

Background

On May 11, 2010, the Kansas State Board of Education approved 11 Career and Technical Education policy initiatives aimed at ensuring college and career readiness among all students. Included in these was an initiative directly addressing individual plans of study, and declaring that the state would “Require every Kansas student, beginning in middle-level or junior high school, to utilize a personalized college career plan of study throughout his/her school experience.”

On July 1, 2012, this initiative gained momentum when Senate Bill No. 155 became law. The Bill established that “The state board of education shall conduct a study of, or contract for the study of, the implementation of requiring each district to maintain an individual career plan of study for each pupil enrolled in the district in grades eight through 12.” The Bill defines “individual career plan of study” as *a proposed individualized coherent sequence of classes focused on a career pathway that will enable seamless transition into a postsecondary program.*

Considering the actions of both KSBE and the Kansas Senate, the Kansas State Department of Education has worked over the last several years to address each of the initiatives as well as SB 155 – including portions addressing individual plans of study – by providing ongoing professional learning and support to districts, schools, and educators responsible for implementation. Likewise, in an attempt to satisfy the stipulations of SB 155, KSDE administered three surveys to the field in order to examine the current state of Kansas districts’ implementation of individual plans of study.

Field Survey Results

The Kansas State Department of Education has administered three voluntary field surveys in an attempt to gain greater insight about districts’ use of individual plans of study. Questions on the survey addressed the stage of implementation as well as how plans are developed and used within a district. Respondents also reported whether students in their district or school currently have access to a licensed counselor.

269 districts responded to the survey, which constitute 94 percent of all Kansas districts. The graphics below represent findings based on survey results from all responding districts.

As shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 below, 66.8 percent of responding districts in Kansas offer individual plans of study to students as identified by KSDE, 88.0 percent of responding districts in Kansas offer some type of individual plans of study, and 48.4 percent of responding districts report that all high school students currently have an individual plan of study.

Figure 1

Does your school district offer an IPS that meets KSDE's definition?

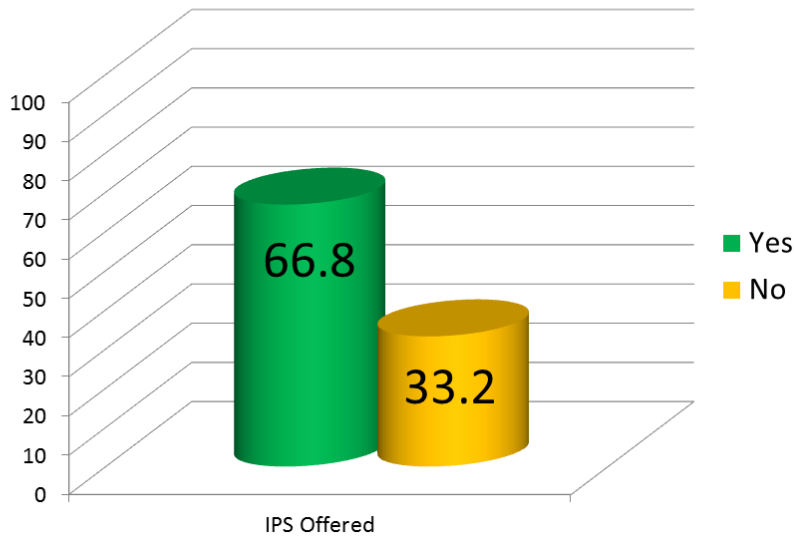


Figure 2

Does your school district offer an IPS to students?

