NCWD/Youth Research and Demonstration Project on

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PLANS

ANACOCO HIGH SCHOOL

November 8, 2010
Anacoco, Louisiana
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Individualized Learning Plans refer to both a document that is created and maintained as well as a process that helps students engage in the career development activities necessary for them to identify their own career goals. Many states refer to the ILPs under different names such as the 5 Year Plan (Louisiana), Next Step Plan (New Mexico), Individualized Graduation Plan (South Carolina) and High School and Beyond Plan (Washington). What these ILPs have in common is a shift towards student-initiated learning by having the students themselves select courses and educational experiences in a manner that is aligned with their future aspirations. In most settings, ILPs are created by students in consultation with a school-based adult mentor who follows and supports student progress over several years. ILPs are therefore developmental in nature and establish a supportive learning environment in which students exercise personal responsibility for their own education.

In many ways, ILPs share common objectives and intentions with individualized education programs (IEPs) in that they: 1) individualize learning for students, 2) prepare students to make effective post-secondary transitions and 3) set high standards for student’s learning and outcomes.

This project was created in response to many states beginning to mandate ILP policies. A report by the Education Commission of the States (2007) indicated that ILPs are being mandated either by legislation or regulation in at least 20 states. To date, however, there has been no research examining the impact or influence of ILP initiatives on student outcomes. To address this issue the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy initiated a research project that is being managed by the National Collaborative for Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) and its partners, the Center for Education and Work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Institute for Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. The purpose of this research program is to evaluate whether ILPs support positive academic performance for students with and without disabilities and whether ILPs assist these students in making effective post-secondary transitions.
The research program initially began by reviewing the relevant policies of states that mandate ILPs. The purpose of this line of inquiry was to identify promising state practices by examining existing legislative and policy language and interviewing state-level administrators who were responsible for overseeing the ILP implementation. Four states were selected to participate in the next phase of research based on the unique features of their ILP policy framework and indications that they would be good prospects for identifying and documenting promising practices. These states are: Louisiana, New Mexico, South Carolina and Washington.

Based on recommendations from state and district administrators, 15 schools were solicited and agreed to participate in a research study and receive technical assistance related to implementing ILPs.

In the Spring of 2009, the 15 schools participated in two data collection activities. One was an online survey completed by students. The survey included quantitative questions about a number of resilience/self-determination skills and students’ perceptions of their exposure to quality learning experiences including engagement in ILP activities. The survey also included open-ended questions designed to gather more in depth information about their career decision-making patterns. The second data collection activity engaged groups of parents, educators, and students in role-centric focus groups at each school. A total of 53, one-hour focus groups were completed across the 15 schools.

2010 UPDATE

This report consists of three analyses. The first analysis examines the career decision-making patterns of the participants using the open-ended responses from the 2009 data collection. The second analysis uses the data from the 2009 sample to test a model of school outcomes and uses the combined data from your schools 2009 and 2010 data collections to examine the model results. The final analysis compares the averages of your combined data from the 2009 and 2010 data collections with our national sample of students with disabilities and total national sample.

The survey measures relate to reported exposure to quality learning environments (i.e., Guideposts) and eight self-determination skills:

- Quality Learning Experiences
- Career Search Self-Efficacy
- Goal Setting
- Academic Motivation
- Academic Self-Efficacy
- Career Decision-Making Difficulty
- Social Connections
- Distress (Well-Being)
- Academic Stress

---

1 See Section III for details of each measure.
Some of the important implications from the results included in this report include:

- Providing students with access to a rigorous academic curriculum, quality self and career exploration activities, leadership development opportunities, connections with school and community resources and engaging parents in the career development process is likely to result in students being more capable of engaging in self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management.

- Students who are able to engage in self-exploration, career exploration and career planning and management are likely to become more engaged learners, perceive school as more meaningful and enjoyable, and are more capable of performing critical academic tasks.

- Students who are able to perform schools tasks well (academic self-efficacy) are likely to be able to more effectively manage stress and distress and receive higher grades.

