

ACP Basics

Introduction

Currently, Wisconsin school districts implement career exploration and planning services for students by aligning their programming with the [Wisconsin Comprehensive School Counseling Model](#) (WCSCM) through nine Model Academic Standards in 3 domains: Academic, Personal/Social, and Career.

School districts are also required to comply with [Wisconsin Administrative Code PI26](#) regarding access to Education for Employment (E4E) programming. At this time most school districts also contract separately for their own individualized learning plan (ILP) software systems to supplement their career development and planning programs. In Wisconsin, legislative language uses the term Academic and Career Planning (ACP) to mean the same product as the ILP.

ACP, in essence, marries the requirements of E4E and meeting the WCSCM standards with a focus on personalization of learning, opportunities, and experiences. ACP also seeks to link some of the requirements for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Post-Secondary Transition Plan (PTP) for special populations as defined under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), as well as [Career Technical Education Programs of Study](#) mandated by federal Carl Perkins funding.

Background

In 2012, the Wisconsin interim special legislative committee on Improving Educational Opportunities in High School met to: “evaluate current options available to high school students for both career and technical education and post-secondary enrollment...and determine how to promote coordination between high schools, technical colleges, universities, and employers to ensure that high school students have the skills necessary to meet the workforce needs of employers in this state.” The committee [recommended an act be created](#) to support Academic and Career Planning.

Concurrently, a Council on College and Workforce Readiness was tasked with “recommending policies and programs to improve student readiness for college or career in the State of Wisconsin.” A Council subcommittee expressed interest in advancing Academic and Career Planning (ACP) for all Wisconsin students and developed specific recommendations for the full Council’s consideration.

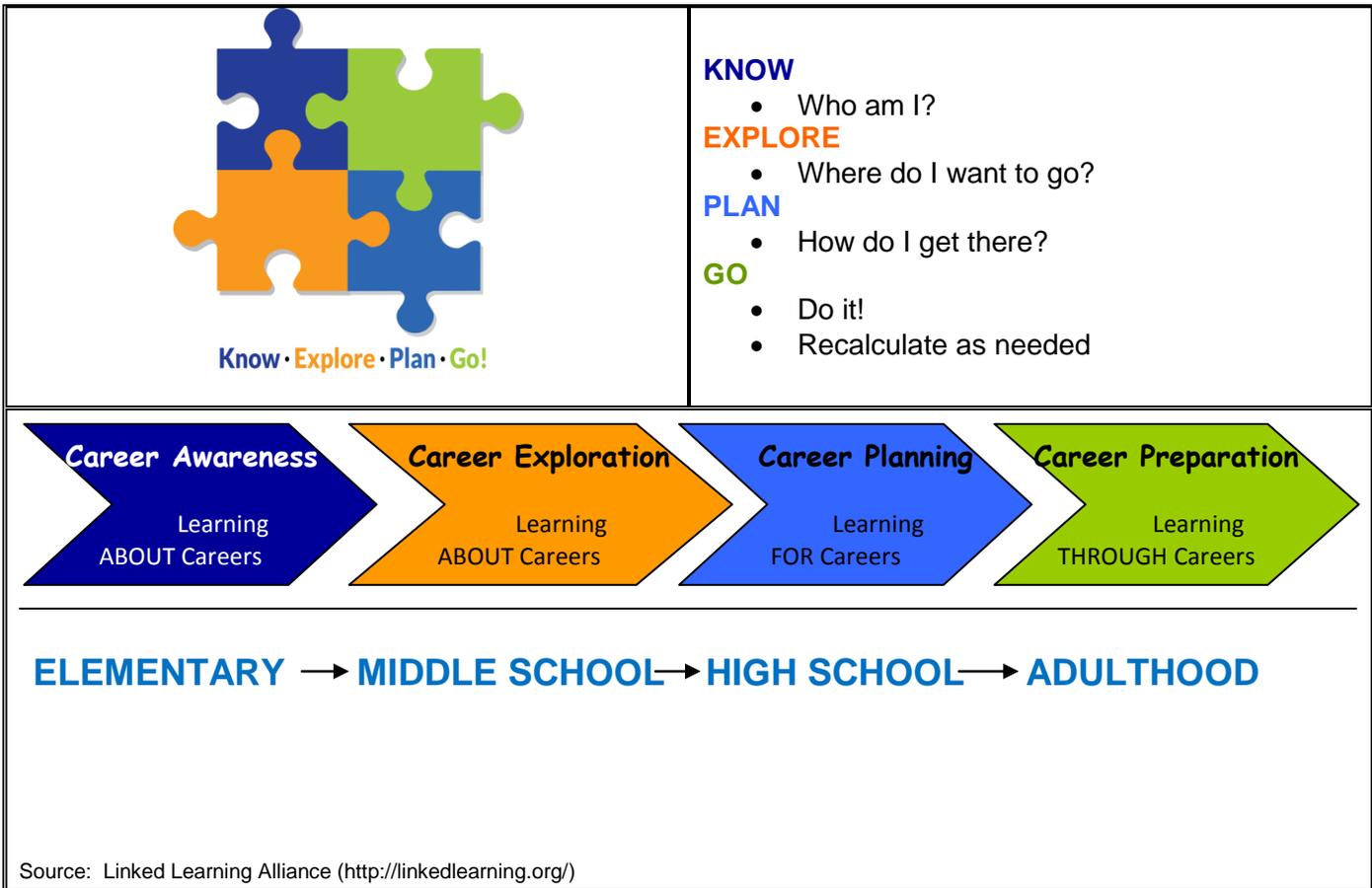
In early 2013, DPI identified and convened a Task Force consisting of sample representation from state agencies and schools to provide direction and input on state priorities for development and implementation of an ACP process.

