

Ohio Personalized Learning Network Case Study

Warrensville Heights ROAR Academy

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

2022/23

Exploring Opportunities

Superintendent encouraged ROAR Academy to join the Ohio Personalized Learning Network LAUNCH pathway.

2023/24

ROAR Academy Joined LAUNCH

ROAR Academy joined the second cohort of the LAUNCH pathway.

ROAR Academy implemented Credit Check Sheets for students' self reflection.

Students developed post-graduation plans and portfolios.

ROAR Academy more intentionally worked with academic counselors to support students.

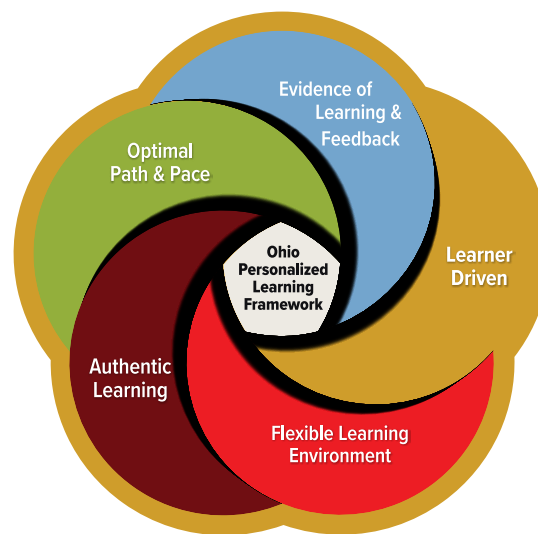


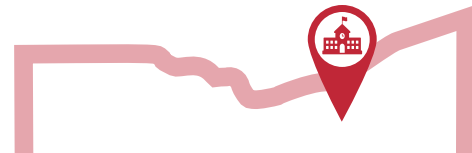
TABLE OF CONTENTS

About ROAR Academy	2
Personalized Learning in Action.....	3
Reflecting on Progress and What the Future Holds.....	5

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>.

Kennedy, K., Zweig, J., & Atkinson, C. A. (2024). Ohio Personalized Learning Network Case Study: Warrensville Heights ROAR Academy. Retrieved from <http://education.ohio.gov/Personalized-Learning>.

ROAR Academy



LOCATION OF SCHOOL:
Warrensville Heights, OH
(northeast Ohio)
Grades served: 10th through 12th

ENROLLMENT: varies depending on credit recovery needs

TPOLOGY: Urban (7)

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS: 96.5% Black, 1.5% White, 1.0% Two or More Races, 0.8% Hispanic / Latino, 0.2% Asian

EDUCATORS: 1 teacher, 1 assistant teacher, 100% certified, 100% 3 or more years of experience

About ROAR Academy

Established in 2018, Warrensville Heights High School’s Tigers ROAR Academy, ROAR Academy for short, serves as a support for 10th through 12th grade students who are not on track to obtain enough credits to graduate on time. In 2019–2020, the district’s superintendent charged a committee to design the learning environment so that these students could recover credits and be successful. The committee included the science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) coordinator, the director of special education, the director of curriculum and instruction, a special education teacher from the high school, a paraprofessional, and a general education teacher. Together, they looked at the data

"More often than not, they just need a safe space to learn."
- STEAM coordinator

available and found a correlation between credit deficiency and non-academic influencers, such as being late to school, working multiple jobs, and caring for family members. The STEAM coordinator is employed by the district and supports the work of ROAR Academy by meeting regularly with ROAR Academy’s teacher. As the STEAM coordinator emphasized, “The students are not credit deficient because of bad behavior. More often than not, they just need a safe space to learn. That’s what we have created for our scholars who need a nontraditional setting to get to graduation.” She went on to describe the superintendent as “visionary” and “holistic,” as “he thinks about the whole child, allowing us to be in better service to our students.”

ROAR Academy prides itself in building and maintaining a strong family engagement component. The teacher who leads the program shared, “We strive to build and maintain relationships with the families to add a sense of community and support for our scholars. The family relationship helps parents understand what it will take from them to support their scholars with getting back on track.” The teacher shares her personal story of being an alumni of the district to make herself more relatable and connected as she continues to serve and support the community through ROAR.

