

Teachers Transition to Personalized Learning

Principal Eric Chagala has been working alongside his teachers to personalize learning through leveraging the Design Thinking process and Project Based Learning. After two years, Chagala reflects on the significant accomplishments he is seeing in his teachers and students but also is very transparent that his school is a work in progress. "Teachers are no longer pulling kids through 'curriculum.' Personalizing instruction gives students more self-efficacy, it gives them the opportunity to WANT to engage in authentic self-reflection and share their learning with a public audience, and they CARE about their learning - they finally see the value." When teachers begin to talk in the ways that are described here, we can see that they are crossing the bridge to new practices that will transform the culture of the classroom.

Phases	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Phase 1 — What is personalized learning? How much change does it require of me to just get started? What am I observing about my students and myself that suggest a change is needed? How much effort are my student's putting into their learning, vs. how much effort am I putting into their learning for them?</p>	<p><i>"Personalized learning to me is student inquiry and investigation guided by teachers who carefully craft the learning process." — Angela Townsend</i></p> <p><i>In personalized learning, a teacher defines and establishes clear learning objectives but provides students a variety of way in which to achieve these. It requires a teacher to relinquish control and expectations for linear, and uniform learning. — David Ruiz</i></p>
<p>Phase 2 — What is your vision for what PL looks like, feels like, sounds like in your classroom community? How do I begin to document this approach in an organized, purposeful curriculum? How might my physical classroom environment and classroom culture change during the transition? How do I get other teachers, students and parents be interested, open, and excited about this approach? How can I give the students ownership of the shift happening in our classroom, and truly reflect and revise with them while I am making these changes?</p>	<p><i>Engaged students require less prompting by the teacher to complete assignments because they have buy in to its completion. Therefore for the amount of effort the teacher invest in planning pay exponentially in students engagement. This provides time to conference and address students' needs one to one when there was no time in the traditional structure for this important element. — Sylvia Brown</i></p> <p><i>One of the most important aspects of personalized learning is the degree in which students are taking responsibility for their own quest for knowledge. This requires a paradigm shift from the traditional teacher-controlled environment to one in which the child is allowed creative "voice and choice." Modern educators need to adopt a more open mindset about each student's unique learning path, position themselves as a mentor and coach, and offer positive encouragement along their journey to success. — Mike Eiben</i></p>
<p>Phase 3 — How are students growing that vision with you as you make changes? How are students developing their voice in the classroom? In what ways are they co-creating with one another and with the adults? How are they using the expertise of others to socially construct their thinking? What are they discovering about themselves that helps them become successful as learners? How do I collect evidence of this? How do I communicate that evidence to parents?</p>	<p><i>An assignment is no longer something which is disembodied from their self but rather something that expresses a part of their identity. Allowing the self a place within the learning leads to us learning more about one another, socially constructing knowledge as a collection of distinct interpretations leading to a richer understanding of absolutely any subject. — David Ruiz</i></p> <p><i>I see that as I have implemented more personalized learning in my practice, that students feel more at ease with their learning. They have grown in their own passions and become self motivated to learn because it is personal to them. Probably the</i></p>

	<p><i>best way to communicate to parents is to show them what the students have done, end product and the journey they have made. We did an exhibition night that showed student work that helped parents see their students success. A grade can never portray the journey of a student and their struggle to create great work. Their work should represent their learning.”</i> — Angela Townsend</p> <p><i>Previously, I was the imparter of information and they were the receivers. Presently, I am the facilitator and they apply and extend the content in the way that best interest them. Therefore, they co-create with the teacher to make sure the direction that they have chosen are within the guidelines of the project and for better understanding. — Sylvia Brown</i></p>
<p>Phase 4 — How do I know if students are performing better or differently as a result of the change? How can we continue to grow and make it better? How do I get feedback from parents as well as students about the changes? How can we use the data that we are collecting to continuously inform the development of future work? How do I share what I am learning with my colleagues so that we are thinking systemically as a school? What changes do I see in my workload since the shift? Do I see more students taking action as a result of their learning? More engagement? How can I let my students communicate these positive changes to others, rather than communicating it myself?</p>	<p><i>After completing the first quarter of our pilot PL program, the biggest change that my colleagues and I are noticing is increased buy in from our students. We are still a work in progress, but the majority of our students are actively engaged and taking ownership of their learning. Even many of our historically lower performing students have begun to show enthusiasm and an increased sense of personal responsibility. One important factor in this was the public exhibition in which all students were expected to present their learning. — Lori Buckley</i></p> <p><i>One does not go from linear and teacher centric learning to student centered learning overnight. My experiences thus far have shown me that when students are more engaged and parents share the enthusiasm their students has demonstrated for the projects you assign, then you may be on the right track. And when students are confused and turn in projects that miss the mark, then it may be time to readjust and better articulate your learning objectives. — David Ruiz</i></p>