

D2L

The K-12 Guide to Personalizing Professional Learning

A guide for K-12 leaders, built by K-12 leaders.



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Overview

There is a growing need and opportunity to modernize K-12 teacher professional development (PD) and to support educators and leaders with a vision forward.

In a survey of 1,000 educators, 91% cited interest in professional learning targeted to a teacher's unique needs and interests, but only 20% reported their increased access to such personalized learning, while 25% report no or decreased access.

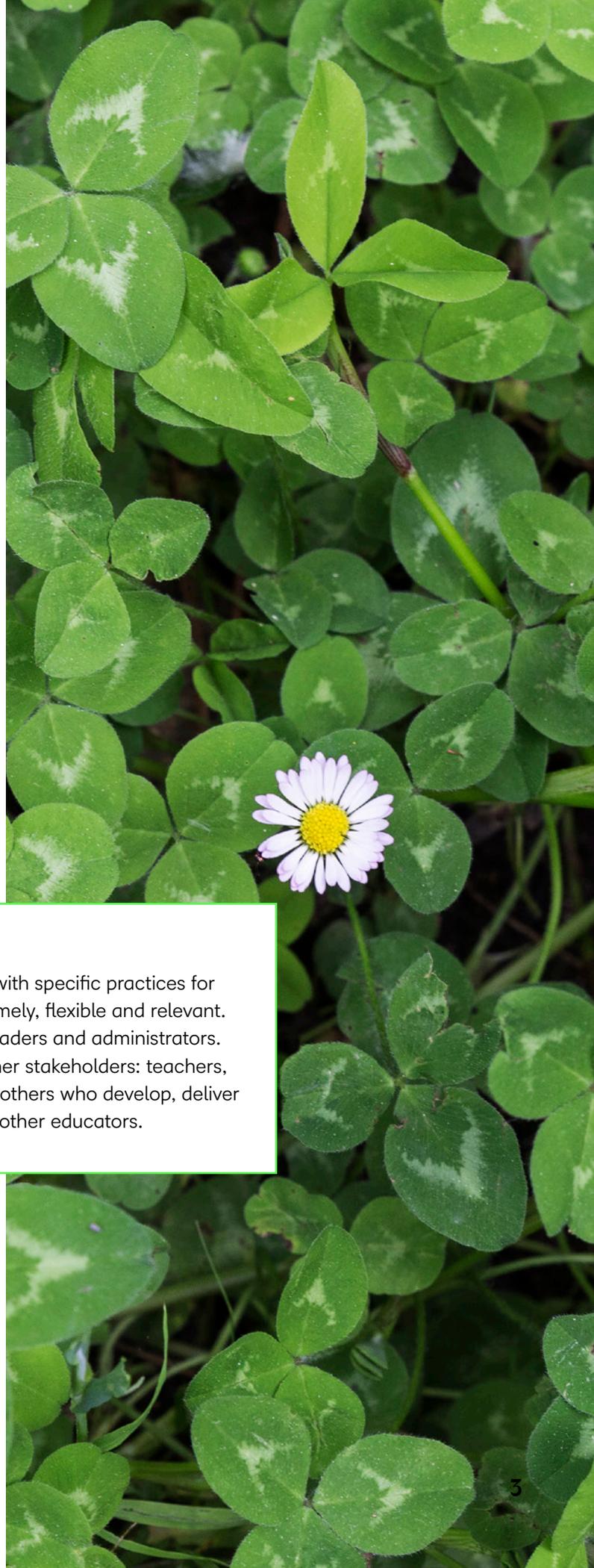
So, how can we increase K-12 teacher access to professional learning that is more flexible and relevant to improve their satisfaction, success and the success of their students while reducing challenges of teacher fatigue and retention?

To identify a set of practices that help reimagine teacher professional learning, D2L gathered a working group of educators who are developing and delivering new models. What follows is a synthesis of their eight recommended practices for improving not only the timeliness and personalization of professional learning, but also the enabling hybrid models and effective communications.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was developed to support K-12 stakeholders with specific practices for modernizing teacher professional learning to be more timely, flexible and relevant. The primary intended audience is local school system leaders and administrators. This guide and the practices herein can also support other stakeholders: teachers, regional and state agencies, colleges of education, and others who develop, deliver or consume professional development for teachers and other educators.



Introduction

Teacher PD is as important as ever, yet there may be growing reluctance to prioritize professional learning due to teacher workload and fatigue. But what if the problem is not the quantity of professional learning, but the relevance and value? Maybe teachers are resistant not to PD, but to PD that fails to meet their evolving needs and schedules, and their expectations and requirements.

In fact, a D2L-commissioned survey of nearly 1,000 educators identified that for teachers who are not satisfied with their PD, 46% report decreased or no availability of professional learning that is targeted to their unique needs and interests (i.e., personalized), while only 9% report increased availability. For those strongly satisfied with their PD, 32% report increased availability, while 16% report decreased or no availability. (See [How the Pandemic Has \[Re\]Shaped K-12 Teacher Professional Learning | D2L](#))

In addition, 93% of teachers identified professional learning that is ongoing as important to their effectiveness, but only about one-third report that professional learning is available on a regular, ongoing basis as needed. For those reporting that they have such regular, ongoing access, satisfaction is 82% (compared with 43% satisfaction for those reporting access only twice a semester or less).

Our K-12 school systems increasingly recognize the importance of learner-centered education for our students, but we may too often fall short of applying those research-based practices to our teachers as learners (see, for example, [Effective Teacher Professional Development | Learning Policy Institute](#)). These practices include learner voice and agency, curriculum relevance and application, and learning feedback and mastery-based pacing.

“Teachers will make time for topics they need but don’t have time for topics they don’t need. When the [digital] learning is effective and relevant, time is less of a barrier for them.”

