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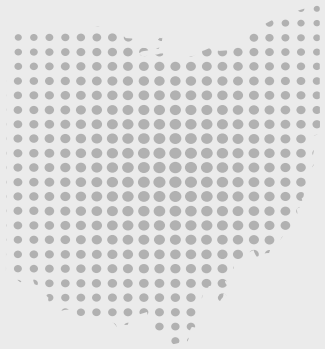

OHIO INNOVATION GUIDE

Ensuring that every K-12 learner is equipped for future success

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WHAT IS PERSONALIZED LEARNING?

Ohio strives to ensure every learner is provided with an environment where they can flourish. This means ensuring students have access to the supports and interventions they need to be successful. Schools, districts, educators, families, businesses, nonprofits and stakeholders all contribute to a successful learning community.

However, each learning environment must be constantly re-examined to identify what is working for learners and where room for improvement exists. This is not a vision for 10 or even five years down the road — the time to create these environments is now. Ohio schools have an opportunity to explore innovative approaches that help students improve literacy achievement, accelerate their learning, provide safe and supportive environments and prepare them for future success. Strategies to help schools explore innovative approaches to learning include:

- Instructional strategies that encourage creativity and strategic problem-solving
- STEM- and STEAM-oriented approaches to teaching and learning
- Project-, problem- and work-based learning
- Purposeful use of technology

Personalized, competency-based learning provides an important structure through which schools can realize each of these approaches and more. Personalized learning empowers students to take ownership of their learning, including how, what, when and where they learn and makes connections to community and real-world experiences. Together, learners, teachers, volunteers, paraprofessionals, parents, school leaders, community members and other stakeholders co-design authentic learning experiences.

Learning experiences are designed to prepare students for future success, accelerate their learning through evidence-based practices such as competency-based education and help students overcome obstacles to their learning. These stakeholders also work together in a broader school community to build a culture of personalized learning that will make this work sustainable and scalable in the long term.

Increasingly, educators across both Ohio and the United States have been using innovative approaches to better serve student needs. Nationally, the Canopy Project, which collects examples of schools using innovative approaches to teaching and learning, has identified 319 high-quality examples from across the country. In Ohio, schools and districts are increasingly exploring innovative approaches to learning through various flexibilities available in the state.

The purpose of this document is to help learning communities better understand ways they can create personalized environments and build a culture that supports their long-term sustainability. The information and examples included in this guide were collected through a combination of focus groups with Ohio stakeholders and direct engagement with schools and districts.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed for anyone interested in reimagining ways in which schools can overhaul their practices and structures to create and expand personalized learning opportunities for learners, such as those offered in STEM and STEAM programs. Interested groups include those directly impacted, such as students, educators and parents. It should also include community partners, businesses, industry and higher education, as stakeholder engagement is key to building the school culture needed for sustainability.

The guide is also designed to be a starting place for school or district teams as they consider how they might personalize learning for their students. It attempts to accomplish three things:

1. It includes concrete approaches, which the guide refers to as "action areas," where teams can begin reimagining what is possible for their learners and provide increased personalization of instruction
2. It provides clarity around select aspects of state policy that schools or districts might perceive as barriers to adapting learner-centered approaches. In addition, relevant links in the action areas are included to support those interested in learning more about specific topics that may not be articulated in the state policy section
3. It provides examples of how actual schools in Ohio are undertaking these approaches within existing state policy structures

Teams just getting started with this work might begin by reviewing KnowledgeWorks *Finding Your Path: A Navigation Tool for Scaling Personalized, Competency-Based Learning* and then skimming the entire Innovation Guide to understand how it is organized. Those teams that have already taken steps down the path of personalization might instead decide to start with the action areas that seem most applicable to the goals of their learning communities. Schools and districts that want to personalize learning through a STEM- or STEAM-oriented approach might consult the state's **Quality Model for STEM and STEAM Schools**. Those schools may also want to consider pursuing **STEM and STEAM designations**.

ACTION AREAS AND OHIO EXAMPLES

The Innovation Guide is intended to inspire schools and districts to deliberately and creatively think and strategize about how to personalize instruction for learners, provide examples to illustrate opportunities for action and begin outlining a path for how to get there.

In early 2023, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce partnered with KnowledgeWorks to conduct a series of focus groups and interviews with stakeholders across the state to gain a better understanding of where and how innovation was taking place. Based on the information collected, the Department and KnowledgeWorks identified six key action areas where schools and districts can leverage existing policies to advance personalized learning. In no particular order of prioritization, these are:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
2. **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
3. **Providing Learner Supports**
4. **Recording and Creating Learning Based on Mastery**
5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, as there are many areas where learning communities can exercise flexibility. However, these particular areas came up repeatedly in conversations and thus illustrate some of the more common areas for innovation in Ohio as identified through this process.

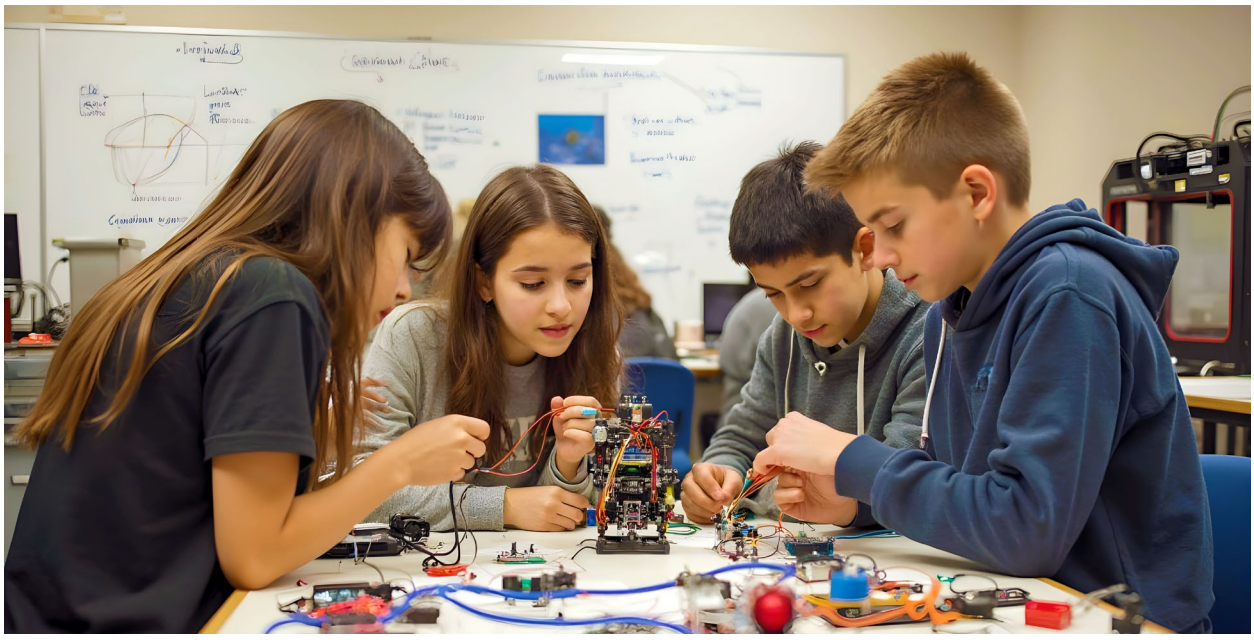
Each action area includes three sections:

