



Talking Points For Community Leaders

Personalized Learning *What it is and How to Explain it*

Personalized Learning is a topic and term often misinterpreted by communities and may even lack clarity among educators. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with “Differentiated Instruction” and “Individualized Learning.” While these terms do not conflict with one another, they do describe different approaches.

The most simplistic way to look at these approaches is to think of Differentiated Learning as **how** instruction is delivered; Individualized Learning as the **pace** at which instruction is delivered; and Personalized Learning as encompassing both differentiated and individualized learning as well as being **student driven**.

Definition of Personalized Learning (Institute of Personalized Learning)

The Institute defines personalized learning as an approach to learning and instruction that is designed around individual learner readiness, strengths, needs and interests. Learners are active participants in setting goals, planning learning paths, tracking progress and determining how learning will be demonstrated. At any given time, learning objectives, content, methods and pacing are likely to vary from learner to learner as they pursue proficiency relative to established standards. A fully personalized environment moves beyond both differentiation and individualization.

Personalized Learning is an effective way to engage learners in their own educational process and ensure that the work they do is relevant to each student’s interests and vision for themselves. Personalization, when designed within the context of achievement expectations and assessments, supports a diverse spectrum of student interests and abilities.

Satisfaction with a one-size-fits-all education has been diminishing for the past 50 years. That fact has been widely acknowledged by educational leaders for decades as they identify approaches to make teaching and learning experiences increasingly rigorous, relevant, engaging, and inclusive.

Greater Personalization does require an ongoing shift in thinking on the parts of students, teachers, and communities. Stakeholders must gain and share accurate information and evidence to make this shift successful. Most models require significantly greater technological support and adapt – but do not diminish – the role of teacher/student/parent interactions.

Some questions to ask:

1. What is your district’s commitment to personalized learning?
2. How well does your community understand the process and goals of personalized learning?