- Interestingly, students without disabilities who are able to perform school tasks well are also likely to be able to make career decisions. This was not the case for students with disabilities, which may be due to a more complex set of factors being associated with career decision-making readiness for these students\(^2\).

- Over half of the students were identified as “impulsive decision-makers” because they could identify a career title but could not describe any knowledge of the career or the educational pathways needed to enter the career while 20% were identified as “deliberate decision-makers” who could explain in detail the nature of their selected career and the educational pathways needed to enter the career.

- Compared to students identified as deliberate decision-makers, students identified as impulsive decision-makers are less likely to be:
  
  - attending school because it is enjoyable or meaningful,
  - competent in performing school and career search tasks
  - connected with peers, family and teachers
  - able to manage academic stress and distress and
  - engage in goal setting.

\(^2\) We are currently following up with individual interviews in order to explore this issue.
SECTION I
Examining Career Decision Making Patterns And Their Impact On Each Of The Survey Measures

OVERVIEW
As part of the 2009 data collection, students responded to 18 open-ended questions about their career decision-making patterns. We were interested in learning more about the students’ process of thinking about careers and deciding their future goals. The large sample demanded that we use a rubric to analyze the results and we chose a popular identity development model that evaluates four developmental phases. Using this rubric, we identified four career decision-making patterns:

• Deliberate decision-makers were those that had identified a career plan, possessed knowledge about the career, and could identify the educational pathways needed to enter the career.

• Exploring decision-makers were those that identified a few career plans, possessed knowledge about them but were not willing to choose a single career objective.

• Impulsive decision-makers were those that could identify a career title, but did not describe information that indicated an understanding of the career or the educational pathways needed to enter the career.

• Overwhelmed decision-makers were those who provided very little responses to the questions.

SAMPLE
To date we have coded a total of 1625 students - 121 students with and 1504 without disabilities. Your school sample consisted of 54 students.
RESULTS

The table below describes the distribution of career decision-making patterns. The majority of students were classified as impulsive decision-makers indicating that they have a career title in mind, but do not have any information about the nature of the career or the educational pathways needed to prepare to enter the career. It is encouraging that 40% of the students with disabilities and 45% of the students without disabilities were either classified as making a deliberate decision or were actively exploring among alternatives. The series of bar graphs compare the combined percentages between the students with and without disabilities with each of the measures in our study\(^3\). Overall, the results indicate that students classified as impulsive decision-makers reported more difficulties and less access to quality learning environments in general than students classified as deliberate decision-makers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Career Decision Making Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Disability</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anacoco High School</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Multivariate results indicated significant differences between the career decision-making patterns (Wilks’ Lambda = .98), \(F(27, 4711) = 4.55, p = .000, \eta = .025\). Univariate results indicated significant differences for all nine dependent measures.
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

For Social Connections, students classified in the Overwhelmed (M = 64.41) and Impulsive (M = 67.72) groups reported less social connections than students in the Exploring (M = 71.16) and Deliberate (M = 73.86) groups.

![Social Connections Graph]

ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

For Motivation to attend school, students classified in the Impulsive (M = 55.44) group reported less motivation than students in the Exploring (M = 58.90) and Deliberate (M = 58.65) groups.

![Academic Motivation Graph]
ACADEMIC STRESS

For Academic Stress, students classified in the Impulsive (M = 32.35) group reported more academic stress than students in the Exploring (M = 28.90) and Deliberate (M = 28.61) groups.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

For Psychological and Emotional Distress, students classified in the Impulsive (M = 30.40) group reported more distress than students in the Deliberate (M = 27.06) group.
ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY

For Academic Self-Efficacy, students classified in the Impulsive (M = 72.73) group reported less academic confidence than students in the Deliberate (M = 76.95) group.

CAREER DECISION-MAKING DIFFICULTY

For Career Decision-Making Difficulty, students classified in the Impulsive (M = 29.81) and Exploring (M = 30.70) groups reported more difficulty than students in the Deliberate (M = 22.30) group.
**CAREER SEARCH SELF-EFFICACY**

For Career Search Self-Efficacy, students classified in the Impulsive ($M = 72.28$) and Exploring ($M = 74.25$) groups reported more difficulty than students in the Deliberate ($M = 78.47$) group.

