DEVELOPING SHARED OWNERSHIP FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING

To transform the education system into one that reflects the values of personalized learning, states must develop and sustain deep partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. As leaders in the state, state legislators, state board members and state education agency (SEA) staff are uniquely positioned to bring stakeholders together to thoughtfully collaborate and design education policies that improve student learning outcomes and are responsive to the needs of their constituents. To do this, the state must shift from notions of traditional stakeholder engagement to build ongoing partnerships and shared ownership between the state and local stakeholder groups.

ALIGNMENT

EQUITY

TRANSFORMATIVE SCHOOL MODELS

SHARED OWNERSHIP

KnowledgeWorks has identified four core commitments that states should embrace as they work to shape their policy systems to support personalized learning statewide. They are alignment, equity, transformative school models and shared ownership. All four commitments are important and should work in concert with one another. This tool focuses on shared ownership because KnowledgeWorks believes it creates the foundation for the other three.

Shared ownership: The state proactively engages diverse stakeholders in the design and implementation of personalized learning systems, progressing toward shared ownership of system design and decision-making around implementation. Local communities are empowered to work alongside the state and share accountability for education practices and outcomes. It is essential to the design of quality personalized learning systems.

State-level shared ownership does not mean the state is taking power away from local districts and communities. Instead, shared ownership requires a multi-level process in which the state provides supports to and learns from districts and communities to broaden personalized learning. As such, stakeholder groups across the state, including the state itself, must uphold high expectations and standards for managing quality of policy development and implementation.

The table below shows the key characteristics and differences between traditional stakeholder engagement and shared ownership.

TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT VERSUS SHARED OWNERSHIP

KEY CHARACTERISTICS	TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS	SHARED OWNERSHIP IN PERSONALIZED LEARNING SYSTEMS
SCOPE	Only stakeholders with longstanding relationships to policymakers are included in decision-making.	All stakeholders who have an interest or would be affected by policy change are engaged.
LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	Consultation happens during policy development.	Consultation happens during policy development, and stakeholders play key roles in implementation and evaluation.
FEEDBACK	Feedback occurs in a structured environment and is one-way.	Feedback is reciprocal, and the ways in which feedback will be integrated into next steps is transparent.

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Evolving from traditional stakeholder engagement practices to a culture of shared ownership requires that state education leaders rethink the ways in which they approach relationships and partnerships with different stakeholder groups. This toolkit is designed to help state leaders deepen partnerships and stakeholder engagement opportunities to create trusting, long-term opportunities for shared ownership.

GETTING STARTED

ENSURING INTERNAL CAPACITY AND BUY-IN

State leaders should cultivate buy-in for personalized learning and a collaborative culture within the state's leadership structures, including the SEA, state board of education and legislature. This process is ongoing but may be considered a precursor to deepening partnerships with external stakeholders. It is designed to reveal skillsets and attitudes state leaders might need to develop to build shared ownership for personalized learning with stakeholders. Consider the following:

» **Determine what staff understand to be true about the state's vision for personalized learning.** Ensuring internal staff understand the state's vision is key to deepening partnerships with external stakeholders. If staff do not clearly understand the state's vision, the public will also struggle to understand it.

» **Identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth for cultivating partnerships with the public in new ways.** Choosing next steps for areas of growth across the SEA, legislature and state board of education will directly support the success of developing relationships beyond the state's leadership.

» **Develop staff skills for deepening existing partnerships and cultivating new partnerships.** State leaders and their staff may or may not be ready to meaningfully engage diverse partners. Cultural competency training and cultural bias training will equip staff with vital skills that increase transparency and build trust between the state and stakeholders.

» **Ensure state leaders and their staff deepen their knowledge of personalized learning by visiting classrooms and learning from practitioners.** The more state leaders and staff can experience personalized learning in action, the more concrete the concepts will become and the more equipped they will be at understanding community needs.

» **Intentionally reflect upon shared ownership practices over time.** As capacity builds within the state and as relationships outside the state deepen over time, each of the above steps will need to be revisited in new ways to ensure this work is replicable and transformational.

YOUR TURN

Consider the level of understanding and buy-in of individuals in the state for personalized learning and for the state's vision for student success. How might differing levels of buy-in affect your external engagement processes? How might you prepare staff for developing stakeholder relationships in ways that reflect a culture of shared ownership?

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

During the stakeholder analysis process, the state should identify stakeholder groups, understand their historical and local context with the state and consider what may influence or motivate their participation. The state may have longstanding relationships with some important stakeholder groups, but a culture of shared ownership requires the state also engage those groups that may not always be easy to reach.

One distinguishing factor between traditional stakeholder engagement practices and shared ownership is the diversity of stakeholders. The state may have longstanding relationships with some important stakeholder groups, but a culture of shared ownership requires the state to also engage groups that may not always be easy to reach. The state should consider all the stakeholder groups that might have an interest in or be affected by policy changes to personalized learning.

POSSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS	GROUPS TO KEEP IN MIND
Local school district and school building leaders	Rural, urban and suburban representation
Students	Students who are racially, linguistically and culturally diverse, students with learning differences, geographically diverse students
Students' parents or caregivers	Diverse array of caregivers, including grandparents, siblings or the foster care system
Postsecondary and industry credentialing partners	Community colleges, four-year universities, technical colleges and third parties that grant industry credentials
Additional state agencies and state leaders in other fields	Health and human services, criminal justice, agriculture, business and economic development, public transportation, among others
Cultural organizations and institutions	Libraries, museums, visual and performing arts centers
Nonprofit organizations	Social service providers, advocacy organizations and community foundations, among others
Business leaders who have engaged with the state	Large and small businesses and businesses owned by women and/or people of color
Community representation	Community centers, neighborhood organizations, diverse faith group representation and other respected individuals or groups

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT FOR STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Shared ownership for the design and implementation of personalized learning systems requires representative and inclusive engagement strategies led by the state. Notably, some stakeholder groups will have more barriers to overcome than others. Therefore, it is important to understand the context for how different stakeholder groups have engaged with state leadership in the past and how they may be involved in the future.

Some context considerations for stakeholder groups include:

» What unique perspective does each group provide? Why is that important?

» What is the level of historical involvement with the SEA for each stakeholder group?

» What is the day-to-day capacity for different stakeholder groups? (e.g., Do members of this stakeholder group work long hours? Do they require longer transportation time because they take public transportation?) What types of accommodations to traditional engagement strategies might each group require?

» What communications and language needs exist among differing stakeholder groups?

» Is there any additional education or training required to empower a particular group in this process?

When possible, state leaders should bring stakeholder groups together and ask them about the nature of their interactions with the state in the past to better understand what strategies would empower them in the future and be open to adjusting course as needed to fully engage as many groups as possible.

CULTIVATING SHARED OWNERSHIP

To cultivate shared ownership for personalized learning, diverse stakeholder groups should know they are playing an important role in the development and implementation of policies and programs within the state. They also need to be assured that their relationships are mutually beneficial. In other words, the state and stakeholders should identify together what a deep working relationship will look like, how it might benefit both parties and how to hold each other accountable to ensure those commitments are upheld.

The state should focus on thoughtfully shifting power structures so stakeholder groups are empowered to bring important issues to the state in meaningful ways, rather than engagement being restricted to the state seeking feedback when needed.

To develop mutually beneficial relationships, the state should implement the following:

» **Guiding principles for empowering stakeholders**

» **Engagement strategies**

» **Long-term partnership opportunities**

Cultivating shared ownership of personalized learning is an active, continuous process. State leaders must empower stakeholders through ongoing interaction and ever-deepening engagement. While that may seem intimidating, there are ways to move toward shared ownership without becoming overwhelmed. By adhering to specific principles for empowerment, utilizing a variety of proven engagement strategies and developing long-term relationships through structured engagements, the state can create an environment where a broad range of stakeholders are working together to build a system that ensures the success of all students.

YOUR TURN

Consider the following three key questions for creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships. How can the state better empower stakeholder groups already engaged with the work? Who else needs to be included? What could be better accomplished through partnership?

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EMPOWERING STAKEHOLDERS

A culture of shared ownership requires that diverse stakeholders know that their perspective is indispensable to the state both in policy design and implementation. The state should adhere to the following guiding principles to empower stakeholder groups to lead alongside the state.

» **Take time to develop trust.** Some stakeholder groups have been marginalized by state leadership in the past, which means it may take time to build trusting relationships with them. The state should be transparent and open with stakeholder groups about how policies might affect certain populations and should find ways to strengthen feedback loops that help build trust and ensure issues important to stakeholders are taken seriously.

» **Listen to and accept varying perspectives on a particular issue.** Differing stakeholders (even within the same stakeholder group) will likely have diverse or even conflicting opinions about how to ensure success of personalized learning. Their perspectives may look different than what the state anticipates or believes to be true but are vital to consider when developing and improving upon policies and programs for personalized learning.

» **Be aware of power dynamics.** For many stakeholder groups, especially those who have not been included as important stakeholder groups in the past, perceived power dynamics—ones in which the state is seen as the ultimate authority—may affect the success of deepening relationships. The state should create opportunities for engagement that focus on developing mutually beneficial relationships, such as setting up meetings in locations stakeholders are familiar with and making meetings interactive.

» **Continually collaborate.** Ongoing two-way dialogue is incredibly important for the success of shared ownership and the sustainability of personalized learning. The more the state collaborates deeply with diverse stakeholder groups, the more trust is built, leading to a deeper level of ownership.

