

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS



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A FRAMEWORK & CATALYST

Strategic points to ponder for
K-12 leaders, from ideation to
instructional transformation

This paper explores the dynamic shift in pedagogical practices, and the necessity for cohesion to ensure longevity for the personalized learning plan, as well as higher academic achievement.

AUTHORS



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As the Chief Technology Officer for the Calcasieu Parish Public Schools for nineteen years, Dr. Abshire is a catalyst to initiate the integration of technology throughout the nation and internationally by providing leadership on numerous national, state and district committees focusing on the role of technology and curriculum in changing educational practice. A forty-three year veteran educator, she has worked as a school principal, K-5 teacher, library/media specialist, classroom teacher, and university professor. In 2010 she was appointed by the FCC to the USAC board representing the nation's schools and libraries on ERATE matters. Sheryl was the 2013 National Coalition for Technology in Education & Training Community Builder Award winner for exemplary service in support of policies and practices designed to facilitate the effective integration of technology into teaching and learning across the nation's education system. ISTE awarded Sheryl the first Public Policy Advocate of the Year Award in 2009 for her decades of work promoting educational technology. Dr. Abshire is the past president of the Louisiana ISTE affiliate – LACUE where she presently serves as the Vice President of Advocacy and Programs. She was the first teacher inducted into our country's National Teachers' Hall of Fame and serves on the board and is past chair of Consortium for School Networking (CoSN). Additionally, she serves on the K-12 Advisory Board for Blackboard, Dell's Platinum Advisory Committee, eSchool News and Scholastic Administrators Advisory Boards.



Scott Bailey

Chief Academic Officer, Washoe County School District (NV)

Scott Bailey is the Chief Academic Officer of the Washoe County School District (WCSD) in Reno, Nevada. With approximately 65,000 students, the Washoe County School District is the second largest school district in Nevada. Scott's leadership experience in the WCSD also includes service as a school principal and a district performance director. As a member of the Superintendent's Leadership Team, Scott oversees multiple initiatives within the District's strategic plan. Under the strategic plan, the WCSD has made tremendous progress in student achievement, including the realization of record-setting graduation rates. Prior to his employment with the WCSD, Scott was a teacher in Joplin, Missouri. Upon accepting a position with the Clark County School District (CCSD) as a reading specialist in 1992, Scott relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada. In the CCSD, Scott taught elementary grades K – 6, and ultimately served as a school administrator for 13 years. In 2005, Scott was extended the opportunity to open a new school, and went on to earn the distinction of Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Year. In addition to numerous senatorial, gubernatorial, and congressional recognitions for excellence in educational service over the years, Scott was appointed to the Baldrige Board of Examiners by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce in 2010. Additionally, Scott has taught graduate level courses for Nova Southeastern University, and spent several years learning corporate structures as a part-time cast member at the MGM Grand Las Vegas. Scott is certified as a Six Sigma Green Belt by the Institute of Industrial Engineers, and holds four FEMA certificates in emergency response. Scott has a proven track record of successfully embedding these "outside the box" experiences into various school improvement initiatives. He enjoys engaging in global professional learning networks, and serves on numerous local, state and national committees.





Tim Clark, Ed.D.
Educational Consultant and Strategist

Dr. Tim Clark is an Educational Consultant and Strategist. In this role, he provides guidance to districts in strategic planning & professional development for integrating technology and designing digital curriculum. He has been an educator for over 25 years and has taught all grade levels, ESL & gifted learners, and most recently served as Coordinator of Instructional Technology for Forsyth County Schools, GA. Tim promotes Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) and mobile learning to empower students and teachers with their personal technology tools for building learning

communities. He is the author of the BYOTNetwork blog at www.byotnetwork.com. He has been featured in NBC News, EdTech Magazine & many other news outlets. Throughout his career, he has been a vocal advocate for the use of instructional technology and digital content to increase achievement & motivation, encourage collaboration, facilitate critical thinking and construct innovative learning environments.



Jeff McCoy
Interim Associate Superintendent of Academics, Greenville County Schools (SC)

Jeff McCoy is currently serving as the Interim Associate Superintendent of Academics for Greenville County Schools in South Carolina. Greenville County Schools is the largest district in South Carolina and 45th largest in the nation with over 76,000 students. Jeff started his career in Greenville County Schools as a middle school teacher in 2000 and has held various district leadership positions throughout his sixteen year career. He is currently an adjunct professor at Furman University and serves on multiple state and national committees.