On June 30, 2013, through [Act 20](#), Wisconsin Statute [115.28\(59\)](#) was allocated \$1.1 million dollars of General Purpose Revenue (GPR) for 2014-15 in a new continuing appropriation by the legislature...

“for implementing academic and career planning statewide. Require DPI to ensure that, beginning in 2017-18, every school board is providing academic and career planning services to pupils enrolled in grades 6 to 12 in the school district. Require DPI to procure, install, and maintain information technology, including computer software, to be used statewide by school districts to provide academic and career planning services to pupils in grades 6 to 12. Require DPI to provide guidance, training, and technical assistance to school districts and school district staff, including teachers and counselors, on how to implement model academic and career plans, including training and technical assistance that is necessary to implement the information technology provided for this purpose. Require DPI promulgate rules to implement these provisions. [Act 20 Sections: 230 and 1737]”

Since July 2013, an internal DPI cross-departmental work group has met regularly to define and work on tasks necessary to implement the seven state priorities identified by the Task Force.

Model



Mission

Empowering ALL students to travel the road TO adulthood THROUGH education and training to careers!

Vision

Reimagining K12 education to equip students

- With meaningful and supportive adult relationships
- And the ability to adapt to opportunities and challenges
- On their personalized journeys to successful lives.

ACP – STAY CONNECTED!