**GOAL SETTING**

For goal setting, students classified in the Impulsive ($M = 60.61$) group reported less engagement in goal setting than students in the Exploring ($M = 65.35$) and Deliberate ($M = 66.37$) groups.
ACCESS TO QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

For access to quality learning environments, students classified in the Overwhelmed (M = 60.14) and Impulsive (M = 61.03) groups reported less exposure to quality learning environments than students in the Exploring (M = 65.73) and Deliberate (M = 67.10) groups.
SECTION II
Evaluation of How Access to Quality Learning Experiences and Self-Determination Skills Impact High School Outcomes

OVERVIEW
Using the quantitative survey measures, we evaluated a model that assessed the degree to which providing students with access to quality career and workforce learning environments would directly impact students’ self-determination skills, which in turn would produce better high school outcomes.

MODEL AND MEASURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School context</th>
<th>Self-determination skills</th>
<th>High school outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Access to quality learning environments</td>
<td>• Career search self-efficacy</td>
<td>• GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Goal setting</td>
<td>• Distress(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic motivation</td>
<td>• Career decision-making readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to examine the results more closely, we have used the data we collected from your school in 2009 and 2010 and created line graphs that allow you to compare your school to the results using the national sample.

SAMPLE
The general sample consisted of 558 students, while the students with disabilities sample consisted of 135 students. Your school sample consisted of 91 students\(^5\).

\(^4\) Distress was evaluated as a combination of psychological and emotional distress (well-being) and academic stress.

\(^5\) Your schools sample size will vary across the sections of the report due to a number of factors.
RESULTS

The results are described in two ways:

1) The path models are presented for both the general and students with disabilities samples, respectively. To interpret the meaningfulness of a path, a
   a. Small effect is denoted by a $\beta$ that is between .10 and .29; a
   b. Medium effect is denoted by a $\beta$ between .30 and .49; and a
   c. Large effect is denoted by a $\beta$ that is larger than .50.

2) In order to help with the interpretability of the model, we have provided graphical representations of the significant paths among the variables using the two years of combined data from your school’s sample compared with the national sample for students with and without disabilities.

The significant pathways that are presenting include:

a. Effects of Quality Learning Experiences on Career Search Self-Efficacy and Goal-Setting (General Sample only).

b. Effects of Career Search Self-Efficacy on Goal-Setting (Disability Sample only) and Academic Self-Efficacy.

c. Effects of Goal Setting on Academic Motivation and Academic Self-Efficacy (General Sample only).

d. Effects of Academic Motivation on Academic Self-Efficacy, Grades (General Sample only), and Career Decision-making Difficulties (Disability Sample only).

e. Effects of Academic Self-Efficacy on Psychological/Emotional Distress, Grades, and Career Decision-Making Difficulties (General Sample only).
PATH MODEL FOR GENERAL SAMPLE OF YOUTH WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES.

![Path Model Diagram](attachment:image)

PATH MODEL FOR SAMPLE OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

![Path Model Diagram](attachment:image)
QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ON CAREER SEARCH SELF-EFFICACY AND GOAL SETTING

Access to Quality Learning Environment

Career Search Self-Efficacy
($\beta = .58_{\text{General}}$ and $\beta = .74_{\text{Disability}}$)

Goal Setting
($\beta = .59_{\text{General Only}}$)
**FIGURE 1** indicates that students from your school who reported more access to quality learning environments reported higher career search self-efficacy.

![Graph showing career self-efficacy against quality learning environments]

**FIGURE 2** indicates that students from the national general sample who reported more access to quality learning environments also reported more engagement in goal setting.

![Graph showing goal setting against quality learning environments]
Career Search Self-Efficacy

Academic Self-Efficacy
$(\beta = .48_{\text{General}} \text{ and } \beta = .58_{\text{Disability}})$

Goal Setting
$(\beta = .19_{\text{General}} \text{ and } \beta = .75_{\text{Disability Only}})$
**FIGURE 3** indicates that students from your school who reported higher career search self-efficacy also reported higher academic self-efficacy.

