

# Insights from Ohio's Personalized Learning Network

## Strategies to Sustain Personalized Learning

As educators and leaders in the LAUNCH pathway look beyond the 2023–2024 school year, they shared that the barriers to sustaining and scaling personalized learning are similar to those of other education initiatives: funding, time, and competing initiatives. Educators and leaders value the structure of the LAUNCH pathway and support from their regional educational service centers, and many are committed to finding ways to continue building on their personalized learning work.

### Leveraging Educator Expertise to Scale

When describing plans to spread personalized learning practices in their schools or districts, educators and leaders talked about how they leverage the expertise of educators in their schools. In many cases, educators who were part of the LAUNCH school design teams shared their knowledge with other educators and encouraged colleagues to try personalized learning practices in their classrooms. Educators and leaders also talked about the importance of dedicated time to make intentional changes to practice. As one of the LAUNCH pathway facilitators noted, “I think that the schools and districts that we’ve seen scale this in the most transformational way, they create time and space for this work to happen.” Approximately 40% of educators in schools that administered the Ohio Personalized Learning Implementation Survey<sup>1</sup> in 2023–2024 agreed that time was provided for them to collaborate with their colleagues around personalized learning during school hours. In some schools, the time and space was provided at staff meetings, while in other schools, administrators found substitutes so educators could attend professional learning opportunities.

### Examples

- In an elementary school in southeastern Ohio, educators who attended the LAUNCH convenings regularly shared updates at staff meetings. The educators shared slide presentations and the “specific things [they are doing] in their classrooms.”
- A high school principal from a small town in northwest Ohio described how the educators in the LAUNCH cohort presented strategies to their colleagues after each convening. A few of the educators who were not involved became interested in the strategies presented and indicated they would try some of them as well. The school plans to continue to scale personalized learning through their established professional learning community structure.

<sup>1</sup>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](https://education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning).

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### 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)



→ An instructional coach at a middle school in northeastern Ohio described how important it was for her team to use resources that they already had to continue to support the work. She shared, “At one of the convenings, there was somebody talking about having all of these different resources, and I said, ‘Okay, but my district doesn’t have that.’ But we have far more than a district 40 minutes from where I am, so I have to think on a much smaller level. That doesn’t mean our team can’t do really cool things. I think that you can do personalized learning no matter what. We learned about community outreach at one of the convenings, so we’re making those connections to help sustain our work.”

## Trust and Support from Administration

In many interviews, educators and leaders described the importance of administrator support for personalized learning. The level of support ranged from a superintendent including personalized learning in the district’s strategic plan to school leaders providing educators with the autonomy to join the LAUNCH pathway and try personalized learning strategies in their classrooms. Approximately 95% of educators in schools that administered personalized learning implementation surveys in 2023–2024 agreed that it felt safe for them to try different instructional strategies and approaches in the classroom even if they did not work out.

### Examples

- An elementary educator in southwest Ohio described how one of the main facilitators of their success was that their administrator was “very willing to let us do what we think is best for our kids.” The trust that the administrator had in them to “have that freedom” to do personalized learning in their classroom was the “big structure” that helped them succeed.
- An instructional coach in northwest Ohio described the importance of the superintendent’s commitment to personalized learning, “Now we are talking about how we can get all of the administration on board and educating them so they understand what it is so that they can support the teachers.”

**"It's just also again, using resources that we've already had differently, looking at it more of, 'How can we individualize this? How can we do this or plan it and utilize the resource in order for the kids to take ownership of their learning?'"**

– Teacher, middle school



### Questions to Consider:

- ✓ What resources or assets might your school or district already have that you could leverage to support the implementation of personalized learning practices?
- ✓ What existing structures are in place that bring teams of educators together so they can work collaboratively to develop and refine lessons that incorporate personalized learning practices?
- ✓ In what ways can you provide support to educators? How can you create a culture of trust that encourages educators to try new practices?