Kerry Padrick
Chief Communications Officer, St. Lucie Public Schools (FL)

Kerry Padrick is the Chief Communications Officer for St. Lucie Public Schools with responsibilities for internal as well as external streams of two-way communication and engagement. With twenty-six years of experience in the field of education, she has had opportunities to learn from others, share her teaching craft, facilitate professional development, build educational partnerships, and enhance student achievement as a classroom teacher, curriculum specialist, site-based administrator, and district leader.

Her recent support of quality teaching and learning via district-wide implementation of

the new standards and of the migration into the digital realm of accessing content provides context to springboard new information.

Understanding the importance of keeping a finger on the pulse of her varied audiences, she works in collaboration with others and seeks input to refine communication, pursue partnerships, and support customer service. By placing high value on working in such a manner, she and her team have experienced success in telling the school district's story, marketing, and re-branding the educational organization to highlight the accomplishments of students and educators alike.

Working as a community partner with others in the area to support high education standards and overall economic development, Mrs. Padrick recognizes that she can accomplish far more through collaboration than through solo operations. As an avid football fan, sideline coach, and cheerleader for her sons, she takes to heart what Coach Vince Lombardi said, "People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society."

Introduction

The goal of personalized learning is to transform instruction through a focus on each student's unique differences, interests, abilities, and aspirations; essentially it must be learner-centric. As an added benefit, there is a greater potential for students to develop marketable skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication¹) demanded by employers in the digital age workplace. In a personalized learning environment, teachers implement innovative, best practice strategies that contribute to student success and academic achievement. Effective pedagogical strategies, engaging content, and student choice are hallmarks of personalized instruction. With a quality teacher in every classroom, technology is the catalyst that makes personalized learning possible.

Personalized learning is a methodology that focuses on more than just standards or objectives. It necessitates that teachers facilitate instruction that caters to each individual child. It must be varied in pace, purpose, and content for each student and tailored to personal interests, passions, and preferences.

This approach is a departure from traditional models in a teacher-centric environment, where a teacher expounds facts upon students and where students memorize and subsequently regurgitate information in tests. In the personalized learning environment, teachers must empower students to assume ownership of their learning and to eventually become co-designers of their learning within appropriate structures. Student ownership of the learning is crucial.

District leaders, principals, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders need to agree upon a common language that supports student empowerment. Confusion about terms will result in delays and lack of accountability. A common vocabulary should be used with fidelity when designing a personalized learning plan for a district and should prioritize student voice and choice. For personalized learning to be successful, leaders must design and sustain a student-centered learning environment. This learning approach facilitates academic success through teaching styles, tools, or curriculum that fits each student's needs. In addition, a student-centered approach involves all areas of a school community for both teachers and students. When implemented correctly, personalized learning affects culture, curriculum and instruction, professional learning, leadership, and data analysis.

For true instructional transformation to occur, the focus must be on student learning. The teacher has to be an observer, learning how to address the multitude of cultural differences, learning styles, and academic strengths and weaknesses in the classroom; and then become a facilitator or counselor. This approach extends beyond academic differences. Identifying the uniqueness of each child helps the teacher to evolve instructionally and nurture that student's skills. A wide array of pedagogies,

¹ <http://www.nea.org/tools/52217.htm>



processes, and projects can be utilized once the teacher discovers what motivates each child.

The personalized learning model has to be flexible so that the teacher can modify it as necessary. As for curricular materials, the teacher may begin with district-provided “out-of-the-box” resources but then modify those materials through the use of online resources and customize them for the needs of their students. It is the responsibility of the school or district to provide teachers with equitable and sustainable instructional resources that all teachers and students can easily access and personalize. The learning resources should be granular and tagged with relevant metadata so that teachers can easily search for instructional materials for their students. In this way, teachers should be involved in the curriculum design process at the classroom level. Technology is the glue that holds all of this together, not the driver of the curriculum. With student progress, and technology connecting the roles of various individuals, these roles become more symbiotic. Personalized learning should be a balanced combination of new instructional approaches, tech tools and adjustments to curriculum.