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Understanding ACP

Is NOT...	Is...
A plan developed by adults for students	A process & product that students direct through self-exploration, career exploration, and planning supported by meaningful interactions with school staff, family members, and community mentoring.
Limited to the courses a student will take in high school	A process & product that involves an active, fluid, sequence of courses, certifications, activities, experiences, work-based learning opportunities, & jobs in and out of school that contribute to a student attaining personal, academic, and career goals.
A declaration of career intent	A process & product that recognizes that a student's interests and strengths vary and change over time requiring frequent re-evaluation and explorative opportunities.
Based on the results of a single career interest test	A process & product that utilizes a variety of surveys, tools, and activities to determine individual interests and strengths.
A means of tracking students toward a single postsecondary option	A process & product that recognizes the variety of routes to and through education and training appropriately individualized for each student's goals while maximizing financial investment.
A recruitment tool for businesses	A process & product that recognizes BOTH individual interests & strengths AND links them to a variety of potential career opportunities in the community, region, and state.
Limited to non-university bound students	A process & product that recognizes the variety of routes to and through education and training appropriately individualized for each student's goals while maximizing financial investment.
Limited to career & technical education (CTE) courses	A process & product that provides a combination of all academic, technical, and liberal arts course offerings to help students achieve their goals.
Steering students from arts, music, languages, and other liberal arts learning	A process & product that provides for students to incorporate all types of learning individualized to that student's interests, strengths, and personal goals.
A replacement for the Special Education IEP or PTP	A process & product accessible to and supportive of ALL students which will show connections to various other services and supports.

Understanding ACP continued...

Is NOT...	Is...
Limited to a college plan reviewed annually	A dynamic process & product built on student visions and goals, regularly reviewed and adapted, documenting student activities, accomplishments, and reflection to reveal multiple routes to success after high school.
Limited to creating standardized e-portfolios or resumes	A customizable process & product leading to unique personalized plans that do document student experiences and accomplishments, but which also facilitate reflection, visioning, goal setting, and goal attainment.
The responsibility of counselors working alone with students	A process & product engaging all staff members of a school in collaborative mentoring, support, and instruction that ensures each student acquires the skills, insights, and confidence to independently develop and implement a plan for attaining personal goals.
A plan developed without parents	A process & product through which students engage with their parents and other appropriate adults to create a vision for the future, set goals along the way toward that vision, and develop a plan for life-long learning and goal achievement with the parents' guidance and support.
Another mandate schools have to accomplish	<i>An opportunity to thoughtfully partner and engage staff, students, parents and community into the district's strategic and improvement plans!</i>

ACP Talking Points

- ACP is based on the **STUDENT'S** interests, abilities, values, and goals.
- ACP provides students and parents with the information needed to make **INFORMED CHOICES** for education, training, and careers while maximizing financial investment.
- ACP is a **CULTURE SHIFT**; the purpose of education is not just to get everyone into college; but, rather to allow students and their families to choose the best opportunities available to achieve personal education and career goals.
- ACP **HONORS ALL POST-SECONDARY ROUTES** to achieve goals, including military, apprenticeship, certification, technical college, and university recognizing that people often move in and out of different routes throughout their lives as needed.
- Schools Districts are **ALREADY DOING SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ACP** such as conferencing, career exploration, career interest inventories, intentional course sequencing, etc. The goal will be to integrate these services into a seamless system of ACP service delivery.
- ACP requires **EVERYONE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS** in the process, including academic teachers, administrators, community members and parents.
- ACP **DOES NOT REPLACE THE IEP OR PTP**. ACP can be used to support and supplement the IEP and PTP.

