

# Ohio Personalized Learning Network Case Study

## Preble Shawnee Elementary School

### 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.

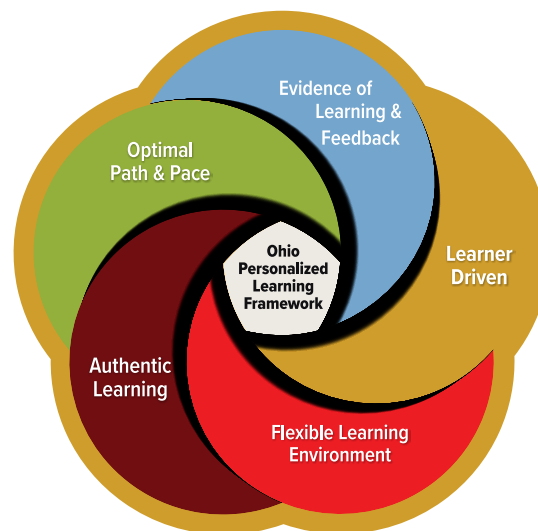
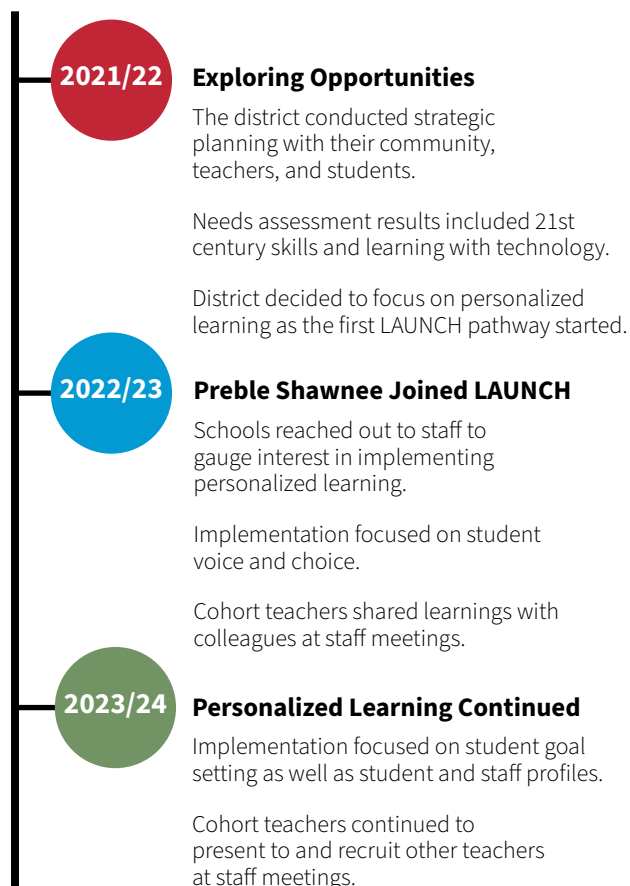
### LAUNCH PATHWAY ACTIVITIES:

- 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  
<http://education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning>

## PERSONALIZED LEARNING TIMELINE



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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 <http://education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning>

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# Preble Shawnee Elementary School



## School Spotlight

### Getting Started with Personalized Learning

During the 2021–2022 school year, Preble Shawnee Local Schools started a strategic planning process, engaging their community, including teachers and students, in a needs assessment. The results led them to personalized learning, while also highlighting the need for 21st century skills and technology integration. At the same time the district was focused on their strategic planning process, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce identified personalized learning as an initiative they wanted to roll out across the state. Preble Shawnee Local Schools was excited to be part of the effort. A total of 12 teachers across the district participated.