Although personalized learning is always a work in progress as students, opportunities, and resources continue to change, this blueprint provides several powerful examples that illustrate the practical ways in which districts are implementing their plans. Greenville County Schools - South Carolina, Perris Union High School District - California, and Washoe County School District - Nevada are but a few of the exemplary districts in our country that are well on their way to creating an optimal personalized learning environment. (See Appendix A)

Personalized learning implementations parallel student learning shifts. As K-12 professionals strive to assess where a student is with his/her skills, it is important to remember that each district is at a different readiness level, so one “recipe” does not fit all. It is important for districts to “adapt” what is relevant from other initiatives and not fully “adopt” another district’s plan. In the same way that personalized learning takes students from where they are to where they aspire to be, administrators and technology influencers must share ideas that help school districts reach their goals. Collectively, all of these considerations provide the greatest opportunities to withstand the adversities that one might encounter when launching this initiative.

Leadership & Vision

Instructional change begins with a shift in culture; however, culture is difficult to change. Nurturing the right environment for personalized learning is the key to success. In order to transition from traditional learning to digital age learning; the “why” has to be developed first. People care about the why, not the what. Author Simon Sinek makes the case for “starting with the why” in his TED talk on the Golden Circle². In some cases, districts need to start a year or more ahead of personalized learning to begin changing mindsets. The ideal cultural setting to serve as fertile ground for personalized learning is the student-centered environment, and a deep understanding of technology’s role.

All students will succeed – that should be the expectation. The district’s culture should be one that expects all students to perform at their best. If students realize a belief in them, they are more open to finding the best way to succeed in their own way. They are also more likely to make the best of the resources they have been given. Communication, trust among all participants, and a feeling that everyone is moving in the same direction are cultural prerequisites.

Leadership for personalized learning requires a close collaboration among all district departments, but especially between academics and technology. It takes a concerted effort for departments to work constructively to make sure they align resources and processes, so they are not working at cross-purposes. The academics and technology departments must work closely to balance teacher and student access to technology resources, and to keep students safe online.

From an administrator’s perspective, it is ideal to meet teachers where they are within their understanding of instructional methodology. If teachers lack an understanding about the methodology, use of resources, or their role in the classroom, there is not going to be coherence in the deployment of true personalized learning. Administrators must also monitor and use data to help guide the different levels of learning. As individuals grow as learners, their expectations shift, and their goals for learning are also going to change. Teachers and principals should closely monitor this growth and adapt to such changes.

An initial personalized learning launch requires a serious investment of time. A strategic plan

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Has the leadership team/stakeholders group identified the “why”? (Why implement personalized learning?)
- Is there support for personalized learning at the superintendent and executive level?
- Is there support for personalized learning from the board?
- Are the right people in key leadership positions that can help ensure personalized learning will be successful?
- What is the implementation plan/timeline?

² https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action/transcript?language=en



must detail roles and progress metrics. This plan is not static; it must allow for continuous improvement, be flexible and fluid based on funding, student success, obstacles that may be encountered, and reactions to those obstacles.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

- Strong vision for personalized learning that is focused on the “why” and not the “what”.
- Strong leadership and support from the district executive team and board of trustees.
- Strong understanding of personalized learning and buy in from the executive team and all district departments.
- Strong leadership at the school level to oversee and lead the personalized learning initiative.

ACTION ITEMS ✓

- Define personalized learning.
- Determine the “Why.”
- Establish a core leadership team to support personalized learning.
- Create focus groups involving all stakeholders to plan for personalized learning.
- Inventory resources that already exist (people, equipment, etc.)
- Develop a collaboratively written plan to guide the implementation.

Funding for Growth & Sustainability

A sustainable and reliable source of funding is a prerequisite to personalized learning success. Districts must be realistic about the long term total cost of ownership over time in order to put the personalized learning plan into action. Professional learning as well as technology resources will need long-term support. If funding runs out after devices have been implemented for multiple years, the investment the district made in teacher development will appear to be a waste of time. Districts must help teachers see the connections between all of their technology tools and resources so that they do not perceive all of the resources as disconnected and disparate tools.