Standard Terms and Definitions*

- 1. Academic & Career Planning (ACP) (i.e., the ACP Process).** The ACP process encompasses the activities, instruction, resources, experiences, and opportunities provided by a school district to assist a pupil with developing and implementing an academic and career plan. Supports from school counselors, teachers, and parents facilitate every student to develop self-reflection, career exploration, career development, and career planning and management skills in order to inform the student's decisions about their plans, courses, and activities throughout high school in preparation for life after high school.
- 2. Academic & Career Plans (i.e., The ACP Plan/Portfolio).** The ACP plan or portfolio is a comprehensive plan developed and maintained by a student that includes the student's academic, career, personal, and social goals and the means by which the pupil will achieve those goals both before and after high school graduation
- 3. Academic & Career Planning Software.** ACP computer software programs can be utilized to provide academic and career planning services, and allow students to download their academic and career plan. The software effectively organizes, stores, and manages the ever expanding and evolving quantity of student exploration and planning information while providing the ability to integrate student information systems with ACP engagement to key academic outcomes.
- 4. Career & Technical Education (CTE).** An educational model of integrated academic and technical standards that aligns secondary and post-secondary education to labor market demand, and provides students with technical, academic, and employability knowledge and skills they need for success in careers.
- 5. Career Awareness.** Career development begins with an individual's earliest awareness of the ways in which people make a living. For example when a child notices that some people are doctors, others are firefighters and some are carpenters. Career awareness at the elementary grade levels includes developing an understanding of the following:
 1. Why people work.
 2. The kinds of conditions under which people work.
 3. The levels of training and education needed for work.
 4. Common expectations for employees in the workplace.
 5. How expectations at school are related to expectations in the world of work.
- 6. Career Clusters.** Career Clusters are broad occupational groupings based on a set of common academic and technical knowledge and skills required for a broad group of careers. Wisconsin has adopted the National 16 Career Clusters that also serve as a tool for organizing CTE curriculum and instruction. Career clusters provide opportunities for all students regardless of their career goals and interests.
- 7. Career Development.** The ongoing acquisition or refinement of skills and knowledge, including education, skill practice, job mastery, and professional development, coupled with career planning activities.
- 8. Career Exploration.** The second step in Career Development is Career Exploration, the process by which a student examines different careers and career pathways – as fit their interests, skills, and abilities – and the education and training needed to attain them. Activities that help students learn how to identify career and life goals consistent with their interests, skills and values. Career exploration involves opportunities to learn about the skills and qualities required to be successful in various careers and the secondary and post-secondary education and training necessary to pursue each career. As a result of the career exploration phase, students should develop the skills to be able to: (a) identify how their interests, values, and skills relate to careers of interest; (b) describe the skills and activities associated with those careers; and, (c) identify the postsecondary training, two year, four-year, or graduate degree programs needed to successfully pursue those careers.

Career exploration at the middle school grade levels includes developing an understanding of the continuum of careers across work environments, duties, and responsibilities and how a pupil's personal interests and skills relate to those careers. Career exploration may also include work-based learning experiences and career research identifying personal preferences in relation to occupations and careers pupils may pursue.

- 9. Career Pathways.** There are actually two distinct sets of definitions that come up for Career Pathways. All educators should be aware of both depending on the context.
- a. In K16 coursework,** Career Pathways means a sub-grouping of the Career Clusters used as an organizing tool for curriculum design and instruction. Similar to career clusters, career pathways are grouped based on their requirements for a set of core and similar academic and technical knowledge and skills for career success. Each pathway highlights a specific part of each cluster. An easy example of this can be seen in the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources cluster where seven different pathways, from Animal to Plant to Natural Resource Systems, highlight the variety of interests in that specific career cluster.
 - b. In Higher Education, Workforce Development, and Social Services,** Career Pathways means a comprehensive 'cradle to grave' approach that aligns education, training, and workforce systems to meet Wisconsin's economic needs through connected strategies utilizing supportive services that enable individuals to secure industry relevant certification and employment while allowing for further opportunity to advance to higher levels of education and employment.
- 10. Career Planning & Management.** The third main step in Career Development is Career Planning and Management which is focused primarily on capacity building activities related to job-seeking and identifying learning opportunities that continue to support student success following high school graduation. Career Planning and Management supports students by helping them: (a) acquire the job search skills needed to secure employment; (b) think about how they will continue to develop career readiness skills (both employability and career specific skills); and, (c) develop the traits, work habits, and behaviors associated with a lifelong commitment to seeking new opportunities for gaining skills and experiences that maximize their employability.

Career planning and preparation at the high school grade levels includes the following:

1. Conducting career research to identify personal preferences in relation to specific occupations.
2. School-supervised, work-based learning experiences.
3. Instruction in career decision making.
4. Instruction that provides for the practical application of academic skills, applied technologies, economics, including entrepreneurship education and personal financial literacy.
5. Pupil access to career and technical education programs.
6. Pupil access to accurate national, regional, and state labor market information, including labor market supply and demand.
7. Instruction and experience in developing and refining the skills and behaviors needed by pupils to obtain and retain employment.

