The Promise of Personalized Learning

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Agenda
• Define what Personalized Learning IS and ISN’T
• What research is saying about effectiveness of personalized learning?
• What are the factors of effective/non-effective?
• How does Competency-Based Learning (mastery) fit into this movement?
• Applications for us…Questions FOR participants?
  – Pros/Cons
  – Future promise
  – When/where/how we might be inclined to use PL?
  – Questions FROM participants?

Definition **Personalized Learning**
• tailoring learning for each student’s strengths, needs and interests
• enabling student voice and choice in what, how, when and where they learn to raise engagement and achievement
• providing flexibility and supports to ensure mastery
• takes place within the context of educational equity, providing culturally responsive learning environments and equitable educational opportunities for all students

Five Basic Principles
1. Competency-Based Learning
2. Authentic Learning
3. Flexible Learning
4. Student-Driven Learning
5. Dispositions for Learning

Educators attempt to use Personalized Learning to empower student voice and choice in classrooms, placing students at the center of their learning and helping every student to succeed.

What is the class experience like?
• Learner profiles
• Records of the student’s strengths, needs, progress, goals
• Personal learning path which allows for variability
• Competency-based progression, driven by a mastery of key skills and ideas
• Variety of flexible learning environments, which the teacher may adjust as needed
What is Competency-based Education?

A systems model in which:
1. Students advance upon demonstrated mastery
2. Competencies include explicit, measurable, learning objectives that empower students
3. Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience
4. Students receive timely, differentiated support based on individual learning needs
5. Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and the creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions

Motivation for Personalized Learning

• future graduates will be expected not merely to retain facts and formulas, but to think critically, problem-solve collaboratively, and innovate creatively
• skills and dispositions, or “habits of mind,” are increasingly the currency of value in today’s colleges, careers, and democracy
• key cognitive strategies (the capacity to think, problem-solve, research), learning skills (ownership of learning, collaborative learning, strategic reading), and transition knowledge & skills (self-advocacy, postsecondary aspirations)

Equity

No longer can a one-size-fits-all education system adequately educate our diverse student body. It never has.
• Massachusetts’ student enrollment over the past 20 years showed significant disparity in achievement between white students and students of color.
• The traditional educational system was set up for one cultural group to the detriment of all others.
• Competency-based structures place an equal emphasis upon lifelong skills such as growth mindset.

What it is not?

Competency-based education models will ensure students are ready for a 21st century economy.
Traditional education is:
• Time-based
• Highly variable in measures of proficiency
• Organized for efficiency in delivering curriculum
• Dependent on extrinsic motivation
• Built on an institutional, fixed mindset
• Good at ranking and sorting students

Differentiation is applied per lesson or unit. Personalized Learning is a culture, structure, and pedagogy.
Most reported research on Personalized Learning is the Gates/RAND studies from 2015.

11,000 students in 62 schools showed gains in math/reading.

Greater gains, longer they were in the program.

Unfortunately, they were not definitive. Results could not be shown to be solely due to PL. Schools employed a wide range of instructional techniques, some very similar to traditional schools. Some may have been the well-funded charter school environments they were in.

Other studies were “mixed.” Some actually negative. Some schools dropped the methodology. (25% in some cases.)

Research

Facilitates one-on-one time with teachers

Teachers adjust the small groups more frequently based on data

Students that were behind showed growth over time

Students grow in the non-academic areas. They are responsible for managing their path to success.

Ensures mastery of skills and a stronger foundation for future success.

Retention, engagement, and motivation may be higher for students who may choose activities in type/content.

Accommodates different learning styles more easily.

Skills for mastery are more like “real life.”

Inherent positive effects

Lacking student agency – too few choices

Inadequate content and not flexible enough to allow you to add your own

Data is not useful, not granular enough

Lacks recommendations

Poorly aligned/created assessments or teacher cannot modify

Little classroom integration

Little research showing evidence that the system is effective with children

Red Flags
Teacher Support

- Enough time to create/modify assignments/instruction/pathways/resources/assessments/interventions
- Addressing standards
- Monitoring speed of students
- Realistic?

How are states becoming involved?

- Moving from a focus on standards to competencies
- Adding cross-curricular skills and dispositions
- Changing assessments from a single measure of achievement to multiple measures and teacher-developed performance assessments
- Developing graduation requirements through proficiency
- Developing seat time requirements that work within this system (including time outside the classroom)
- Multiple pathways to demonstrate proficiency
- Credentialing for teachers, promoting personalized learning methods

School/System Level Practices

- Leadership
- Communication
- Multi-grade band classrooms/structures
- Learning outside the classroom walls
- Readiness
- Graduation through proficiency
- Reallocation of resources
- Autonomy and accountability
- Collaboration
- Technology that supports this model

Task #1

- Pros

- Cons

Task #2 – Future Promise?

Task #3 – Does Personalized Learning make sense in your context?

- Apply it to your context
- We’re going to use Personalized Learning
  - When
  - Where
  - How
  - For what purpose (Why?)