



# **VT Flexible Pathways Tool: Considerations for Student Participation in a Flexible Pathway**

## **Facilitation Guide**

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Issued by the Vermont Agency of Education Personalized Learning Team

## Purpose of the Pathways Profile Tool

The purpose of the Student Participation Tool is to support a consistent process for students and their advisors to determine how a Flexible Pathway opportunity fits within a student's [Personalized Learning Plan](#) (PLP), to verify the necessary preparation required to engage in the learning experience, and to identify the supports they may need to be successful. It is not intended to be a checklist, but rather a guide for students to ensure that the potential learning experience is practical and aligned to the student's short- and long-term goals. Evidence should be provided to support why the learning opportunity is or is not appropriate for the student. This tool is also meant to support discussions about Flexible Pathways options with students and their families, and for educators to ensure that they have considered the questions provided and are working towards implementing procedures, practices, and processes consistent with [Vermont's Education Quality Standards](#).

## Background

From 2016 – 2019, AOE staff from the Student Pathways division engaged in listening tours, participated on Integrated Field Reviews (IFRs), facilitated collaboratives and showcases of learning, and collected the questions and observations of students, educators, parents, community members, legislators, business owners, and other Vermont stakeholders to better understand challenges to implementation of personalized learning and Flexible Pathways in Vermont.

These experiences indicated that improvement was needed to reach parity between student groups in access, opportunity, and equity of educational experience, specifically regarding Flexible Pathways to graduation. In 2018, the Agency began to develop technical assistance sensitive to the unique needs and context of a local school community that also encouraged consistency in implementation and educational equity across the state. A set of resources referred to as the Flexible Pathways Implementation Kit is the result of these efforts. The following facilitation guide provides guidance for using the [VT Flexible Pathways Tool: Considerations for Student Participation in a Flexible Pathway](#), herein after referred to as the Pathways Profile Tool.

## Using the Student Participation Tool

The Student Participation Tool should be used with students seeking to experience learning through an approved Flexible Pathway opportunity. Flexible Pathway opportunities are approved at the local level using the [VT Flexible Pathways Profile: A Tool to Evaluate Flexible Pathways at the Local Level](#).

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## What are Flexible Pathways?

The [Flexible Pathways to Secondary School Completion Initiative](#), passed by the Legislature in 2013, described opportunities school districts could provide to engage and support students to complete secondary school.

Per [16 V.S.A. § 941](#), Flexible Pathways include:

- [Virtual and Blended Learning](#)
- [Career Technical Education](#)
- [Dual Enrollment](#)
- [Early College](#)
- [High School Completion Program](#)
- [Work-Based Learning](#)

Nothing in the Flexible Pathways Initiative, “shall be construed as discouraging or limiting the authority of any school district to develop or continue to provide educational opportunities for its students that are otherwise permitted...”

Additional Flexible Pathways can be developed such as, but not limited to the following:

- [Expanded Learning Opportunities](#)
  - [After-school and Summer Programs](#)

## Convening a Team

When using the Student Participation Tool to determine participation in a Flexible Pathway learning experience offered at your school it is recommended that you convene a team of stakeholders knowledgeable both about the student and the specific experience. In many cases, this may be a small team consisting of only a student and the school counselor who will use the Pathway Profile Tool as a resource. However, depending on where a school may be in developing their Pathway Profiles, you may want to consider a larger team to begin with.

While team composition may change from school to school or based on the Flexible Pathway experience being reviewed, it is important to have on any team some individuals who meet these overarching criteria:

- a decision-maker,
- personnel familiar with the specific Flexible Pathway under consideration,
- personnel involved in PLP/scheduling/etc.,
- personnel involved in assessing for/awarding of “credit,”
- the student pursuing the Flexible Pathway learning experience.

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[Note, as it pertains to the Student Participation Tool, one individual may meet several of the criteria above.]

Students should be involved in determining whether a particular Flexible Pathway learning experience is appropriate for them using the Student Participation Tool.

However, the process should be facilitated by one or more educators who know the student well, and who understand the requirements of the Flexible Pathway Opportunity being considered. Appropriate educators could include school counselors, advisors, work-based learning coordinators, community-based learning coordinators, or others with similar roles. In addition, educators and special educators who know the student and his/her skills well may be consulted or included in completing the tool.

Example: A student wishes to engage in a Dual Enrollment opportunity by taking an online advanced algebra class. The student may meet with their school counselor, who knows them well and has strong knowledge of the Dual Enrollment Program, to complete the tool. Additionally, the school counselor may seek feedback from or invite the student's algebra teacher to participate in a meeting with the student to help determine if the opportunity is appropriate.

### Strategies to Consider

Teams may wonder when or how they'll find the time to complete multiple Student Participation Tools. We suggest that schools/leaders consider leveraging existing teams, schedules, and structures to engage in the determination of suitable and practical learning experiences with their students. For example, consider:

- leveraging existing school counseling meetings (e.g., when determining student schedules or getting college/career advising);
- leveraging Student Advisory as an opportunity for staff and student teams to engage in targeted work;
- incorporating Student Participation tools into College and Career Readiness classes (e.g., Career Exploration, SAT Prep, Personal Finance)
- utilizing WIN time or flex blocks for staff and students to prepare for, engage in, and determine appropriate and practical learning that takes place outside of the school/classroom.