Joseph South, Chief Learning Officer, ISTE

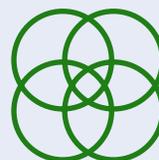
THE D2L-COMMISSIONED SURVEY OF EDUCATORS IDENTIFIED FOUR ESSENTIAL AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED:



Personalization to increase relevancy and flexibility



Timeliness to improve access and application



Hybrid methods to support learner community and self-pacing



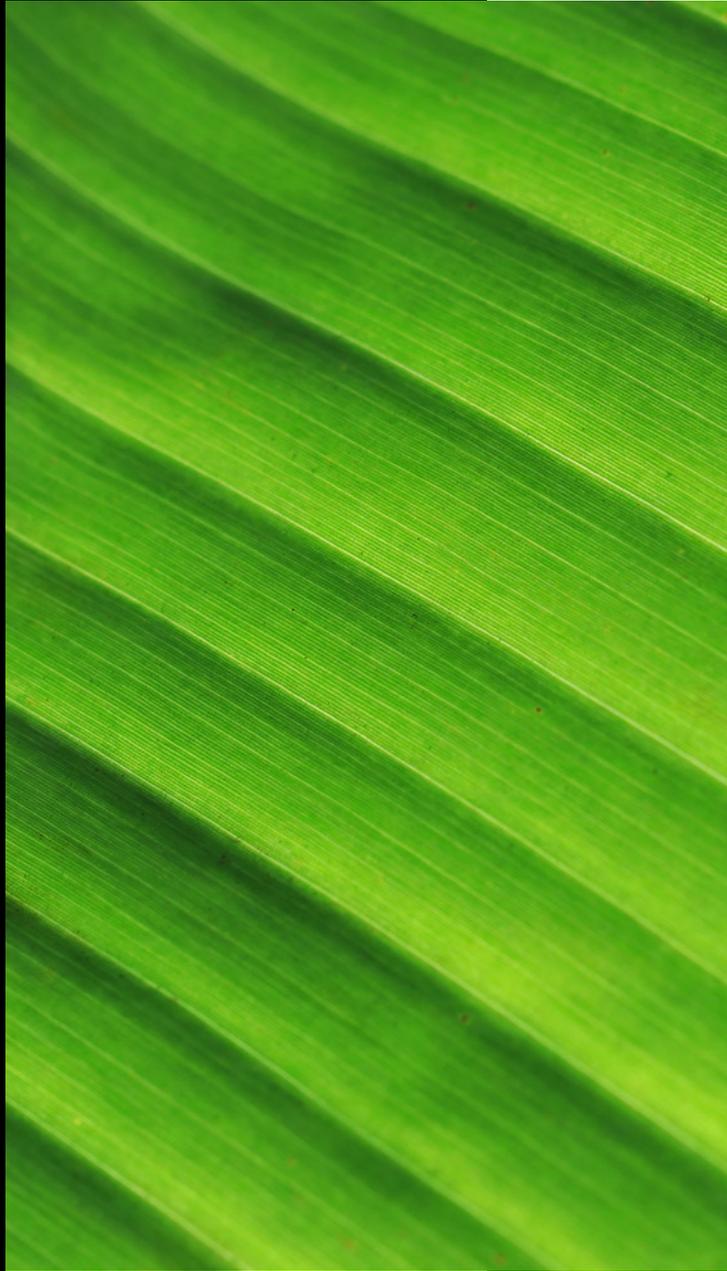
Internal communications enhancement to inform understanding and awareness

This guide identifies eight recommended practices for operationalizing those themes, filling these gaps and modernizing K-12 professional learning to be more teacher-centered, responsive to their dynamic needs and applicable to their daily practice.

Summary of Recommended Practices

1. **Value Professional Learning:** Create a school culture that values teachers as professionals and professional learners
2. **Incentives and Measures:** Incentivize, measure and reward teachers for their personalized learning time and progress
3. **Actionable Communications:** Provide clear, relevant and actionable communications to teachers about professional learning expectations and resources
4. **Modern Infrastructure:** Provide a modernized, teacher-centered professional learning infrastructure
5. **Resource Catalog:** Curate a robust catalog of professional learning resources and formats to address the scope of teacher needs
6. **Authentic Learning:** Design authentic professional learning that incorporates practice, reflection and feedback
7. **Personalized Pathways:** Build flexible content pathways, including through competency-based progressions and modular approaches
8. **Hybrid Methods:** Employ multiple formats, methods and modalities for effective instructional design and learning personalization

