

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

a briefing series for new england's educational leaders

What Are Personal Learning Plans?

Students create personal learning plans—typically in collaboration with teachers, guidance counselors, advisors, and parents—as a way to help them achieve short- and long-term learning goals in school.

In recent years, the use of personal learning plans has been growing, and many states—including Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont—now require and support personal learning plans in high schools.

While personal learning plans may take a variety of forms, they tend to share many common features. For example, students may be asked to:

- Think about and describe their collegiate and career aspirations.
- Reflect on their individual learning strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify specific learning gaps or skill deficiencies that should be addressed in their education.
- Describe their personal interests, passions, pursuits, and hobbies.
- Plan a personal educational program that will allow them to achieve their educational, career, and life goals while fulfilling school requirements.
- Document major learning accomplishments and milestones.

How It Works

Schools generally use personal learning plans to:

- ✓ **Encourage students to take greater responsibility for their education, be more thoughtful and goal-oriented about the educational choices they make, and use their time in school more purposefully.** If students have a clear direction and sense of purpose in their education, they will be more likely to achieve expected learning goals, satisfy all school requirements, and graduate prepared for higher education and careers.
- ✓ **Help teachers gain a stronger understanding of the interests, learning needs, and aspirations of their students so they can use that information to teach, advise, and support them more effectively.** When students reflect on and document their educational history—what they academically achieved, excelled at, or struggled with in the past—teachers learn more about the specific learning strengths and needs of their students.
- ✓ **Motivate students to challenge themselves academically and consider learning opportunities they may not have considered otherwise.** For this reason, personal plans may also address learning experiences that occur outside of school, such as internships, college courses, volunteer opportunities, and summer programs students pursue as part of their education.
- ✓ **Help parents become more informed about their child's interests, learning needs, and aspirations, while also actively involving them in planning their child's education.** Personal learning plans can encourage more substantive discussions about life goals and educational interests between parents and their children.

A high-quality education has never been more important than it is right now.

The New England Secondary School Consortium hopes that our *Leadership in Action* series will spark conversations across the region about how students could be learning in today's high schools.