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Personalized Learning Planning Process: Framework for Adults

OVERVIEW

Creating Personalized Learning Plans provides students the opportunity to reflect upon their learning and shape their future, and enables the adults in their lives to better understand each student as a unique individual. However, the actual documentation of the PLP—in any selected format—is only as good as the process that supports its development. This framework outlines a process much more so than a product, even though a clear and thoughtful product is key to ultimate success.

The PLP should be seen as a “living” document that can adapt as students develop over time and as their needs and ideas change. The honesty and commitment to this process by students and stakeholders, and the integration of the PLP into the learning environment by teachers and advisors, will determine the ultimate value of the Personalized Learning Plan process.

CREATE A STUDENT PROFILE

The first step in developing a Personalized Learning Plan is for each student to build a profile. Each school should develop a process that includes engaging ways for students to think about themselves as individuals. Such questions could include the following:

- Who am I? What defines me as a person and member of my community?
- What are my values? What do I value?
- What and/or who inspires or influences me?
- How do I learn? How do I learn best to meet my learning goals?
- What are my skills and interests? What do I like to do and what do I do well?
- What is my future? What do I want to do with my life after high school?
- Where do I see myself in the short term (6 months – 2 years) as well as the long term (5 – 10 years)?
- What challenges or barriers will I need to overcome?

Schools may choose to give students the opportunity to complete a series of activities or experiences that will help them learn more about how to use their strengths and interests when considering their future. Schools may choose to use one or more of the following tools so students can develop a profile of themselves as a learner and individual: a learning style inventory, a Myers-Briggs Inventory, career assessments, or interest

surveys.

These questions, activities and tools should help students build a list of strengths and challenges that will help in the development of short- and long-term goals for students' Personalized Learning Plans.

IDENTIFY GOALS

Considering their interests, values, strengths and skills, each student will then identify personal and college and career goals. A goal is most helpful to students if it is something that is important to them (e.g., of personal interest or a graduation requirement), specific, achievable, and measurable. Questions that might help students develop their goals include:

- What are my strengths and abilities?
- What are the common learning expectations of my school?
- What do I want to accomplish? What are my short-term and long-term goals? (e.g., What do I want to accomplish this year? In school? After I graduate?)
- Does this goal challenge me? How does it challenge me?
- Am I willing and able to work toward this goal? Am I committed to it?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?
- What is my timeframe for accomplishing this goal?

Identifying these goals should occur with the support of a teacher, advisor or counselor and the student's family. The level of support provided should be developmentally appropriate to match the degree of autonomy and responsibility a student can demonstrate. Once students have set their goals they can devise a plan to attain them.

DRAFT ACTION STEPS

The Personalized Learning Plan is a guide to help students meet their short-term and long-term goals toward graduation and post-secondary success. It is important that they are engaged in the process and take primary responsibility for monitoring their progress toward meeting those goals.

Considering the student's goals and the common learning expectations set forth by your school, students will want to map out their personal learning plan identifying how they will meet both sets of expectations.

A few questions for students to consider in this step include:

- Where do I have choice in course selection?
- How might various activities help me meet both my goals and common learning expectations at the same time?
- Have I considered flexible pathways – such as expanded learning opportunities, work-based learning, Dual Enrollment, Early College, Career Technical Education, etc. – to meet my personal and learning goals?
- How might experiences outside of my school help me meet common learning expectations and/or my goals?
- Does this plan describe steps/activities that will help me meet my short and long-term goals?
- How will I know if I have been successful at following my plan?
- When will I have the opportunity to adjust my plan if things change?
- Who or what might I need support from to develop my plan or meet my goals?

Once students have developed a Personalized Learning Plan, it will be important they revisit this plan regularly to be sure they are on track, and as necessary, make adjustments as plans or interests change.

Act 77 requires districts to provide opportunities for secondary students to pursue flexible pathways to graduation, and specifies that any flexible pathway opportunities a student participates in must be documented in their PLP. It is of critical importance that students are aware of the flexible pathway opportunities available to them when they are considering how they might meet their learning goals. Some flexible pathways may require certain aptitudes, specific coursework or demonstration of readiness to participate. By introducing students to these educational opportunities early in the PLP development process (e.g., 7th grade or earlier) they can identify what they might need to know and/or do to access a flexible pathway and incorporate those action steps into their plan.