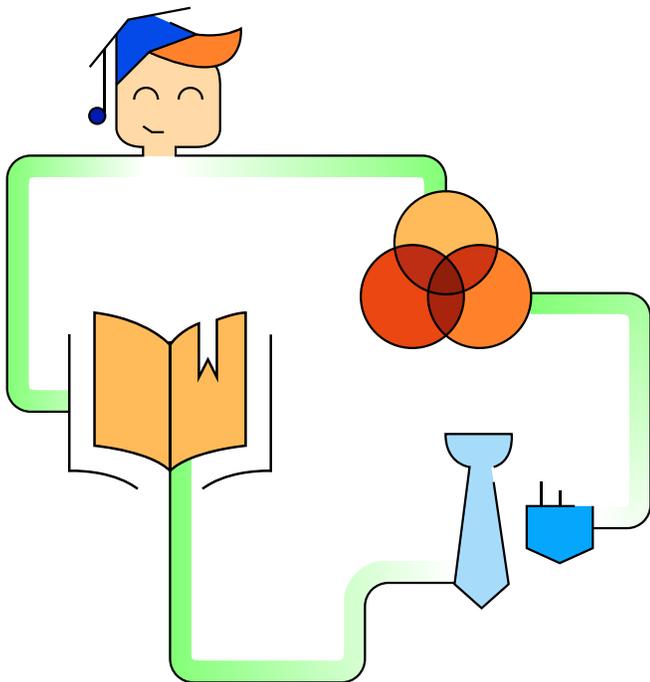




Recommended Practices in Detail

1. Create a school culture that values teachers as professionals and professional learners

Schools are learning organizations, and this growth mindset should apply to support teachers as learners where PD is now too often pushed at teachers or not prioritized. Instead, create a culture where staff learning is personalized, empowering, ongoing and a universally valued and prioritized core activity.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Create and communicate a shared understanding that each teacher’s unique learning interests and needs are valued and primary to district success, and establish the expectation that teacher professional learning time and growth is prioritized to support student success (e.g., strategic plan, parent communications, etc.).
- Ensure teacher voice and agency by inviting teachers to define their professional learning needs and program—individually and as a collective stakeholder—and to be responsible for their learning plans and pathways.
- Make clear that the school system’s continuous improvement includes teacher growth and explicit permission for them to fail forward by innovating, learning and improving.
- Model modernized professional learning by district and school leaders sharing their own journey to identify and address their personal development goals and needs.
- Layer and align individualized professional learning goals and supports across district system initiatives to enhance the relevance for, and growth of, teachers.

“Teachers need to be lifelong learners, but it can be challenging to keep up with all that is new when you are mired in the day-to-day work with students. Really effective, job-embedded, action-oriented professional learning helps teachers continually evolve their practice without burning out.”

Tracy Dalton, Assistant Principal at Bowness High School

HOW THE DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SIMPLIFIED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PERSONALIZATION THROUGH AUTOMATED CUSTOMIZATION

The Durham District School Board's (DDSB) **Professional Learning Hub** was created as an anytime/anywhere, personalized, on-demand PD portal for teachers and staff.

The Hub intelligently speaks to the school board's HR systems so that all employees are greeted with a landing page that highlights a personalized professional learning catalog geared toward their role and grouping based on user attributes. Access to online learning modules, links to face-to-face learning opportunities and other key professional learning resources are all centralized, organized and customized to simplify access for all staff. When courses are ready to launch, they are added to a learning group, automatically enrolling all learners in that group to efficiently scale personalization.

Course content is created by a cadre of departmental staff and instructors. Each department sets up a custom theme created with their logo and colors, so users can quickly identify which department runs specific learning opportunities. A common hub and template allow DDSB to create courses that are uniform and easy to navigate. Courses include quizzes and tools that automate content release, pacing, notifications and badging to track completion.

The scaling of introductory-level, self-paced and on-demand courses also allows for instructors to repurpose their time to delve into deeper topics and spend more time one-on-one to advance learning with teachers and staff.



2. Incentivize, measure, enable and reward teachers for their personalized learning time, planning and progress

While administrators may be concerned with infringing on teacher time during and beyond school hours, teachers may be more responsive to professional learning if it is flexible to their schedule and relevant to their interests. Yet the marginal shift of PD from largely in-service to more flexible, ongoing and personalized learning does not diminish the required time and effort. Best practices recognize and support this shift and empower teachers to engage in more ongoing, individualized learning in return for its increased flexibility and relevance.

“Just because teachers may want to complete this professional learning ‘anytime, anywhere’ does not mean we should expect them to do so unless they are also provided the enabling supports, incentives, agency and tools.”

Allie Sberna, pHCLE, Professional Development eLearning Coordinator, Ohio Department of Education

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Recognize and address the cognitive, social, financial and other factors that motivate each teacher’s professional learning, such as credentials, peer recognition and self- (and student-) improvement.
- Highlight teacher exemplars who successfully identified their learning needs, developed a personalized learning plan, and pursued and achieved their professional growth goals.
- Increase the time available to teachers during the regular school day, through release time, on PD days, etc., to engage professional learning that meets the topics, formats and schedule of their choice, including marginal repurposing of time used for live lectures or systemic initiatives.
- Provide flexibility in when and where teachers can access professional learning, including virtually and through informal forums (e.g., conferences, online professional learning communities); reward teachers for their learning outside of regular school hours; and balance that flexibility with accountability.
- Where re-licensure or advancement requirements are based on seat time or traditional course models, create frameworks with flexibility and accountability that also support asynchronous, self-paced and stackable models.
- Incentivize teachers and provide them a safe space to identify their learning needs, create a professional learning plan, and pursue those goals flexibly and without concern for judgment or penalty.
- Operationalize a pull model whereby teachers can easily provision professional learning with minimal administrative barriers, including teacher accounts to enroll in a course, access a subscription, travel to a conference, purchase a book, etc.
- Embrace the role of teachers in leading or supporting the professional learning of their peers through teacher teams and peer coaching models that also further support their growth and recognize their mastery and professionalism.

HOW TRAVERSE CITY AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS INCENTIVIZES TEACHER-CENTERED LEARNING

Many educators at Traverse City Public Schools (TCAPS) are enthusiastic about technology and have been successfully trialing digital learning in their classrooms for years. The COVID-19 pandemic provided the need and opportunity to build on these initial successes and formally roll out digital learning tools across all schools to enhance learning both virtually and in the classroom.

To ensure effectiveness in digital teaching practices, TCAPS made it a top priority to support its staff. They created teacher digital learning training courses within the same new learning management system (LMS) that teachers (and students) would use for classroom instruction, and established an accompanying reward system to accelerate teacher adoption and boost student access to digital learning innovation.