As a result, ahead of the 2022–2023 school year, Preble Shawnee Local Schools identified their curriculum coordinator as their school design team lead and asked teachers from their three schools, specifically one teacher from each grade level, to join the school design team. There were five teachers and one administrator from Preble Shawnee Elementary School who participated in the LAUNCH pathway together. The curriculum coordinator shared, “The champions for personalized learning are the teachers who stepped up and are doing the work, learning something new, and implementing it in their classrooms.” The principal and curriculum coordinator both emphasized to the teachers that the focus for the implementation was to “start small” and not try to “do everything at once.”

### Building and Maintaining Momentum

All educators interviewed agreed their most successful strategy was their team-based approach. The educators emphasized how important it was for them to find the time to work together and share ideas. One of the third grade teachers shared, “I’d have to say that one of my biggest resources is my team. Going and talking with them.” One of the struggles for the school was teachers not really knowing what it would be like for students to set goals in the younger grade levels, so they’re learning ideas about how to do that from each other.

The team approached the implementation of personalized learning in small steps, noting it was “not a huge overhaul of what we’re doing.” Instead, their approach was to be intentional about “understanding the different parts of personalized learning,” acknowledging what they’re already doing that aligns with the initiative, and, as another teacher emphasized, “meeting with our educational service centers (ESCs) to brainstorm and get support.” Their curriculum coordinator shared that “more educators and administrators are getting excited to learn more.” The Preble Shawnee Elementary School design team members were learning different personalized learning strategies from the convenings and sharing at staff meetings with the rest of the staff. This year, more teachers were interested just by word of mouth.

This intentionality and commitment is reflected in educators’ perception of personalized learning in their schools. Approximately 77% of educators at Preble Shawnee Elementary School in 2024 understood the school’s

**LOCATION OF SCHOOL:** Camden, OH (southwest Ohio)

**GRADES SERVED:** PK through 4th

**ENROLLMENT:** 529

**TYPOLOGY:** Rural (2)

**STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:** 95% White, 2% Multiracial, 1% Hispanic, 1% Black, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native

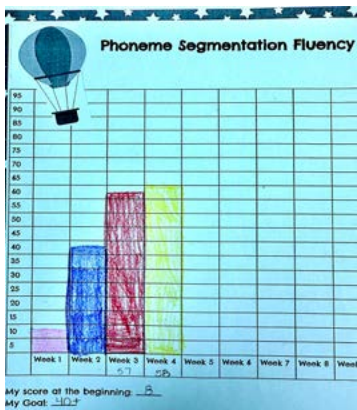
**EDUCATORS:** 27 teachers, 100% certified, 91% have 3 or more years of experience

vision for serving all students through personalized learning, which was a significant increase from 43% in 2023. Personalized learning is also influencing the culture of the school. Approximately 70% of educators reported that implementing personalized learning in the school has improved the overall culture of the school.

The principal reflected how important it is to have staff from each grade level be part of the personalized learning journey. She continued, “I do not feel that this would have been as successful as it has been if it weren’t for having a representative from all grade levels so that they can process on their level about how they can implement it for their grade. I also think having a small portion of our staff meetings dedicated to talking about this and making it a part of our daily language has been key as well.” Each grade level shares their ideas with the rest of the staff. At the end, they have discussions about how this could work in other grade levels, which has encouraged vertical alignment.

## Classroom Highlights

### Personalized Learning in First Grade: Optimal Path & Pace and Learner Driven in a Title I Support Setting



When entering the learning space, decorations cover the wall and the floor, and books and activities are organized on shelves and in colorfully-labeled storage bins. The teacher sits behind a horseshoe desk with four small chairs opposite her in preparation for **optimal path and pace** learning. Four first grade students work with her by playing a game on an iPad to help them learn vowel sounds. The teacher is a Title I teacher who supports the four- to five-lowest academically-performing students in each first grade classroom. She pulls these students out together to support them. Using a **learner driven** approach, she works with students as they set goals each week [see picture of Phoneme Segmentation Fluency goal sheet]. The teacher shared, “It’s a bit more challenging to personalize learning because I have to use [a specific] program with the students. It’s already written out for me. My focus is to help students close the reading gap.” She continued,

This year, I have 27 kids, and I’ve implemented this goal setting board. Then I also have folders for each of the kids that have their graphs to see how they improve, and they get so excited to see it on paper. They love it!