When asking teachers to transform their entire teaching style, an innate promise is made to them that these tools will work. Districts need to carefully analyze what funding needs to be devoted to supporting teachers and the devices and tools necessary for a successful personalized

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What sustainable funding source will the district/board use to fund the initiative?
- Does the funding source have the potential to go away? (grants, special revenue, etc.)
- What back up funding sources are in place if not using sustainable (general) funds?
- How will funding be secured for needed cost centers? (technology, human resources, digital content, communication and professional development)

learning implementation. A well-funded, adequate support plan for classroom teachers is necessary. Having a strong support plan in place will allow teachers to have confidence in developing their lesson plans with the use of technology.

Initially, districts must consider all cost centers as part of their personalized learning plan, such as:

- Technology (devices, insurance, infrastructure, maintenance, storage, WAN and LAN, internet connection, upgrades)
- Human Resources (tech support for devices and connectivity, technology integration support for teachers)
- Digital Resources (learning management systems, digital collections)
- Communication Resources (branding, outreach, community partnerships)
- Professional Development (teachers, administrators, media specialists)

Districts may need to consider multiple funding sources in order to get personalized learning off the ground. However, it is strongly advised that districts find a long term, sustainable funding source. A grant or bond may initially fund the initiative while districts plan a more permanent solution, but a long term funding source is critical to ensure districts can deliver on the promise of personalized learning for every student.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

- Strong, sustainable funding source to ensure that the investment and transformation of instruction does not end after a few years when the funding runs out.
- Appropriate funds for all cost centers.



ACTION ITEMS ✓

- ☐ Identify through appropriate processes the devices to be purchased.
- ☐ Identify Technology needs. (devices, insurance, infrastructure, maintenance, storage, WAN and LAN, internet connection, upgrades etc.)
- ☐ Identify human resource needs. (tech support for devices and connectivity, technology integration support for teachers, etc.)
- ☐ Identify digital resource needs. (learning management systems, digital collections, etc.)
- ☐ Identify communication needs. (branding, outreach, community partnerships, etc.)
- ☐ Identify professional development needs. (teachers, administrators, media specialists, etc.)



Community Engagement

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How will the district engage the community and communicate the vision for personalized learning?
- How will the district get community buy in and support?

Energizing and engaging the stakeholders within a community is necessary to the success of the implementation. Any time there is a shift in roles and expectations, all stakeholders should be involved and feel that they play an active part in the change. Districts should cultivate partnerships and solicit feedback from higher education institutions, local and county government, recreational associations, juvenile justice, faith-based, and non-profit organizations. Educators should keep in mind that, in most communities, there is a larger majority of people who do not have school-age children than parents

of current students. Because they may not be as connected to the schools, districts must work harder to “sell” these constituents and stakeholders on the initiatives, particularly in districts where personalized learning funding depends on referendums or bonds to be passed.

Effective marketing and branding is a foundational strategy essential to any successful, innovative effort in a district. Districts should be careful to ensure that their “personalized learning brand” is grounded in teaching and learning, rather than being solely focused on technology. All departments must have input to achieve a sense of ownership, agreeing on terms and messaging to be used when communicating this to internal and external stakeholders. The use of social media, presentations, focus groups, board meetings, surveys and/or visualization tools (software) can enhance the stakeholder engagement process.

In order to ensure a successful personalized learning initiative districts should start preparing well in advance before implementing a personalized learning program. Well-timed marketing campaigns that resonate with the community are critical to success. The district communications team must understand and explain the vital components of the personalized learning plan to all stakeholders. Effective marketing campaigns will alleviate parental concerns and help them understand instructional shifts. For example, many parents expect textbooks to be sent home for homework each night. Holding parent nights at the beginning of the initiative to explain to parents the “why” around personalized learning is a great way to accomplish buy-in for the initiative. A good marketing campaign can also facilitate an understanding of how the shift to personalized learning prepares students with the skills to compete in the global economy.

As a district begins the initiative, it is wise to plan for gathering stakeholder feedback for continuous improvement. Consider what focus groups are needed to get feedback for how the initiative is going and to gather ideas for improvement. Focus on the brand and marketing message and launch the initiative on a positive note.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

- Strong shared vision for personalized learning.
- Strong community support for your personalized learning initiative.
- District communications team.

ACTION ITEMS ✓

- ☐ Design a brand for the initiative.
- ☐ Create a community leadership team to solicit feedback from the community.
- ☐ Develop an outreach plan with all community stakeholders.
- ☐ Articulate the communication plan to all stakeholders.