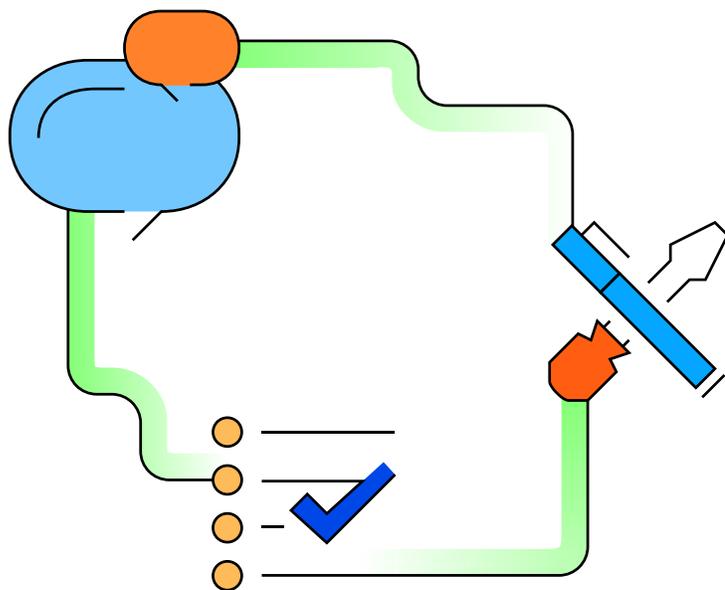
“Teachers who go through the program can progress through four different badges based on their level of adoption: beginner, intermediate, advanced and innovator,” said Heidi Maltby-Skodack, executive director of school improvement and innovative programming at TCAPS. “As well as benefiting from upskilling and enhanced resources, we even offer a financial bonus to teachers who achieve ‘advanced’ and ‘innovator’ badges. That has helped encourage more faculty members to work toward becoming digital learning champions.”

The TCAPS training course and rewards system has helped more teachers develop new skills and realize the full potential of digital learning. Looking ahead, TCAPS is exploring ways to help teachers increase blended learning by creating complementary digital courses that students can take at flexible times throughout their day.



3. Provide clear, relevant and actionable communications to teachers about professional learning opportunities, expectations and resources

The D2L-commissioned survey found that teachers and administrators reported significant differences in not only their teacher professional learning priorities but also their experiences, which suggests a lack of common understanding, awareness or both. A shared vision is best enacted and enabled with clarity of definitions and effective communications about needs and options.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Solicit (and act on) teacher interests and embed ongoing feedback loops to identify dynamic teacher needs and satisfaction, evaluate systems and programs, and inform continuous improvement.
- Enhance solicitation of teacher needs and interests by explaining why you are asking, embedding requests into other workstreams, going deeper than simple checklists, using alternatives to surveys, and using sampling and incentives to reduce survey fatigue.
- Streamline and target communications across varied (preferred) channels so that teachers receive the most relevant information about professional learning options and important information is not lost in the larger volume of communications, including through aggregation across all sources, a periodic digest and filtered announcements by role/topic, etc.
- Describe professional learning resources across multiple dimensions and criteria, including format and alignment to outcomes and district strategies, to help teachers better identify the method and relevance.
- Drive all communications back to a single source such as a portal or LMS, so that teachers know where to find information and resources if they miss/misplace announcements and can easily find other opportunities.
- Spark teacher curiosity (such as through a blog or tweet) and encourage their self-directedness through facilitating tools and supports that curate that interest/need identification and fulfillment.

HOW THE LASTINGER CENTER EMPOWERS TEACHER VOICE TO TAILOR THE PD EXPERIENCE

Central to the University of Florida Lastinger Center's support for K-12 student learning is their delivery to school districts and teachers of customized PD that is online, instructor facilitated and competency-based. The provision of 360-degree communications through multiple embedded channels is critical to scaling personalization and success.

This model starts with the Lastinger Center's recognition of educator variance. For example, at the start of each course, educators are surveyed about what they will need to succeed in the course. This engagement also activates their self-realization as learners (rather than their usual role as educators). A mid-course survey checks for engagement and feedback. Within the course, this personalized communication translates to using multiple modalities and formats such as instructor-recorded videos, live chat and asynchronous discussions.

"Educators come from a wide range of contexts and backgrounds and bring a variety of needs and strengths, and so we try to be very sensitive to their

individual preferences to receive information, communicate and engage in the course," said Cathy Cavanaugh, chief experience officer at The University of Florida Lastinger Center.

The Lastinger Center uses a team approach to meet each learner's unique learning and technology needs. One team serves a help desk role, building empathy with each learner's needs. They curate requests to drive improvements in course design and learner experience. Another team communicates to every educator before, during and after the course about registration, certification, etc. As a result, learners receive more timely support, and instructors can focus on the teaching and learner support and a more positive mentor relationship.

At the end of the course, Lastinger surveys teachers for their feedback to drive continuous course improvement to best meet teacher needs. The generation of net promoter scores for each course also drives accountability for teacher satisfaction.



4. Provide a modernized, teacher-centered professional learning infrastructure

Quite often, traditional professional learning has been centered around district initiatives and single-point workshops, focused on continuing education credits or relegated to scattered informal learning. Modernized professional learning is ongoing, personalized and hybrid; merges content and community; is embedded in and applied to practice; and leverages resources from across the district and beyond—all requiring a thoughtfully designed network infrastructure that affords choice, customization, community and credentials.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Create a single hub for teachers to identify and access all professional learning information and resources, including announcements, content and course catalog, tools and communities such as through a web portal or LMS.
 - Embrace asynchronous, on-demand formats to provide teacher agency and convenience of scheduling and self-pacing, including better enabling learning anytime, anywhere, including outside the school day and in an ongoing manner.
 - Enable teachers to connect to a variety of formal and informal professional learning communities (PLCs) both inside and outside the district, including online and through social media.
 - Institute policies, practices and tools to enable teachers to more easily connect informally through the day and week, including through formative classroom observations, circle discussions and other ongoing mechanisms for sharing and feedback.
 - Build hybrid, scaffolded and stackable frameworks and pathways with priority around ease of use/ navigation and personalization so teachers can easily identify appropriate resources.
- Leverage subject matter experts across district departments and roles to create, deliver and support professional learning, rather than limiting it to a fixed team.
 - Enable the use of student and other data to help teachers identify their areas of needed improvement but in a non-punitive manner (i.e., a personal flashlight, not a district hammer.)
 - Embed relevant teacher supports and professional learning within the student course/curriculum to increase relevance, ease navigation and expedite supports to where and when most needed such as within the student-facing LMS.
 - Incorporate dashboards for teachers, as well as their instructors and systems, to easily track professional learning engagement, progress and outcomes with a priority around teacher navigation and agency such as through an LMS.