» **Accept feedback and be transparent about the bad and the good.** To create and sustain empowering partnerships that lead to shared ownership, the state must be willing to engage in continuous improvement processes with stakeholders. When state leaders are transparent about successes and failures and accept feedback to help improve policies and programs, partnerships are more likely to deepen and grow.

YOUR TURN

What processes or strategies could state leaders implement to empower stakeholder groups? How might the state deepen and improve ongoing communication with stakeholders to increase transparency and solicit stakeholder feedback?

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

As state leaders and stakeholders cultivate a culture of shared ownership, specific engagement opportunities will prove helpful in a variety of ways. Below is a list of options that can serve to both broaden and deepen reciprocal relationships with diverse groups of stakeholders.

In addition to initiating strategies to engage with stakeholders, state leaders should be open to learning from stakeholder groups in both formal and informal settings to build a broader knowledgebase of diverse perspectives.

» **Connection / Sharing Fairs:** At a convening of stakeholders across local communities who are engaged in personalized learning practices, create sharing stations that people can visit to connect with one another, learn about and from others' programs and practices and develop connections and partnerships.

» **In-Community Interviews / Focus Groups:** Host short interviews with a wide range of people in different locations at different times of day from around the state, gathering perspectives to better understand individual and community perceptions about personalized learning.

» **Online Engagement:** Create opportunities with digital tools, such as social media, survey tools, text messaging and existing school platforms, for community members to find and share success stories and lessons learned from the school- and district-level to inform the state about personalized learning practices.

» **Public Meetings / Town Halls / Forums:** Gather constituents in person or online for larger meetings or small group discussions, providing time for soliciting ideas and feedback from a large group of people, as well as creating an opportunity to communicate out about personalized learning goals.

» **Site Visits:** Give community members and policymakers an opportunity to visit and experience personalized learning first-hand.

YOUR TURN

Which of these engagement strategies do you currently use to enlist input from stakeholders? How might they be modified and restructured to build a culture of shared ownership between stakeholder groups and the state? What accommodations need to be considered to ensure successful participation of traditionally marginalized stakeholder groups?

LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Shared ownership for personalized learning does not emerge without concerted, long-term efforts to build lasting relationships with diverse stakeholders, utilizing a variety of strategies. Below are some strategies for cultivating long-term partnerships:

» **Advisory cabinets** allow for long-term partnerships with specific stakeholder groups whose voices traditionally have not been at the table.

» **Advocacy coalitions** are led by diverse stakeholder leaders and are designed to help message the importance of personalized learning to members of their stakeholder groups and to leaders in the state.

» **Learning networks** are facilitated by a neutral party and are designed for stakeholders and the state to deepen knowledge of and problem-solve for issues aligned to the state's vision for student success.

» **Participatory funding opportunities** enable stakeholder groups to have power over a certain amount of funding and leverage grassroots partners to identify and implement education solutions.

YOUR TURN

Which of these partnership opportunities do you currently use in your work? How might they be modified and restructured to build a culture of shared ownership between stakeholder groups and the state? What accommodations need to be considered to ensure long-term partnership success for individual stakeholder groups?

LOOKING FORWARD

Statewide policy transformation is challenging and will require meaningful partnerships with national, state and local stakeholders. As you engage in this work, we hope you consider KnowledgeWorks as a resource. With nearly 20 years of experience exploring the future of learning, growing educator impact and working with state and federal policymakers, our team welcomes partnerships to grow a statewide approach to personalized learning.

We encourage you to also leverage **KnowledgeWorks** resources to deepen your understanding of personalized learning and to increase buy-in and urgency for a new approach to education. The following resources may be of particular interest as you partner with stakeholders toward statewide transformation.

An Introduction to Personalized Learning
Get an overview of personalized learning, learn about key concepts and get answers to frequently asked questions about personalized learning and competency-based learning.
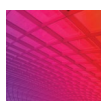
State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning
Ready to ensure all students in your state benefit from high-quality personalized learning experiences? This framework provides policy opportunities to help states evolve from exploration, to replication, to statewide transformation.
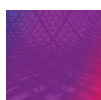
Navigating the Future of Learning: Key Considerations for Policymakers
Learn about KnowledgeWorks' fifth forecast on the future of learning, Navigating the Future of Learning, and use discussion questions to help you explore the future of learning in your community and state.

ONLINE ASSESSMENT Is your state ready for personalized learning? Find out what your state needs to do next. Take a short online assessment aimed to help state policymakers and partners get more information on ways to advance personalized learning across all 12 policy conditions. **Start your quiz at KnowledgeWorks.org/Policy-Quiz**

KnowledgeWorks is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing personalized learning that empowers every child to take ownership of their success. With nearly 20 years of experience exploring the future of learning, growing educator impact and working with state and federal policymakers, our passionate team partners with schools and communities to grow a system-wide approach to sustain student-centered practices so that every child graduates ready for what's next.

Get more resources to help make personalized learning a reality at **KnowledgeWorks.org.**

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