Students also reflect to see if they’ve met those goals. If they do, they get a gumball for their personal gumball machine that is on the teachers’ wall [see picture of gumball machines].




### Personalized Learning in Second Grade: Evidence of Learning & Feedback in a Flexible Learning Environment

In a **flexible learning environment**, students in the classroom are busy working at stations: some are coloring at a desk; two other students are working on laptops on the floor taking a self-assessment; and a few others are writing in their journals. The students have the choice to write about their favorite part of a story or do free writing. Students can work independently or together based on what they are working on.

The teacher is taking this time to meet individually with students to check in on their goals, specifically their math goals, to track growth with the help of **evidence of learning and feedback**. During these meetings, the teacher is asking each student to talk through their progress toward their goals, as well as asking them to reflect on what they have been working on and the progress they are making. To support the students with their goal setting, they have goal sheets (see picture of Math Fact Goals sheet). The students are asked to update their goals or create new ones if they've already met their goals. The teacher encourages students to choose goals they can achieve in a week or two.

When the teacher thinks about personalized learning, she said one question that sticks out to her that she learned during one of the personalized learning convenings is: "What am I doing that the kids can do for themselves?" With that little shift, the teacher shared that students are "starting to make a little bit of decision-making on their own. I'm not intimidated anymore as I was when personalized learning was introduced to us. I tell the other teachers in our school, 'Some of these things you're already doing. Give yourself credit for those things, and then work on slowly embedding one new personalized learning approach.' Personalized learning has truly changed me as an educator."



## Personalized Learning in Third Grade: Optimal Path & Pace

Students are learning about time in this classroom at an **optimal path and pace** that works for them. The teacher explains, "Everybody learns things at different paces even as adults." The teacher gives students a pre-assessment to see what students already know about time. The students are excited to see where they are at and what they need to focus on to improve their understanding. The teacher groups students based on the concept they are working on, and the students work together to teach each other. The students ask each other questions and pull in the teacher as needed. The teacher explains that the concept-specific, just-in-time approach to grouping helps "students not feel bad because they know that other students are in the same boat."

The teacher also shared how her students really appreciate being able to choose when they need to meet, which she shares as an example of **flexible learning**:

They recognize, "I don't have to sit with my teacher for the whole lesson. The teacher is there as a resource as I need her." That flexibility is refreshing for not only them but also for me. I don't need to hold their hand through their learning process. They enjoy that independence and control over their learning. By practicing this now, they'll be a bit more confident in their ability to take their learning into their own hands.

She went on to share that personalized learning has helped her students' thinking and has enabled her to "connect on a more in-depth level" with her students.

## Personalized Learning in First Grade: Learner Driven and Evidence of Learning & Feedback

This first grade teacher recently joined the personalized learning implementation process and is focused on facilitating a **learner driven** approach through goal setting. She works with her students to set a couple of goals, including a behavior-based goal and an academic goal.

The students have a goal sheet where they color in pictures of donuts as they work toward their goals. “The students love it,” she said. “They especially like that they get to color in donuts because they can easily see their progress and evidence of their learning. The process of goal setting, tracking, and reflecting is giving them purpose for their learning. And, even better, we’ll have a donut party at the end of the year!” She explained that while they are engaging in **evidence of learning and feedback**, her students see goal setting more as a game and really enjoy the process, “They self-reflect, show their progress, and they can go home and say what they’re working towards.”

The teacher shared her approach to implementing personalized learning, “I put myself in the position of my students. I know I learn best when I am learning in ways that are engaging for me. That’s what I want for my students, and that’s why I think personalized learning is the answer.”