“While professional learning has always been important for educators, the speed at which technology and information is accelerating makes it imperative for education to stay viable and relevant. It is impossible for one teacher to be an expert at everything. Using an LMS allows teachers to blend their expertise in a given field with technology that is keeping up with today’s global environment. An LMS also allows for teachers to collaborate (peer guidance), which provides for a learning community.”

Chris Huckans, Principal of Bishop Hall Charter School

HOW THE GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD CREATED A HUB FOR PD DISCOVERY AND ACCESS

The Greater Essex County District School Board has 4,700 staff members in southern Ontario dedicated to serving approximately 36,000 students. School board leaders realized the importance of making all teaching and learning resources more easily discoverable, including for their teachers to identify the most relevant professional learning resources.

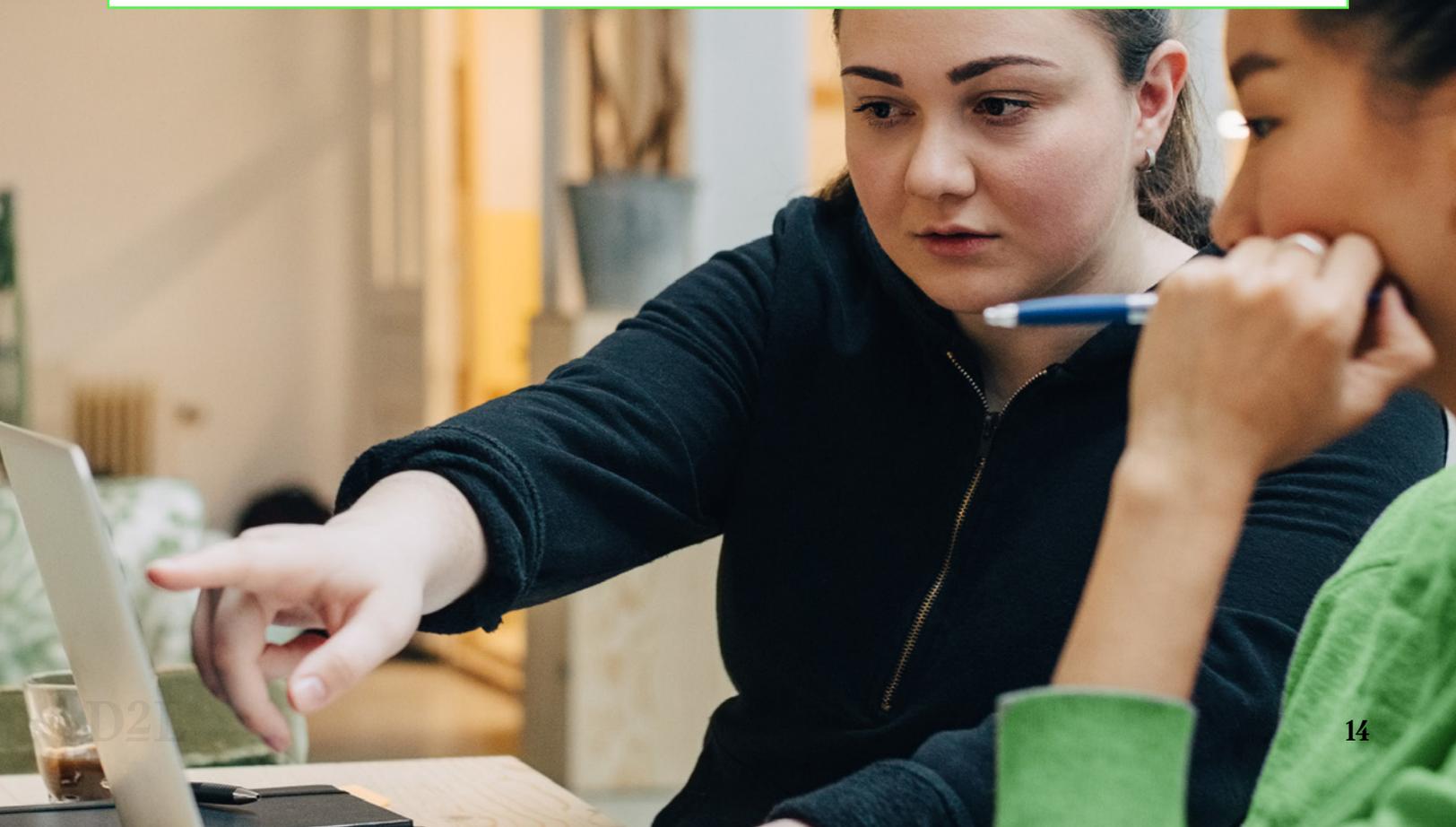
“We had to find a way to provide PD and support to all of our teachers in a way that would be accessible, convenient and personalized to their individual needs,” said Peter Phinney, technology enabled learning and teaching contact at the Greater Essex County District School Board.

Greater Essex started with the most immediate need of supporting teachers to implement their Brightspace learning management system for student learning. They created a teacher course within the LMS that featured 90+ short, targeted one-topic tutorials on how to do basic tasks. Each followed a 3-tab template of a 5-minute video, written instructions

and a PDF download. This provided a single online hub within their central teaching and learning environment for ease of access and discovery to an organized set of modules, while a simple text search tool was added for easy identification of the most relevant resources.

