iNACOL

Meeting The Every Student Succeeds Act's Promise:

State Policy to Support Personalized Learning

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Table of Contents

Introduction

A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR STATES WITH THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in December 2015, presents a historic opportunity for the United States to begin to transform K-12 education toward personalized, student-centered learning.[1]

ESSA gives states and localities flexibility to redefine student success, and to work with communities on redesigning our education systems to be more flexible, responsive and connected to the real world.

ESSA provides states a historic opportunity for transformation by increasing flexibility over systems of assessments, accountability models, the use of federal funding and educator preparation and development systems. It represents a marked shift from federal control to state control, presenting state and local stakeholders with an important opportunity to redefine student success and the goals of our nation's education system.[2]

Across the country, state leaders are shifting from a focus on compliance toward continuous improvement and systemic change, in order to support local efforts to redesign K-12 education around student-centered learning. Why? Personalized, competency-based education models are critical for raising achievement for all. The promise of personalized learning is empowering teaching and leadership for dramatically improving outcomes for students—by designing learning environments around how students learn best—to meet the needs of each student and ensure mastery of critical knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for success.

Educators are empowering learners, making everything about learning, connecting student pathways inside and outside of school, designing learning environments to meet the needs of each student and tailoring learning to students' goals and interests. Communities working together with educators are seeking to increase quality, equity and opportunities to ensure every student is prepared for future success.

> *Research on personalized, competency-based learning is revealing promising results. A recent study from the American Institutes for Research found that the clear learning targets and opportunities to earn credit beyond the classroom in competency-based education were related to an increase in students' intrinsic motivation.[3] Research from the RAND Corporation found that personalized learning approaches helped students, especially those who were lowest performing, make substantial learning gains relative to their peers.[4]*

Innovation for Equity—Meeting the Needs of Every Student

Personalized, competency-based learning ensures all students are held to the same high, world-class standards and are provided the resources and supports to achieve those standards by making progress and advancing based on demonstrating proficiency. It allows students to build a strong foundation for success by demonstrating mastery before advancing to the next level.

Students come to school with a range of academic skills and life experiences. In these learning environments, students receive flexibility, time and supports to fill in learning gaps in order to perform at-grade level and beyond. They are empowered to go deeper in their learning experiences, apply knowledge in meaningful ways and to develop important dispositions and habits of success.

In order to help educators meet students' unique needs, advanced technologies can enable data-rich, personalized learning environments at scale, in which students can achieve dramatically improved outcomes and successfully attain their learning goals.

If we truly want to prepare every student for success, equity must be the primary goal for policies and educators, bringing all students to the highest achievement levels through coherent systems and policies that foster innovation for equity. Personalized, competency-based learning models should be organized to promote universal attainment of deeper learning outcomes and be very intentional about keeping all students on track.

New systems of student-centered learning must be designed to increase equity and effectively meet the needs of all communities, elevating the learning and readiness of all graduates, regardless of race, zip code or circumstance.

To do this, school leaders and policymakers should:

- Seek to identify patterns of institutional bias (especially those affecting historically underserved student populations) and correct the unintentional consequences of those patterns;
- Question implicit assumptions;
- Ensure students' academic needs are met with the right mix of instructional supports with the goal of helping all students reach grade level performance or above; and
- Support educator and school leader capacity to effectively respond to students' needs.

Our vision for education is that meaningful and highly-engaging learning experiences, with the right mix of instructional supports, will be available to all students so everyone is successful.

Failure is not an option; it's just part of the learning process.[5]

Districts are moving away from seat time as the proxy for earning credit toward a system to ensure all students are mastering important knowledge, skills and dispositions. Schools are building better learning environments for supporting all learners, meeting kids where they are and making it possible for students to advance upon demonstrated mastery when ready. The education infrastructure is focused on continuous improvement through data-rich environments and offering flexible, anytime, anywhere learning pathways to address and close persistent achievement gaps and fix inequities.

This report contains recommendations for supporting and advancing personalized learning and competency education in state policy to realize the promise of the historic opportunities under ESSA.

iNACOL STATE POLICY FRAMEWORKS

iNACOL publishes state policy frameworks to provide concrete, actionable recommendations for state policymakers to create system-wide transformation through personalized, competency-based learning.

The recommendations in the graphic below provide a roadmap for policymakers to support innovative educators and leaders to close learning gaps and address inequities with personalized, competency-based education. Building on previous iNACOL state policy frameworks, this year's frameworks address existing policy opportunities and emphasize new opportunities states have under ESSA to advance student-centered learning.

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Meeting ESSA's Promise: State Policy to Support Personalized Learning

New Policy Opportunities Under ESSA	Continuing Opportunities
+ Rethink accountability for continuous improvement.	+ Create personalized, competency-based education systems.
+ Redesign systems of assessments to align with student-centered learning.	+ Build new learning models infrastructure.
+ Transform systems to build capacity for a next generation educator and leader workforce.	+ Create system coherence and build capacity for the long-term.

Taken as a whole, the recommendations present a comprehensive state policy approach to supporting student-centered learning. However, each state starts from a different place, with its own unique policy context, stakeholders and education system. We encourage state policymakers to develop and advance a coordinated set of these recommendations in a way that best meets the needs of students in their state.