Because of the non-academic influences, the committee acknowledged the schedule for ROAR could not look like a traditional schedule, so they divided the schedule into two sessions. Seniors attend a morning session from 9 a.m. to noon, while sophomores and juniors attend an afternoon session from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The district provides transportation for the ROAR students. When students arrive, they eat breakfast or lunch depending on the session they attend. Then they engage in online courses that are used specifically to help them recover credits toward fulfilling their graduation requirements.

Deepening Personalized Learning Practices

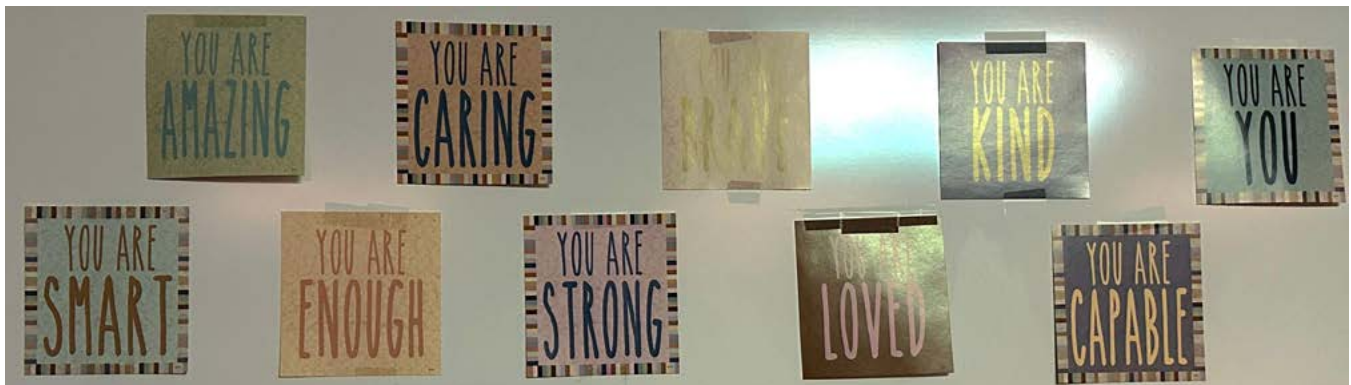
Between 2018 and 2022, the program was successful in helping students graduate and continues to expand. When the district's STEAM coordinator saw the opportunity to engage with the Ohio Personalized Learning Network ahead of the 2023–2024 school year, she encouraged the teacher, a trained intervention specialist, to get involved. She noted that the teacher was “already personalizing learning for her students.” While nervous at first, the teacher shared, “I felt a bit cautious since personalized learning was unfamiliar to me, and I thought, ‘Is this going to add more onto my already overflowing plate?’” But then she jumped in!

Personalized Learning in Action

Flexible Learning Environment

As you enter ROAR Academy, which is set up in a classroom within Warrensville Heights High School, soft, calming music plays and lights are dimmed to a comfortable level. Indicative of a **flexible learning environment**, students choose to sit in different spaces based on what they prefer: bean bag chairs, moveable desks, or on the carpeted floor. The teacher and teaching assistant walk around and see if anyone needs support as students work individually or talk to their peers about their work. The dynamic in the classroom is evident: ROAR Academy has built a respectful rapport with students and a caring and empathetic supportive space to help students feel comfortable asking for help.

The teacher checks the students' work as they are working toward deadlines in their respective classes in which they are recovering credit. As students come in and out of the classroom, the teacher asks each one what they're working on and if they need help. She also brings out the students' Credit Check Sheet and has the student self-reflect on where they are at and what they need to do to finish the course(s). The teacher shares words of encouragement, such as "Continue just like that!" and "Yes, I like it!" There are motivational posters all along the walls of the room (see image).



Authentic Learning

Inspired by what she learned at one of the Ohio Personalized Learning Network convenings focused on **authentic learning**, the teacher asked the STEAM coordinator if she could add a career readiness component to the learning experiences that ROAR Academy offers its students. That implementation happened in 2023 and provided ROAR students opportunities to go on trips to learn about a variety of career paths they could take. The STEAM coordinator attended one of the career trips with the students to a bee farm where they learned the process to harvest the bee hives and extract honey. The teacher shared:

What personalized learning has done for me and my students is to bring our intentions into focus. Personalized learning has given me a mindset to find ways to enhance what we're already doing and provide a structure for our students to leave the program with a broader understanding of what the real world is and what it expects from them, and the real world expects a plan! This program is a second chance for these students. This program builds students' confidence; many of our students feel defeated because they have a lot to make up. But this opportunity, the personalized, reflective approach, provides them with the chance to do so and thrive.