- 11. Career Ready.** A student that can effectively navigate pathways that connect education and employment to achieve a fulfilling, financially-secure and successful career. Career readiness has no defined endpoint. To be career ready in a dynamic global economy requires adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning, along with mastery of key knowledge, skills and dispositions that vary from one career to another and change over time as a person progresses along a developmental continuum (Career Readiness Partner Council).

12. Career Readiness Skills. Career, employability, and work-readiness skills refer to the large range of soft skills that employers have identified as critical to being successful in finding and maintaining a job. These skills include general personal qualities, personal habits, good work ethic, effective communication, punctuality, self-discipline, problem solving, organizational skills, teamwork, a willingness to accept supervision, and more.

- a. **Communications.** The giving and receiving of information, conveying ideas and opinions, and interacting with those around us. Communication can be verbal (sounds, language, and tone of voice); aural (listening and hearing); non-verbal (facial expressions, body language); written (letters, emails, blogs, text messages, reports), and visual (signs, symbols, and pictures). Communication involves both providing information *to* others and receiving and interpreting information *from* others.
- b. **Enthusiasm & Attitude.** A job candidate who has a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle a new job usually will have an important advantage over one who is negative or disinterested. Genuine enthusiasm and a positive attitude also are easier for a person to have, sustain, and grow if they are doing work that they truly enjoy, which is why this category is appropriate to consider as part of students' career readiness skills.
- c. **Teamwork.** Teamwork involves building relationships and working with others through such means as contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and efforts; communicating and working cooperatively with others; having a sense of personal responsibility and a respect for different opinions, ideas, and preferences; and practicing the ability to participate in and support team-based decision-making.
- d. **Networking.** Central to finding a job – from a student's summer job, to their first entry-level full-time work, and throughout their career advancement. When it comes to finding a job – it's not what you know, so much as who you know – that is often the key to success. Networking for the purpose of finding a job or advancing a career involves talking with friends, family members and acquaintances about one's goals, interests, and dreams.
- e. **Problem Solving & Critical Thinking.** Problem solving and critical thinking involve the ability to use formal education and training, past experience, data, and other information to assess and resolve challenges and problems, especially those that arise in the workplace. Employers look for employees who can work through problems on their own, or as part of a team; employees who can think critically and creatively, sharing thoughts, opinions, and using good judgment to make ethical decisions.
- f. **Professionalism.** Professionalism isn't one thing, but a combination of qualities, including arriving on time for work and managing time effectively, as well as looking clean and neat and dressing appropriately for the job. It also involves high quality work standards, honesty, and integrity plus communicating effectively and appropriately at the workplace. Professionalism encompasses all of the other soft skills areas, but in a broader framework.

13. College Ready. A student sufficiently prepared academically and socially to enter and complete postsecondary college programming (ACT).

14. College and Career Readiness (CCR). Students academically, socially, and emotionally prepared, possessing and demonstrating knowledge, skills and habits for success in postsecondary education, training environments, and workplace settings (DPI).

15. Education for employment. Wisconsin state legislated program created in November 1986 intended to ensure that school boards provide access to programs to prepare elementary and secondary pupils for future employment; to ensure technological literacy, to promote lifelong learning; to promote good citizenship; to promote cooperation among business, industry, labor, postsecondary schools, and public schools; and to establish a role for public schools in the economic development of Wisconsin. Under s. 121.02 (1) (m), Wis. Stats.

16. Financial Literacy. Financial Literacy refers to student skills and knowledge on financial matters to make informed consumer decisions that best fulfill an individual's personal, family, and community goals.