Infrastructure, Support & Equitable Access

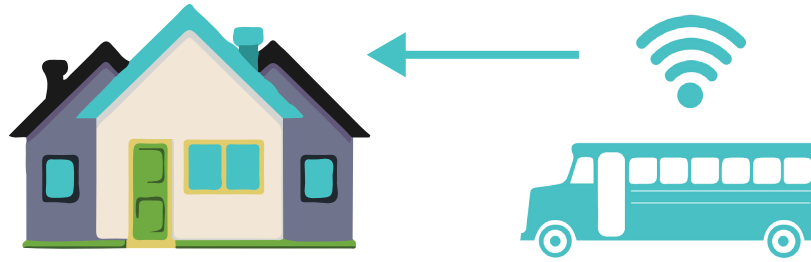
Districts should plan for the future, not for the present. It is possible that students will have multiple devices connected to the wireless network. Even when schools provide devices, districts must recognize that students may bring their own devices. Because students are often personally connected to their own technology tools, those devices can be a natural conduit for personalized learning. It is essential that the technology policy assure ubiquitous, safe and secure access to the internet during the school day and at home. Additionally, districts should plan for the amount and quality of digital content that will be a part of the personalized learning transformation. These are major considerations when planning a reliable, scalable infrastructure.

A key concern is the “digital divide”, known more commonly in personalized learning environments as the “homework divide.” As teachers become more comfortable with personalized learning, assignments for students begin to move towards an online environment. The “homework gap” happens when students do not have internet at home to complete the assignment. This obstacle can be overcome.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Will your current infrastructure support personalized learning in every building?
- How will you overcome the digital divide by providing equitable access?
- How will you provide technical support?





Coachella Valley Unified School District found an innovative solution to the homework gap by putting wireless access on all school buses and then parking them around the community for students to have access to the internet.³

In addition, the FCC's Lifeline Program⁴ makes broadband more affordable for low-income Americans. Furthermore, a national nonprofit, called EveryoneOn⁵ is working to eliminate the digital divide by identifying providers for high-speed, low-cost internet service and computers, and free digital literacy courses accessible to all unconnected Americans.

St. Lucie Public Schools have focused on the access, not the device, and as a result coined the phrase "Access Now⁶." St. Lucie Public Schools maximizes bandwidth/Wi-Fi access by partnering with businesses that support Internet access for all students. St. Lucie students have access beyond the school day, thus meeting the promise of a truly personalized learning environment. Additionally, an innovative partnership with the county's mass transit system offers free transportation to public libraries and other community spaces with free Wi-Fi access.

For personalized learning to have the most impact, districts must consider the capacity and equity among all of their schools. Typically, newer facilities receive the most modern technology and infrastructure; however, districts must continually review and monitor these needs to eliminate any potential disparities. If students are allowed to take devices home, districts must consider whether they have the equipment and structure necessary to filter content on devices while students are off-campus. Student security and data privacy should be addressed during the planning process as this area may quickly derail the initiative. If districts do not feel capable of evaluating these areas, consider collaborating with other districts or trusted vendors who can help evaluate strengths and weaknesses.

One area of infrastructure that districts should consider when moving to personalized learning is how to deliver digital content to students. Most districts implementing personalized learning implement a robust suite of interoperable digital tools and resources (Student Information System, Learning Management System, Assessment System, Learning Object Repository,

³<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/wi-fi-enabled-school-buses-leave-no-child-offline/>

⁴<https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers>

⁵<http://everyoneon.org/>

⁶<http://www.stlucie.k12.fl.us/parents-students/access-now/>

etc). The planning and development of this learning ecosystem is an important decision and should begin with a strong partnership between academics and technology. Once chosen, the technology department must ensure that they can effectively support the this ecosystem from a technical and security standpoint. Districts should consider having teachers, principals and students involved in the decision-making process since these tools will serve as the foundation for the personalized learning platform. Additionally, it is critical to provide teachers with professional learning around any of these new resources.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS	ACTION ITEMS ✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wide-spread infrastructure that adequately supports multiple devices per student.• Digital tools, resources, and platforms that are interoperable for supporting personalized learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Evaluate current infrastructure in existing schools.□ Identify infrastructure needs and secure appropriate funding.□ Plan and construct a reliable, scalable infrastructure and network.□ Share strategies for providing home access.□ Map and illustrate an ecosystem of current available digital tools, resources, and platforms that support personalized learning.