Rethink Accountability for Continuous Improvement

For the first time in decades, states have the opportunity to engage communities in redefining student success and reimagining the future of education.

ESSA opens up flexibility for states to design next generation accountability systems that support student learning. States now have a historic opportunity to rethink the purpose, role and design of their accountability systems, reframing them for continuous improvement of student learning toward new, more meaningful definitions of success through data-rich learning environments.

A NEW DEFINITION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

State leaders should start by engaging and listening to diverse stakeholders from across the state, including teachers, students, parents, families, school leaders, community leaders, civil rights groups, philanthropic groups and business groups to chart a new vision for K-12 education. They should answer the question: "What do students need to be able to know and do to be successful beyond high school?"

In crafting a new state plan for ESSA, states can start by rethinking what success means for the whole child, for the future of their communities, for meaningful participation in the economy and in a global context.

Driving a new definition of success is crucial to developing coherent system improvements that are built around learning—including instructional shifts, systems of assessments, expanded pathways and better learning environments connected to communities and to the real world. Collaboration and community engagement needs to be sustained and ongoing rather than a one-time activity.

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> *Redefining student success—determining what we want students to know and be able to do upon graduating—should be the starting point for creating a coherent education system. Only after states build this broad consensus of what constitutes student success, should they determine what to measure for accountability.*

MULTIPLE MEASURES IN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

ESSA requires states to use multiple measures in accountability systems, including: grade level proficiency, English language proficiency, graduation rates, and at least one state-selected "measure of school quality."

States could include additional indicators to encourage schools to focus on multiple factors of school quality, support continuous improvement and to reward and highlight schools that are meeting the needs of each student.

States could shift toward a "balanced scorecard" approach, through multiple measures of the key factors for student success and for school quality. Other measures states could consider include performance levels, extended-year cohort graduation rates,[6] student and teacher engagement, advanced coursework enrollment or non-cognitive competencies.[7]

States will want to consider:

» Which data does the state need for accountability?
» Which data does the district need?
» Which data does the school need? and
» What information do families and the community need?

This approach tracks strategic outcomes along with processes and inputs to provide valuable feedback to individuals at all levels of an organization. States may want to use some of these measures, especially non-cognitive competencies, in low stakes ways that support continuous improvement.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND IDENTIFY STUDENT SUPPORTS

With the passage of ESSA, states and localities should rethink how accountability can ensure quality, equity and excellence. They should examine how systems of assessments will support continuous improvement. A forward-thinking accountability system should align with student-centered learning to provide success for each and every student.[8]

Next generation accountability increases transparency so stakeholders can see how well students are being educated. It promotes continuous improvement of learning and systems, and ensures students advance at a sufficient pace to graduate on-time—ready for success in college and careers.

As states use next generation accountability to promote this improvement, they can catalyze rapid closure of achievement gaps between student subgroups and build local educators' capacity to address student needs.

Finally, in order to lead to lasting, systemic transformation, next generation accountability should be coupled with state policies to create space for innovation and new models of personalized, competency-based teacher preparation and credentialing (such as competency-based licensure that includes portable recognitions of mastery like stacked micro-credentials or digital badges). This will equip educators with the skills and flexibility needed to successfully implement student-centered learning.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

» Collaborate with a diverse set of stakeholders from across the state, in a sustained and meaningful way, to develop a state accountability plan under ESSA to:
  • Redefine what success means for the whole child, and align the elements of accountability to the new definition of student success. This process should identify metrics to track and support student growth toward college- and career-readiness and include multiple measures of student learning;
  • Determine how data will be reported and used at each level to support continuous improvement and to provide timely, differentiated supports to meet the needs of each student, such as real-time data dashboards and report cards; and
  • Describe the role and goals of the accountability system. This process should outline how and when students and schools receive supports and interventions and how the system will celebrate and reward success.
» Delineate how the state will target resources to the students and schools who need the most support.
» Prioritize personalized, competency-based learning in school improvement strategies.
» Explain how the state will build educator capacity to strengthen teaching and leadership for continuous improvement of student learning.

Redesign Systems of Assessments to Align With Student-Centered Learning

ESSA empowers states to redesign their current systems of assessments to better support personalized learning. To do this, state systems will need to provide rich, real-time data to teachers to support continuous improvement of student learning toward college- and career-readiness and to promote rapid closure of subgroup achievement gaps through personalized, competency-based education.

In competency education, assessment is a meaningful and positive learning experience for students. It informs how to meet students where they are, what comes next in a student's learning trajectory and also what a student needs to keep working on in order to demonstrate mastery.

Systems of assessments that support personalized, competency-based learning help teachers, parents and students alike understand where students are in their learning process. Next generation systems of assessments:

» Provide timely data to teachers to differentiate supports to students based on their individual learning needs;
» Measure both content knowledge and the application of knowledge and important skills and dispositions; and
» Determine student progress on and mastery of explicit, measurable and transferable learning objectives.

State leaders should seek input from stakeholders to develop a shared vision for how these systems of assessments will support educators and student learning.