Learner Driven and Evidence of Learning & Feedback

For the 2023–2024 school year and as part of their personalized learning journey, the ROAR team decided to incorporate goal setting and reflection, as well as a planning process for graduation so students can be more intentional about their post-graduation plans. As part of the plan, scholars are asked to perform credit checks (see Credit Check Sheet) as **evidence of their learning**. To do this, they meet with their ROAR teacher, who coordinates with their content teacher, to discuss the work necessary to meet graduation requirements. The students are also asked to create a portfolio that includes a résumé. The resume can be for a job they want to get or a college they want to apply to.

A **learner driven** option added during the 2023–2024 school year was study hall, where students come into ROAR Academy for one period a day rather than a full session. This includes both current students who are working to recover credit, as well as students who need additional support. With this new addition, the program is expanding to support even more students.

As the STEAM coordinator shared, “We’re helping students begin to build out their future based on self-reflection and feedback. Now that they’ve caught up with their credits and are on track for graduation, the conversation shifts to ‘What’s next? What’s going to happen the day after graduation?’”

Optimal Path & Pace

In order to avoid overwhelming students, each course is set up for students to work on one lesson at a time, offering them the opportunity to experience an **optimal path and pace** for their learning. When students finish a lesson as indicated in their online program, they let the teacher know they are ready to move to the next lesson, which the teacher then unlocks. The teacher is also notified when students complete a lesson.

WHHS CREDIT CHECK SHEET- CLASS OF 2022 AND BEYOND

NAME: _____

I. COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Each semester is worth .50 credits unless noted otherwise):

ENGLISH: I ___ / ___ II ___ / ___ III ___ / ___ IV ___ / ___
4 credits

SOC. ST.: World Stud. ___ / ___ US History ___ / ___ Govern ___ / ___
3 credits

MATH: Alg ___ / ___ Geom ___ / ___ Alg II ___ / ___ Other ___ / ___ Pre-Calc. ___ / ___ Calc ___ / ___
4 credits

SCIENCE: Physical ___ / ___ Biology ___ / ___ Chemistry ___ / ___ Environmental ___ / ___ Other ___ / ___
3 credits

LANGUAGE: ASL I ___ / ___ ASL II ___ / ___ ASL III ___ / ___
Spanish I ___ / ___ Spanish II ___ / ___ Spanish III ___ / ___

HEALTH: ___ / ___ **PHYS ED:** (.25) ___ / ___ (.25) ___ / ___ **FINE ARTS:** ___ / ___
1/2 Credit 1/2 Credit (2 semesters) 1 Credit

ELECTIVES: A. A. Studies/ Lit ___ / ___
4 credits

Course	Course	Course	Course
___ / ___	___ / ___	___ / ___	___ / ___
Course	Course	Course	Course
___ / ___	___ / ___	___ / ___	___ / ___
Course	Course	Course	Course
___ / ___	___ / ___	___ / ___	___ / ___

NOTES: _____

Reflecting on Progress and What the Future Holds

The STEAM coordinator shared how personalized learning significantly challenges both her team’s thinking and confidence, as well as her own. She expressed, “Personalized learning has given me an opportunity to showcase the job our team is doing and how we’re really supporting scholars to work toward their success. That’s the goal and our purpose.”

Their future plan for the program is to “support our academic counselors to shift the conversation with our scholars” to focus on the scholars' aspirations and how to support them to reach those aspirations. In order to start moving in this direction, students set goals for their post-graduation plan and share those with their teacher. “That’s really where it starts,” said the STEAM coordinator. She continued, “Then there are two other spaces, including our freshmen and senior seminars, where we’ll embed personalized learning as well as share the opportunity to be supported through ROAR.”

The STEAM coordinator shared her *why* for delving into personalized learning, “I serve in the community that I live in, and I’ve been a community member for over 20 years here in my district. Watching my scholars leave school, personalized learning gives them an opportunity to leave with a plan. That’s my *why*.”

METHODOLOGY: This case study highlights the experiences of a credit recovery program based in a high school that participated in the LAUNCH pathway in Ohio. The information shared in this case study is based on two interviews (one district leader and one teacher), and one classroom observation.

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