- 17. Individualized Education Program (IEP).** The IEP is federally mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An IEP defines individualized objectives of a child who has been found with a disability, as defined by federal regulations. The IEP is intended to help children reach educational and transition to adulthood goals. In all cases the IEP must be tailored to the individual student's needs as identified by the IEP evaluation process, and must especially help teachers and related service providers understand the student's disability and how the disability affects the learning process. Under s. 115.76 (9), Wis. Stats.
- 18. Individualized Learning Planning/Plan (ILP).** ILP is the standard term used nationally for the ACP process and product. In Wisconsin, the *ILP was named ACP in legislation*.
- 19. Implementers.** Also known as Doers. The school district staff that will be working directly with students and other stakeholders to deliver ACP services.
- 20. Post-secondary Outcomes.** The activities a student pursues after high school graduation. These may include pursuing postsecondary education and training, entering the workforce, serving in the armed forces, or undertaking other personal growth and development activities.
- 21. Post-Secondary Transition Plan (PTP).** A federal mandate requires youth, with federally defined disabilities, age 16 and older, to have an IEP with a postsecondary transition plan. In Wisconsin, transition requirements begin no later than in the first individualized education program (IEP) that will be in effect when the child is 14 and updated annually thereafter. A postsecondary transition plan must include measurable postsecondary goals for students based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to training/education, employment and, independent living skills (if appropriate) and a description of transition services including courses of study needed to assist the students in reaching their goals.
- 22. Programs of Study (POS).** A Program of Study is a specific career pathway, defined by a local school/district partnership, which details a sequence of instruction based on recommended set of academic and technical standards, knowledge, and skills. The POS outlines suggested coursework, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, worksite learning, service learning and other learning experiences available through the school district, including Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO). The sequence of instruction provides broad, basic preparation for a career in the secondary setting.
- 23. Self-Assessment Ratings.** The levels of ACP preparation, planning, development, and implementation listed on the ACP Self-Assessment Rubric for school districts.
- a. **Initiating.** A process that is beginning, taking the first steps. School districts that are initiating are just beginning to plan, prepare, and develop the structures, training, and components of ACP process delivery.
 - b. **Implementing.** A process that is being carried out; put into practical effect. School districts that are implementing are developing and delivering ACP processes; however they are still likely in the beginning stages of evaluating, improving, and embedding the delivery of those services deeper into the prevailing culture of the district.
 - c. **Institutionalized.** A process that is incorporated and structured in a well-established system. School districts that are institutionalized delivery an array of comprehensive ACP services in a school district setting that has embedded that delivery into the predominating attitudes and behaviors of the culture, staff, students, families, and community of that district.
- 24. Self-Reflection.** A continuous process of quality self-exploration activities are ones that help students become aware of their interests, skills, and values that can then guide subsequent career exploration efforts.

- 25. Universal Design for Learning (UDL).** UDL is a set of curriculum development principles that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL is a framework for designing education environments that enable all learners, including students with disabilities, to more effectively participate in learning. This is accomplished by designing activities that offer variations in learning style preferences and approaches. UDL-designed assessment and evaluation processes as means to help each student better define and realize their dreams and achieve educational, vocational, and employment success.
- 26. Visioners.** Also known as Leaders. The school district staff that will be leading efforts to champion and train staff and other stakeholders for the delivery of ACP services.
- 27. Work-Based Learning.** A broad spectrum of school-supervised activities that involve the following three key components: (a) school-based learning classroom instruction involving both academic and technical areas; (b) a work-based learning structured work activity; and, (c) a connecting career development activity. Work-based learning activities range from job shadows and volunteer work to service learning, leadership learning, internships, cooperative learning (i.e., co-ops), and youth apprenticeship.
- 28. Youth Development & Leadership.** In brief, *youth development* is the process of helping prepare youth to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences that aid them in gaining skills and competencies. *Youth leadership* is the distinct area of youth development that focuses on the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem to carry them out. It includes the ability to identify community resources and use them, not only to live independently, but also to establish support networks to participate in community life and to effect positive social change. It includes training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution; exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self esteem.

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