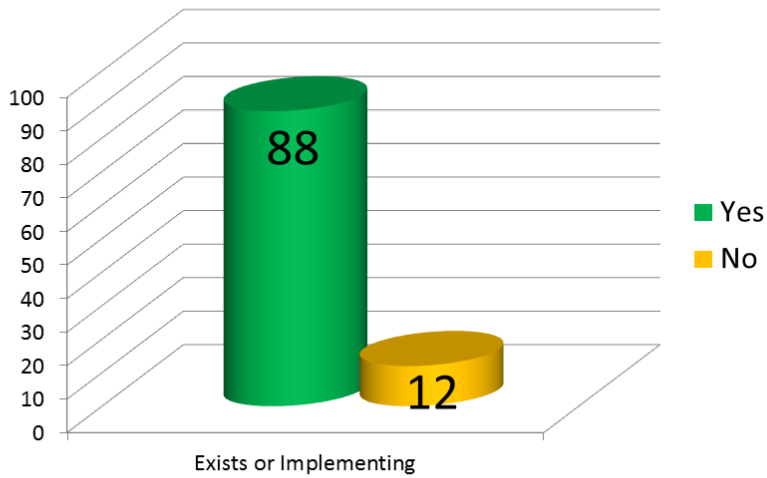
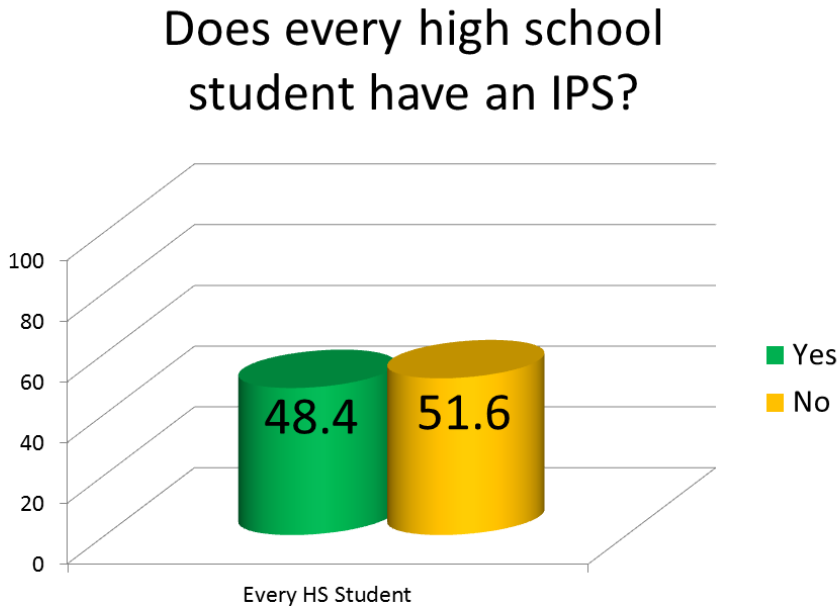


Figure 3



Many districts administer a career interest inventory to students in order to inform the creation of students' individual plans of study. As show in Figure 4, 83.5 percent of Kansas districts currently administer a career interest inventory to students. Survey results indicated that the programs districts use to administer the interest inventory vary, and costs range from \$0 to around \$6500 annually.

Figure 4



Responding districts also revealed a range of uses for the individual plans of study, as shown in Figure 5. Districts reported using the plans to inform content for various course curricula, career explorations classes, seminar or advisory periods, and a host of other programs and initiatives within local districts.

Figure 5

How are the IPS implemented?

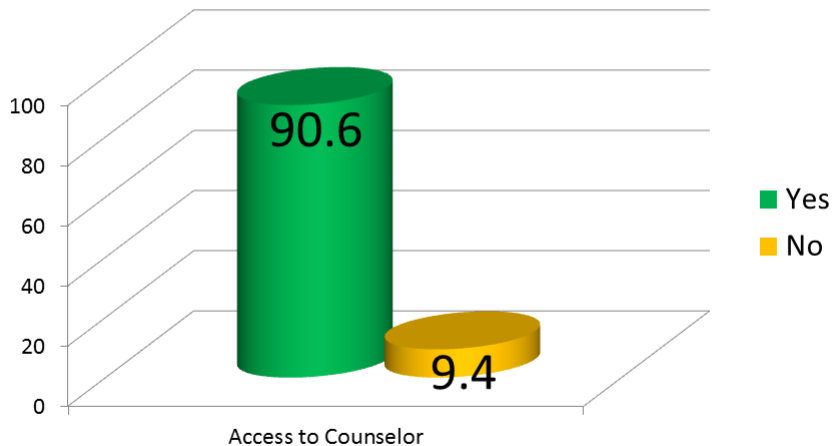
- Guidance Program – 172
- Career Exploration Class – 57
- Seminar, Activity Period, Advisory – 78
- Content Curriculum – 37
- Other – 63
 - CTE Introductory Classes
 - Career Fair
 - During Enrollment



The survey also included a question about students' access to licensed counselors. Since most secondary institutions call upon the counselor to advise students in matters of college and career planning and scheduling coursework aligned to those plans, the successful implementation of individual plans of study depends greatly on the quality and qualifications of the staff primarily responsible for developing, monitoring, and following up on each student's progress during the period of time covered by the plan of study. As indicated in Figure 6, survey results indicate that 90.6 percent of responding districts currently employ licensed counselors.

Figure 6

Do your students have access to a licensed school counselor?



Recommendation

Considering the directives put forth in the 2013 Board-adopted initiatives and SB 155, in addition to the field survey findings, the Kansas State Department of Education strongly recommends that all districts implement individual plans of study for students in grades 8 through 12 for the following reasons:

- 1) Individual plans of study should be considered a “best practice” for districts, can help all Kansas students obtain a suitable vision of their path toward college and career readiness, and will address the gap between the percentage of students enrolling and the percentage of students earning credit during their first year of enrollment in 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions.
- 2) Individual plans of study are addressed as part of the “Career Awareness and Guidance” criteria in the current draft version of Kansas’ new accreditation model.
- 3) The Kansas State Department of Education can provide support to educators, as well as to vendors of student information systems to ensure that individual plans of study are implemented in ways that will be cost-effective and not unreasonably taxing to students or educators.