

Personal Learning Plan

A **personal learning plan** (or PLP) is developed by students—typically in collaboration with teachers, counselors, and parents—as a way to help them achieve short- and long-term learning goals, most commonly at the middle school and high school levels. Personal learning plans are generally based on the belief that students will be more motivated to learn, will achieve more in school, and will feel a stronger sense of ownership over their education if they decide what they want to learn, how they are going to learn it, and why they need learn it to achieve their personal goals.

While personal learning plans may take a wide variety of forms from school to school, they tend to share many common features. For example, when developing their plans, students may be asked to do any or all of the following:

- Think about and describe their personal life aspirations, particularly their collegiate and career goals.
- Self-assess their individual learning strengths and weaknesses, or reflect on what they have academically achieved, excelled at, or struggled with in the past.
- Identify specific [learning gaps](#) or skill deficiencies that should be addressed in their education, or specific knowledge, skills, and character traits they would like to acquire.
- List or describe their personal interests, passions, pursuits, and hobbies, and identify ways to integrate those interests into their education.
- Chart a personal educational program that will allow them to achieve their educational and aspirational goals while also fulfilling school requirements, such as particular [learning standards](#) or credit and course requirements for graduation.
- Document major learning accomplishments or milestones.

The general goal of a personal learning plan is to bring greater coherence, focus, and purpose to the decisions students make about their education. For this reason, plans may also include learning experiences that occur outside of the school, such as internships, volunteer opportunities, and summer programs students want to pursue or books they would like to read. For a related discussion, see [learning pathway](#).

To help students develop personal learning plans, educators typically create a template form and process, such as a series of questions or a multiyear course-planning chart that allows students to map out the specific classes they want to take before graduating. Personal learning plans may help engage parents in the planning process and in substantive discussions with their children about their life goals and educational interests, while also helping teachers learn more about their students and their particular interests and learning needs. Personal learning plans are commonly revisited and modified annually to reflect changes in student learning needs, interests, and aspirations.

The use of personal learning plans in schools may be required or encouraged by state policies and departments of education, and districts and schools may require students to create a personal learning plan. Personal learning plans are distinct from individualized education programs (or IEPs), which are federally mandated plans created for students who receive special-education services. For these students, an individualized education program may also serve as their personal learning plan.

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