

Academic and Career Planning 2020-21 Evaluation Report Executive Summary

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 post-secondary education and training. As part of its longitudinal, mixed-methods evaluation of ACP, WEC fielded a school-level survey to investigate the extent of implementation, varieties of ACP infrastructure and activities, and stakeholder perceptions. WEC also analyzed school and student implementation and outcomes data. Ongoing case studies were reported in the [Addendum to Academic and Career Planning Evaluation 2019-20](#) (March 2021) and will continue in 2021-22.

ACP continues to show evidence of varied component implementation

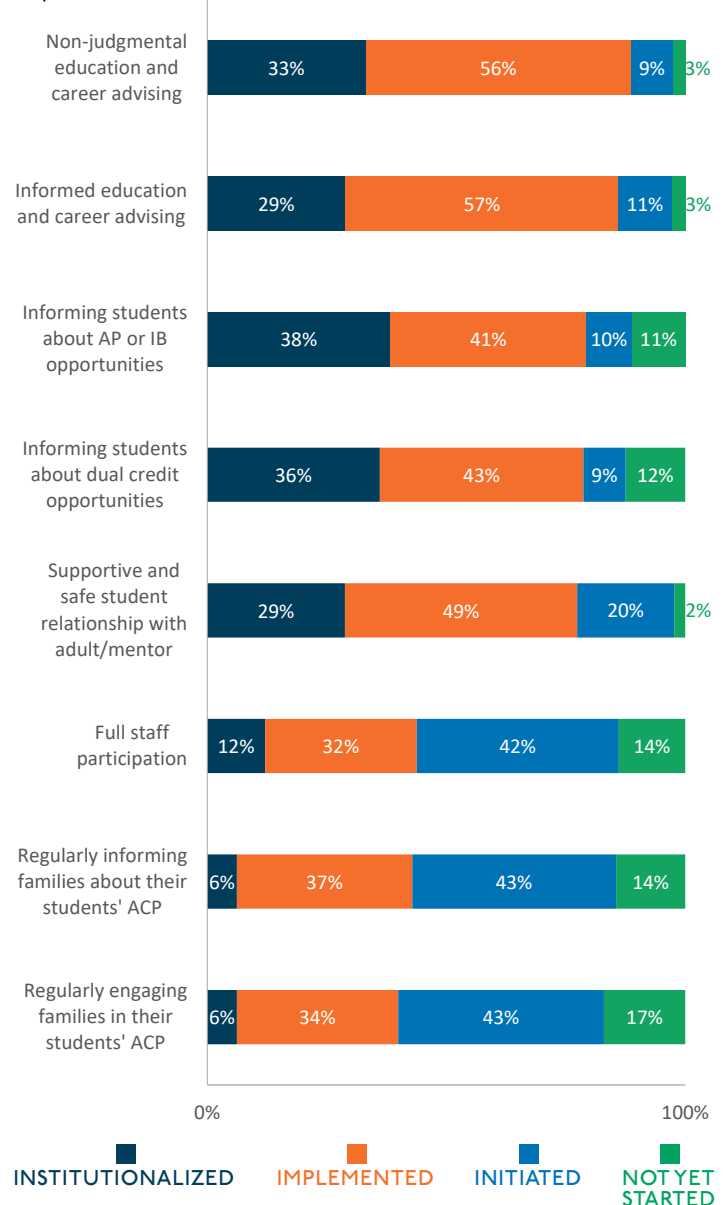
Across the state, components with the highest levels of implementation include informed and non-judgmental education and career advising; informing and encouraging students about AP, IB, or dual credit opportunities; and providing supportive and safe student relationships with adults. However, other components of ACP continue to show lower levels of implementation, including regularly informing and engaging families about their students' ACP and having full staff participation in ACP.

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.

Recommendation: Continue to examine best ways to support schools to increase family and full staff engagement in the ACP process.

FIGURE I

Implementation of ACP Activities

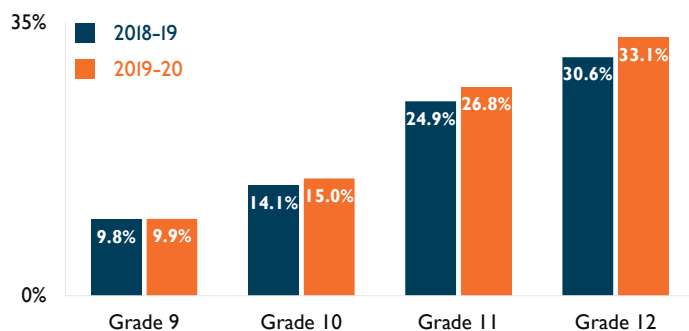


Evidence of an increase in dual enrollment participation throughout the state

Dual enrollment participation data show an increase in participation from 2018-19 to 2019-20 of nearly 1.5 percentage points among high school students. Increases occurred for American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, special education, and English learner student subgroups. Much of the increase in participation stems from an increase in technical college dual enrollment courses. Not all subgroups experienced an increase, however, with Black and Pacific Islander students showing decreased participation rates.

FIGURE 2

Dual Enrollment Participation by Grade



Recommendation: Continue to track participation in dual enrollment and identify possible trends of any increasing participation gaps.

Implementation data show evidence of gaps in participation

Related to the previous recommendation, course- and career-based learning participation data continue to show gaps not only by various student subgroups but also by region. Areas of ACP with the largest gaps across subgroups include youth apprenticeships, industry recognized credentials, and AP course participation. WEC is still in the process of conducting additional research, delayed due to COVID-19, on the nature of these gaps.

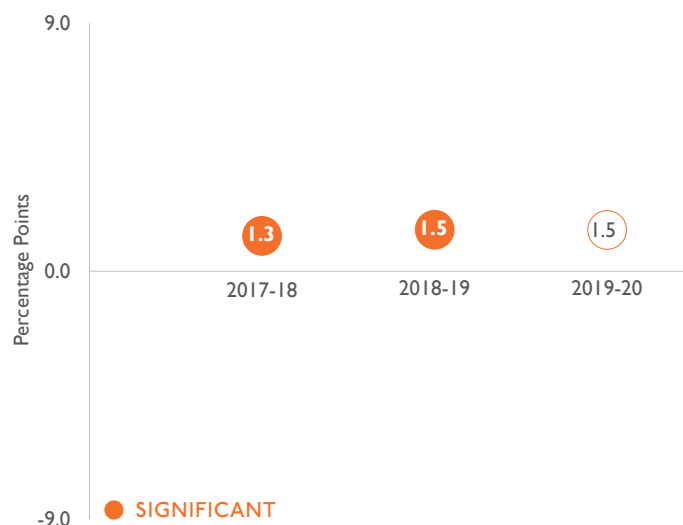
Recommendation: Continue to pursue additional research into the equitable implementation of ACP in terms of access and participation gaps.

Some outcomes, such as high school graduation rates, continue to show a positive increase

An analysis of ACP outcomes shows evidence of increases in some short- and medium-term measures and decreases in others. These findings include an associated positive change in four-year high school completion rates and in attendance rates in high school and an associated negative change in composite ACT score. There continue to be limitations to these findings; consequently, these outcome estimates should be interpreted with caution.

FIGURE 3

Estimated Impact of ACP on Four-Year High School Completion by Year



Recommendation: Continue to track ACP outcomes longitudinally to help verify existing patterns.

About the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative

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 wec.wceruw.org.