Successful implementation of these new systems of assessments will require states to collaborate with and support local school districts and educators. States will need to invest in building educator professional judgment and capacity to reliably create, grade and evaluate performance assessments within these new systems of assessments. These systems should also make room for entry, formative and performance-based assessments as well as interim and summative assessments across a state to measure and evaluate student progress.

ASSESSMENTS TO SUPPORT PERSONALIZED LEARNING UNDER ESSA

With ESSA, states now have a historic opportunity to rethink how to use assessments in a coherent way to align and support teaching and learning while meeting the requirements of next generation accountability focused on continuous improvement. States can develop cohesive and balanced *systems of assessments with multiple measures of student learning*, rather than being pigeon-holed into the unintended consequences of solely relying on a single test.

This important shift from a *single test to systems of assessments* enables new ways of thinking about the role that assessment can play in supporting student success, including: providing a deeper understanding of individual students' progress and success; meeting students where they are in their learning trajectory and readiness levels, including recognizing prior learning; and accelerating student learning by allowing them to *be assessed and move on when ready* by advancing upon demonstrated mastery.

What does this mean for student learning?

» With the flexibility to assess students at different times throughout the year, it is possible now to track individual student growth.

» With room to use multiple different types of assessments, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of what students know and can do.

» Educators can benchmark student learning when students enter a school or educational program, to identify their unique learning needs, and to give credit for prior learning.

» Educators can customize instruction based on where students are in their learning and target resources to the students who need the most support.

» With the ability to assess students at any time, and at multiple points throughout the year, local districts can assess students when they are ready to demonstrate mastery and accelerate learning. Multiple interim assessments can provide real-time data that can be used for continuous improvement of teaching, learning and programs.

» With the ability to assess students at their level of knowledge (and not just on the standards for the grade level in which they are enrolled), it is possible to have a better picture of exactly where students are in their learning. This provides helpful feedback for educators, and richer transparency for stakeholders to close achievement gaps and increase equity.

States can include a variety of forms and types of assessments and test items in their new systems of assessments. The forms of assessments allowed under ESSA include the following:

» **Adaptive assessments** can pinpoint more accurately where students are in their learning progressions, in addition to determining whether they have achieved proficiency on grade-level proficiency benchmarks. Prior to the passage of ESSA, federal law did not allow for the use of adaptive testing or the use of test items outside of a student's grade level for federal accountability purposes. This information would provide greater transparency in the ability to analyze if and how much students are making more than a single year's progress per year to accelerate learning. It would also more accurately show the depth of achievement gaps to focus more on equity.

» **Interim assessments**—State systems could include smaller, interim assessments given at intervals throughout the year. Specifically, ESSA allows assessments that are "administered through multiple state-wide interim assessments during the course of the academic year that result in a single summative score that provides valid, reliable, and transparent information on student achievement or growth."[9] Students could take interim assessments when they are ready to demonstrate mastery on a specific competency and move on to the next level. Interim assessments can measure individual student growth and knowledge gained over a given period of time, as well as the rate of this growth. It is possible to ask, "How much learning is happening in time-bound targets, per month or per year?"

» **Formative assessments** are instructionally-embedded assessments that can empower students and educators with rapid feedback on student learning. Formative assessments can be teacher-created and embedded in curricula and instructional materials. While formative assessments provide more of a "check in" than summative information on student learning, states and school districts could explore innovative ways to use formative assessments to minimize testing burdens, and to determine if students are ready to demonstrate mastery on interim or summative assessments.

» **Summative assessments** tell us what students have learned over time, providing a determination or certification of learning. Summative assessments may bring to mind standardized tests, but they can take many forms, including portfolios, performance assessments, projects and exhibitions.[10]

» **Performance assessments**—The performance tasks referenced in ESSA are a key component of competency-based learning. Performance assessments evaluate a student's demonstrated performance on a learning target. Students must show what they know, demonstrating whether they have achieved competency or proficiency on a learning goal with evidence of their learning. Projects, essays and written exams requiring analysis of texts could be included in performance assessments. Performance assessments, which can use common performance tasks and/or locally-developed items with common rubrics for teachers to evaluate student work, measure complex demonstrations of mastery and integrate multiple points of learning evidence.

THE INNOVATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT DEMONSTRATION AUTHORITY

A key shift in ESSA from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is allowing states to move from a single, summative, end-of-year test, to systems of assessments that may contain multiple assessment and item types. As they examine new and innovative ways of thinking about assessment, states may wish to pilot them in a subset of districts before scaling up statewide. To do this, states will need to ask the U.S. Department of Education for permission to participate in the Innovative Accountability and Assessment Demonstration Authority (also known as the Innovative Assessment Pilot), which is a new pilot program in ESSA.

ESSA already allows all states to create systems of assessments that include multiple assessments over time, adaptive assessments that can measure student learning outside of their grade level and performance tasks. The demonstration authority is only needed if a state wishes to pilot an innovative system of assessments with a subset of districts.

The intent behind this program was to provide a clear, objective and viable path forward for states to pilot new types of assessments for accountability under ESSA to support competency-based education and personalized learning. The statute holds a high bar of quality for these systems of assessments, requiring them to be comparable to the statewide assessment and to meet the same level of technical quality. Seven states could initially be approved to participate in this pilot.

