Academic and Career Planning 2019-20 Evaluation Report

*for the* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Academic & Career Planning is intended to equip students in grades 6-12 with the tools necessary to make informed, career-based choices about postsecondary education and training. It is part of DPI's overall vision for every student to graduate from high school college- and career-ready. As part of its longitudinal, mixed-methods evaluation of ACP, WEC fielded a school-level survey and began case studies in schools across the state to investigate the extent of implementation, varieties of ACP infrastructure and activities, and stakeholder perceptions. WEC also analyzed school and student outcomes data. Case studies were interrupted by the Covid-19 closure of schools, but will be continued in Fall 2020. Findings from case studies and additional school and student output data will be reported in an additional report expected in December 2020.

## Implementation continues to grow, some are still initiating

While survey data show that implementation continues to grow, there are still districts and schools in the initial phases of planning and implementation. Particularly in terms of scope and sequence, some locations are still (re)assessing what current activities align to ACP, what additional elements are needed, and how and where they should be delivered and by whom. Some districts still rely heavily or exclusively on Xello to serve as their scope and sequence for all of ACP. While districts continue to move towards an all-school culture of ACP, there are still those who view ACP as the responsibility of one or a few staff members, typically counselors and/or CTE instructors.

FIGURE 1

Implementation of an Outlined ACP Activity Curriculum, 2019-20
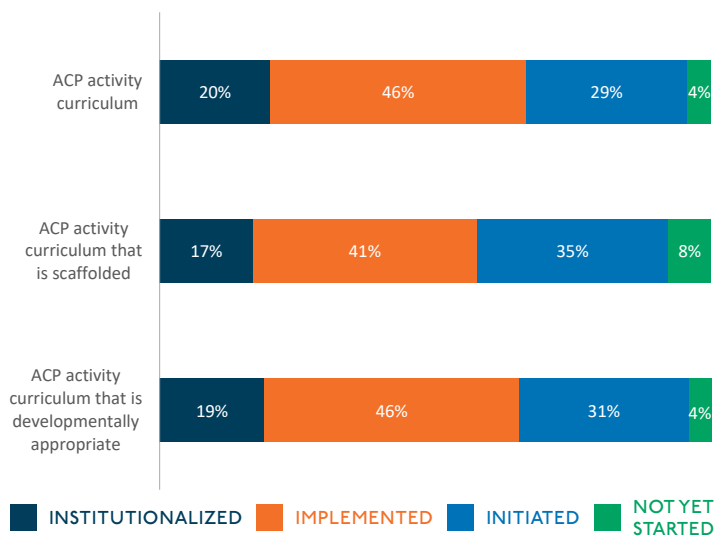
Mixed-Methods Evaluation
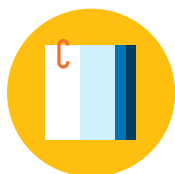
Case Studies

School & Student Outputs

Student Outcome Data

School Level Survey

The Covid-19 interruption may have a silver lining in that it may cause many districts, both at initial and at more advanced stages of implementation, to tweak or rethink their delivery systems, scope and sequence, and other factors. Consequently, districts may have additional needs for building or rebuilding their programs, but opportunities for "late bloomers" to get going may exist as well.

Recommendation: Continue to support schools in the process of building an ACP culture and practices. Leverage the Covid-19 interruption as an opportunity to (re)start, assess, tweak, or even rebuild ACP programs so that they better serve students in the changed economic landscape.

Recommendation: Connected to the above recommendation, continue to message that Xello is not the sum total of ACP programming, but simultaneously leverage the advantages it provides for distance, online learning.

Job Shadowing continues to grow

The 5 Powerful Practices (Final Projects, Job Shadowing, Mock Interviews, Resume-Building, and One-on-One Conferencing/Advising) were first identified in the 2017-18 evaluation report xand reinforced in the 2018-19 report. Among these, in this limited data set, Job Shadowing stood out as a particularly valuable activity, with schools either requiring job shadows or working to make them a requirement. While seen by both students (as evidenced in last year's data) and school personnel as valuable, job shadow opportunities require planning, infrastructure, and coordination, both with employers and internally to match students to opportunities and track their participation. Districts with well-established, required job shadowing programs report that consistent, ongoing communication efforts are paramount, and that staffing, funding, resources, and policy are required to make this a viable component.

Recommendation: Continue to develop and share information, resources, networking opportunities and other means for supporting interested districts in developing or expanding job shadowing and other types of work-based learning programs.

Some outcomes improve, but participation gaps exist

The second year of outcomes data continues to show increases in some short- and medium-term measures and decreases in others. While most effects were small, and quite possibly the result of statistical "noise", there are some continuing trends from the first year's analysis. These trends include an associated positive change in four-year high school completion rates and in high school attendance rate and an associated negative change in composite ACT score. There continue to be limitations to these findings; for example, the possibility of interference from other, co-occurring policy changes and other factors cannot be determined given the statewide roll-out of ACP. Consequently, outcome estimates should be interpreted with caution, and findings need to continue to be observed over time to better determine their meaning.

Course participation data continue to show gaps by various student subgroups and by region. As further data on career-based learning and dual enrollment become available, the evaluation will continue to track the status of these gaps. WEC is still in the process of conducting additional research on the nature of these gaps.

Recommendation: Avoid prematurely claiming positive effects in terms of outcomes of ACP implementation, but instead, continue to monitor the data longitudinally.

Recommendation: Continue to pursue additional research into the equitable implementation of ACP in terms of access and participation gaps.

Wisconsin Center for Education Research

The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) is housed at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. WEC's team of evaluators supports youth-serving organizations and initiatives through culturally responsive and rigorous program evaluation. Learn more at http://www.wec.wceruw.org. For questions regarding this report, please contact Robin Worth at robin.worth@wisc.edu, or Grant Sim at grant.sim@wisc.edu. Full report available at https://dpi.wi.gov/acp/quality