## Reflecting on Progress and What the Future Holds

The hardest part for the team at the elementary school is finding time to work together to plan. In a planning session in August 2023, the curriculum coordinator and the rest of the school design team discussed how to shift the school schedule to better support and provide more time for the educators to come together. In response, the district created professional learning days dedicated to personalized learning. They also invited staff from their educational service center to all of their professional learning days. The curriculum coordinator emphasized how important it was to have the help from the educational service center: “Having the opportunity to work with the educational service center, to be able to pull them in to help us with personalized learning has been awesome. Being able to ask those questions and have deeper conversations around personalized learning, the teachers leave the professional learning day with a plan for how to implement personalized learning.”

The curriculum coordinator reflected, “The teachers that are in the cohort know it works, and they’re excited about it and talking to other teachers about it. Because of that, personalized learning is spreading.” The educators shared how much they are seeing change for their students. One of the teachers shared, “I saw excitement in my students. I saw some of my first graders writing seven sentences when they didn’t have to write that much.” The same teacher reflected that at times, while implementing personalized learning, it was a “challenge to keep the students all focused and doing what they’re supposed to do, as they need a lot of help and guidance at that age.”

The principal shared, “Voice and choice: that was the turning point for us. We were able to do some things immediately, and we were able to see some immediate positive feedback from our students. The teachers implemented some things in the classroom and were so excited over what they were seeing.” The principal continued to describe how this year “we’re focused on student goal setting, and we’re seeing great gains.”

This focus on goal setting in the classroom was reflected by staff and students in their responses to the 2023 and 2024 Ohio Personalized Learning Implementation Surveys. For instance, the percentage of educators who reported that they regularly engage learners in goal setting increased from 43% in 2023 to 77% in 2024. Students in grade 4, the youngest grade eligible to take the survey, noticed these changes in their classrooms. Approximately 55% of students in 2024 reported that they set written goals for their learning most or all of the time, up from 32% in 2023. Seventy-nine percent of students in grade 4 reported that their teacher understands the way they learn, up from 67% in 2023.

The curriculum coordinator loves seeing:

students look at their data and set their own goals, and then have weekly check-ins with their teachers about reaching those goals. The students asking, "How do I reach these goals? What do I have to do to get there?" The teachers responding, "Did you reach it? Are we ready for a new goal?" That is so exciting to me. That's really my why.

When asked about how the district feels about continuing their efforts with personalized learning, the curriculum coordinator expressed, "We're really excited about increasing engagement. A lot of our teachers are doing components of it. This year, we've been more intentional about spreading personalized learning out through the whole school and having cohorts of teachers supporting the rest of the staff in implementing components of it." In addition to the professional learning days, they incorporated early-release Wednesdays where the students go home and teachers stay to talk about their data and what that means for personalized learning.

The curriculum coordinator explained,

Personalized learning is in our strategic plan, so for us, it's not going to just be two years and done. We have a plan to see it past the end of the grant funding, and we're hoping to move into training on project-based learning, which will make students' learning more personalized. So we are continuing our efforts after the two years are up.

Approximately 87% of educators in 2024 indicated that Preble Shawnee Elementary School has a plan with goals and timelines to advance personalized learning over the next year, and 77% reported that they are getting the support they need to implement it in their classrooms.

**METHODOLOGY:** This case study highlights the experiences of one school that participated in the LAUNCH pathway in Ohio. The information shared in this case study is based on six interviews (one district leader, one school leader, and four teachers), one focus group (with nine educators), four classroom observations, and student and staff responses to Ohio Personalized Learning Implementation Surveys. There were 84 survey responses from grade 4 students in 2023 and 92 in 2024. There were 30 survey responses from educators in 2023 and 30 in 2024. The term educators in this survey includes classroom educators, special education educators, subject matter educators, specialist educators, and paraprofessionals.

To learn more about Ohio's personalized learning efforts, visit: <http://education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning>.