ESSA presents a historic opportunity to redefine student success and to build aligned, coherent systems that advance a powerful vision of student-centered learning. As states harness this new flexibility to create next generation systems of assessments, they will empower educators to create innovative, student-centered learning environments to maximize the potential of each individual student. The Innovative Assessment Pilot in ESSA is just one tool that states can use—only if they need it—to power personalized learning.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

» Collaborate with stakeholders to develop a clear shared vision for how the state's systems of assessments will support educators and student learning.

» In partnership with local school districts, design, build and implement balanced systems of assessments to support personalized and competency-based learning.

» Ensure systems of assessments provide coherence and support local systems to meet the needs of measuring readiness and identify where students are in their learning, to provide data in real time to support learning and to embed appropriately into the instructional process to support effective pedagogy.

» Invest in building educator capacity to effectively calibrate and moderate on professional judgments of performance tasks[11] within these new systems of assessments.

Transform Systems to Build Capacity for a Next Generation Educator and Leader Workforce

Only by raising and building the capacity of educators and school leaders will we realize the bold vision of systemic transformation toward student-centered learning. Educators across the K-12 education workforce are the most important element of success in the shift to powerful, personalized, competency-based learning.

To make this a reality, state leaders need to modernize educator preparation to become competency-based and personalized. They ought to transform their siloed educator preparation, certification, development and evaluation systems into an integrated, coherent and aligned system designed to build capacity within educators to effectively implement personalization at scale.

In student-centered learning, educators and leaders take on new roles as they work individually and collectively to design customized pathways to graduation for every student. Most educators will require new skills to adapt instruction for students with varying levels of competency and interests. This will require significant changes to ensure educators have the support and resources they need to make this transition.

State leaders should collaborate with stakeholders to create a cohesive vision for transforming the educator workforce to support a new definition of student success.

The graphic below from the iNACOL and KnowledgeWorks report, *Laying the Foundation for Competency Education: A Policy Guide for the Next Generation Workforce*,[12] contrasts the traditional educator workforce system with a seamless, next-generation system able to prepare educators at scale to effectively personalize learning for every student.

THE SHIFT TO A NEXT GENERATION EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

TRADITIONAL
(Siloed)

PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION
Teaching and leadership degrees are awarded based on the number of credit hours completed.

STATE CREDENTIALS
Teachers can obtain state credentials to teach specific subject and grade-level positions often based on mastery of aligned subject matter tests.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Professional development programs require teachers and leaders to participate in one-time development activities that are often one-size-fits-all and time-based.

EDUCATOR EVALUATION
Educator evaluation systems determine individual teacher and leader performance based on annual, time-based measures. Information on performance informs district human capital decisions such as compensation and tenure.

COMPETENCY
(A Seamless Continuum)

PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION
Teaching and leadership degrees are awarded after candidates build a portfolio of multiple forms of evidence that demonstrate mastery of rigorous academic and clinical competencies aligned to practice expectations.

EDUCATOR EVALUATION
The primary purpose of educator evaluation systems is to improve practice and functionalize educator supports through real-time feedback on individual and collaborative educator performance. This seamlessly aligns with customized professional development opportunities to ensure educators continuously improve their practice.

STATE CREDENTIALS
Educators can obtain state credentials that reflect changing teaching roles, are aligned to learning progressions, and may enable educators to teach integrated or multiple subject areas. Credentials are obtained only upon demonstrated mastery of clinical teaching competencies and are directly aligned to pre-service programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Professional development programs are highly personalized, ongoing, and job embedded. They address the individual needs of educators and are aligned to a set of rigorous, practice-aligned competencies that help educators advance along individualized career pathways. These programs build on pre-service and credentialing expectations.

Source: Pace, L., & Worthen, M. (2014, Oct.). [Graphic]. The Shift to A Next Generation Educator Workforce. Retrieved from http://www.inacol.org/resource/laying-the-foundation-for-competency-education-a-policy-guide-for-the-next-generation-educator-workforce/.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND CREDENTIALING

Transformation of the educator workforce must begin with development of educator standards and competencies which reflect the skills and professional responsibilities educators will need to transition to competency-based instruction.

A next generation education system will align pre-service and credentialing programs to ensure educators can succeed in competency-based learning environments through the following:

» **Pre-service programs and credentialing requirements** should align to instructional competencies that will ensure educators have the knowledge and skills needed to help all students excel in a competency-based system;

» **Accreditation requirements for teacher preparation programs** should also align to instructional competencies which educator candidates earn based on mastery, not seat time; and

» **Educator preparation programs** should provide candidates with multiple pathways to completion, ensuring mastery of the full-range of instructional competencies, and candidates should have various ways to attain competency-based licensure.

States should engage a wide range of stakeholders in this conversation around the future of educator preparation and credentialing, including educators from across the K-12 system, as well as representatives from pre-service preparation programs and state educational agencies.

Until recently, federal teacher requirements focused almost exclusively on input-based credentials like Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT). HQT provisions were repealed with the passage of ESSA—an important first step. The flexibility now provided by the federal government is a call to action for states to shape their own systems. Thus, it will be up to each state to lead the critical next step: shifting the focus to educator competencies as the basis for credentialing on demonstrated outcomes, rather than on time-based inputs.