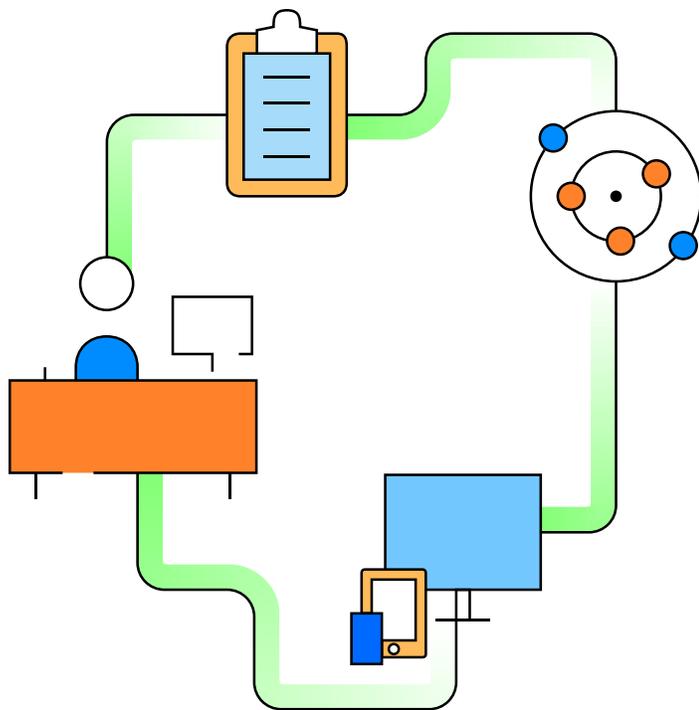
This approach has now been used for other courses. Various board-level consultants and special assignment teachers are developing their own PD courses to be added to this hub and included in the “discover” tool to make them accessible to any teacher who wants PD on any of the provided topics.

“As a board, we are utilizing Brightspace for self-enrollable PD courses for teachers on a variety of topics,” said Phinney. “The impact has been huge. We have noticed that the number of questions regarding basic tasks has decreased significantly. This has allowed us to focus on PD that takes teachers to the next level in their online teaching practice, including assessment and learner engagement.”



5. Curate a robust catalog of professional learning resources and formats to address the scope of teacher needs

Teacher professional learning interests and needs vary widely based on, among other factors, their subject/grade taught, specific curriculum, instructional approach, experience and expertise. What is the teacher looking to get out of the professional learning—ideas, information, skills, feedback? How does that impact the type and format? Personalization and relevance are critical. Given this diversity of needs, achieving these goals requires new and varied sources/methods that enable teachers to design their own pathways.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Search widely to identify a diversity of resource types (e.g., social media, blogs, archived conferences, content libraries, course catalogs, videos, podcasts, etc.) across different third-party sources (e.g., experts, professional associations, educational agencies, colleges, etc.).
- Tag curated resources using common district definitions, taxonomy and naming convention, including for learning outcomes, topics, formats, district initiatives, suggested scaffolds and progressions, etc., to enable teachers to sort, filter and stack resources with multiple entry points and pathways.
- Build consortium partnerships with other school districts and regional agencies to share needs and costs and increase the economy of scale given the time/effort/resources it takes to build out a multitude of resources and pathways.
- Partner with regional or state agencies, colleges, nonprofit organizations, and other course content and service providers who are accredited and have the mission/funding to support at scale across districts.
- Use your LMS to empower district staff across roles and teams to author courses and modules, including integration of third-party resources.
- Identify and design inclusive and universally designed resources that enable teacher voice and agency, recognize their diversity, and provide multiple means of engagement, representation and expression.
- Continuously evaluate and enhance professional learning resources through teacher feedback and other means while updating the catalog by modifying less effective/relevant resources.

HOW PNW BOCES FLIPPED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TO RESPECT EDUCATORS' TIME AND NEEDS

When the pandemic hit, Putnam Northern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services (PNW BOCES) quickly realized that it needed to accelerate its rollout of remote professional learning to ensure access and meet the dynamic, individualized needs of teachers and administrators across the county. Not only was most PD previously conducted at a fixed time and place in person at county conference centers, but resources and tools were also scattered.

PNW BOCES reoriented its professional learning from an in-person model to a flipped classroom model that combines synchronous and asynchronous learning. The model enables ongoing access to teachers across the region and the state, not only eliminating the barriers of distance and travel but also enabling a more learner-centered model that allows time for teacher application and improvement.

“With the flipped classroom, it’s not about just soaking up information and then walking away,” said John Boniello, former director and systems change facilitator at PNW BOCES. “It’s about changing your practice and applying what you’ve learned. That’s a much better use of everybody’s time.”

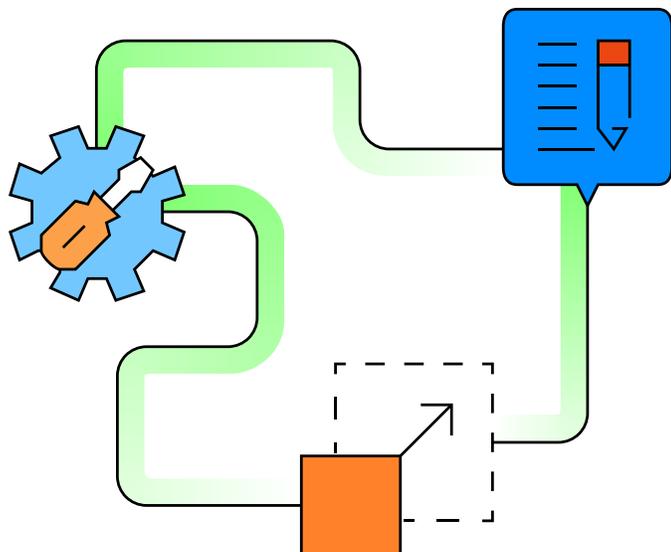
PNW BOCES’ use of the Brightspace LMS also provides a streamlined user experience that helps educators use their learning time productively, and for administrators to manage professional learning for hundreds or thousands of teachers across dozens of cohorts. A single hub brings everything together for the teacher, from instructional videos to course content to links to live virtual sessions. The system also automates welcome emails, personalized reminders to learners, and unlocking of course content and assignments at each learner’s pace to scale personalization.