![Graph showing relationship between career search self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy](image)

**FIGURE 4** indicates that students from your school who reported higher career search self-efficacy also reported more active engagement in goal setting.

![Graph showing relationship between career search self-efficacy and goal setting](image)
GOAL SETTING EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY

Goal Setting

Academic Motivation

(β = .66
  \text{General} \quad \text{and} \quad β = .60
  \text{Disability})

Academic Self-Efficacy

(β = .10
  \text{General Only})
**FIGURE 5** indicates that students from your school who reported more engagement in goal setting activities reported more motivation to attend school.

![Graph showing academic motivation across different goal setting levels for National, Disability, and Anacoco groups.]

**FIGURE 6** indicates that students from the national general sample who reported more engagement in goal setting activities also reported greater academic self-efficacy.

![Graph showing academic self-efficacy across different goal setting levels for National and Anacoco groups.]

ACADEMIC MOTIVATION EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY, CAREER DECISION-MAKING READINESS, AND GPA

- Academic Self-Efficacy
  \( (\beta = .25_{\text{General}} \text{ and } \beta = .36_{\text{Disability}}) \)

- Career Decision-Making Readiness
  \( (\beta = -.22_{\text{Disability Only}}) \)

- GPA
  \( (\beta = .18_{\text{General Only}}) \)
**FIGURE 7** indicates that students from your school who reported more motivation to attend school reported greater academic self-efficacy.

![Graph showing academic self-efficacy vs academic motivation](image)

**FIGURE 8** indicates that students from the national disability sample who reported more motivation to attend school reported less career decision-making readiness.

![Graph showing career decision making readiness vs academic motivation](image)
Figure 9 indicates that students from the national general sample who reported more motivation to attend school reported higher grade point averages (GPA).
ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY EFFECTS ON CAREER DECISION-MAKING READINESS, DISTRESS, AND GPA

Academic Self-Efficacy

Career Decision-Making Readiness
\( (\beta = .29_{\text{Only}}) \)

Distress
\( (\beta = -.33_{\text{General}} \text{ and } \beta = -.31_{\text{Disability}}) \)

GPA
\( (\beta = .32_{\text{General}} \text{ and } \beta = .23_{\text{Disability}}) \)
**FIGURE 10** indicates that students from the national general sample who reported more academic self-efficacy reported more career decision-making readiness.

![Graph showing career decision-making readiness vs. academic self-efficacy.](image)

**FIGURE 11** indicates that students from your school who reported more academic self-efficacy reported less distress.

![Graph showing distress vs. academic self-efficacy.](image)
**FIGURE 12** indicates that students from your school who reported more academic self-efficacy reported higher grade point averages (GPA).
SECTION III
Comparison of Your School Averages to Our National Sample for Each of the Survey Measures

OVERVIEW
This section of the report compares the individualized survey results for your school with our national sample in order to evaluate whether your school may want to consider addressing specific issues. The national sample for students with disabilities is provided to help evaluate how students with disabilities compare with students from your school sample and the total national sample.

SAMPLE
In Spring 2009 and 2010, 91 students (Male = 33; Female = 58) completed surveys from your school. Of the students completing the survey, 2 were in the 9th grade, 69 were in the 10th grade, 1 was in the 11th grade, and 19 were in the 12th grade; 90 students identified as White, while 1 student identified as American Indian; 6 were identified as free lunch status, 44 were identified as paid lunch status, and 4 were identified as reduced lunch status; finally, 7 of the 91 participants were identified as having a disability. This report provides your school with a comparison of your results for each measure with the average across all 15 schools participating in the study.

The comparison groups include 135 students with disabilities for the Disability (National) sample and 2854 students with and without disabilities for the National Total sample.