With ESSA's new flexibility, state policy could change to support teachers earning portable recognitions of mastery, such as stacked micro-credentials or digital badges.

The MacArthur Foundation explains that "badges are designed to make visible and validate learning in both formal and informal settings, and hold the potential to help transform where and how learning is valued."[13]

Teachers and school leaders build capacity for personalized learning by experiencing it and demonstrating mastery of competencies using evidence such as projects, exhibitions, e-portfolios and work products. Educators could experience professional development by creating powerful, personalized learning experiences.

States, districts and schools should work together to create next generation micro-credentials to redesign teacher preparation and certification for the 21st century.

EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

New competency-based professional development pathways are also necessary to build strong pipelines of bold, visionary and capable school and district leaders to catalyze the transformation to next generation learning.

States can build capacity in educators and school leaders to create new, personalized models of instruction, by creating ongoing professional development programs where educators can constantly apply what they are learning on the job and continually refine their practice. One key area will be to build educator professional judgment and capacity to reliably create, grade and evaluate performance tasks within new systems of assessments that support personalized learning.

Professional learning for educators in the future will model competency-based learning with demonstrated performance and outcomes. Teachers, just like their students, should experience powerful, personalized learning experiences generating evidence of success through exhibitions and e-portfolios.

Finally, state leaders can align state requirements for educator evaluation systems to personalized, competency-based learning by:

» Emphasizing multiple measures and portfolios of evidence tied to practice;
» Encouraging teams of educators to work collaboratively to ensure students are progressing to or above grade level;
» Supporting local leaders and educators toward data-driven instructional and evaluation systems with multiple measures; and
» Evaluating the state's role in building educator capacity for continuous improvement throughout the system.

Educators should receive ongoing feedback on the impact of instructional strategies so they can make the necessary adjustments in real time to ensure all students are on pace to be college- and career-ready upon graduation. It is important to consider what is the appropriate state and local role and determine which data are needed by each to meet policy objectives and foster continuous improvement toward a learner-centered education system.

TRANSFORMED SYSTEMS FOR A NEXT GENERATION WORKFORCE

As state policymakers work to transform the educator and school leader workforce, they should take care to ensure systems of support—from pre-service through credentialing, professional development and evaluation—are integrated, coherent and aligned.

Our educators deserve personalized pathways to support and effectively lead the transformation of the K-12 system to personalized, competency-based education. With the passage of ESSA, these opportunities are firmly in the domain of state policy and provide one of the biggest policy opportunities for systemic transformation.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

» Create seamless, aligned and coherent educator and school leader preparation and development systems by:
- Engaging a wide range of stakeholders to develop competencies that align to the state's academic standards and reflect the skills needed for personalized, competency-based learning environments;
- Aligning teacher and leader preparation program accreditation requirements to these competencies;
- Providing educator candidates with multiple pathways to attaining competency-based credentials;
- Using micro-credentials as the basis of new competency-based educator credentials and in lieu of seat-time-based Continuing Education Unit requirements for professional development;
- Creating ongoing, job-embedded professional development to build capacity in educators and school leaders to transition to new, personalized models of instruction; and
- Aligning state requirements for educator evaluation systems to support personalized, competency-based learning.

Create Personalized, Competency-Based Education Systems

Creating an education system that prepares every student to succeed requires systemic transformation to high-quality, personalized, competency-based education.

The prevailing, traditional, one-size-fits-all K-12 education model is not meeting the unique needs of many learners. David Hood, an international education expert, describes this as "'The Paradigm of One': one teacher, teaching one subject to one class of one age, using one curriculum at one pace, in one classroom, for one hour."[14] There is good reason to challenge the status quo: too many students are falling through the cracks, not graduating or graduating unprepared for success after high school.