6. Design authentic professional learning that incorporates teacher practice, reflection and feedback

One-time workshops, system-wide initiative training and lecture courses too often ignore the importance of learning timeliness and learner application and reflection. Learner-centered best practice requires not just personalization of content, pace and place, but equally as important, the ongoing opportunity for practice and feedback to deepen content knowledge and instructional skill.

“The professional learning must be meaningful and applicable to the classroom for teachers to find value.”

Jennifer Harriton-Wilson, ED.D., Putnam|Northern Westchester BOCES



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Design professional learning based on an individual or group-identified problem of practice, embed reflection of prior knowledge and experience, and include post-event processing within and across groups.
- Structure teacher learning across an extended period to provide time for classroom practice, and build a progression of learning events so teachers can continuously (re)identify and further target their gaps.
- Employ coaching, PLCs, peer observation and teacher diaries—including the use of video and other technologies—to support post-event processing and feedback needed for authentic and deeper learning.
- Where professional learning extends beyond the school/district or is not specific to the local curriculum and instruction, provide local PLCs or other opportunities for that localization with peers and practice to enable relevance (to the curriculum and school practice).
- Facilitate participation in PLCs where teachers can connect asynchronously and flexibly schedule synchronous sessions, including with teachers and experts outside their school/district as well as with peers within the district.
- Consider repurposing large-group synchronous learning for more personalized components such as for observation/feedback and peer-to-peer learning.
- Design with dual purposes where possible, such as ice breakers built around relevant topic or experience and professional learning that embeds and mimics sound pedagogy that teachers can apply to their teaching.

HOW THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LAUNCHED A HYBRID MODEL FOR SCALING FLEXIBLE, CUSTOMIZABLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

When the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) rolled out a state-mandated course, they needed to design it with the flexibility for teachers to work through the course according to their personal needs and school schedules. The solution was an adaptable, hybrid model that included state-certified course facilitators available for in-person instruction as well as course content and assignments hosted in the state-licensed learning LMS.

ODE trained subject matter experts to become state-certified course facilitators that school districts can schedule to lead their staff's training on site during previously scheduled professional learning days. Often, the facilitators ask that teachers complete pre-work in the LMS prior to the meeting days while blending LMS-hosted digital resources into their onsite discussions. For example, they project instructional videos from the course while enabling teachers from their own computers to follow along in the lessons and complete any knowledge checks, quizzes or assessments as the group is working through the content.

This hybrid format allows each educator to also have access to the content for their ongoing review as needed and to complete the requirements at their pace to earn the course award.

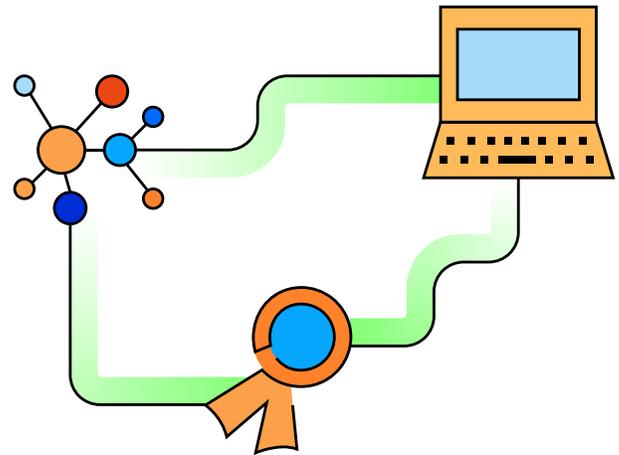
While working with a facilitator is the recommended best practice, that is not always possible in every district. In this case, because the design enables individual enrollment and progression in the LMS, the course can also be taken by a single teacher or by teacher teams. Many districts have scheduled times for building-level teams to work through the course together in PLCs to also support local feedback and reflection.

“Valuing and protecting teachers’ time must be an important part of both the planning and executing of professional learning,” said Allie Sberna, pHCLE, professional development eLearning coordinator at the ODE. “This hybrid model provides the flexibility needed for teachers to collectively and individually access learning when and as needed, both in-person and online.”



7. Build flexible content pathways, including through competency-based progressions and modular approaches

Formal education is traditionally based on fixed-path, semester-long courses, which is especially challenging for professionals trying to fill learning gaps within their busy days. We recognize that our students have unique needs and pathways, and the same is true for teachers as learners. More flexible, mastery-based and modular designs can help teachers target what they need and when they need (or have time for) it.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Support learner agency and choice over learning pace, path, time and place, including not only mastery-based progressions and on-demand formats but also choice boards or playlists within a given learning goal or task to reflect principles of universal design, diversity and inclusion.
- Build mastery-based and self-paced progressions by documenting teacher competencies at a granular level, mapping content and learning to those outcome goals, embedding formative assessment and choice, and sequencing stackable content progressions.
- Design with a balance of structure (e.g., preconfigured pathways) and flexibility (e.g., the ability to “choose your own adventure” based on teacher interests, needs or demonstrated mastery).
- Create or (de)construct courses/content as shorter, stackable modules with clear articulation of learning outcomes, expected prior knowledge and pathways so teachers can learn in small, on-demand doses.
- Provide easy, informal on-ramps to professional learning such as through a social media post, a blog or even a question that triggers teacher interest and aligns to a course, module or other content pathway where they can then go deeper where they have interest/need.
- Scaffold content and activities over an extended period for an adaptive experience of learning preparation, absorption, practice and review through which knowledge and skills are applied and deepened over time.
- Integrate assessments across the professional learning infrastructure and within all courses/content to enable a personalized or mastery model, including pre-assessment to identify prior knowledge and suggested pathways as well as post-learning growth measures.
- Incorporate a variety of methods for self-, peer, formative and summative evaluation of teacher knowledge and skills during their learning journey such as through activities, quizzes, rubrics and practice portfolios for flexible and authentic demonstration of learning.
- Where appropriate, use student data to identify gaps in student learning and thus in teacher expertise/needs for individual teachers and cohorts.
- Embrace micro-credentials and badging as a flexible, empowering framework for evaluating and recognizing teacher mastery, including alignment of multiple pathways to a given badge.

