

Insights from Ohio's Personalized Learning Network

Collaboration as a Catalyst

Collaboration was at the forefront of educators' minds when thinking about catalysts for building capacity around personalized learning. Educators valued opportunities to collaborate with educators at their own schools, with educators outside of their schools, and with their regional educational service centers (ESCs).

Collaboration Within Schools

Educators highlighted the advantages of collaborating with their peers within their schools to experiment with personalized learning strategies. For example, a rural middle school principal emphasized the mutual support among educators in their school design team, describing them as "champions for each other." Another teacher reflected on the significance of fellow teachers as their primary resource. However, Ohio Personalized Learning Implementation Survey¹ results from 2023–2024 revealed that **less than half of educators felt they had time to collaborate on personalized learning practices** during school hours. This section offers two examples of schools strengthening collaboration.

Examples

→ A high school in a small town in northeastern Ohio scheduled meetings about personalized learning during their intervention block every other week so they would not need substitutes for the teachers. The school design team comes together as a group to discuss successes and failures.

→ Two middle school teachers in southeastern Ohio paired up to design a writing project based on the personalized learning practices they learned at the LAUNCH convenings. The teachers described how having a partner was essential as they designed the project and experimented with new practices. While adjusting to a learner driven approach, the teachers would lean on each other, often walking across the hall asking the other for advice, such as, "How did your kids do this?"

"If I was trying to do this on my own, I don't feel like it would have been as successful because we can help each other."

– Teacher, middle school

¹ The Ohio Personalized Learning Implementation Surveys were administered in 17 schools in 2023–2024 to capture self-reported data that described how key elements of personalized learning were progressing, scaling, or spreading within a school or across a district.

This brief is part of a collection of briefs that highlight learnings from an evaluation of the LAUNCH pathway in Ohio. The information shared in these briefs is based on interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observations. This research was made possible with the generous support of KnowledgeWorks and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. For more information about KnowledgeWorks, please visit <https://knowledgeworks.org>. For more information about Ohio's work in personalized learning, please visit education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning.

Zweig, J., & Kennedy, K. (2024). Insights from Ohio's Personalized Learning Network: Collaboration as a Catalyst. Retrieved from education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning.

WHAT IS PERSONALIZED LEARNING?

Personalized learning is a learner driven approach to education that empowers students to take ownership of their learning.

HOW ARE SCHOOLS ENGAGED WITH PERSONALIZED LEARNING?

Schools across Ohio engaged in the LAUNCH pathway — a professional learning cohort that introduced teams of educators to personalized learning strategies. Schools received ongoing support from regional educational service centers (ESCs) and KnowledgeWorks.

LAUNCH PATHWAY ACTIVITIES:

- Regular coaching
- In-person and virtual convenings
- Optional personalized learning implementation surveys with continuous quality improvement supports
- Collaborative engagements with a national and state network of personalized learning practitioners

RESOURCES:

Ohio Department of Education and Workforce: [Personalized Learning education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning](https://education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning)



Collaboration with Other Schools and ESCs

Educators reported that the Ohio Personalized Learning Network convenings provided valuable opportunities to exchange ideas with other educators and further explore personalized learning in practice. Focused on components of the Ohio Personalized Learning Framework, KnowledgeWorks provided resources and guidance, had school design teams share artifacts and examples, and created space for collaboration. Across convening surveys, respondents agreed the convenings met the objectives of collaborating with their own school design team (97%-98%) and with other school design teams (85%-95%).¹ Participants reported that hearing from others about strategies to implement personalized learning and having time to develop plans with their own teams were particularly valuable. Between convenings, school design teams worked with staff from their ESCs, who provided practical assistance to incorporate personalized learning practices into their schools and classrooms. Educators reported that their interactions with the ESCs were particularly beneficial because of their strong understanding of the local context and close proximity, which allowed them to support educators in a just-in-time way.

“The most valuable is sharing ideas with colleagues and seeing what they have tried and how they do personalized learning.”

– Convening participant

Examples

- A teacher in a rural district in southeastern Ohio shared the “tremendous” help given by a team member at their ESC who was able to provide support around personalized learning. The ESC staff member guided them and then let them brainstorm on their own to create a plan together that would work best for them. In another school, the ESC staff member attended a professional development day to answer questions from educators about personalized learning.
- School design teams also appreciated the opportunities to learn from other schools. For example, a school design team was exploring the idea of Portrait of a Learner but wanted to know more about how it was working in other schools. The school design team was put in contact with another school to hear how they brought the creating a “Portrait of a Learner to life,” including ways to support teachers and students. These collaborations helped participants understand what this actually looks like in practice.



Questions to Consider:

- ✓ How can your school create a sustainable approach to educator collaboration around personalized learning? What existing structures could be leveraged?
- ✓ What opportunities for cross-school collaboration already exist that could be used to share personalized learning practices? How does personalized learning fit in with existing initiatives?
- ✓ What educators could serve as leaders in your school to build capacity around personalized learning?

¹The statistics reported here are based on survey questions at three convenings.