Professional Learning

Professional learning investments are often overlooked by districts when planning for a personalized learning initiative. Effective professional learning should be ongoing, sustained, differentiated, and just in time. If teachers are expected to transform instructional practice required to make personalized learning successful, effective professional development must be provided. Professional learning around designing

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Has the district invested appropriately in professional learning?
- What professional learning will be provided for district level staff to help them understand the shifts required for the implementation of personalized learning?
- What professional learning will be provided for administrators so they can lead the personalized learning initiative and facilitate true classroom transformation?
- What training needs to happen before implementing personalized learning?
- What professional learning will be provided to teachers to ensure they have the training necessary to implement personalized learning?
- How far in advance of rolling out devices will the district and schools begin providing professional learning opportunities to stakeholders?



digital curriculum is critical to make the necessary shifts in teaching. Furthermore, it is essential that school administrators and district leaders are also engaged in professional learning that enables them to understand, support and lead the implementation of these new learning environments.

If a personalized learning initiative is going to be successful, the way districts conduct professional learning must change. Successful districts are offering “just in time support” or “job-embedded PD.” In this scenario, professional learning happens at the school during the teacher’s planning time. Educators need personalized learning as much as the students. District leaders and principals have the opportunity to model personalized learning in professional learning sessions as a way to help teachers understand what it looks like in action. Excellent examples of this model of personalized learning for professional development can be found in Washoe County School District - Nevada, Greenville County Schools - South Carolina and St. Lucie Public Schools - Florida. (See Appendix B)

Various models of professional learning may also be implemented by a district to ensure long-term success and sustainability within a model of continuous improvement. If professional learning is embedded throughout the day, teachers may need access to a coach or mentor who can provide encouragement, suggestions, modeling, and support. They may need assistance in the process of instructional design for personalized learning. Professional learning activities may be conducted in person or online and should be focused on developing resources and processes that teachers can implement more readily within their classrooms.

In order for true transformation to take place, the culture must be one that supports risk-taking. Teachers must feel that it is acceptable and necessary to fail from time to time and to learn from those mistakes. Strong professional learning will help stakeholders gain the knowledge and confidence to plan and implement personalized learning effectively. Professional learning in tandem with effective leadership will create a climate that encourages teachers and students to explore new strategies or experiment with the curation and creation of digital content.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS	ACTION ITEMS ✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Professional development plan that is ongoing, sustained, differentiated and just-in-time prior to the implementation of personalized learning.● Professional development for all levels of leadership from district level executive staff to classroom teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Detail your professional learning plan for the implementation, including roles, responsibilities, and expectations.□ Identify professional learning resources. (in-house, vendor partnerships, etc.)

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What changes need to be made to the current curriculum to support personalized learning?
- Does the curriculum provide enough flexibility for teachers to truly personalize learning for students?

Teachers should leverage technology as part of the personalized learning plan, but it is a mistake to equate “personalized” learning with “digital” instruction. Digital instruction is a support network for the plan while personalized learning introduces new ways of addressing learning goals. Technology innovations make it possible to customize instruction and play to an individual’s abilities or address gaps and deficits in ways that educators have previously never been able to accomplish.

One of the mistakes that many districts make when implementing personalized learning is overlooking the required changes to the curriculum. Instructionally, there must be a flexible curriculum designed by the district or schools at a very granular level: the right playlist or collection of resources and learning objects at the right time to make a difference. Differentiated and individualized content must appeal to and motivate students on their personalized learning paths. This curriculum may include a variety of delivery models such as project-based learning and hands-on activities so students can demonstrate their strengths through multiple venues and approaches.

While digital curriculum is at the heart of personalized learning, the delivery of that curriculum is also critical to transform instruction. If district leaders and teachers do not understand this holistic change throughout the curriculum, content areas, and delivery, personalized learning will become nothing more than the use of expensive devices that have simply replaced pen and paper. There are numerous innovative delivery models available. However, each district must find the one that works best for their learning community, but there is no doubt that “traditional” (teacher-centric) approaches are no longer effective.

Teachers must be willing to embrace and implement the changes to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that personalized learning requires. Sometimes when teachers begin utilizing technology tools for instruction or implementing project-based learning, there may be a tendency to focus on the application or the product. Teachers should practice good instructional design, create authentic assessments, align the content to standards, identify the appropriate tools to support instruction and select a delivery model that will complement personalized learning. Student voice and choice can be honored by capitalizing on their individual interests and strengths by using technology tools or other resources to show what they have learned.