MEASURES
Responses on all scales range from 0 to 99 with 50 as the midpoint. The measures relate to reported exposure to quality learning environments (i.e., Guideposts) and eight self-determination skills:

- Quality Learning Experiences
- Career Search Self-Efficacy
- Goal Setting
- Academic Motivation
- Academic Self-Efficacy
- Career Decision-Making Difficulty
- Social Connections
- Well-Being
- Academic Stress

RESULTS
The subsequent pages: a) describe each measure and b) provide a bar graph comparison representing the national averages for students with and without disabilities and your school average.
QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The **Quality Learning Experiences** scale measures the degree to which students perceive they have been provided access to a range of learning career and workforce readiness learning experiences including engagement in ILPs. The Quality Learning Experiences scale is comprised of six subscales: School-Based Preparatory Experience, Career preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences, Youth Development and Leadership, Connecting Activities, Family Involvement and Support, and Engaged in ILPs.

The **School-Based Preparatory Experiences** subscale measures perceptions of the adequacy of courses taken and the classroom environment to meet educational needs. This is assessed, for example, by questions regarding the impact of classroom size on a student’s ability to learn, perceptions of classroom safety, belief of their teachers’ preparedness to teach a class, and the rigor or courses taken. High scores on this measure indicate that students perceive their classroom environments and courses to be adequate to positively impact their learning and development.

The **Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences** subscale measures exploration and preparation for educational/occupational life after high school as well as access to professional development related experiences. This is assessed, for example, by questions regarding using one’s ILP to explore career and work options, taking career assessments, exploring skills, educational requirements, and income for specific occupations, participation in a job-shadow, and engagement in internships or work-based learning experiences. High scores on this measure indicate greater educational and occupational exploration and preparation and greater access and use of experiences to facilitate work preparedness.

The **Youth Development and Leadership** subscale measures access to adult and peer mentors, and participation in school or community based extra-curricular activities. This is assessed, for example, by questions regarding having an adult or peer mentor, participation in activities to develop leadership skills, and participation in extra-curricular and outside of school activities. High scores on this measure indicate greater access to mentors and school- or community-based activities to facilitate leadership skill development.

The **Connecting Activities** subscale measures access and ability to utilize community and career related resources. This is assessed, for example, by questions regarding being able to secure an apartment, identify information to make financial decisions, knowledge of career centers, and being able to find programs for college or work training. High scores on this measure indicate greater belief in a student’s ability to identify and utilize community and career related resources.

The **Family Involvement and Supports** subscale measures involvement of adult figures in students’ personal, academic, and occupational future. This is assessed, for example, by questions regarding involvement of adults in supporting a student after high school, planning for life after high school, and having access to networks that may be useful for a student after high school. High scores on this measure indicate that students have high adult involvement in the planning of their personal, academic, and occupational life after high school.
The *Engagement in ILPs* subscale measures how students use or envision using their ILP. This is assessed, for example, by questions regarding use of an ILP for purposes outside of school (e.g., job application), to make decisions about academic courses, and to explore and evaluate plans after graduation. Additionally, questions address students’ belief that their ILP is an extension of themselves and their willingness to share it with others. High scores on this measure indicate that students believe that their ILP can be used for various tasks, have used their ILP, enjoy working with their ILP, and are willing to share it with others.
CAREER SEARCH SELF EFFICACY

The Career Search Self Efficacy scale assesses a student’s belief that he or she is capable of engaging in self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management. This scale is comprised of five subscales: Self Management, Career Planning, Career Awareness, Interviewing, and Networking.

The Self Management subscale addresses a range of issues related to advanced preparation and planning tasks regarding personal preparedness. Students are asked about their confidence in identifying their work skills, learning about different career opportunities before searching for a job, and describing skills to an employer, among several other things.

The Career Planning subscale assesses confidence in career planning by asking students about their confidence in developing a good plan for finding and getting a job, knowing the resources necessary for finding a job, as well as knowing where to find information about employers.

The Career Awareness subscale assesses a student’s confidence in finding and identifying a career that would be best for him or herself. Students are asked about their confidence in identifying career preferences, what they value in a career, and identifying personal values.

The Interviewing subscale consists of questions regarding the interview process, a student’s confidence in meeting people in careers of interest and conducting an informational interview with potential employers, as well as questions regarding preparation of a good resume and asking appropriate questions during an interview.