- A description of what it is and how to do it, including any key considerations for schools and districts considering taking that particular approach and how it connects to the definition of personalized learning
- Relevant state policy connections specifically outlining the areas in state policy that give flexibility for schools and districts
- Ohio “spotlights,” which include examples and advice from the schools and districts that were interviewed

The sections also include a series of examples from different types of schools across Ohio. Examples were selected based on their geographic location and school grade level. School and district spotlights are drawn exclusively from Ohio schools and districts, and staff from each were directly interviewed or surveyed. All student population estimates were made using the most recent data from the Department's website. The spotlights focus on the following schools and districts:

- Reynoldsburg City Schools
- Mason City Schools
- The Metro Schools
- Perry Local School District
- Noble Local School District
- Bio-Med Science STEM Academy
- Tallmadge School District
- Butler Tech Career Tech Science Center
- Global Impact STEM Academy
- Summit Road STEM Elementary

Please note, while school and district teams can begin with any of the action areas, experts and practitioners in personalized learning implementation have often found that defining the qualities they wish to impart to learners is crucial and beneficial for newly established learning communities. A portrait/profile of a learner and an aligned set of competencies (the first action area) establishes this vision and structure. Teams new to this work could begin by centering learner qualities either formally through a portrait/profile of a learner or less formally through conversation and connection. This will help guide the work when pursuing personalized learning prior to tackling other action areas.



ACTION AREA 1 PORTRAITS/PROFILES OF A GRADUATE AND COMPETENCIES

What It Is and How to Do It

In reimagining school through a personalized learning lens, it is important to begin with a clear vision of the knowledge, skills and dispositions learners will need to achieve their full potential. This establishes a clear "why" behind transforming school structure, thereby smoothing the transition to a new approach to teaching and learning. Many communities define this vision through a Portrait of a Learner or a Profile of a Graduate. A portrait/profile serves as any learning community's "north star" when redesigning education systems and structures.

When complete, a portrait/profile will articulate a community's hopes and aspirations for what their learners will need to navigate a rapidly changing future with evolving workforce needs. Learning communities typically include six to 12 attributes they want to see learners achieve by the time they leave the K-12 system, which often connect to key considerations for local business and industry. These documents are typically developed through an intensive and inclusive community-driven process that includes learners, educators, employers, postsecondary education partners and other community stakeholders.

It's crucial to include all these stakeholders when crafting a portrait/profile. Doing so will help ensure their investment and long-term support in building a sustainable culture centered on the vision as the school or district puts it into practice.

Once a learning community has established a portrait/profile, they will need to think about how to implement this at the school and classroom levels. One strategy to do this is to create what is often called a competency progression or continuum. If the portrait/profile is the "north star" for what a community wants for their children, competencies provide a structure that educators will use to implement the competency-based approaches to achieve that vision.

Competencies allow the portrait/profile to be "unpacked" and contextualized across subject areas, grade levels and other learning experiences. As learners continue to master rigorous academic content, the competencies provide a structure to evaluate progress toward that higher-level vision articulated in the portrait/profile as learners engage with content in more authentic and problem-based ways.

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Portraits/profiles and competencies are also key to empowering schools and districts to achieve a vision aligned to personalized learning, as well as frameworks such as Ohio's Quality Model for STEM and STEAM Schools. For example, reorienting school around competencies can make it easier to create more flexible learning environments that allow learners to progress through the curriculum at their own optimal path and pace. Competency-based learning is also one of the key indicators of a system built to give students evidence of their learning as well as feedback.

There's one final and very important consideration — profiles/portraits and competencies often go hand in hand. Competencies allow the portrait or profile to be put into practice at the classroom level. Similarly, the portrait or profile creates the vision for what competencies will ultimately achieve for learners. Together, they form the backbone of a high-quality, personalized, competency-based learning approach.

State Policy Connection

While state policy in Ohio does not require schools or districts to develop a portrait/profile, developing one can be useful to help a learning community connect about and identify priorities around learner skills and dispositions. Ohio offers guidance and requirements around Ohio's Learning Standards and graduation requirements. Schools can use these areas of policy as a starting point to help guide them through this process and consider the various learning goals that students have as they create a portrait/profile.

As outlined in Ohio Revised Code 3301.079, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce establishes learning standards by grade level. Learning standards, along with high school graduation requirements (Ohio Revised Code 3313.603), may be good places to help learning communities think about the skills and dispositions that learners need to master. While separated by grade level, learning communities can view Ohio's Learning Standards more holistically to help think through the qualities that should be included in their portrait/profile and how mastery of those standards can help learners make progress toward those qualities. In addition to learning standards, the Quality Model for STEM and STEAM Schools includes guidance on innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The teaching and learning guidance offered in this Quality Model guide should be considered when developing a portrait/profile regardless of whether a school is seeking STEAM and STEM school designation.

Ohio Spotlight

Mason City Schools

In Southwest Ohio, Mason City Schools is undertaking steps to personalize instruction for its approximately 10,000 learners. To kickstart the work, the district utilized a crowd-sourced process to develop its Portrait of a Comet and the district's three big rocks — culture, inclusive excellence and personalized learning.

The work engaged community partners, including higher education representatives, businesses, board members, parents, educators and learners. Now that the portrait has been released, the district is developing an action plan to create developmentally appropriate indicators for each skill to help guide successful implementation in future school years.

> **District staff emphasized the importance of creating built-in supports for learners throughout their personalized learning journeys.**

Mason City Schools is currently revising its K-12 curriculum to make it easier for educators to incorporate the skills identified in the Portrait of a Comet into the learning outcomes for each course and grade level. This process will ultimately allow learners to demonstrate their mastery of these skills through authentic demonstrations of learning. The district is developing a portfolio system as one way to allow learners to achieve this demonstration.

District staff emphasized the importance of creating built-in supports for learners throughout their personalized learning journeys. Dr. Shanna Bumiller, Learning Experience Supervisor, Mason City Schools, shared that one of the district's goals for the 2023-2024 school year was to help both learners and staff in all school buildings set goals around their competency-based learning work.

These goals will be used to help the district improve and fine-tune its student-centered learning work. Bumiller shared that the district is in the process of examining its existing Multi-Tiered System of Support to ensure it can proactively meet each learner's needs.

Mason City Schools is also rethinking the physical structure of its schools. The district is in the process of creating innovation hubs in some buildings. When completed, these spaces will become a central location for learners, staff and the community to come together to collectively meet learners' needs.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
2. **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
4. **Recording and Creating Learning Based on Mastery**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

Reynoldsburg City Schools

Reynoldsburg City Schools, located in the southeastern suburbs of Columbus and serving approximately 7,300 students, has been personalizing learning for students of all ages for years. The district's work was initially catalyzed by space considerations. At the time, the district needed a new high school, but it wasn't clear how it should be structured.