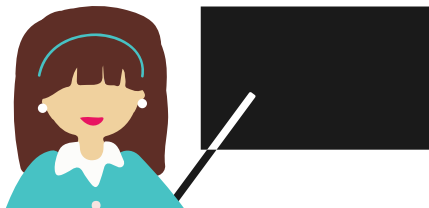
Instructionally, personalized learning transforms educational practice, facilitates inquiry, and promotes problem solving in order to entice curiosity. Additionally, as curriculum, instructional and assessment strategies are optimized for personalized learning, it is important not to minimize the shift that will occur with classroom management. When introducing devices and personalized learning into a classroom, behavior strategies and management will have to shift to accommodate this new landscape where learners have more control and responsibility for their learning.

While modifying curriculum to support personalized learning, districts must align it to the district's vision and strategic plan. Curriculum specialists and other instructional leaders will need to understand how writing curriculum in a personalized learning environment varies from writing curriculum for the traditional environment. The standards and learning targets contained in the curriculum should be consistent and easily understood for every student, but how students meet those standards may differ. Multiple pathways to meeting standards are informed by real-time data on student performance and engagement, learning styles and interests, and the goals of the student and parents. A personalized learning environment requires a more authentic system of grading and assessment in order to properly gauge the effectiveness of this new learning model.

Although personalized learning may be considered a new and innovative approach to learning, standard measures of accountability may present a new reality for schools and districts. Teachers can get frustrated because standardized testing may run contrary to personalized learning. Personalized learning may clash with rigid expectations of where, when and how learning takes place. Teachers should provide students with options to demonstrate competency and focus on the processes that the students use instead of just the end result.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

- Curriculum that supports the digital transformation required for personalized learning.
- Culture of risk-taking.



ACTION ITEMS ✓

- ☐ Modify written district curriculum to support personalized learning.
- ☐ Establish a process for instructional design.
- ☐ Describe best practices for teaching and learning.
- ☐ Define methods for accountability and assessment.

Policies & Procedures

Implementing something new or making changes to a traditional model often conflicts with established policies. Because some district policies may have existed for many years, those policies that could potentially impact personalized learning must be examined to ensure support for the initiative. Tied to those policies are often job descriptions that may need revision in order to support personalized learning. Policy review provides an additional opportunity to bring key stakeholders into the conversation.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What policies and procedures need to be examined and revised in order to adequately support personalized learning?
- Has the district identified or created a curriculum for digital citizenship?

One aspect often overlooked when transitioning to a curriculum that supports personalized learning is digital citizenship. Converting from a traditional environment to a personalized learning environment with devices changes the game. Internet safety and responsible use practices need to be embedded throughout the curriculum to ensure student safety. All departments should be mobilized to promote student data privacy, online safety and security.

Most districts have Acceptable Use Policies in place already. Acceptable Use policies will need to be reviewed to align with personalized learning plans. Policies that dictate seat time and other restrictions may need to be revised or modified to reflect the needs of the new learning landscape. Additionally, districts that have negotiated employee contracts in place should be mindful of how these contracts might need to be collectively modified to ensure successful personalized learning implementations.

The use of digital curricula and assessments in K12 teaching and learning as part of a personalized learning environment is dependent on the intelligent and creative use of data. Student strengths and weaknesses must be identified by using multiple data sources. However, the extensive use of student data to truly personalize learning has led to potential issues with student data privacy. Districts must be cognizant of the developing local, state and federal policies dealing with this emerging data privacy landscape.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

- Culture focused on learning and a process to balance policy and instruction.
- Culture of awareness around data privacy.

ACTION ITEMS ✓

- ☐ Publish an Acceptable Use Policy that supports personalized learning through digital citizenship.
- ☐ Develop and align policies and procedures for data privacy.
- ☐ Utilize data to ensure ongoing sustainability.



Conclusion

Prioritizing initiatives is and will continue to be one of the greatest challenges in transformational learning. Personalized learning is a critical component of assuring that each student is able to meet his or her learning potential. While a potentially daunting task to begin a personalized learning project, it is essential that districts examine the opportunity to create an optimal learning environment for every student.