Networking subscale assesses a student’s confidence in skills associated with acquiring assistance in job hunting from friends and other people.

![Career Search Self-Efficacy Chart]

Disability (National) 76.35
School Total 74.58
National Total 73.04
GOAL SETTING

The Goal Setting scale measures activities related to educational and occupational goal attainment, and the perception of obstacles to achieving one’s goals. The measure is comprised of three subscales: Goal Setting and Pursuits, Use of Resources, and Challenges.

The Goal Setting and Pursuits subscale measures strategies for actively setting and pursuing one’s goals as to increase one’s chances of reaching them. Low scores indicate that one is unlikely to use selection and optimization strategies, while high scores indicate that such active selection and optimization strategies are core to one’s goal striving efforts.

The Use of Resources subscale describes the use of support from others and learning experiences as resources in the goal pursuit process. Low scores indicate either an unavailability of social support and learning support or a reluctance to rely on these resources, while high scores indicate active use of social and learning supports.

The Challenges subscale describes difficulties that students face or anticipate facing in their goal striving efforts. Low scores indicate that students perceive fewer obstacles to achieving their educational and occupational goals, while high scores indicate greater perception of obstacles to goal attainment.

![Goal Setting Chart]

Disability (National)  | School Total  | National Total
--- | --- | ---
59.98 | 60.86 | 61.43
ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

The Academic Motivation scale measures the degree to which students attend school because they find it meaningful or enjoyable. The measure consists of two subscales: Enjoy School and Meaningfulness of School.

The Enjoy School subscale assesses motivation to attend school that is based on enjoying a particular course of study and school being perceived as fun and involving many things that are interesting. Students who score high on this subscale view themselves as motivated by enjoyment of school and school related activities.

The Meaningfulness of School subscale assesses a student’s motivation to attend school that is based upon personal and familial perceptions of school significance, and wanting to avoid negative consequences of due to not attending school. Students who score high on this subscale view themselves as motivated by personal or familial perceptions of school significance and are motivated to attend school in order to avoid an aversive consequence.

![Academic Motivation Chart]

- Disability (National): 55.55
- School Total: 59.43
- National Total: 58.35
ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY

Academic Self-Efficacy assesses the degree to which students believe they can successfully perform a number of school-related tasks. The measure is comprised of three subscales: Social, Classroom, and Test Taking.

The Social subscale addresses social skills. For example, questions ask students about their ability to make friends, participate in class discussions, work with classmates, and give presentations. Students who score high on this subscale perceive themselves as having more confidence in tasks requiring strong social skills.

The Classroom subscale addresses skills related to academic/class performance. For example, questions ask students about their ability to take notes, write essays, turn in assignments in a timely manner, and using a computer. Students who score high on this subscale perceive themselves as having more confidence in skills related to successful class performance.

The Test Taking subscale centers on the ability to prepare for tests by use of test-taking strategies and emotional management. For example, questions ask students about their confidence in doing well on a test, preparing for a test, relaxing during a test administration, and balancing time. Students who score high on this subscale perceive themselves as having more confidence in skills related to test preparation and test taking.
CAREER DECISION MAKING DIFFICULTY

The Career Decision-Making Difficulty scale measures some factors that contribute to a student’s lack of education and career direction. This scale is comprised of three subscales. These are: Lack Information, Undecided, and Indecisive.

The Lack of Information subscale addresses a range of issues related to expressing a need for information in order to make a decision and not knowing when to decide or whom to approach to discuss educational and career issues. Individuals who score high on this subscale view themselves as lacking information, while those with low scores feel that they have sufficient information in order to make a decision.

The Undecided subscale indicates themes of being unable to decide or lacking clarity in order to make decisions regarding their educational and career future. An individual with a higher score on this subscale is more likely to be undecided with respect to a future career, while students with a low score have greater clarity about their education and occupational direction.