### When This Tool Should be Used

The Student Participation Tool should be completed prior to the student engaging in the Flexible Pathway Opportunity, in order to ensure that the learning experience is appropriate and practical, and to surface any issues that may need to be addressed before the student engages in the experience. However, students and their advisors should revisit the tool periodically as the opportunity progresses, or as the student faces

transitions, to ensure that the student is succeeding and to identify any roadblocks that the student may encounter. This is especially important if the initial completion of the tool surfaced any potential challenges or areas where the student would need ongoing support.

We recommend that schools begin using the Student Participation Tool and their SU/SD Flexible Pathway Profiles with students no later than 7th grade. Although some Flexible Pathway Opportunities are only available to eligible students in high school, the more familiar students are with the Flexible Pathway options the better prepared they should be in determining appropriate and relevant learning experiences that support their near and long-term goals.

Communication to students and families regarding Flexible Pathway Profiles and Student Participation Tools increases transparency around student expectations, readiness criteria, and intended outcomes for students pursuing Flexible Pathway Opportunities. Making these tools available during Parent Conferences, Open House, Transition Days, and on the school's website, allows for multiple entry points and communication channels for equitable access to student participation in Flexible Pathways.

### **Walking a Team Through the Student Participation Tool**

Prior to engaging with the tool, we recommend the team has the following materials on hand (see also Resources section below): the student's PLP, the Flexible Pathway Profile, the School Handbook, and the School's Program of Studies.

Once a team has been convened, consider the following set of recommended steps as you complete the tool:

1. Identify a team member who can act as the facilitator and who can convene the group when updates to the tool are needed. It will be important to capture the information as you complete the Student Participation tool.
2. As a team read through each question in the Consideration column. Clarify any questions the student may have about the tool. If your school deems it appropriate to make this form available to students (e.g., on school website), a student may review the form prior to the meeting, and be expected to come prepared with any outstanding questions, thoughts, concerns, etc.
3. Collect the appropriate information to inform whether the experience is suitable and practical for the student. Depending on the school, this step may be completed in advance of the meeting to allow additional time for the student to review and gather supporting documents and consult with appropriate school personnel (e.g., during Advisory).
4. Add the information to the Evidence column and/or provide a brief explanation to answer the corresponding question in the Evidence column. If steps 2 and 3 are

completed in advance of the meeting, we strongly encourage that the team review all information in the evidence column. This collaborative team review will support a shared understanding of the determination for student participation in the learning experience.

### What is 'Yes'?

If the evidence provided answers the question in the affirmative, answer 'Yes' in the YES, or Action Steps to get to Yes column. When saying 'Yes,' Teams should, as much as possible, consider linking/attaching existing student/school/district documentation related to the question.

### What if we cannot say 'Yes'?

If the answer to a question is 'No' or 'Not Yet' it does not necessarily mean that the conversation is over, and the student cannot participate in the experience. Instead, use the questions to prompt educators' and the student's thinking about what action steps are necessary to get to 'Yes', including what additional information, resources, or improved student supports may be needed and could be reasonably implemented to make the experience work for the student.

When identifying action steps, it will be important to identify who is responsible for tracking down information and when the team will revisit the tool.

### What materials should we have on hand while completing the Student Participation tool?

- **General Flexible Pathway Guidance Materials:** Relevant, local (at the LEA or school level) guidance on Flexible Pathways, including any policy guidance around Flexible Pathway opportunities offered through the LEA or school; any documented procedures or policies for already approved Flexible Pathway opportunities and/or off campus experiences.
- **Specific Flexible Pathway Experience Materials:** Information about the specific experience being considered, such as program materials, course syllabi, letters of agreement or contracts between the school and the site facilitating the opportunity.
- **Student Materials:** The student's Personal Learning Plan and other individual goal planning documents, the student's schedule and transcript, or any other materials determined relevant to team members.

### Summary

At this point, AOE is not collecting the Flexible Pathway Profiles or Student Participation tools nor are they asking schools to submit them. AOE expects that school will use the

questions in the guides to ensure appropriate, equitable placement, understands that the local context will vary from school to school and hopes that schools will publish their Flexible Pathways Profiles.

## Resources

The following resources are referenced throughout the Pathways Profile Tool associated with this Facilitation Guide.

## Pathway Profile Examples

These additional resources will be developed and made available on the AOE [Flexible Pathways](#) page.

Student Participation Tool Examples	Student Participation FP Talking Points
Dual Enrollment	Dual Enrollment
Early College	Early College
Work Based Learning	Work Based Learning
Center for Technology Education	Center for Technology Education
Virtual Blended Learning	Virtual Blended Learning

## Pathways Profile Tool links

[Personalized Learning Plan \(PLP\)](#)

[AOE Flexible Pathway Profile](#)