The community developed the idea of creating learning academies that would allow for increased personalization for learners. The academy model has since grown into 13 college and career-ready pathways at the high school level. These pathways also align across elementary and middle schools, with exposure to them beginning as early as kindergarten.

> **During any given class, you might see learners researching independently on their Chromebooks, acting out and dramatizing content with peers or engaging in meaningful group work.**

Reynoldsburg also exemplifies the importance of considering what is taught and how learners engage with that content. The district has established grade-spanning rubrics that cover all ages. These are directly aligned to the district's set of competencies, articulated in its Profile of a Learner. All teachers are expected to teach both Ohio's Learning Standards as well as the district's competencies. The district also leverages performance tasks as an assessment model for instruction. Instead of a traditional standalone test, learners may engage in a multi-day, deeper learning experience where they exhibit the knowledge around what they are expected to know after a particular quarter relative both to Ohio's Learning Standards and Reynoldsburg's profile-aligned competencies.

Reynoldsburg educators also leverage a variety of instructional strategies to personalize learning for each learner. Educators are explicitly trained in a variety of methods of instruction, ranging from whole-group direct instruction to strategies that facilitate collaborative time with peers. Learners are also given the time and space to pursue the curriculum in a way that works best for them. These practices collectively create more authentic learning opportunities and create flexible learning environments that help personalize instruction for each student. Staff shared that during any given class, you might see learners researching independently on their Chromebooks, acting out and dramatizing content with peers or engaging in meaningful group work.

Jocelyn Cosgrave, Reynoldsburg's former chief academic officer, provided some key words of advice for other potential innovators. Cosgrave emphasizes the importance of spending substantial time educating everyone in the building about the "why" behind the personalized learning work. Without that, she says, it just becomes a compliance activity. In her experience, the time and energy you invest up front in winning hearts and minds before diving into the details will increase acceptance of the work later.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
2. **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

ACTION AREA 2 CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

What It Is and How to Do It

It is critical to create a shared vision for personalized learning and orient a school's approach around mastery. But it is also critical to acknowledge that implementation is an equally important component of transforming education systems. Schools need to examine their curriculum and instructional strategies and create an agreed-upon framework for quality, learner-centered instruction as a driver for instructional decisions. Without considering the ways in which educators engage with learners, efforts to implement personalized education at the classroom level may not achieve their goals.

Schools will need to carefully rethink their curriculum, embodied in the portrait/profile competencies, to ensure it aligns with the vision. In a competency-based system, learners still need to meet rigorous and cognitively demanding state academic standards and learning targets but at a pace and on a path that makes sense for them. Both educators and learners will collectively need more flexibility to create new opportunities for how learners can meet these standards. To accomplish the personalization goals associated with a successful competency-based system, educators may need to engage with new curricular resources and freedoms.

High-quality instructional materials are an important part of personalized, competency-based learning as they specifically ensure students are on the optimal path and pacing to achieve mastery. However, schools are encouraged to think creatively and look for ways to leverage the flexibilities of out-of-the-box curricula and recommended scope and sequence documents.

Schools will also need to reconsider how instructional practices need to shift to align to their vision for education. In a personalized education approach, instruction can shift to a learner-led approach that incorporates differentiated instructional models, such as direct instruction, project-based learning, flipped models or independent study. When executed effectively, this leads to the types of flexible learning environments and authentic learning experiences that allow students to make meaningful connections among their learning and their interests, as well as the needs of their communities.

Many educators will likely need personalized professional development and support to develop strategies that guide their learners toward mastery of things like the portrait/profile attributes alongside academic content. These efforts, in turn, are crucial to creating the type of cultural shift in schools necessary to sustain personalized education approaches.

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Here are a few practical ways schools can pursue changes in these areas:

- Allow educators to incorporate learner-centered activities or look at curriculum options that embody learner-centered practices that allow for flexibility and personalization.
- Consider how to give educators the time and space to build project- and problem-based learning opportunities that foster skills such as innovation, problem-solving and design-thinking.
- Consider how curriculum and instruction can be redesigned to create cross-curricular and transdisciplinary learning opportunities that require engagement from multiple content disciplines. For example, educators in multiple subject areas like English, math and science might collaborate to co-design opportunities that incorporate standards in all three content areas and allow learners to demonstrate mastery of higher-order competencies.
- Create specific professional development opportunities built around personalized learning practices. This could include professional development led by the district, experts or external organizations with expertise in this area or the creation of opportunities like badges or micro-credentials that educators could earn to demonstrate their mastery of these practices.

State Policy Connection

An education system that allows learners to receive personalized education is dependent, among other things, on the accessibility to and support for competency-based learning.

As defined in Ohio Administrative Code 3301-35-01, a competency-based learning model "means any system of academic instruction, assessment, grading and reporting where students receive credit based on demonstrations and assessments of their learning rather than the amount of time they spend studying a subject. A competency-based learning model encourages accelerated learning among students who master academic materials quickly while providing additional instructional support time for students who need it."

Competency-based education is a component of many other learning models in the state, including blended learning, dropout prevention programs, online learning and credit flexibility. Competency-based education is also named in Ohio Revised Code 3326.15 as an option for STEM-designated schools. Learners' instructional needs and personalization are typically set by the central office and approved by the local board of education. Schools may engage in any of these learning experiences at the classroom, school or district level.

Ohio Spotlight

Bio-Med Science Academy STEM School

Bio-Med Science Academy STEM School (Bio-Med), located in Northeast Ohio, is thinking differently about how to give educators the flexibility they need to implement personalized learning strategies for the approximately 1,000 students the school serves.

Stephanie Lammlein, the school's chief academic officer and superintendent, says that people often remark that the school feels different. She attributes this to the amount of freedom educators are given to personalize instruction for their learners in alignment with the school's Academy Pillars.

In any given Bio-Med classroom, you may see educators giving direct instruction, engaging in topic deep dives with learners or learners independently working on projects. Educators are encouraged to think about how content in two courses could be integrated together to promote cross-curricular work. But even within this freedom, educators are still facilitating their learners' pathways through engaging and rigorous academic content.

Bio-Med's staff members also regularly leverage scheduling and course flexibility to personalize offerings for their learners. The school employs an accelerated term that allows learners to move through content more quickly than in a traditional semester period. The result is an elective, learner-driven project personalized to the passion of what they want to learn at the end of the academic period that is three weeks long.

Unlike the traditional school year, this three-week period has no specific course catalog tied to it. Educators design their own classes apart from their typical curriculum. External partners from higher education or business can be asked to come and teach courses as well. Educators sign up for a handful of classes during that period and receive a small amount of credit for what they complete.

> **Before graduating, learners in their senior year must have an internship that they design themselves, some of which result in industry-recognized credentials.**

The school is also one of 11 Ohio schools listed as members of the Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC). The organization has created a transcript oriented around mastery of key competencies rather than a traditional A-F grading scale. Bio-Med specifically focuses its transcript on higher-order objectives and skills and combines this transcript with a learning management platform so that the school does not report direct letter grades. The accompanying learning objectives are integrated into every subject, and educators are required to embed the academic standards into them. Interested communities can see a general example of the MTC transcript that Bio-Med uses on the MTC Consortium website.

