teachers with information and suggestions for incorporating an integrated, personalized curriculum into existing instructional programs.

- Chapter I reviews specific growth characteristics of children in three domains of development (psychomotor, affective, and cognitive) and suggests specific activities for promoting the child's growth in these areas.
- To further personalize the educational program, chapter II outlines a variety of alternatives for setting up schedules and organizing classroom activities.
- In chapters III, IV, and V, ideas are presented for integrating subject area objectives and objectives from the psychomotor and affective domains with objectives related to the development of thinking abilities.
- Chapters VI and VII present additional suggestions for personalizing instruction by describing practical means of involving parents in the educational process and by suggesting a variety of alternatives for assisting teachers in their professional growth.

A list of resources teachers can use for promoting personalized instruction, a list of objectives for each of the three domains, and sample units of activities are included in the appendices.

Personalization and Social Supports: Site Visit Protocol and Discussion Guide (2003, National High School Alliance Partners)

http://www.hsalliance.org/call_action/Protocols/ProtocolPersonalization.pdf

The protocol is designed to be a tool and guide to facilitating a school/program site visit to observe school:

- I. Climate (“Personalized programs/schools provide a safe, welcoming environment for all students characterized by clear and shared expectations, mutual respect, a sense of fairness, and visible celebration of students’ accomplishments”;
- II. Organization (“Personalized programs/schools are explicitly organized to encourage development of supportive, informed relationships between adults and students that serve students’ social and academic advancement. They also consciously foster active participation and strong personal investment in the operation and continuous improvement of the program/school.”
- III. Youth/Adult Relationships (“Personalized programs/schools operate from the assumption that positive and supportive relationships are highly motivating for youth and necessary features of a successful learning environment...”)
- IV. Curriculum and Pedagogy (“Personalized programs/schools organize and deliver instruction in ways that engage students by building on their strengths and interests, applying active instructional practices, and making learning relevant to students’ lives and futures...”
- V. Community Partnerships and Connections (“Personalized programs/schools acknowledge that the communities in which they reside are strong influences and important resources for education and youth development.”)