> 66
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> *'The Paradigm of One': one teacher, teaching one subject to one class of one age, using one curriculum at one pace, in one classroom, for one hour.*
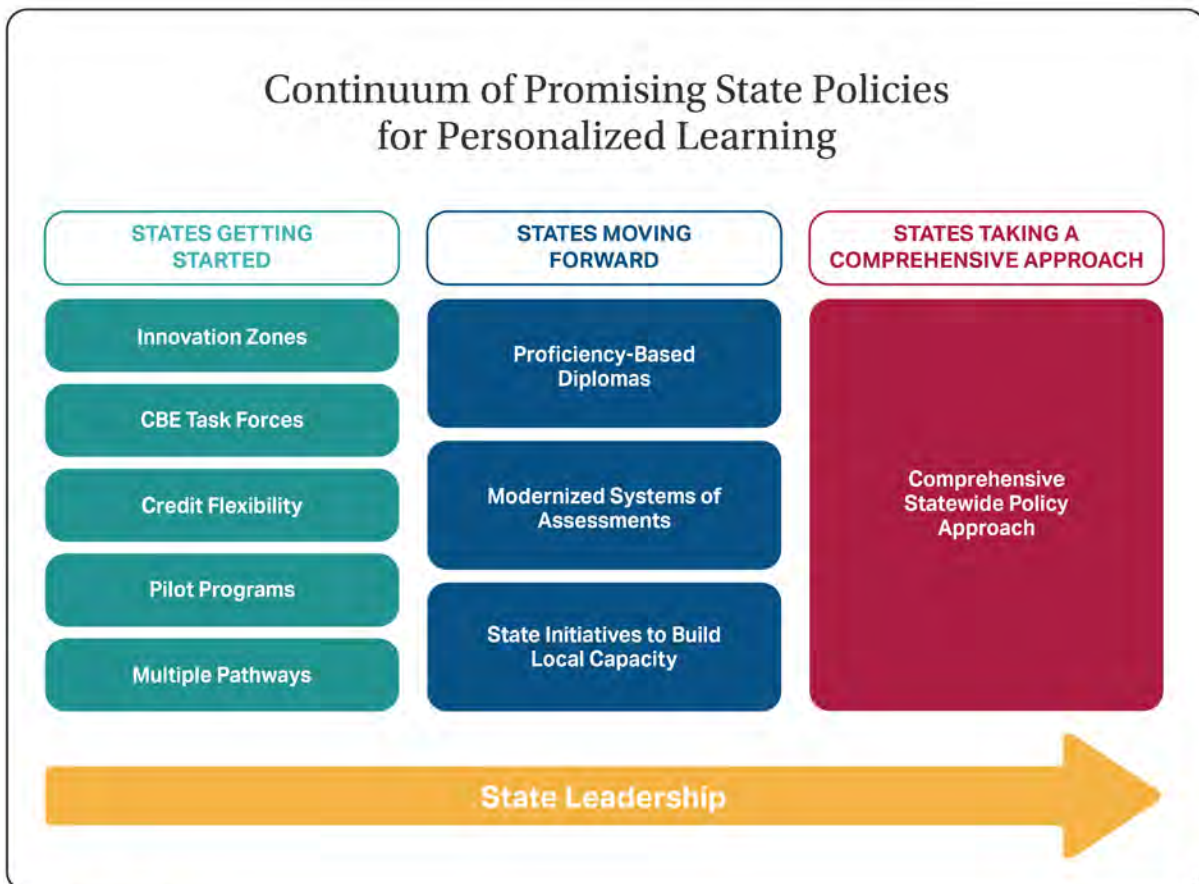>
> – DAVID HOOD

ESSA makes it possible for states to pursue a more comprehensive policy approach to supporting personalization at scale by removing federal policy barriers for states to align accountability, assessment and educator preparation and development systems to student-centered learning.

The graphic below identifies state policy strategies or "entry points" for policymakers wishing to catalyze the shift to a personalized K-12 system.

States that do not yet have any enabling policies can get started by studying policy barriers and creating room for local innovation, while states that have already made progress could consider more comprehensive steps toward transformation.

> *It is true that pioneering districts and schools across the country are making incremental shifts to student-centered learning without state supports and policy flexibility. However, we believe transformation at scale will require alignment and synchronization of policy with innovative practice.*

Continuum of Promising State Policies for Personalized Learning

STATES GETTING STARTED	STATES MOVING FORWARD	STATES TAKING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH
Innovation Zones	Proficiency-Based Diplomas	Comprehensive Statewide Policy Approach
CBE Task Forces	Modernized Systems of Assessments	
Credit Flexibility	State Initiatives to Build Local Capacity	
Pilot Programs		
Multiple Pathways		

State Leadership →

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For states getting started, competency-based education task forces help to identify policy barriers, advance the concept of competency education in the state and generate a feedback loop to state policymakers. Credit flexibility policies allow districts and schools to move away from seat time and to award credit for graduation based on demonstrated mastery.

Innovation zones provide pioneering school districts with flexibility from state policies and requirements in order to implement personalized learning models. Pilot programs support the examination of which strategies work in practice and lead to sharing and scaling of best practices in other localities. Finally, policies that allow for multiple pathways to earning credits and to graduation create opportunities for students to pursue their interests and gain real-world skills and experiences.

For states moving forward with more advanced policies, proficiency-based diplomas require students to demonstrate mastery of academic content before graduating. This approach encourages the adoption of personalized, competency-based learning by stipulating that graduation decisions be based on students demonstrating mastery rather than on seat-time credits.

ESSA allows states to redesign their systems of assessments, which could be structured to support learning in real time. Innovative systems of assessments can help districts and schools identify where students are in their learning and track their growth. ESSA also gives states the flexibility to rethink accountability using multiple measures. Next generation accountability models could support continuous improvement of student learning toward new, more meaningful definitions of success, rather than on high stakes decisions and consequences.

Finally, state-level initiatives and partnerships to develop educator and school leader capacity provide educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to transform K-12 education at scale. These support strategies include connecting local leaders to research and expertise, providing technical assistance, offering specialized training and facilitating peer learning networks.

Redesigning the foundations of K-12 education to be learner-centered and competency-based will create a system that prepares all students for success.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

» Establish innovation zones to provide school districts flexibility with state policies and requirements in order to implement new learning models.
» Establish competency-based education task forces to identify barriers and policy issues.
» Provide flexibility to school districts to allow students to earn credits on demonstrated mastery.
» Set up pilot programs and planning grants to support personalized, competency-based learning models.
» Create policies that allow for multiple pathways to earning credits and to graduation.

» Ensure mastery by implementing proficiency-based diplomas.