Bio-Med also works to provide a range of college and career pathway opportunities to learners. At the end of 10th grade, learners can declare one of six pathways encompassing areas such as engineering, health or technology. Throughout these pathways, Bio-Med engages regularly with business partners in ways such as bringing them into the school for career days or by bringing learners into the career field to engage with business and community experts. Before graduating, learners in their senior year must have an internship that they design themselves, some of which result in industry-recognized credentials.

Lammlein has some important advice for schools and districts trying to rethink their school environments. She suggests talking to a diverse group of people and visiting many other schools engaged in personalized learning to observe and learn from their successes and challenges. This speaks to the importance of networking and getting outside of your building and observing what is possible.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
2. **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
4. **Recording and Creating Learning Based on Mastery**
5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

ACTION AREA 3 PROVIDING LEARNER SUPPORTS

What It Is and How to Do It

Learner-centered educational approaches are oriented around learner mastery of key knowledge, skills and dispositions. They also allow learners to accomplish these skills at their own pace while ensuring they have the agency to do so.

However, this also means that schools must consider each learner's individual needs. Some learners will thrive in a self-directed environment, while others will need more structured supports along the way to overcome learning obstacles. Supports for individual learners may even vary by subject, with some learners working ahead in a subject like math while simultaneously requiring academic intervention in English.

Students will need a variety of supports to help them exercise their agency. It's crucial for learners and educators to work together to develop learner-driven plans and strategies to ensure their personalized needs are met. Creating these types of flexible learning environments and learner-driven plans represents an important component of personalized, competency-based learning. Schools will need to ensure learners have the supports and interventions they need to experience success in a competency-based system.

Learning communities should consider how to design support systems so they are responsive and ongoing and provide assistance to learners when and where they need it. A mastery-based education system gives all learners opportunities to progress at a pace that is appropriate to their needs. However, it's difficult to guarantee this outcome without the proper level of supports being put into place.

Existing education systems and structures provide a number of supports for learners (see the state policy connection section for examples). These will continue to be important in a personalized learning environment. However, unlike a traditional system where supports are mainly targeted at low-performing or struggling learners with mixed results, personalized and competency-based systems provide supports to get learners back on track. These systems also accelerate or extend learning in a more equitable manner so students remain on their optimal path and pace to achieve mastery of key knowledge, skills and dispositions.

Schools should also base supports on real-time feedback and data gathered through frequent formative assessments.

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State Policy Connection

Learners can reach their full potential when they are provided with the tools and supports that meet their individual needs. This often produces learners who are healthy, safe, supported, challenged and engaged.

To achieve these outcomes, schools and districts in the state can work with community partners that specialize in learner support and wellness. The Department offers ideas for innovation to support student wellness. Examples of these types of innovative ideas are available on the Department's webpage. To support student wellness, schools can access the Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid, Base Cost Student Wellness and Success Component.

The state provides other programs and guidance documents that serve to support education models and meet the needs of all learners. For example, community learning centers, specified in Ohio Revised Code 3302.16, permit the collaboration between schools and school districts with community partners to provide "comprehensive educational, developmental, family and health services" to learners, families and community members during and outside of school hours. The school-based health care support toolkit may be helpful for education leaders hoping to expand these services. Education leaders in a school or district may want to engage in Local Equity Access Planning to build supports for learners from historically underserved communities. Ohio's STEM and STEAM Quality Model also includes a similar focus on ensuring all learners have what they need to be successful.

Ohio Spotlight

The Metro Schools

The Metro Schools in Columbus is leveraging a number of strategies to support its approximately 850 learners' progress toward the traits exemplified in their Portrait of a Graduate. Metro began as a partnership between The Ohio State University, Battelle and several area school districts that wanted to create early college opportunities for learners. As a result, Metro shifted to what it is today, a comprehensive middle and high school offering learners opportunities to engage in college-level coursework when they are ready.

The school has notably created a range of supports to meet the personalized needs of every learner. For example, each year, every learner is assigned to an advisory course, which students select after a "get to know you" period with instructors. An instructor serves as the learner's advisor for the entire year and helps the student set goals, keep on track with their work, as well as identify areas for improvement. When learners struggle, they are also able to attend office hours with various educators for assistance.

The Metro Schools also utilize scheduling flexibility to personalize learning. The school has created a two-week "window of time" between the fall and spring semesters during which learners have an opportunity to improve their understanding of concepts they may not have fully mastered during the semester. Alternatively, learners have the option of using this time to take short classes in areas of personal interest, such as rowing or jiu jitsu.

The Metro Schools also leverage a variety of opportunities to create flexible learning experiences for students. Once students have earned a certain number of credits in their first two years of school, they present a defense of learning, where they make a case for their capacity to take college-level coursework. Once they're ready, the school has five early college pathways. For example, one pathway focuses on medical professions and involves learners taking college-level coursework both at the school and on The Ohio State University's campus, participating in a capstone project with a professional and participating in regular cohort meetings with similar groups of learners. On average, learners graduate from the program with approximately 30 college credits.

Anthony Alston at Metro Schools offers an important piece of advice for other schools seeking to innovate. He urges districts not to try and reinvent the wheel. It's important to go out into the field and see as many different programs as possible and emulate those that might work in their buildings. At the same time, he also notes it is important to remember that things don't always work the same everywhere and that everything ultimately has to be individualized to the district.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

- ❶ **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
- ❸ **Providing Learner Supports**
- ❺ **Flexible Learning Environments**

ACTION AREA 4 RECORDING AND CREATING LEARNING BASED ON MASTERY

What It Is and How to Do It

Student learning has historically taken place largely within the four walls of the physical classroom, but today, opportunities that take learners outside these walls seem to proliferate at an ever-increasing rate. Tools like smartphones, social media and artificial intelligence empower learners to pursue their interests through authentic experiences when and how it makes sense to them.

Learners and parents are increasingly interested in how schools can offer and reward real-world learning experiences. These can be formal, such as internships or part-time jobs in business and industry, or informal, such as community-based experiences or independent study opportunities. Consequently, it's important to consider how to create the conditions for learners' agency as they pursue their personal interests. When considering personalized learning systems and structures, schools have an opportunity to reorient how learning is recorded and credited around mastery rather than the amount of time a learner sits in a physical space.

For learning to be truly personalized, these types of opportunities must also be driven by learners' needs and should allow them to engage in experiences that are relevant and meaningful to them. Superficial opportunities aren't enough — they must be co-designed between learners and educators and be grounded in students' needs, interests and aspirations. These experiences must also ensure that learners receive opportunities to demonstrate career-ready competencies through meaningful, community-based opportunities where possible.

One common challenge to creating learner-centered, authentic experiences is that most schools still primarily award credit based on whether learners sit through a certain number of hours of instruction, dictated by the Carnegie Unit. Reorienting learning around mastery of content is crucial to supporting and encouraging learner inquiry and entrepreneurship. Doing this also allows schools to more effectively optimize the path and pace of learning for each student. Some may be able to move more quickly, while others may need additional time, support and alternative means of demonstrating success to master the same content.

