



REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

College and Career Readiness, Educator Effectiveness
September 2018

Question:

What does research say about the implementation or impact of academic and career plans, particularly about counselor implementation of these plans?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about academic and career planning. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on academic and career planning tools. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed the implementation of academic and career planning and the effects of those tools on postsecondary and career readiness. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

Solberg, S., Martin, J., Larson, M., Nichols, K., Heidi, B., Lillis, J., & Costa, L. (2018). *Promoting quality Individualized Learning Plans throughout the lifespan: A revised and updated "ILP HOW TO GUIDE 2.0."* Washington, DC: The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) For Youth. Retrieved from <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Promoting-Quality-ILPs-Throughout-the-Lifespan-WEB.pdf>

From the NCWD website: "Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans throughout the Lifespan: A Revised and Updated 'ILP How to Guide 2.0' expands upon the guidance and resources in NCWD/Youth's earlier ILP How to Guide. ILP How to Guide 2.0 provides career development resources and examples of ILP implementation for an extended range of age groups and settings including elementary and secondary school, postsecondary education, workforce development programs and other non-school settings. It also offers strategies for building and supporting capacity at the local level to facilitate adoption of the ILP process and provides examples of how to ensure that ILPs are implemented with quality."

Solberg, V., Phelps, L., & Haakenson, K. (2012). The nature and use of individualized learning plans as a promising career intervention strategy. *Journal of Career Development, 39*(6), 500–514. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ984300>; full text available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c56c/bf0ad8b6f79dd4ae96fc41b3781683076eff.pdf>

From the abstract: "Individualized learning plans (ILPs) are being implemented in high schools throughout the United States as strategic planning tools that help students align course plans with career aspirations and often include the development of postsecondary plans. Initial indications are that ILPs may be an important method for helping students achieve both college and career readiness. Parents, teachers, and students indicate that ILPs result in students selecting more rigorous courses, better teacher-student relationships, and positive parent-school relations. This article describes the emergence and nature of ILPs, promising practice strategies as well as challenges associated with gaining whole school buy-in, and the potential for career and vocational research."

Tierney, W., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practice guide* (NCEE #2009-4066). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED506465>

From the introduction: "Access to higher education remains a challenge for many students who face academic and informational barriers to college entry. This guide targets high schools and school districts, and focuses on effective practices that prepare students academically for college, assist them in completing the steps to college entry, and improve their likelihood of enrolling in college. The guide contains specific steps on how to implement the recommendations that are targeted at school- and district-level administrators, teachers, counselors, and related education staff. The guide also indicates the level of research evidence demonstrating that each recommended practice is effective. This practice guide includes five recommendations for how high schools and school districts can improve access to higher education. The first two recommendations focus on preparing students academically for college by offering a college preparatory curriculum and assessing whether students are building the knowledge and skills needed for college. These two recommendations reflect the [What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide Panel's] belief that students are best served when schools develop a culture of achievement and a culture of evidence. The next recommendation describes how high schools can build and sustain

college aspirations by surrounding students with adults and peers who support these aspirations. Recommendations 4 and 5 explain how high schools can assist students in completing the critical steps to college entry, including college entrance exams and college and financial aid applications. Appended to this guide are: (1) Postscript from the Institute of Education Sciences; (2) About the authors; (3) Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest; and (4) Technical information on the studies.”

Trusty, J., Niles, S., & Carney, J. V. (2005). Education-career planning and middle school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 9*(2), 136–143. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ743318>

From the abstract: “In this article, the authors emphasize a comprehensive and developmental view of education career planning, with special emphasis on middle schools. Research findings that underscore the need for effective education-career planning are presented, followed by the variables and data that are salient for planning. The article includes a framework for education-career planning systems in middle schools.”

Visher, M. G., Mayer, A. K., Johns, M., Rudd, T., Levine, A., & Rauner, M. (2016). *Scaling academic planning in community college: A randomized controlled trial* (REL 2017–204). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Education Laboratory West. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED570335>

From the key findings: “Community college students often lack an academic plan to guide their choices of coursework to achieve their educational goals, in part because counseling departments typically lack the capacity to advise students at scale. This randomized controlled trial tests the impact of guaranteed access to one of two alternative counseling sessions (group workshops or one-on-one counseling), each of which was combined with targeted “nudging.” Outcome measures included scheduling and attending the counseling session, completing an academic plan, and re-enrolling in the following semester. Evidence suggests that both variations on the intervention increase academic plan completion rates by over 20 percentage points compared to a control group that did not receive guaranteed access to a counseling session or the automated nudges. Exploratory evidence suggests that when combined with nudging, the guarantee of workshop counseling is as effective as the guarantee of one-on-one counseling in causing students to schedule and attend academic planning appointments.”

Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult

Ask A REL Mid-Atlantic at Mathematica Policy Research. (2018). *What does the research say about effective ways for high schools to align curriculum to specific 21st century workforce needs?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel_44.asp

Ask A REL West at WestED. (2013). *Research on ninth grade advisory programs and curricula.* Retrieved from https://relwest.wested.org/system/documents/pdfs/183/original/REL_West_Website_Advisory_Program_07_2013.pdf?1400003056

Additional Organizations to Consult

College and Career Readiness and Success Center: <https://ccrscenter.org/>

From the website: “The College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) is dedicated to ensuring all students graduate high school ready for college and career success. The mission of the CCRS Center is to serve Regional Comprehensive Centers in building the capacity of states to effectively implement initiatives for college readiness and success. Through technical assistance delivery and supporting resources, the CCRS Center provides customized support that facilitates the continuous design, implementation, and improvement of college and career readiness priorities.”

College Board for Counselors – Counselor Resources: <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/guidance/counseling/counselor-resources>

From the website: “The College Board recognizes and appreciates the work that school counselors complete on a daily basis. We know your time is limited and is best spent with your students – not searching for the information you need. We are thrilled to be able to provide a one-stop page, filled with easy to use, timely resources to help counselors carry out the hard work being performed throughout the school year. Hopefully the wide range of resources available on this site will not only make counselors’ jobs more manageable or useful, but will also enhance their professional work to help students make the most of the opportunities they have earned through their hard work.”

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

From the website: “The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) assists state and local workforce development systems to better serve all youth, including youth with disability and other disconnected youth....NCWD/Youth knows that all youth, including youth with disability, require a set of skills in order to become employed, effectively change jobs, and plan and manage multiple careers throughout their lifetimes. These skills are developed through the three phase process of career development. The three phases of career development include:

- Phase 1: Self-Exploration Skills: Self-exploration is a crucial first step in the career development process because it allows youth to discover who they are and what they like to do.
- Phase 2: Career Exploration Skills: Developing career exploration skills consists of learning how to identify and analyze various career options in terms of what education, training, experience, and competencies are required for success.
- Phase 3: Career Planning and Management Skills: Career planning and management involves developing employability and decision-making skills and increasing the youth’s capacity to navigate within the world of work, not just in the short term but also throughout their lives.”

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- (“academic career plan*” OR “career plan*” OR “career academic plan*” OR ICAP OR “individual* career academic plan” OR “individualized learning plan”) AND (quality OR impact OR effective* OR eval* OR implement*)
- (“counselors” OR “plan”) AND (“college” OR “career”) AND (quality OR impact OR effective* OR eval* OR implement*)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover the most current information (i.e., within the last ten years), except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Search priorities of reference sources: Search priorities include IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on August 7, 2018. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by education stakeholders in the Appalachia region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia (REL AP) at SRI International. This Ask A REL response was developed by REL AP under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0004 from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, administered by SRI International. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.