» Redesign systems of assessments to support learning.

» Create next generation accountability models focused on enabling continuous improvement.

» Build local capacity to transform education, connecting districts with research and experts, technical assistance, specialized training and peer learning networks.

Build New Learning Models Infrastructure

A well-distributed, statewide "learning infrastructure" is essential to implementing personalized learning at scale. Learning infrastructure includes robust broadband connectivity, secure, learner-centered data systems and openly licensed content. These systems and supports can improve equity by making powerful, personalized learning possible for every student, anytime and anywhere.

Important elements of learning infrastructure for personalized, competency-based learning include:

» High-speed, anytime/anywhere internet access for each student;

» Secure, learner-centered data systems;

» Open educational resources (OER); and

» Effective governance of student data privacy and security.

State policymakers can help support equitable access to, and sustainability of personalized learning by advancing policies to build and improve learning infrastructure.

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS

High-speed broadband internet access is critical for educators and students to have anytime, anywhere learning at their fingertips. The promise of next generation learning, driven by blended and online modalities, can only be realized at scale, when all students, regardless of geography and socio-economic status, have equitable access to connectivity.

Policymakers can leverage Federal E-Rate funds and use state strategies such as pooled purchasing agreements, statewide contracts, and direct appropriations to significantly increase schools' access to high-speed broadband connectivity.

Anytime, anywhere learning means that students have access to a variety of learning opportunities and environments. States should advance policies to make no- or low-cost broadband access available to economically disadvantaged students at home and in their communities.

States could also provide outreach or encourage districts to ensure families know about and can easily access the Federal Communications Commission's Lifeline program. Lifeline now provides affordable internet access to low-income families. States could also explore policies and partnerships to increase community access to connectivity like wifi access on buses or city-wide wifi access.

DATA SYSTEMS ALIGNED TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Effective data systems allow educators to monitor and report on student achievement and progress, each step of the way on a student's learning trajectory. Data systems that foster student-centered learning:

» Chart each student's learner profile;
» Capture meaningful assessment data;
» Allow reporting of competencies and competency levels;
» Track actionable information to facilitate just-in-time supports and interventions;
» Store portfolios of student work; and
» Are accessible to and easily used by educators, students and parents.

To better support accountability for continuous improvement, data systems should be capable of effectively aggregating data that reflects actual student competency. In addition, these systems must disaggregate data by student subgroups for state reporting purposes and should be able to pinpoint the students that need additional supports to succeed.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

OER are openly-licensed learning materials that educators can share, access and customize. They provide a foundation of customizable content for personalizing learning and increase opportunities for educator collaboration and engagement.

Because they are freely available, OER can have a positive fiscal impact, saving limited education funds on textbooks and other learning materials. In reallocating savings from licensing or royalty fees, states and districts should consider the additional resources required to develop the capacity of educators to access and effectively use high-quality OER.

State leaders wanting to promote OER should require all learning materials and resources developed using public money to be openly licensed. They also can include openly licensed materials on state instructional materials lists and support the development and maintenance of OER. States could use funds under Title IV of ESSA to support OER infrastructure and training.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Effective use of data is critical for educators to personalize learning. To protect student data privacy, states should ensure policies promote good governance, privacy and security of student data. States should avoid prohibitive policies that can impede the appropriate use of data for instruction. Balanced data privacy policies ensure proper protection and use of personally identifiable student data while, at the same time, enable personalized learning to close achievement gaps.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

» Expand and improve high-speed, broadband connectivity to ensure student opportunities for anytime, anywhere learning by:
  - Examining contracting strategies and pooled purchasing agreements to support cost-effective contracting for schools and districts;
  - Allowing any K–12 education program in the state to buy off of statewide enterprise contracts to maximize telecommunications investments with public dollars and E-Rate funds; and
  - Exploring state strategies to make free or discounted broadband connectivity available to economically disadvantaged students at home and in their communities for anytime, anywhere learning.
» Support the development of data systems aligned to personalized, competency-based learning.
» Develop state data systems to collect, in real-time, standards-based, baseline and longitudinal data to measure student growth over time to promote continuous improvement.
» Ensure content, learning materials and professional development resources created with public funds are made publicly available as OER.
» Include OER on approved state instructional materials lists and support the development and maintenance of openly licensed instructional materials aligned with state standards.
» Establish policies for the protection and good governance of student data privacy and avoid prohibitions that could have unintended consequences for the ability of educators to personalize learning.

Conclusion

It is hard to overemphasize the rare and incredible opportunity states have under ESSA to redesign K-12 education systems around student learning. States should work with communities to fundamentally reimagine education and scale powerful, personalized learning models to meet the needs of every student.

State leaders have a critical responsibility to embark on this journey to redesign and transform our education system. We must build future capacity in our educators to create opportunity, address equity

and ensure success for all students. Higher goals must be examined at the state and local levels and within our communities in our quest to redefine student success as we seek to empower students to thrive in our global economy.

State policymakers can set a vision of high expectations for all and foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation for equity. With an aligned vision and goals for a broader definition of student success and achievement, school leaders will design new innovative learning models to address equity and increase opportunity for all students. These learning environments will enable all students to graduate prepared to succeed in college, to thrive in their careers and to engage actively and effectively as citizens.