Educators are better able to respond to these individual needs when mastery of knowledge, skills and dispositions is prioritized through authentic learning experiences.

Here are a few practical ways schools could pursue changes in these areas:

- Leverage opportunities offered through the state's **credit flexibility policies** to give credit for learning that occurs outside of the traditional education setting of the classroom.
- At later stages of the transformation process, explore how to **modify the**

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report card to provide a closer alignment to a higher-level vision such as those articulated in a learning continuum or portrait/profile. Interested schools can visit the Portraits/Profiles and Competencies section for more details.

» Consider **creating a graduation requirement**, such as a capstone project or a defense of learning presentation, that prioritizes demonstration of higher-order knowledge, skills and dispositions.

» **Restructure the high school transcript** process around a standards- or mastery-based grading system. Schools might go even further and base it on a competency framework. One example of this is the Mastery Transcript Consortium, which is used by several Ohio schools. Interested schools can read the Metro Schools example in the previous section.

Several of these opportunities, such as rethinking report cards, transcripts or graduation requirements, are local decisions and can be done within existing state policy requirements. This opens a whole new world of possibilities, including incorporating design thinking and authentic learning opportunities. Learners can then earn credit for a much broader range of learning experiences.

These could include more traditional college and career pathway opportunities like College Credit Plus, work-based learning or career-technical education. They could also include integrated and transdisciplinary coursework, project-based learning and work- or community-based experiences. These opportunities are explored further in the Flexible Learning Pathways section.

State Policy Connection

Both Ohio Revised Code 3313.603 and Ohio Administrative Code 3301-35-01 provide the statutory and regulatory basis for Ohio's credit flexibility policy. Credit flexibility is defined in Ohio Administrative Code 3301-35-01 as a "...method by which students may meet curriculum requirements or earn units of high school credit by demonstrating subject area competency through the completion of traditional coursework, testing out or otherwise demonstrating mastery of course content through the pursuit of an approved educational option pursuant to the plan for credit flexibility..."

The Department provides schools and districts with general credit flexibility guidance and information as well as integrated coursework and awarding simultaneous credit guidance for schools. Learners can earn credits for graduation through experiences meaningful to individual students, including opportunities like:

» Traditional coursework (distance learning, online learning, after-school programs)

» Educational options (testing out, educational travel, independent study, internships, community service, work-based learning)

» Individualized learning to support any learning gaps

» A career-technical education blend (program credit, academic credit, work experience)

Credit flexibility is available ubiquitously throughout the state and can be accessed by learners in grades seven through high school. Each school district and community school has a policy that specifies requirements and considerations for credit flexibility.

Ohio Spotlight

Perry Local School District

Perry Local School District, situated in Northeast Ohio, is using several innovative practices to personalize the learning experiences of the approximately 700 students. The district is innovating practices in ways that support the goals of the district's Learner Profile. Like most innovative work, it began with strong leaders like middle school Principal Bob Knisely. He started hearing that increasing numbers of kids weren't satisfied with the way school was working for them, and that began the process of change in Perry.

The district is leveraging the state's credit flexibility to give learners credit for educational experiences that take place in nontraditional locations. Perry's staff flagged that before adopting personalized approaches to learning, many learners seemed disengaged. However, the introduction of credit-based flexibility, allowing for more authentic, hands-on learning experiences outside of the traditional classroom, helped to turn this around. Knisely shared an example of how a learner leveraged this credit flexibility to earn school credit for a mission trip to Central America to create cost-efficient purification systems for small villages. The learner shared their experience in front of a faculty panel and earned an environmental science credit.

Staff also shared several examples of how learners are personalizing their learning by moving outside of the traditional walls of the classroom. In some cases, learners might attend the local vocational school to earn credits. In others, learners have engaged in more creative and hands-on learning environments in areas such as construction. For example, a group of learners engaged in a house-flipping project where the district purchased a house and learners took it apart and rebuilt it. The learners were able to earn high school credit for the experience.

Perry Local School District has also created several exploratory experiences, such as the Perry Ingenuity Institute. This pilot is located at the local elementary school and serves as a school-within-a-school model. The district has also created an Authentic Learning Academy at the middle school. Perry staff note that the Authentic Learning Academy was created in response to a decline in learner engagement, and they have since seen a positive impact on engagement as a result.

Sharing some important words of wisdom for other innovators, Assistant Superintendent Betty Jo Malchesky emphasized the importance of fleshing out what measures the school or district will use to determine quality. In her experience, having those driving measures will keep you moving in the right direction.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
4. **Recording and Creating Learning Based on Mastery**
5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

Noble Local School District

Noble Local School District, a rural Ohio STEM-designated K-12 school district serving approximately 1,000 learners located in Southeastern Ohio, is taking important steps to personalize learning around its vision for learner success, the Portrait of a Zep. Like many schools that practice personalized learning, Noble has oriented its approach around creating a diverse range of learning pathways and putting the necessary structures in place to empower learners to participate in experiences of their choosing.

Noble Local began personalizing learning by creating an individual graduation plan for every learner, which later was renamed as the student success plan. During this process, learners and learning facilitators meet to consider the schedules that will best meet their individual needs, and, at Noble Local School District, learners have a wide variety of options from which to choose.

Noble Local School District offers traditional career-oriented options like College Credit Plus or career-technical education. Learners would previously have to travel several hours to the local campus to participate in college coursework, the high school now offers 100 semester hours of College Credit Plus courses on campus. Noble Local School District also created dedicated pathway opportunities in areas like agricultural business, medical fields, manufacturing and teaching.

Within these pathways, learners have opportunities to engage in project-based learning experiences where they work directly on problems the community wants to solve. Perhaps most uniquely, Noble Local School District leverages its identity as a rural district and operates a 136-acre working farm, allowing learners to participate in hands-on work in the agriculture pathway.

District Superintendent Justin Denius shared that throughout their pathway offerings, the district provides learners opportunities to move between what interests them most.

Noble Local School District leverages its identity as a rural district and operates a 136-acre working farm, allowing learners to participate in hands-on work in the agriculture pathway.

This expansive focus on diverse learning options isn't limited to high school — it begins in middle school. Superintendent Denius shared that currently, all eighth graders start their day at the high school to make progress toward earning two elective credits. This achieves two important goals — in the short term, learners get a jump start on their high school careers. In the long term, these credits allow learners to dedicate more time to elective opportunities, like participating in hands-on experiences at the district's farm.

In creating these opportunities, Noble Local School District has implemented several innovative education approaches. The district began its path toward personalized learning by creating regular learner surveys and learner advisory committees to give students a direct voice in shaping their education. The district has also shifted toward grading based on mastery, rather than continuing with traditional grading practices. Noble Local School District's approach allows learners to build on their initial assessment score and improve their grades over time through practices like reassessment.