HOW THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION PARTNERED ON A MODULAR, FLIPPED CLASSROOM APPROACH TO SCALE PERSONALIZED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In 2018, the [International Society for Technology in Education](#) (ISTE) launched ISTE U with a series of instructor-led courses built around the ISTE Standards and eligible for graduate-level credits. The courses were all 15 hours and were cohort-based, being launched at three pre-scheduled times each year and assuming a similar pacing for all learners (though not synchronous). These extended, fixed-schedule courses met many needs, but ISTE recognized that many teachers sought additional flexibility.

Based on teacher feedback and changed needs at the start of the pandemic, ISTE accelerated its prior plans to also deliver many two- and five-hour courses in a more modular approach. These shorter courses are available on demand and are self-paced. Intelligent agents automate task releases and reminders within the LMS powering ISTE U. The courses can also be bundled to address multiple pillars within a larger topic.

“We have found a lot of interest in self-paced courses because they are short and specific, which means they have the potential to be more relevant and certainly more flexible,” said Joseph South, chief learning officer at ISTE.

Many school districts leverage ISTE U self-paced courses in a flipped classroom model. Teachers access the most relevant content at their own pace and then join a local PLC where cohorts can apply that shared, foundational knowledge to their own context and environment. This format provides alignment to district curriculum and priorities, and a 360-degree learning experience inclusive of practice and reflection.

“This model enables flexible scaling of personalized professional learning that may not be otherwise possible for many districts if they had to develop and deliver their own courses,” said Liz Miller Lee, director of online learning at ISTE. “This out-sourcing and collaboration is so important to providing all teachers with ongoing, job-embedded and relevant professional learning that supports their growth.”



8. Employ multiple formats, methods and modalities for effective instructional design and learning personalization

While COVID-19 was a catalyst for digital professional learning, the use of hybrid models and multi-event experiences often remains the outlier to traditional in-person, one-time workshops. The intentional use of technology can provide a more engaging and meaningful professional learning experience that better meets individual needs as well as matches the most appropriate format to the learning task. A blending of in-person and online, synchronous and asynchronous, and group and independent learning can most effectively ensure sound instruction and learner agency.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- Blend synchronous and asynchronous activities, including the use of a flipped classroom model that enables on-demand, self-paced consumption and leaves live sessions (online or in-person) for deeper feedback and discussion.
- Supplement live (online or in-person) PD with ongoing virtual engagement, including asynchronous discussion groups, on-demand resources, and video/audio recording of live sessions (with automated, time-stamped closed captioning for enhanced access and navigation).
- Leverage external social media, online discussion groups and online PLCs to crowd-source (from peers and experts) and scale personalization to a degree not otherwise practical within a district.
- Use notifications and social media groups to push or enable subscription to bursts of professional learning content that introduce concepts as a catalyst for further exploration.

“If you can email the training content, do so (or make it available on demand), and save the real time spent together for deeper learning.”

Tara Linney, Founder, TL Specialists ([read more here](#))

- Apply multi-media across purposes, such as audio podcasts that teachers can access during their commute, video recordings to demonstrate a classroom practice, and video journals or portfolios for teachers to record or annotate their instructional methods for feedback.
- Where synchronous or interactive experiences are integrated in an asynchronous learning experience or course, leverage discussion threads and similar tools that are more flexible to teacher schedules than in-person-only options.
- Use technology to create engaging and inclusive learning experiences and communities, including universal design principles, video, closed captioning and interactives.
- Where synchronous professional learning requires or applies technology, enable any pre-requisite technology tool training to happen independently and on demand so that live and group learning time can be optimized and not disrupted by basic how-to technology questions.
- Use QR codes, bit.ly links, etc., to simplify the connections/navigation between in-person learning and online resources (synchronously or later on-demand).

Conclusion

As K-12 educators continue to reimagine the way schools, teaching and learning can be more student centered and personalized, you have the opportunity to lead the way with more personalized teacher professional learning. Curating learner agency, enabling the use of blended and hybrid models, and increasing learning relevance and flexibility for teachers not only support their own effectiveness, but also model best practices for their own classrooms and instruction.

Giving teachers agency around the topic, time, place and pace of their learning is also important to teacher satisfaction in their professional learning and therefore their overall satisfaction. Increased effectiveness, comfort with learning personalization (for themselves and their students) and satisfaction are all important to address increased teacher burnout.

The best practices curated above may seem overwhelming. As educators and administrators, you should not expect to implement and succeed with all of these practices at once. Instead, reflect on your own experiences and needs, identify first steps, and take an iterative approach of continuous improvement as you would with any new initiative or method. Open communications and collaboration so that teachers are more empowered and in control of their learning as professionals. Most importantly, recognize that professional learning is as important as ever to grow teacher capacity.



About the Guide/ Working Group Acknowledgements

D2L-commissioned research identified an extensive gap between the interests and the actual experiences of teachers in their professional learning methods and formats. In response, D2L gathered our partner education leaders on the frontier of modernizing teacher PD to help fill this gap that many school systems face in identifying and operationalizing alternative models.

We invited our partners to join an interim professional learning community to share, reflect and formulate recommended practices. We met in small, shifting study groups from July to October of 2022. We asked questions, tested our hypothesis, engaged in synchronous and asynchronous activities, and curated a consensus on the most impactful considerations and practices. The result is this practitioner-driven guide.

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ABOUT D2L

D2L is a global learning innovation company, reshaping the future of education and work. We're leading the way into a new era of personalized learning, driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of their age, ability or location. Our signature technology products—D2L Brightspace and D2L Wave—enhance the learning experience for millions of learners at every stage of life, from the earliest days of school to the working world.

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