Definitions

Blended learning is formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. The modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience.[15]

Competency-based learning is a system of education in which: 1) Students advance upon demonstrated mastery; 2) Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students; 3) Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students; 4) Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; 5) Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.[16]

Deeper learning is the ability to master core academic content, think critically and solve complex problems, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, learn how to learn and develop academic mindsets.[17]

Online learning is education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily via the Internet.[18]

Personalized learning tailors learning to each student's strengths, needs and interests, including enabling student voice and choice in determining what, how, when and where the learning occurs—providing flexibility and supports to ensure mastery of the highest standards possible.[19]

Student-centered learning means: 1) Learning is personalized; 2) Learning is competency-based; 3) Learning happens anytime, everywhere; 4) Students take ownership over their learning (e.g., student agency).[20]

Resources

RETHINKING ACCOUNTABILITY

CompetencyWorks – ESSA Represents an Historic Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning: http://www.competencyworks.org/policy/essa-represents-an-historic-opportunity-to-advance-personalized-learning/?platform=hootsuite

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) – ESSA Implementation Considerations: Stakeholder Engagement: http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/CCSSOESSAImplementationConsiderationsStakeholderEngagement(0).pdf

Education Commission of the States (ECS) – Special Report: Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement: http://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/Collaborative_Stakeholder_Engagement_June-2016.pdf

iNACOL – Letter to the U.S. Department of Education Regarding ESSA Accountability and State Plans: https://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/iNACOL_NPRM-Comments.pdf

iNACOL – Next Steps Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): http://www.inacol.org/resource/next-steps-under-the-every-student-succeeds-act-essa/

iNACOL – Rethinking Accountability for Continuous Improvement of Next Generation Learning Models: http://www.inacol.org/news/rethinking-accountability-for-continuous-improvement-of-next-generation-learning-models/

iNACOL – From Compliance to Continuous Improvement: Accountability, Assessments and Next Generation Workforce with ESSA: http://www.inacol.org/news/from-compliance-to-continuous-improvement-accountability-assessments-and-next-generation-workforce-with-essa/

REDESIGNING SYSTEMS OF ASSESSMENTS

CompetencyWorks – An Opportunity in ESSA for Performance Assessment Literacy and Teacher Leadership: http://www.competencyworks.org/reflections/an-opportunity-in-essa-for-performance-assessment-literacy-and-teacher-leadership/?platform=hootsuite

iNACOL – Department of Education Proposes New Rules for ESSA's Innovative Assessment Pilot: http://www.inacol.org/news/department-of-education-proposes-new-rules-for-essas-innovative-assessment-pilot/

iNACOL – Supporting State Capacity to Plan for Innovative Systems of Assessments Under ESSA: http://www.inacol.org/news/supporting-state-capacity-to-plan-for-innovative-systems-of-assessments-under-essa/

iNACOL – Systems of Assessments that Support Student-Centered Learning and Continuous Improvement: http://www.inacol.org/news/systems-of-assessments-that-support-student-centered-learning-and-continuous-improvement/

TRANSFORMING EDUCATOR WORKFORCE SYSTEMS

iNACOL – How States Build Local Capacity to Implement Personalized Learning: http://www.inacol.org/news/how-states-build-local-capacity-to-implement-personalized-learning/

iNACOL – Laying the Foundation for Competency Education: A Policy Guide for the Next Generation Workforce: http://www.inacol.org/resource/laying-the-foundation-for-competency-education-a-policy-guide-for-the-next-generation-educator-workforce/

iNACOL – Modernizing Educator and Leader Development for Student-Centered Learning: http://www.inacol.org/news/modernizing-educator-and-leader-development-for-student-centered-learning/

CREATING PERSONALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEMS

iNACOL – How Competency Education Drives Equity: http://www.inacol.org/news/how-competency-education-drives-equity/

iNACOL – Innovation Zones: Creating Policy Flexibility for Personalized Learning: http://www.inacol.org/resource/innovation-zones-creating-policy-flexibility-for-personalized-learning/

iNACOL – Mean What You Say: Defining and Integrating Personalized, Blended and Competency Education: http://www.inacol.org/resource/mean-what-you-say-defining-and-integrating-personalized-blended-and-competency-education/

iNACOL – Promising State Policies for Personalized Learning: http://www.inacol.org/resource/promising-state-policies-for-personalized-learning/

BUILDING NEW LEARNING MODELS INFRASTRUCTURE

iNACOL – Infrastructure, Data Systems, Student Data Privacy, and OER are Critical to Scaling Personalized Learning: http://www.inacol.org/news/infrastructure-data-systems-student-data-privacy-and-oer-are-critical-to-scaling-personalized-learning/

iNACOL – OER State Policy in K-12 Education: Benefits, Strategies, and Recommendations for Open Access, Open Sharing: http://www.inacol.org/resource/oer-state-policy-in-k-12-education-benefits-strategies-and-recommendations-for-open-access-open-sharing/

iNACOL – Student-Centered Learning: Functional Requirements for Integrated Systems to Optimize Learning: http://www.inacol.org/resource/student-centered-learning-functional-requirements-for-integrated-systems-to-optimize-learning/

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