Noble Local School District leverages other supports and structures to implement its vision. For example, the district actively creates release time for learning facilitators to explore how to create innovative learning opportunities. The district also transformed its schedule to use an alternating A/B period organization Monday through Thursday. This gives learners longer periods of time in each class while also creating space for them to participate in off-campus experiences to come and go as they need to. Lastly, the district leveraged Ohio's Credit Flexibility option to give learners more innovative options to earn the credits they need toward graduation.

Noble Local School District reports a variety of successes from this work. When it started surveying learners in 2018, about one in three said they were hopeful about the future. Today, that number has jumped to around 85%. Noble Local School District also has seen increasing numbers of learners demonstrate their future readiness through higher state test scores and an increase in the number of College Credit Plus credits earned. Superintendent Denius shared that, in his experience, it is important to start with "yes" and never be afraid to take a risk when meeting learners' needs. He says it's important to be willing to deviate from the norm and, at times, push the boundaries of what educators think they can do without worrying about making a mistake. In his experience, everyone makes mistakes, but the important thing is keeping learners at the center of every decision and changing what needs to be changed along the way.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
3. **Providing Learner Supports**
4. **Recording and Creating Learning Based on Mastery**
5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

ACTION AREA 5 FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

What It Is and How to Do It

An important part of personalizing learning will be to create learning opportunities in environments that extend beyond the traditional four walls of the classroom. Building on the Recording and Crediting Learning Based on Mastery section on page 18, schools can actively work to create flexible learning environments, both inside and outside of the school building.

These flexible learning environments should balance opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively. They should also ensure learners have a role in determining how to best utilize these environments given their unique needs. These flexible learning environments could include more formal structures, such as those that lead to defined college and career pathways, or opportunities that allow learners to earn credit for learning in less traditional environments like community-based experiences, field trips or independent study.

These opportunities should allow learners to explore new experiences and authentically connect their interests to the priorities of the community. They should also give learners an opportunity to demonstrate both mastery of rigorous academic knowledge as well as the skills and dispositions represented in resources like a portrait/profile of a graduate and an aligned set of competencies on a path and at a pace that works for them. When possible, they should be learner-driven and give learners agency to show what they know through dynamic assessments. Lastly, these types of opportunities often utilize different mechanisms to provide evidence of learning and feedback.

For example, students participating in an internship might be assessed through a portfolio or performance task rather than a standardized test or another more traditional assignment.

Flexible learning environments can take on different forms. Here are a few examples:

- **College Credit Plus** can give learners an opportunity to explore college credit-bearing coursework in areas of interest to them. Learners can also earn high school credit for these experiences.
- **Work-based learning experiences**, such as career shadowing, internships or apprenticeships, will give learners an opportunity to explore areas of interest. Learning communities can also find ways to crosswalk those experiences with academic standards and competency frameworks to ensure they help learners make progress toward their academic goals.
- **Career-technical education**, similar to work-based learning, can give learners access to more real-world experiences. These experiences can also be cross-walked with academic standards and competency-based frameworks.

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- **Early college high schools**, which combine high school and the first several years of college, allow students to take a combination of high school and college coursework for free.
- **Community-based learning experiences** can provide learners with an opportunity both in high school and in lower grades to engage in innovative learning opportunities that meet their interests in ways that are relevant to where they live.

Additionally, flexible learning environments aren't just programmatic. They can also refer to how the physical space of the school is structured. These types of environments should create a variety of opportunities for student engagement, give students access to the tools they need to deepen their learning and give them a voice and choice in how they use these spaces. For more examples of these types of environments, see Action Area 6: Rethinking School Structures.

The Department provides substantial guidance for schools and districts interested in formal College Credit Plus, work-based learning and/or career-technical education (CTE). Visit the Department's website to learn more about each of these types of opportunities.

Flexible learning environments can give learners alternative and less traditional opportunities to achieve the same types of goals. Here are a few examples of what these can look like:

- Learners might participate in opportunities such as **capstones or portfolio developments** that encourage them to explore areas of interest through community engagement experiences. Similar to more structured types of experiences, these experiences can help learners explore additional areas of interest, as well as make progress toward meeting key competencies. These types of experiences could also serve as the culmination of mastery of the portrait/profile-aligned competencies that give learners an opportunity to participate in more hands-on learning.
- Ohio offers a unique opportunity, the **Ohio Means Jobs-Readiness Seal**, based around a set of 14 professional skills that overlap with many competency frameworks. This seal represents a ready-made opportunity to provide learners with a means of validating learning that has occurred through a more diverse offering of pathways.
- **Industry-recognized credentials** can provide students with an opportunity to deeply practice and apply knowledge through their work while also learning job-specific skills they will need to perform on a day-to-day basis. Industry-recognized credentials can take several forms, including occupational licenses, certifications and certificates and are required to meet certain eligibility criteria to be added to the Department's list of approved credentials.

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State Policy Connection

Ohio offers a wide range of education delivery model flexibilities for schools to explore. In addition to the competency-based education and credit flexibility models discussed previously, Ohio offers blended learning opportunities. Blended learning options are defined in Ohio Revised Code 3301.079 as "the delivery of instruction in a combination of time primarily in a supervised physical location away from home and online delivery whereby the learner has some element of control over time, place, path or pace of learning and includes non-computer-based learning opportunities."

Learning doesn't just happen in brick-and-mortar school buildings anymore, and frequently, a more personalized and deeper approach to learning requires time outside of a traditional classroom to promote hands-on experiences for better understanding. Learners who take advantage of blended learning opportunities can spend up to 50% of their learning time outside of the traditional classroom setting. Schools that wish to participate in blended learning options must submit a Blended Learning Declaration form to the Department.

Ohio Administrative Code 3301-35-03 outlines the requirements that each board of education or chartered nonpublic school must abide by when operating a school or classroom with a blended learning environment. This section of code explicitly states that the personalization of learner-centered learning models needs to meet the needs of each learner. Students in blended learning programs can also earn credits by demonstrating mastery of knowledge or skills through competency-based learning models. While any personalized approach to learning can benefit from blended learning approaches, it may be especially helpful for work-based learning and career-tech programs.

Ohio Spotlight

Tallmadge School District

Tallmadge School District in Northern Ohio is deep into the process of implementing practices to personalize learning for its approximately 2,500 students. One example of this is how it is considering curriculum development. Within schools, educators work on teams to review curriculum choices to ensure they align to the personalized goals for learners as articulated in the district's Portrait of a Graduate. Once that curriculum is in place, staff in the Tallmadge School District shared that it allows educators to more effectively build project- and problem-based learning experiences into that content through flexible learning experiences.

Tallmadge School District also related its experience with recreating the physical space where education occurs within a personalized mindset. At one point in the past, the district passed a levy to create new buildings. When thinking through the design of the new buildings, the district specifically considered how workplace environments will look in the future and designed the new buildings to better resemble those types of environments.

At the primary level, Tallmadge Elementary School has elected to use standards-based grading with its learners. The school decided to move away from the traditional A-F structure and instead uses a standards-based 1 through 3 scale. Staff spoke to how this type of grading approach has enabled educators to better adopt standards, as well as show students when they've met their academic goals. This has resulted in stronger student buy-in.