WORK TOWARD GOALS

Once students have developed their Personalized Learning Plan, students can begin working to achieve their goals. Students and vested adults should review their plans regularly to evaluate progress towards their goals. Communication between students and their advisors, teachers and parents/guardians will be crucial to meeting and, when necessary, revising their goals.

You may want to share the following tips for success with students:

- Your plan is a road map to successfully meeting your goals. Be sure to follow your plan and take the action steps necessary to complete your goals! This might include adapting or changing them. Pay attention to deadlines and make sure you are meeting them.

- In the event of challenges or barriers to your success, be sure to talk with your parents/guardians, teachers or school advisor to access resources that may help resolve them, allowing you to continue moving forward.

ASSESS PROGRESS

As students review their goals on a regular basis, adults may need to support them to figure out which goals to extend, revise, or remove as well as which goals they have successfully met.

This step requires students to review their progress and provide evidence of their accomplishments. It is important that a PLP is a “living document” that students are frequently reflecting on and adding evidence to.

There are any number of ways that students can assess progress. Student self-evaluations or 360 evaluations with family members, school staff, peers and/or members of the community (such as employers); student discussions; video or digital journals or blogs; performance assessments; and many other tools and strategies can be integrated into this process.

Questions students might consider when assessing progress include:

- Which goals have I met?
- How do I know that I am making progress toward my goal or have accomplished my goal? Why or how did I accomplish this goal?
- Did I need support in accomplishing my goal?
- What strengths am I currently using and/or building?
- What recent achievements have I made?
- Where in my learning plan am I feeling challenged?
- How do I know that I am challenged?
- What kinds of information do I need to show that I have made progress?
- How will I display or share this information with others?

REFLECT ON EXPERIENCES

The nature of goals, short-term or long-term, is that they require assessment and reflection at various points along the way. The process of setting, assessing, and reflecting on goals is a continuous cycle. Reflection helps students consider their role in the learning process and guides them in the next steps of their personalized learning planning process.

Students should have an opportunity to review their progress and reflect on the overall experience, both as a formative and summative process. Teachers, advisors, or counselors may help them in this process through one-to-one conferences or small group discussions, by providing prompts or through interviewing techniques, or by developing reflective exercises/activities. A student's family or peers can also support their reflection and provide feedback, which may help the student in the revision of their Personalized Learning Plan.

It is important that students reflect and gain feedback at least once a year in a formal way. Schools may also create opportunities where students stop and reflect on the experience and their progress at any time throughout the year – with or without the support of their team. Integration into their daily experience, both in and outside of the classroom, can engender a sense of ownership over their own learning. Reflections can come in various forms and may include a journal entry, a dialogue, a presentation, a video, or a format that the student and school staff find suitable.

Questions students may want to consider as they prepare their reflections include:

- What did I learn from the assessment portion of the personalized learning planning process?
- What have I learned about myself thus far?
- What went well? How do I know?
- What do I wish had gone differently?
- What did I have control over?
- What do I better understand about my own learning and goal-setting?
- How was I able to make gains in learning? How can I apply these strategies to areas where I might need more work?
- Was there any unexpected learning? What was it?
- How does what I have learned connect to my future short-term and long-term goals?
- How could I use this experience to revise and/or make new goals for my plan?

The reflective process and the feedback students receive will help them in revising their Personalized Learning Plan to be sure it reflects who they are and what they want to achieve.

REVISE

In this step of the cycle, students are expected to revise their plan based on the reflective process and changes in goals, interests, and circumstances. Reasons for goal revisions should be documented in the plan.

The revision process occurs between the student, their advisor, teacher or counselor, and a parent or guardian. This process must happen annually, although it can be helpful for students to review their plan with greater frequency – such as each marking period or after participating in a flexible pathway and/or completing major projects or units of study. Schools should establish a process where students can make changes in their plans outside of the official revision period.

At least annually, the revision process should be a joint effort between everyone who was originally involved in, or identified as a support or resource for, the development of the PLP. Changes in the plan should include documentation as to why they must be made and should outline changes in actions steps to achieve changed goals.

Questions for students to consider during the revision process include:

- In looking at my reflection, what has encouraged me to change or enhance my goal(s)?
- What level of effort did I make to meet my previous goals and actions?
- Were my goals realistic given my schedule, my interests, and/or my motivation and effort?
- How are my new goals more in line with my future plans?
- Do I need support or input from others in order to meet my new goals? How can I enlist others' support?
- How do my new short-term and long-term goals relate to each other?