Insights from Ohio's Personalized Learning Network
The "Why" of Personalized Learning

Educators across Ohio were looking for ways to engage their students, particularly those who have been harder to reach. As part of the LAUNCH pathway, educators and leaders reported they saw a difference in their teaching practice and the way students engaged with their learning. Reflecting on the "Why" of personalized learning was one of the first activities that educators and leaders engaged in during the LAUNCH pathway.

Educators Wanted Something New

After the first LAUNCH convening, 92% of participants reported that they developed an individual and collective "Why."

Educators across the country experienced a dip in morale as a result of the pandemic and its influence on students' mental health and knowledge gaps.[1] Educators in the Ohio LAUNCH pathway shared that they chose to participate because they wanted to try something new and were looking for different ways to engage students in learning. Educators shared that personalized learning was a way to re-energize their instructional practice.

In Educators' Own Words

➔ "I started the professional learning for personalized learning, and I was so excited to be starting something new. It was a change I needed because it made me excited to [teach again], and the kids are more excited about being in class."

➔ "I'm really just trying to find a way to make an inroad to the skills for every student because they're coming to me at so many different levels with very different backgrounds. It's just hard to take a curriculum and just sit it there and be like, 'Okay, now learn it.' And so, I just thought if I could find a way to personalize this for every kid, it would be great."

Zweig, J., & Kennedy, K. (2024). Insights from Ohio's Personalized Learning Network: The "Why" of Personalized Learning. 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

Students are More Engaged and Motivated

Educators reported they saw positive changes in their students' engagement and motivation when they integrated personalized learning practices into their lessons. Of the 114 educators implementing personalized learning practices who responded to a survey at the April 2024 convening, **89% agreed their students were more engaged when they implemented personalized learning practices in their classroom**, and 83% agreed that their students took more ownership of their learning. Educators who were in the second year of the LAUNCH pathway talked about how seeing those outcomes and feeling more confident in how they incorporated personalized learning in their practice encouraged them to deepen their commitment to personalized learning.

64% of educators in schools that administered personalized learning implementation surveys in 2023–2024 agreed that implementing personalized learning made them want to stay in their school.

In Educators' Own Words

➔ At the elementary level, a principal relayed, "Voice and choice was a turning point for us. We were able to see immediate positive feedback from students." A teacher at that same school confirmed that providing voice and choice was a gateway to implementing personalized learning, as they have now moved to creating flexible learning environments and goal setting.

➔ An educator described the progress her students made, "My biggest success I feel like is closing that gap. Students that maybe read 39 words per minute at the beginning of the year are now up to 93. We read every single day with the students that didn't come in at a fluent level. So, we'll pull them aside. Another thing with co-teaching that really helps us is one can be teaching while the other one's pulling. And we'll grab anybody in the building and ask them to read. It takes about a half hour a day to read with all those students. And the gap is really closing. We like to set goals and graph what they do, and they're just all growing. And that's, I guess, my biggest success. Makes me feel good about what I'm doing."

➔ An educator described why she is continuing with personalized learning, "I've seen it work for kids…kids that maybe weren't as motivated before and I see them excited now. Kids that struggled with being here for so many reasons, but now they see a connection, and teachers that are my age that maybe are burning out, all of a sudden there's a renewed spirit, and they're excited to come to work. And it's not always easy to come to school. And they're passionate again, and they're excited again. And it's a win for everybody, so that's why."

Questions to Consider:

✓ How does personalized learning relate to your learning community's mission and vision?

✓ What personalized learning practices or strategies could help engage your students?

✓ How will you know if engagement increases as a result of incorporating personalized learning practices in your classroom, school, or district?