Tallmadge Elementary School also shared the importance of technology in the school's pursuit of 21st century skills in early education. In part a result of the COVID pandemic, the district moved to a 1:1 device ratio for kids, leveraging state and federal funding to increase access. This has empowered educators to approach instruction differently and create different types of learning experiences for students.

Tallmadge Elementary School has also taken steps to pilot new approaches to project-based learning in its building. Staff at the school shared that several projects have been completed over the past several years, and the fourth-grade team is conducting a transdisciplinary project. In one example, a class of learners undertook a project around Earth Day where they leveraged learning that had taken place inside the classroom to engage more deeply with experiences outside of the classroom, including planting flowers and learning from a beekeeper. Tallmadge School District's long-term goal is to implement projects within specific grade levels with small groups of learners and later share the results with the rest of the district team.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

1. **Portraits/Profiles and Competencies**
2. **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
4. **Recording and Creating Learning Based on Mastery**
5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

Butler Tech Career Tech Center

Butler Tech is a career-technical school district northwest of Cincinnati where students can explore more than 30 career pathways, including aviation, criminal justice and graphic design. Butler Tech is one of the largest career-technical schools in Ohio, serving more than 18,000 students. Unique in its offerings for high school students, as well as an adult program, Assistant Superintendent Dr. William Sprankles referred to it as a "school district of choice." Students at Butler Tech can weave in and out of education opportunities inside and outside of their specific pathways of choice during their time at the school. One of the easiest ways students choose to do this is through the district's 5th Day Experience.

One Friday a month, students at Butler Tech campuses engage in an initiative called the 5th Day Experience. On these Fridays, students can explore various technical and non-traditional school experiences on their school campuses or neighboring campuses. While students have the option to stay home, most students choose to take advantage of the 5th Day Experiences being offered.

> **Tapping into classes across pathways, utilizing work-based experiences offered in the school and participating in clubs allow students to explore a variety of career options and prepare for life after high school.**

These days, principals are given the autonomy to personalize the experiences offered to students. Principal David Helms, who oversees the Natural Science Center school, shared that these experiences are created in collaboration with students and teachers and designed to incorporate the different district and school offerings. Principal Helms also shared that school clubs will often use this unstructured time to partake in work-based learning projects or activities they might not otherwise have time to do.

These 5th Day Experiences are one way for students to deepen their learning within a pathway or broaden their learning across pathways, but it's not the only way. Principal Helms shared that the flexibility they offer at the Natural Science Center school allows students to choose one pathway but explore other pathway classes and opportunities as their schedules allow. Students can also choose to personalize credentials within a pathway. The Natural Science Center school offers three programs: Equine Sciences, Veterinary Sciences and Green Engineering.

The school houses animals on campus to bring non-traditional learning experiences directly to students. In the case of one student at the Natural Science Center school, the student enrolled in the veterinarian pathway but helped develop and engage in the Green Engineering pathway program. Tapping into classes across pathways, utilizing work-based experiences offered in the school and participating in clubs allow students to explore a variety of career options and prepare for life after high school.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

- ❷ **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
- ❺ **Flexible Learning Environments**
- ❻ **Rethinking School Structures**

ACTION AREA 6 RETHINKING SCHOOL STRUCTURES

What It Is and How to Do It

Schools and districts can consider how to rethink the ways that schools are structured, both physically and organizationally. These new structures should create flexible learning spaces and places that support the whole learner and support access to anytime, anywhere learning for all students.

The Aurora Institutes field-recognized definition of competency-based learning lays out key principles to consider, including ensuring that learners have a voice and choice in how they use these spaces and that they provide access to authentic learning experiences connected to learner and community needs. Rethinking school structures can be crucial to enabling progress in other action areas highlighted in this guide, such as creating flexible learning environments, recording and crediting learning or empowering innovative curriculum and instructional strategies.

Here are a few examples:

- Launch a small **pilot program** within a school that tests innovative approaches to school structures such as flexible scheduling, pacing based on mastery and cross-curricular content. This approach can allow a school to test and iterate on new ideas before scaling to the entire school or district.
- Consider rethinking **how educators spend their time**. For example, schedules can be modified to provide the types of professional development that will be needed if educators are expected to adopt learner-centered education practices successfully.
- Rethink the way **school schedules or calendars** are used within existing instructional time requirements. Learners might be given "personalized learning time" or "flex time" periods within which to work on topics or projects they've selected or to collaborate with their peers on projects or seek supports if they are struggling with a topic.

Schools don't only have to focus on organizational structure — they might also consider how to alter the way buildings are constructed or how existing buildings are set up to create more learner-centered environments. For example, a school could build a small space within a building designed to support learner collaboration.

When designing a new building, schools may think about how to make the design more learner-centered by including open areas for collaboration or areas designated for project-based learning. In some cases, building new structures may not be possible or even desirable. Schools and districts can still think creatively about how existing space can be used to meet students' needs within their existing constraints. For example, schools could consider whether they have underutilized spaces in their current buildings and how these spaces could be used to create flexible learning environments.

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State Policy Connection

It's important for schools and districts seeking to innovate personalized learning practices to understand and leverage **flexibility in seat time and instructional time requirements**.

Traditional models of education assume learners need to be in their brick-and-mortar classrooms receiving instruction for a certain number of hours or minutes. More personalized approaches to education recognize that time isn't the best way to determine concept mastery.

Ohio policy explicitly outlines opportunities for learners to move through the education system in a way that is not exclusively tied to seat time requirements. As outlined in Ohio Revised Code 3313.48, all learners must meet instructional time requirements for the year (450 hours for kindergarten, 910 hours for full-day kindergarten through grade 6 and 1,001 hours for grades seven through 12). However, Ohio Revised Code 3301.07 specifies that "credits of grade level advancement shall not require a minimum number of days or hours in a classroom," meaning learners can advance through the curriculum without the constraints of classroom instructional time.

Ohio Spotlight

Global Impact STEM Academy

Global Impact STEM Academy, located in southwestern Ohio, has adopted several innovative practices to personalize instruction for its approximately 650 learners. One notable approach is the school's use of the Ohio Means Jobs-Readiness Seal as an opportunity for learners who struggle on state tests to show what they know and for the school to connect with local businesses.

The seal allows learners to demonstrate mastery of 14 identified professional skills and asks learners to submit evidence they've attained proficiency in each. This seal also allows learners to meet the state requirement of earning at least one state-defined seal before graduating high school. The school's chief academic officer, Jamison Truebenbach, championed the school's strong partnership with the local chamber of commerce for putting an emphasis on the seal.

Global Impact has also empowered its educators with the autonomy to create learning schedules that meet the needs of its learners. Educators are treated as content area specialists and given what they need to teach, including the flexibility to create the projects, lessons and content delivery strategies that are most relevant to learners.

Truebenbach shared that most days, you'll see learners engaging in a diverse variety of instructional activities. Students in grades 7-9 might be working on a project-based learning experience with limited educator engagement, while older students might be engaging in College Credit Plus coursework. Most notably, the school does not operate with a bell.

Educators are treated as content area specialists and given what they need to teach, including the flexibility to create the projects, lessons and content delivery strategies that are most relevant to learners.

When undertaking this work at the school level, Truebenbach emphasizes it is hard and difficult work, but educators need to be challenged and supported with autonomy to create opportunities that allow students to learn in ways that meet their needs.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

5. **Flexible Learning Environments**
6. **Rethinking School Structures**

Summit Road STEM Elementary

Summit Road STEM Elementary is the epitome of what it looks like to create a personalized learning space for students. Part of Reynoldsburg City Schools, this vibrant school serves a diverse student population of around 400 students in grades K-5. Over the years, Summit Road STEM Elementary has fostered a dynamic culture of personalized learning, leveraging its physical space, project-based learning practices and shared philosophies to cultivate an educational experience that is not only rigorous but also provides a unique approach that allows students to find joy in their learning.

Students at Summit Road STEM Elementary have the opportunity to engage deeply with their learning environment, embracing hands-on experiences that go beyond traditional classroom settings. The school's unique campus includes an on-site wetlands area, a living laboratory where students have continuous access and engage in diverse activities like conducting scientific observations, undertaking creative writing projects, participating in bird watching as part of the ornithology lab and engaging in a wide range of environmental education activities. Summit Road STEM Elementary has also installed garden beds and hydroponic stations for additional hands-on learning experiences. When designing project-based learning plans, educators can use these resources to get students engaged with the curriculum in new ways.

Living the values of STEM and personalized learning, educators work together to coordinate lesson plans to create complementary learning opportunities for students across the different areas of the campus. At Summit Road STEM Elementary, project-based learning has long been the foundation of the school's curriculum; however, opportunities for cross-grade and schoolwide collaboration, as well as shared resource utilization, have been decreasing.

Recognizing the potential for greater coordination, the school focused on fostering a more collaborative culture through common vocabulary and shared templates. Now support teachers, like English language instructors, reading instructors and special education teachers, often align their lessons with the project-based lesson taking place in a learner's primary classroom. This cohesion allows students to have deeper learning experiences and apply content knowledge across learning spaces.

> **The school's unique campus includes an on-site wetlands area, a living laboratory where students have continuous access and engage in diverse activities.**

Teachers and students are given the necessary autonomy and support to enhance educational experiences. The school's approach enables teachers to sequence learning standards in a way that better aligns with their project-based learning initiatives. The school organizes quarterly design challenge days, where students collaborate in pairs or small groups to address a given problem. Additionally, teachers have the flexibility to initiate smaller-scale challenges aligned with various themes or current PBLs as they see fit.

Autonomy is extended to learners as well, allowing them to select from a variety of deliverable options in project-based learning activities, tailored to their age group. These options may include slide show presentations, prototypes (such as apps or products), written assignments and creations using WeVideo or Flip. As students engage more deeply with project-based learning activities, they become familiar with various deliverable options and are encouraged to propose new forms of deliverables to their teachers in the higher grades.

Summit Road STEM Elementary has been a trailblazer in the personalized learning space for years and was the first STEM-designated elementary school. The STEM designation allowed them to pursue learning with greater flexibility and provided additional supports as they pursued more innovative methods of teaching and learning.

Summit Road Elementary has leveraged many of the supports from the Ohio Stem Learning Network (OSLN), including professional development programs for teachers and assistance in applying for the STEM designation. The school has also received numerous OSLN grants to create and update physical spaces, like the garden beds and hydroponic stations, that allow for unique student learning experiences.

Spotlight Action Areas Include:

- ❷ **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
- ❸ **Providing Learner Supports**
- ❺ **Flexible Learning Environments**
- ❻ **Rethinking School Structures**

CONTINUING THE WORK

Building a Culture of Acceptance and Innovation

When considering and implementing innovative approaches to teaching and learning, it is crucial for learning communities to build a culture that encourages and supports innovation. This includes helping the parents, students and teachers who will be experiencing the innovation understand the "why" behind the learning. It also requires intensive and inclusive community engagement. Both are critical to long-term sustainability.

Just as personalized learning environments need to empower students to receive feedback and learn from their experiences, this culture also needs to be built around a process of continuous improvement. Stakeholders must be invested in the importance of testing new approaches to personalize learning within a culture where making adjustments and improvements along the way is an accepted aspect of teaching and learning.

Next Steps

Learning communities have a tremendous amount of flexibility to create learner-centered learning experiences. The following suggestions can provide the next steps to creating personalized learning experiences:

- Reach out to other learning communities to hear about their journeys to implementing personalized learning
- Explore grant opportunities that support innovation and personalized learning
- Explore personalized learning courses on the Department's Learning Management System
- Review the Additional Resources

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Ohio's Quality Model for STEM and STEAM schools:** https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/STEM-Science-Technology-Engineering-and-Mathem/Quality-Model-for-STEM-and-STEAM-Schools/Ohio-s-Quality-Model-for-STEM-and-STEAM-Schools-2.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US
- **Ohio's STEM and STEAM Designation Rubric:** https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/STEM-Science-Technology-Engineering-and-Mathem/STEM-and-STEAM-School-Designation/STEM-and-STEAM-Designation-Rubric-2024-2025-v7.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US
- ***Finding Your Path: A Navigation Tool for Scaling Personalized, Competency-Based Learning:*** https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/navigation-tool-finding-your-path-scaling-personalized-learning/

Organizations with Additional Resources

- Aurora Institute: https://aurora-institute.org
- Center for Innovation in Education: https://www.leadingwithlearning.org
- Center for Teaching Quality: https://www.teachingquality.org
- Competency Works: https://aurora-institute.org/our-work/competencyworks/
- Education Elements Personalized Learning Communications Guide: https://www.edelements.com/personalized-learning-communications-guide
- Getting Smart: https://www.gettingsmart.com
- Next Generation Learning Challenge: https://www.nextgenlearning.org
- reDesign: https://www.redesignu.org
- Ohio's STEM Learning Network: https://osln.org
- The PAST Foundation: https://www.pastfoundation.org
- Quality Model for STEM and STEAM Schools: https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/STEM-Science-Technology-Engineering-and-Mathem/STEM-and-STEAM-School-Designation/Ohio-s-Quality-Model-for-STEM-and-STEAM-Schools-2.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US
- Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) Alliance: https://soldalliance.org/

State Statutes and Regulations of Interest

STATUTES

- Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3301.07: State board of education – powers and duties
- Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3301.079: Academic standards – model curriculum
- Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3302.16: Community learning centers; written consent required
- Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3313.48: Free education to be provided; hours in a school year
- Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3313.603: Requirements for high school graduation; workforce or college preparatory units
- Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3326.15: High school credit

REGULATIONS

- Ohio Admin. Code 3301-35-01: Purpose and definitions
- Ohio Admin. Code 3301-35-03: Blended learning

KnowledgeWorks

KnowledgeWorks is a national nonprofit organization advancing a future of learning that ensures each student graduates ready for what's next. For more than 25 years, we've been partnering with states, communities and leaders across the country to imagine, build and sustain vibrant learning communities. Through evidence-based practices and a commitment to equitable outcomes, we're creating the future of learning, together. **KnowledgeWorks.org**