The Indecisive subscale assesses a more pervasive mindset of being indecisive and a lack of readiness to make educational and occupational decisions. The subscale asks about whether a student always decides in a hurry and thus makes mistakes, as well as if a student is unsure about wanting to continue studying after secondary school. Students with a high score on this subscale were found to be indecisive with regard to a future career, while those with a low score will be more likely to be making decisions.

![Career Decision Making Difficulty Chart]

- Disability (National): 42.22
- School Total: 33.56
- National Total: 30.65
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

The Social Connections scale measures the degree of connection/support from family, teachers, and peers. The Connections scale is comprised of three subscales: Family Support, Teacher, and Peer.

The Family Support subscale assesses perceptions of support from family members. For example, questions ask students if there are family members to whom they can go for assistance with important life decisions, if there are family members who share similar interests and concerns, and if there are family members on which they can rely during an emergency. Students who score low on this subscale perceive a lack of family support relative to those who score high.

The Teacher subscale assesses perceptions of support from school teachers. For example, questions ask students if there are teachers who care for them, if teachers respect students, and if they can go to teachers to talk about personal problems. Students who score high on this subscale perceive that teachers are available to support them.

The Peer subscale assesses perceptions of support from peers. For example, questions ask students about the availability to gain support from peers, and if there are friends they can trust as they make important life decisions. Students who score high on this subscale perceive greater availability of peers from which to gain support.
WELL-BEING

The **Well-Being** scale measures a student’s level of emotional or physical well-being and distress. On this scale, higher ratings related to higher levels of perceived distress in five areas: Agitation, Eating Problems, Feeling Blue, Sleeping Problems, and Physical Well-Being.

The **Agitation** subscale assesses experiences of being irritated, nervous, or losing one’s temper. It also asks how often in the past week a student has fought with his or her friends, broken things when angry, or feared for his or her safety. A high score on this subscale indicates that a student experienced more agitation during the past week, and a low score indicates that the student had not had those distressing experiences.

The **Eating Problems** subscale assesses experiences of overeating, snacking more than usual, or having an increased appetite. If a student scores high on the Eating Problems subscale, they are indicating that they have experienced these symptoms more often in the past week. If a student scores low on this subscale, they have rarely experienced these symptoms in the past week.

The **Feeling Blue** subscale assesses emotional well-being by asking students about their experiences of feeling depressed or hopeless, lack of personal confidence, and quick changes in mood. A high score on this scale indicates that the individual is more likely to be feeling blue or depressed than those who score low on the scale.

The **Sleeping Problems** subscale measures sleep related disturbances. These are assessed through questions inquiring about how often a student is tired but unable to sleep, gets less sleep than usual, doesn’t sleep well, and has nightmares. A person who scores high on this scale is more likely to be experiencing sleeping problems than someone with a low score.

The **Physical Well-Being** subscale measures physical symptoms of distress. This is assessed by questions regarding getting sick often, having frequent headaches, and experiencing increased heartbeat and an upset stomach. Students who score high on this subscale are more likely than those who score low to experience more physical distress.
ACADEMIC STRESS

The Academic Stress scale assesses the amount and degree of stress students perceive in their lives. The Stress scale is comprised of three subscales: Academic Stress, Social Stress, and Financial Stress.

The Academic subscale assesses stressors from school settings, such as experiencing difficulty in learning new tasks or maintaining the balance between housework and school work. Students who score high on this scale, relative to students who score low, report greater experiences of academic-related stressors.

The Social subscale assesses difficulty related to interactions with others. This includes experiencing difficulty making friends, talking with teachers, asking questions in class, and being treated differently by school classmates. Students who score high on this scale, relative to students who score low, experience greater interpersonal stress.

The Financial subscale assesses difficulties associated with money. This includes difficulty in paying for food, textbooks, or items when out with peers as well as family financial problems. Students who score high on this scale, relative to students who score low, experience greater financial stressors.

Photo credits: Cover photo Jeff Miller, p. 1 Michael Forster Rothbart (University of Wisconsin-Madison).

Funding support for the ILP study was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Cooperative Agreement OD-16519-07-75-4-11) through the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. The mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations does not imply the endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor.