

STATE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Establish an end-state policy structure for those seeking to advance the growth of student-centered and competency-based approaches at the state level.

State policy plays a crucial role in driving school and district education practice, including the adoption of personalized, competency-based learning. When well designed, policy and implementation steps can support and advance the work being done in communities throughout a state. When designed poorly, it can act as a hindrance at best and an insurmountable barrier at worst. This third edition of *KnowledgeWorks State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning* is grounded in more than a decade of experience working in states and presents an “end-state” framework for a transformed state policy environment that would support and advance the growth of personalized, competency-based learning.

Policy Conditions

The framework is divided into eight policy conditions that our extensive field experience at KnowledgeWorks shows are necessary to support student-centered learning, including personalized, competency-based education.

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Each condition includes several details, including:

- » How an evolved state policy environment would look
- » Transformative policies requiring state-level policymakers to exercise formal authority
- » Implementation actions that will help readers translate recommendations into action
- » State examples that illustrate policy conditions in action
- » Additional resources to support deeper exploration

While the eight conditions offer our collective vision of the ideal policy environment, KnowledgeWorks encourages states to consider their own unique realities when developing and implementing policy. Our work supporting nearly two dozen states to build meaningful policy systems suggests that doing so is key to ownership and sustainability.

SYSTEM PURPOSE

OVERVIEW

State policy champions a clear vision for the purpose of the state's K-12 education system, emphasizing the importance of preparing students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a world that is constantly changing. The vision is operationalized through common learning frameworks and policies that integrate high-quality academic content with a focus on personalized, competency-based learning. The state's vision is implemented through networks and resource creation.

WHY IT MATTERS

States play an important role in shaping the vision and purpose of their K-12 education systems by clarifying what success looks like and making sure systems are progressing toward that vision. A clear, unified statewide vision for K-12 education allows schools and districts to create student-centered education approaches. The state must reinforce this vision through guidance and support as well as an accountability system that emphasizes personalized, competency-based learning. This is essential to building the foundation and capacity needed for local systems to transform what education looks like.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Student-centered Vision

The state collaboratively creates and communicates a strong vision for K-12 student-centered learning supporting school and district efforts to transform their systems in alignment with this vision. State strategic documents, including higher education and workforce plans, support the public-facing vision. The state's public-facing federal plans (e.g., the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan, its Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act plan, and/or its Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act plan) incorporate this vision where it makes sense. State strategic documents, including rule-making and non-regulatory guidance, are aligned with the vision.

High-quality Academic Content

State policy requires students to master high-quality academic content and higher-level competencies. This is achieved by establishing high-quality academic standards and requirements that will define student proficiency.

Model State-level

Competency Frameworks

State policy directs the development of a model state-level framework and operationalizing documents that establish a foundation for personalized, competency-based learning. These documents articulate the knowledge, durable skills and dispositions students should attain as they progress through a student-centered K-12 system. The frameworks can often be a statewide Profile or Portrait of a Graduate and an aligned set of competencies. The state requires that the model frameworks are crafted in close collaboration with communities, businesses, industry and postsecondary partners. The state commits financial resources to develop these frameworks.

Definitions

The state formally defines personalized, competency-based learning or an equivalent term in statute or regulation. This definition is aligned to the seven elements of the Aurora Institute's field-developed 2019 [definition](#).

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Implementation Leadership

An organization is charged by the state to support schools and districts while they are implementing the state's vision for personalized, competency-based learning. The organization could take many forms; it could be a separately designated public entity, such as a university, a collection of regional district support organizations or a separate third-party, such as a nonprofit organization. The chosen organization creates the model resources detailed in the transformative policies above while providing guidance and technical assistance to schools and districts focused on implementation. It supports schools and districts that want to create their own resources, such as a portrait and aligned competencies.

Technical Assistance for Areas of Greatest Need

Technical assistance, resources and best practices are made available to districts serving historically underserved populations to ensure that they have the capacity to overcome barriers while co-designing personalized, competency-based systems with their communities that will ensure student proficiency in high-quality academic content. The state helps districts implement academic interventions where needed based on student performance data.

Quality Implementation

Schools and districts receive the feedback and needed supports to effectively and equitably implement the state's vision for system purpose, either by using the state's model resources or developing their own.

Statewide Networks

Schools and districts have access to a formal statewide network focused on the state's framework for personalized, competency-based learning. This network provides opportunities for cross-district collaboration, technical assistance, sharing best practices and locally developed resources.

Intentional Communication

Resources and best practices are shared throughout statewide networks to help grow local understanding and ownership of the work to adopt personalized, competency-based learning. Communications work focuses on building district-level buy-in of K-12 education transformation across the state.



Read current state examples of this work and get access to additional resources related to this condition.
[Learn more »](#)

POLICY FLEXIBILITY

OVERVIEW

State policy frees schools and districts from traditional structures, especially those that ground learning in time- and location-based requirements. Balancing broad flexibility for local transformation with guardrails allows the state to safeguard educational quality and equity. Ongoing feedback opportunities help state policymakers identify lingering policy challenges and propose solutions to support transformation. The state department of education and other aligned organizations actively encourage the use of flexibility and share best practices across the state to help them spread.

WHY IT MATTERS

Schools and districts implementing personalized, competency-based learning need to create structures that depart from the way they've traditionally run their schools. State policy environments should give schools and districts broad flexibility to build and sustain personalized, competency-based learning environments and practices. These structures should also contain reasonable quality assurance measures that ensure districts continue to fulfill their obligations under state and federal law while they work to transform education. A fully transformed policy environment would make the freedom to innovate the rule rather than the exception.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Statutorily-protected Flexibility

Policy provides districts with broad flexibility in exploring alternative ways to structure learning. The state may still choose to establish requirements around things like calendars, start dates and instructional minutes; but where these exist, districts should be given leeway to determine how best to meet these requirements through student-centered means.

Statutorily-protected Innovation Opportunities

Schools and districts can easily obtain flexibility from statute or regulation through a state-approved mechanism to create student-centered learning environments. The right to request flexibility should be codified in state statute and should require the state to regularly collect and disseminate information on how it is being used. The specific mechanism could take several forms; some states could create waivers that allow flexibility to be given from state statute and regulation, while others embed such waivers in a pilot program or an innovation zone.

Regular State Policy Audit

Regular audits of state statute, regulation and department of education practice help identify barriers to education transformation, as well as opportunities to provide maximum flexibility for local innovation. These audits are required under state statute and/or regulation, require the involvement of a diverse group of education community members and require that the audit produce recommendations for change that the state can put into practice.

Proficiency-based Credit

Credit for learning is based on student demonstration of proficiency of clearly defined learning expectations, not seat time. State policy outlines the process districts must follow when awarding credit to ensure both quality and equity of implementation while delegating the responsibility for determining student proficiency to districts. State grading and reporting policies, where they exist, facilitate the use of proficiency-based credit.

Higher Education Transitions

State policies require postsecondary institutions to establish policies so that students who matriculate to higher education from K-12 schools using personalized, competency-based approaches are not disadvantaged. These policies should cover transcripts, admission requirements, athletics and financial aid.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Supportive State Department Structures

The state department of education supports schools and districts in taking full advantage of flexibilities to innovate through their organization and staffing structures. Department leadership publicly supports personalized, competency-based approaches. Department staff see encouraging personalized, competency-based learning as a key part of their mission.

Innovation Intermediary

A regional or state-level organization is charged with providing professional support around school transformation, clarifying state policy and giving general technical assistance to schools and districts pursuing personalized, competency-based learning approaches. The organization should be funded at least in part by public dollars, which is important to support long-term sustainability.

Shared Best Practices

The state collects and shares examples of successful personalized, competency-based implementation with policymakers and the public. The state creates feedback loops to provide insights on state policy implementation. This, in turn, informs the creation of guidance or resources to support implementation. The state updates the guidance appropriately in response to feedback. It also takes deliberate steps to ensure historically underserved communities have meaningful input in the design and implementation of each of these steps.



Read current state examples of this work and get access to additional resources related to this condition.
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FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND PATHWAYS

OVERVIEW

State policy allows all students to access and easily move between flexible student-centered pathways tailored to their needs and interests. This enables students to have a choice in when, where and how they demonstrate proficiency in key knowledge, skills and dispositions. These pathways include both traditional college- and career-ready opportunities, as well as a broader range of community-based learning experiences. The state establishes the resources and partnerships necessary to support statewide implementation.

WHY IT MATTERS

To truly personalize learning, K-12 education systems need to give students a range of engaging learning experiences connected to local employers, community organizations and postsecondary partners. These pathway opportunities provide students the opportunity to explore topics and careers of interest while simultaneously giving them multiple ways of demonstrating proficiency in key knowledge, skills and dispositions. A system that combines federal- and state-supported college and career pathways and locally designed flexible learning environments is key.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Equitable Access to Existing Pathways

State policy supports access to high-quality college and career pathways for all students. Pathway opportunities should include but are not limited to career and technical education, dual enrollment, work-based learning, internships and apprenticeships. State and federal funding is used to ensure all students can access these pathways. State policy includes flexibility to engage representatives from business and industry in these opportunities where appropriate, including as instructors. Policies also ensure that students can earn high-quality and valid credentials as informed by business, industry and postsecondary partners and that these credentials lead to positive employment outcomes where possible.

High School Graduation Requirements

State graduation requirements articulate the key knowledge, skills, and dispositions students must master to receive a diploma, as well as any experiences in which they must participate. Requirements allow students to demonstrate proficiency in personalized ways independent of the amount of time spent in a particular class. The requirements also support learners in exploring their individual interests and aspirations. Districts have broad flexibility to develop locally responsive learning pathways and to use methods such as performance tasks or portfolios to assess student proficiency in state requirements. Policy also allows districts to develop their own personalized graduation requirements beyond those required by the state.

Federal Funding

The state explicitly leverages federal workforce funding opportunities to support local expansion of personalized, competency-based pathways for students that connect to in-demand careers. Business and industry play a role in acknowledging these locally created transparent and accessible pathways as high-quality.

Innovative Learning Records

State policy encourages adopting new methods of capturing and recording learning, such as alternative transcripts or learning and employment records. In doing so, policy ensures that sensitive student information is protected. These methods of capturing learning are connected to postsecondary and workforce systems where appropriate. Statute clarifies that innovative transcripts should be treated as equivalent to traditional transcripts when students engage with postsecondary and workforce opportunities and that students using them are not disadvantaged in postsecondary applications, financial aid decisions or direct admissions policies.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Pathway Guidance

The state collects and shares examples of high-quality, flexible learning pathways. It also provides guidance on how to effectively create locally designed learning environments aligned to state and/or local competency frameworks. This guidance emphasizes the importance of learner voice and choice in choosing and co-designing pathways.

Equitable Access

The state establishes statewide goals for student participation in pathways that reflect the demographics of the learning communities they serve. The state collects information to analyze patterns of access to pathway opportunities, particularly among historically underserved populations and helps districts identify areas for improvement when gaps are identified. These data can be disaggregated by student subgroups to identify and address inequities in pathways. The state's goals could be articulated through formal policy or through non-policy means.

Innovative Learning Record Supports

The state provides support for schools and districts seeking to use innovative tools like proficiency-based transcripts to capture and report student learning. These supports may be provided directly by the state or through secondary providers such as intermediaries, regional professional development organizations or other external partners.

Postsecondary and Workforce Partnerships

The state works to make sure that K-12 education leaders partner directly with business and industry when designing and expanding flexible learning pathways. Partnerships should include co-creating credentials of value.

Navigational Resources

The state provides guidance and resources to help families and students navigate existing pathway opportunities and find those that work best for them. Navigation resources help students and families understand how pathway opportunities connect both to the workforce and postsecondary opportunities. The state may also support the creation of individual career and academic plans for students to help them take ownership of their pathways.



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ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT STRUCTURES

OVERVIEW

The state's accountability and school improvement system support the growth and development of all schools based on indicators that align with the state's vision for student-centered learning. The system reinforces a reciprocal relationship between the state and districts, integrating common statewide and locally created indicators to guide state and local accountability and improvement. The public can easily access these data through a dashboard. Communities most in need receive resources to develop and execute continuous improvement strategies.

WHY IT MATTERS

Implementation of personalized, competency-based education requires systems that help districts respond to changing student and community needs and transform their schools accordingly. When well-designed, these systems provide transparency and real-time data on indicators that matter to educators, students and communities. All schools and districts, not just the lowest performing ones identified under federal law, need data and flexibility to test new approaches and adjust as needed. At the same time, they must be accountable for school and student performance on a diverse set of metrics. Most importantly, this system should focus on creating a positive partnership between the state and districts as they both work to make sure that public education meets the needs of students and communities.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Reciprocal Accountability Structures

Developed in collaboration with communities, state policy establishes specific goals and outcomes for all schools and districts, not just those identified as low performing. Districts are given autonomy to explore and implement innovative approaches, including using personalized, competency-based strategies. Policy clarifies that the state is responsible for working in partnership with districts to evaluate progress toward their stated goals, including providing targeted financial and technical assistance resources to districts in response to identified local needs.

Holistic State Accountability Indicators

The state accountability system considers both input and output measures that collectively give a full picture of the conditions within the school and/or district, as well as how well they are serving students. These measures should include student proficiency of academic- and Portrait or Profile-aligned outcomes as well as building-level measures such as the degree of access to meaningful and diverse learning pathways, positive student-teacher relationships and student access to educators trained in student-centered learning techniques.

Data Governance

State agencies involved in data collection make decisions together about how data will be governed and shared, ensuring data security while identifying and authorizing appropriate usage so stakeholders have a comprehensive picture of system outcomes.

Local Accountability Policies

Policy supports the development of new local accountability approaches at the district level. It also includes a mechanism for incorporating locally developed school quality indicators into the state's accountability system. This allows local leaders to engage their communities identifying measures and reporting mechanisms that align to local priorities such as labor market needs. Required state reports seamlessly integrate local and state measures so communities can develop a comprehensive picture of school quality across state and local reports.

Data Transparency

A public-facing dashboard includes state and local information on school and district strengths and needs. Information includes academic measures as well as information on school and district progress toward helping students attain the knowledge, skills and dispositions embodied in the state's Portrait or Profile. The dashboard also includes opportunities to share local measures of quality. The state establishes regular feedback loops with districts to help them identify opportunities for improvement and better understand how the state can provide support.

Student-centered School Improvement

State law related to school improvement prioritizes student-centered strategies such as personalized, competency-based education. Schools identified for improvement under federal law receive resources to implement these approaches, including coaching support. These approaches are explicitly integrated into legally required federal documents.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Local Accountability Support

The state develops districts' capacity to build local indicators of school quality. The state shares best practices related to local indicator development with districts. The state may also consider providing model systems (i.e., populated with high-quality/leverage local indicators) and the technology to support accurate integration of local data into public reporting systems.

Capacity for Improvement

School improvement systems build the capacity of districts, communities and stakeholders to analyze and respond to data on student learning in real time. The system also supports strategies that ensure all students benefit from high-quality, student-centered education practices. The state includes personnel, either through the state education agency, a third party or educator leaders from across the state, that conduct in-depth reviews and coaching of all schools and districts to help identify areas for improvement.

Research and Cycles of Improvement

The state regularly engages with districts to identify and share the impact that student-centered education approaches are having on a holistic set of student success measures. Rich impact data is updated frequently on a public-facing dashboard, and the de-identified raw data are available to the public.

Supportive Technical Assistance

State and local leaders focused on school improvement are trained in personalized, competency-based models and practices and understand how to use them to drive improvement. The state builds district capacity to co-design personalized, competency-based learning strategies through regional professional development entities and/or coaching teams. The state may support these people with tools and guidance in research-based personalized learning practices to build district capacity, enabling co-designing personalized, competency-based learning strategies.



Read current state examples of this work and get access to additional resources related to this condition.
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COMPREHENSIVE STATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

OVERVIEW

The state partners with educators to develop a coherent system of aligned formative and summative assessments that advance a shared commitment to student-centered strategies such as personalized, competency-based learning. The system measures essential knowledge, skills and dispositions, drives deeper learning, enables students to demonstrate proficiency when they are ready, provides real-time data to inform instruction and gives students a choice in how they demonstrate proficiency. The state supports implementation with resources, feedback loops and technical assistance.

WHY IT MATTERS

Assessments help determine what students know and still need to learn. Existing assessment systems are often limited in scope, focusing on academic skills alone. While important, this focus overlooks the critical higher-level skills and dispositions that students need for future success. A comprehensive assessment system supportive of personalized, competency-based education ensures that teachers have information to improve instruction in real-time. It also provides statewide stakeholders with the ability to understand whether the system is achieving its intended outcomes. An aligned system of coherent and innovative state assessments should also represent the demands of postsecondary and workforce stakeholders. This helps make sure that K-12 education can better prepare students for the future.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Purpose of the State Assessment System

The state assessment system aligns to the state's vision for student-centered learning. It rebalances the heavy focus on standardized assessments to emphasize more transformative and relevant assessment approaches that drive deeper learning. Federally required assessments help state policymakers allocate resources to districts and schools in need. These assessments are right-sized, meaning they meet the requirements of the law but do not go further. By contrast, transformative state-required assessments use deeper learning tasks such as performance assessments or portfolios that support meaningful instructional practices.

Assessment Content

The state assessment system measures proficiency in essential academic content as well as the attributes in the state's Portrait or Profile across grade levels so students are prepared for graduation. The system includes both summative and formative assessments. The summative assessments measure achievement and progress toward proficiency. Formative assessments aligned to the summative assessment monitor student learning throughout the year and provide feedback that helps teachers make instructional adjustments. The state collects and makes summative assessment data available for schools and communities to help them understand student readiness.

Federal Flexibility

The state has considered partnering with the federal government to leverage funding through federal programs such as the Comprehensive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) and, if necessary, flexibility through the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) or a general Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver to support development of its assessment system.

Funding for Research and Innovation

Dedicated state funding supports the development and implementation of local assessments in non-federally required tested subjects or other measures that are used in local accountability systems. Funds are available to all districts with prioritization for historically under-resourced districts. Funding also supports research about the quality of state and local assessment systems with the goal of improving them over time.

Assessments and High School Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements prioritize performance assessments, portfolios or capstones in place of standardized assessments or course sequences that emphasize completed time over mastery of content. These performance assessments may be developed at the state or local levels. The state puts mechanisms in place to ensure quality statewide implementation. The assessments can be used to demonstrate proficiency in academic content or higher-order knowledge and skills. Higher education and workforce stakeholders play a role in crafting policies.

Infrastructure

Resources are allocated to support the effective and universal implementation of the state's assessment systems. This includes providing adequate funding for the development of assessment systems, shared public evaluation rubrics and professional development to build student-centered assessment literacy among teachers and leaders. The state invests in the technology needed to implement new formative and summative assessment models. The state also develops the infrastructure needed to study new assessment systems and make adjustments as needed.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Feedback Loops

The state includes those closest to the classroom when they develop, implement and refine state assessments. The state engages educators in administering and scoring innovative assessment structures where appropriate. The state leverages technical experts through mechanisms such as its assessment technical advisory committee to support the design and review of state assessments aligned to student-centered and competency-based learning. Research also examines the higher-order knowledge and skills included in a Portrait or Profile and prioritizes which ones are most appropriate to measure.

Local Assessment Technical Quality

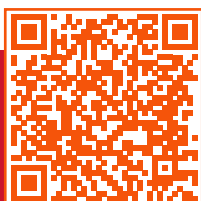
The state helps district planning and implementation efforts to ensure any new local assessments created are high-quality and that curricula, instructional materials and assessments are aligned to shared learning goals. This support also reinforces the importance of continuous cycles of improvement.

Model Resources

The state provides model resources to help schools and districts implement innovative assessments at the state and local levels. These resources include educator-created performance tasks or a task bank in specific content areas and grade levels or bands. These tasks align with the state's model Portrait or Profile and aligned competencies.

Integrating Instruction and Assessment

The state creates opportunities to advance assessment literacy statewide, which helps people understand the basic principles and practices around high-quality assessments. This could take the form of public-facing resources, or educator networks focused on assessment literacy.



Read current state examples of this work and get access to additional resources related to this condition.
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EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

OVERVIEW

Educator preparation and workforce systems build statewide teacher and leader expertise in implementing student-centered learning approaches like personalized, competency-based learning. These systems and structures prepare educators with the competencies necessary to facilitate student-centered learning and support teacher retention, job satisfaction and personalized career advancement.

WHY IT MATTERS

Quality educational experiences require strong relationships with impactful educators. For this reason, educators, leaders and paraprofessionals must have a deep understanding of how to implement student-centered learning approaches like personalized, competency-based learning. Ideally, the preparation programs in which they receive training and their future school environments are grounded in the state's vision for student-centered education. This vision is embodied in the state's vision, Portrait or Profile of a Learner and aligned competencies.

Educator preparation and workforce systems – including professional development and evaluation – must reinforce knowledge of and training in student-centered instructional strategies. Student-centered learning environments also take time and effort to implement. For this reason, teacher retention is crucial for schools implementing these approaches. States seeking to transform their education systems must ensure that policies and practices create positive environments that attract educators to the classroom and make it desirable to remain there. They must also find ways to help teachers personalize their professional advancement throughout their teaching careers.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Licensure and Credentialing

State educator licensure policy requires a demonstrated understanding of practices aligned with student-centered learning strategies. This requirement applies to applications for new licenses as well as license renewals. The state supports credentials that directly align with the educator's ability to create student-centered learning environments. Credentials support opportunities to personalize their growth and development as they continue in the profession.

Preparation Programs

The state establishes standards for teacher and leader preparation programs that require intentional design around and training in student-centered learning practices. These standards apply to traditional teacher preparation programs and alternative certification programs.

Alternative Certification

State policy around alternative methods of teacher preparation (e.g., “grow-your-own,” apprenticeship, competency-based programs) emphasizes personalized, competency-based approaches to teaching and learning where possible. These programs also focus on expanding teacher diversity throughout the state.

Teacher Evaluation

Where a required or optional statewide teacher evaluation model exists, it explicitly incorporates knowledge of student-centered practices aligned to the state's vision and state-level knowledge and skills frameworks. These evaluation models are also designed to help teachers personalize their professional growth. If appropriate, the state provides model observation and evaluation templates aligned with the state's expectations for student-centered learning.

Research and Development

The state dedicates resources to studying the impact of student-centered education requirements for teachers and leaders on student outcomes. It also studies how these requirements impact teacher recruitment and retention and educator job satisfaction. The research informs policy recommendations as appropriate.

Compensation

The state ensures that teacher and leader compensation is competitive with other college-educated professions. The state connects additional educator financial incentives to demonstrated knowledge of student-centered learning practices. These incentives could include credentials or career development pathways oriented toward growth in student-centered practices.

Professional Advancement

The state creates clear credentialing pathways recognizing teacher professional growth and development, including in personalized, competency-based teaching strategies. This could be integrated into existing teacher credentialing pathways or could be implemented through alternative routes, such as a micro-credentialing system.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Personalized Local Development Systems

The state supports schools and districts in creating opportunities for teachers to personalize their growth within the teaching profession and the context of personalized, competency-based systems. This could include things like instructional leadership roles, opportunities for hybrid teaching and administrative roles or more formal mentoring opportunities for high-performing teachers.

Professional Development Offerings

Professional development provides training for classroom teachers and school leaders in student-centered learning practices. The state supports schools and districts in thinking about creating space and time for professional learning focused on innovation. These offerings align with a competency-based vision. The state either provides this development directly or through a high-quality third-party entity.

Educator Networks

A statewide educator network makes it easy for teachers and leaders engaged in personalized, competency-based learning practices across the state to connect with and learn from one another. The network also provides an opportunity for the state to establish feedback loops between the field and the state to inform additional changes to policy and practice related to educators.

Educator Diversity

The state collects and shares best practices for expanding teacher diversity. This could include identifying existing gaps in access to teachers from diverse backgrounds and highlighting strategies for K-12 and higher education that help build a diverse teacher pipeline.

Additional Educator Training

The state may highlight or support the creation of alternative programs to develop educators with personalized, competency-based teaching experiences, such as apprenticeships or “grow-your-own” programs. The state studies these programs and leverages insights to inform new programs as well as traditional training programs.



Read current state examples of this work and get access to additional resources related to this condition. [Learn more »](#)

HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS

OVERVIEW

All students have equitable access to student supports and the safe, vibrant learning environments that they need to ensure future success. This access includes whole child supports, academic interventions, technology and secure and healthy learning environments, as well as transitional supports for young people as they leave K-12 education and progress toward what is next. The state actively supports schools and districts implementing these supports through partnerships grounded in data.

WHY IT MATTERS

Many states continue to experience high rates of chronic absenteeism and stagnating academic performance. A network of community and school supports is essential to ensure students come to school ready to learn and are prepared to take full advantage of personalized, competency-based environments. This, in turn, cultivates student agency, ensuring they can chart their own future path, both academically and as fully developed people. Personalized supports are oriented around a whole child approach to education and ensure that students can successfully engage in meaningful learning experiences and master the academic and higher-order competencies they need for future success.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

Whole Child Supports

State funding and policy ensure that all students have equitable access to responsive supports, including those that address whole child needs, mental health, physical health and trauma-informed care. State policy supports state agencies in coordinating across silos to provide access to these supports for all students where applicable.

Academic Interventions

The state provides targeted, personalized resources that create engaging and meaningful learning experiences for students who may be struggling academically. The state should make it clear that those supports funded by state dollars are to be grounded in evidence of success while also giving districts the flexibility to determine how to best meet the needs of their students.

Educator Training

Educator preparation programs and professional development funding supports training in delivering whole child supports and how to create culturally responsive environments.

Supportive School Models

State policy and aligned funding support structures such as community schools, promise neighborhoods, after-school programs and/or children's councils that coordinate services to support student health, wellness and other non-academic needs. Funding is distributed equitably and addresses disparities in access.

Cross-sector Alignment

Funding streams for student supports are aligned across agencies that service K-12 education, higher education, workforce, health, social services, juvenile justice and early childhood. This maximizes supports for historically underserved populations, including students with different needs, justice-impacted youth and/or foster care systems, Native youth, youth experiencing homelessness and others.

Technology Access

State policy ensures that students have access to the physical and wireless technology needed to maximize personalized, competency-based learning. The state collects data on broadband availability and technology access, identifies inequities and acts to address disparities. Where needed, the state provides clear guidance and establishes policies around emerging technologies to ensure districts are considering the benefits and challenges inherent in their implementation.

Transitional Supports

State policy establishes requirements around transitional supports for young people as they enter postsecondary education, the workforce or the military. Adequate state funding ensures that all K-12 students have access to supports, such as guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, coaching, mental health and planning services. State systems also directly connect students to post-K12 supports when registered in opportunities like dual enrollment. The state collects data on access to these supports and corrects disparities.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Academic Intervention Support

The state provides technical assistance to help schools and districts implement academic interventions that they've determined best meet the needs of their communities. The state partners with districts and leverages its data systems to ensure that supports are directed to where they will make the greatest impact. Where appropriate, the state helps districts consider how to best customize those supports to individual students and provide them in real time where possible.

Data Systems

The state collects and analyzes data on academic and non-academic student outcomes and reports them in the state report card. The state collaborates with schools and districts to help address identified inequities and includes this information in its school improvement process.

Community Partnerships

The state encourages community partnerships to build capacity and ensure safety and oversight as local communities work to deliver the full range of whole child and academic supports needed to help students experience success.

Physical Space

The state encourages the development of physical spaces to support student health and wellness. The state collects and disseminates best practices for ensuring high-quality infrastructure as well as calming indoor and outdoor spaces for relaxation and play. There is funding support to achieve this vision.



Read current state examples of this work and get access to additional resources related to this condition. [Learn more »](#)

RESPONSIVE FUNDING SYSTEMS

OVERVIEW

State funding structures are designed to make it straightforward for schools and districts to adopt student-centered learning practices. These funding structures ensure that learners receive funding to meet whole child needs and pursue educational opportunities that support their learning goals and interests. Supportive systems help schools and districts understand how to work within these structures to advance student-centered learning strategies.

WHY IT MATTERS

States need to ensure funding is available for communities to both begin and sustain student-centered learning. Even when a state's policy supports student-centered learning, funding systems must be designed in a way that ensures schools using innovative methods continue to receive their full allotment of per-pupil funding. This requires flexibility in how schools and districts are funded overall. The structures, requirements and opportunities connected to funding, in turn, drive school and district decision-making.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

State Funding Formula Structure

The state prioritizes education funding in its budget and allocates money to ensure that public education is fully funded. The state funding formula makes sure that dollars enable schools and districts to support educational experiences for all students, regardless of where that learning takes place. The funding formula includes additional dollars to support equitable access to education and supplemental education programs for students with the greatest need. This includes spending additional dollars in years when more wraparound services may be required to maintain student outcomes.

School Finance Equalization

The state school funding formula accounts for the differing abilities of different districts to raise revenue locally. Given that local revenue provides a substantial amount of funding for public education, the state supports greater education equity and quality across the state by leveraging equalization policies. To do this, the state calculates a district's ability to generate revenue through taxes and supplements local funding across the state.

Categorical Funding

State grants and other supplemental funding programs prioritize student-centered learning practices where appropriate. Dedicated funding is made available to schools and districts to grow and scale student-centered education programs. This includes grants for planning, infrastructure investment and district participation in learning networks.

Definitions Relevant to Funding

Terms and definitions impacting state funding are defined broadly enough in state statute and regulation to ensure that districts and schools are not penalized financially for innovating. This can include terms like “instructional hours” and definitions like “student count.” The definitions balance the need for flexibility with measures for quality assurance.

Equity Evaluation

The state analyzes the relationship between funding and student outcomes and adjusts the funding formula accordingly. The state also provides public information on school and district per-pupil expenditures. In partnership with a broad range of stakeholders, the state revisits the funding formula as necessary to ensure it meets the needs of its student population. The state analyzes data to identify equity gaps in funding and enacts policies to adjust its funding formula.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Funding Guidance

Funding guidance and dedicated state personnel advise schools and districts how to use funding to design the most effective student-centered learning experiences for students, including blending and braiding funding streams. The state also provides technical support and guidance to help districts analyze spending patterns and target local funding for student groups with the greatest need.

Federal Funding Opportunities

The state leverages federal funding to support expanding and implementing student-centered learning. This includes optimizing the use of passthrough funding as well as applying for competitive grants.

Economies of Scale

The state takes advantage of partnerships to broker cost-effective purchases of education supplies and services that schools and districts can choose to use. The state makes these partnership services well-known and easy to opt into. This could include the state offering districts access to software to support student-centered learning at a lower cost than what a school or district could obtain on its own.

Philanthropic Partnerships

The state offers guidance that outlines existing philanthropic resources or opportunities for which schools and districts can apply to supplement state funding. In addition, this guidance is maintained by designated state personnel who are also available to support districts as they apply for and cultivate these relationships. Philanthropic resources promote school transformation and encourage partnerships between schools and districts and philanthropic partners.

Utilizing Funding Data

The state regularly analyzes spending on programs and initiatives to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of programs. In this analysis, the state emphasizes the equitable use of funding to support historically underserved communities. The data and analyses are made public. Additionally, the state provides comparative analyses of district and school per-pupil spending for federal, state and local expenditures to help stakeholders contextualize equity needs across the state and disseminate funds accordingly.



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