Being a part of the national conversation with colleagues and peers is an important first step. Personalized learning is possible for any and every school that wants to take advantage of this momentum and start their own transformation. The time is right for districts to use personalized learning strategies to enable and improve learning. Collaborating with community stakeholders can reach beyond the classroom and form strong, lasting partnerships to support anytime, anywhere learning. We are now living and working in a time of great potential and possibilities. Technology enabled personalized learning can be the link to realize the true mission of learning for all students in the nation's schools.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.bcps.org/academics/stat/>
<http://www.houstonisd.org/Domain/35313>
<http://edglossary.org/personalized-learning/>
<http://www.personalizelearning.com/p/home.html>
http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-PLP_Guide_to_Personalized_Learning.pdf
<http://k12education.gatesfoundation.org/student-success/personalized-learning/>
<http://nextgenlearning.org/topics/personalized-learning>
<http://one-to-oneinstitute.org/>
<https://www.k12blueprint.com/toolkits/personalized-learning>
<http://gettingsmart.com/2014/01/10-resources-promote-personalize-learning/>

Appendix A

In Greenville County Schools, South Carolina, a plan is in place to provide devices for every child in grades 3-12. Greenville currently has 12 schools with devices for every child and an additional 10 schools will be receiving devices in August 2016. After re-evaluating a pilot that began several years ago, the initiative was re-branded after analyzing the lessons learned. Once fully implemented in 2019-2020, around 63,000 Chromebooks will be deployed. Greenville is already experiencing success in their schools that have embraced maximizing the resources of digital tools to support personalized learning.

Perris Union High School District started their planning process by carefully crafting and creating desired outcomes for their Scholar+ initiative⁷. The Scholar+ initiative provides students with the opportunity for 24/7 learning that is both flexible and personalized. Some of their other outcomes included using 21st Century tools to do authentic work, the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively with peers, experts and their teachers, accessing libraries of digital content that provide multiple pathways to learning, and pursuing real-world issues and topics of deep interest.

As Washoe County anticipates an increase in personalized classroom learning environments, it has been intentionally working to build 21st century teacher competencies. For example, Washoe has devoted a team of specialists and coaches to support schools and teachers through professional learning opportunities and resources that help them implement content standards through 21st century competencies. Popular tools include 21st Century Elevator Guides⁸, which serve as an instructional planning tool for 21st century student outcomes such as collaboration, knowledge construction, real-world problem solving and innovation, use of technology, self-regulation, and skilled communication. The District has also formed a robust 21st Century Leaders Network, which serves as a district-wide professional learning community supporting 21st century learning and technology integration, and Camp 21, which exposes teachers to Web 2.0 tools and resources that can be used in the classroom to increase student engagement, productivity and learning.

⁷ <http://www.puhisd.org/pages/scholar>

⁸ <http://wcsd21.com/Elevator%20Guide.php>

Appendix B

Washoe County School District made great strides in the professional learning arena. They employed a design team, representing department leadership from across the district, to plan comprehensive year-long professional learning of teachers and support personnel. Additionally, a Leadership Development Steering Committee plans year-long professional learning for all



administrators within the 64,000-student district. 21st Century learning competencies have voice at both tables. Start professional development before getting devices and work on 21st Century behaviors and a badge system or matrix, such as the one Washoe County has put in place.⁹ Build momentum towards 21st Century technology environments and work on the instructors' competencies well before the devices are there.

Many districts start professional learning for administrators and teachers at least a year ahead of device rollout by offering Personalized Learning Academies for school leadership teams. Greenville County Schools hosts Personalized Learning Academies for school leadership teams a year prior to the school receiving devices. These teams include the principal, assistant principals, instructional coaches and teacher leaders to include all stakeholder input. However a district chooses to roll out professional learning, the administration should always be careful to not focus on the technology.

St. Lucie's approach to professional learning leveraged teachers' strengths rather than starting from ground zero. Three waves of professional development and implementation were developed with respect for where teachers were as individuals in their use of technology innovations, their roles and responsibilities, and their personal professional learning goals. Using this personalized approach, a network of expanding capacity for leading and coaching was developed. As waves progressed, so did the capacity for teacher-to-teacher coaching, the appreciation for collaboration, and the positive shift in school culture.

⁹ <http://wcsd21.com/badge.php>