



important lessons about the implementation of online and blended-learning programs and attempts to foster a successful personalized educational environment for students.

- Even though online learning is supposed to help with pacing, educators are certainly still struggling to deal with students that are significantly behind. Several said during the online summit that they felt self-paced learning was great for engaged students but didn't work well for those that are not. They wanted advice on motivating students.
- Even though there's no set definition of what personalized learning is, educators said the big difference between differentiation and personalization is the amount of agency that students have. With differentiation teachers are really driving the process more.
- It's a challenge to balance student autonomy and the need to meet state and local educational goals.
- Relationships between students and teachers are key, whether it's an online environment or a face-to-face environment.
- Giving teachers the proper support and training is key to making personalized learning successful, but that can be a challenge when some teachers are afraid of technology and don't want to engage.
- As the use of ed-tech tools increases and the amount of data being collected from students increase, student data privacy is critical at every level, both on the school/district side and the vendor side.
- Teachers need to experience the same type of high-level personalized learning online to be able to understand what they can offer and provide to students.



### What Do Principals Believe About Personalized Learning's Role in Schools?

**Intro:** Education Week Assistant Managing Editor Kevin Bushweller talked about the results of the newspaper's exclusive, nationally representative survey of principals' views on personalized learning. Many principals are embracing the idea of personalized learning, but not always putting it front and center in their schools. And many are concerned about the negative impact that ed tech, in the guise of personalized learning, can have on students' ability to think deeply and connect with peers

- Many principals remain unclear about how personalized learning can help them meet their goals for delivering high-quality instruction.
- Some principals believe tech-driven personalized learning is a truly distinct opportunity to enrich learning if it can give students the opportunity to connect with sources outside of school, allowing them to access key primary source documents and texts.

- Professional development is seen by principals as the key to getting teachers on board with personalized learning.
- Principals support a coaching/mentoring approach to getting more teachers comfortable with using personalized programs in their classrooms.
- 85 percent of principals surveyed by *Education Week* say they're worried that personalized learning might over-emphasize technology and 77 percent worry that PL will lead to increased screen time for students as well as a loss of collaboration and social skills.



### Training Teachers for a Radical Change

**Intro:** Education Week Staff Writer Sarah Schwartz spoke with Stacy Stewart, principal of Belmont-Cragin Elementary School in Chicago, about the school's experience preparing teachers to work in personalized learning environments. After an intensive 6-month professional development regimen, school leaders found they still needed to provide continuing support. Stewart discussed what strategies worked and what adjustments they made.

- Teachers must be on board for a personalized learning implementation to succeed. Targeted and specific professional development can help teachers make the transition.
- Stacy Stewart, featured guest, discussed two key supports for teachers that she provided while implementing personalized learning in her school: starting with a pilot program and allowing teachers to share information and learn from one another through shadowing, question and answer, etc.
- Personalized learning requires a significant shift in the way teachers are used to teaching. So, professional development must build on what they already know or already don't know. Stewart did this in Chicago by designing a two-track PD system for those less experienced and those more experienced. This allowed for ongoing learning and training but also met the individual needs of teachers depending on their current level.
- A lot of teachers and administrators in the chat were hesitant about implementing personalized learning because context varies so much from school to school. They're not sure how or if strategies Stewart used would succeed in their districts—especially when these strategies relied on scarce resources, like time for teacher PD or shadowing.



### It's Not All About Technology!

**Intro:** Education Week Assistant Editor Sarah Sparks spoke with a pair of principals in the Henry County, Ga., school system about their district's personalized learning experience. Unlike some districts, Henry County has de-emphasized technology's role in personalized learning, focusing instead on developing targeted interventions for students based on their academic needs.

- Henry County was funneling a lot of time, money, and energy into personalized learning that was based on technology and now is backing off, because they feel they've lost some of the personal aspect of personalized learning.
- The district decided to move towards a system that instead gives students more control over choosing the help they feel they need, allowing each student to ensure assistance where they need it.
- Henry County leaders believe personalized learning is deeply rooted in traditional ways of teaching and doesn't require tech to work or be impactful.
- Henry County was transparent about their setbacks with personalized learning and was open to experimenting with a system that would work, changing it until it reached all its students' needs. They believe this self-reflection and improvement was critical in their journey toward a better model.



### The Research Arguments For (And Against) Personalized Learning

**Intro:** Education Week Staff Writer Benjamin Herold spoke with researchers at the RAND Corporation about their work analyzing the impact of personalized learning models, what we know about the implementation challenges schools are facing on the ground, and the questions about personalized learning that the research community is still trying to answer. Guests included Associate Policy Researcher Elizabeth Steiner, Senior Behavioral Scientist Laura Hamilton, and Senior Scientist John Pane.

- Because “personalized learning” means so many different things in practice, it's been hard for researchers to study the movement and make claims about its effectiveness.

- Personalized learning generates heated discussion because there are strong feelings on all sides of the movement, including proponents who believe it's what's needed to transform schools and critics who contend it's mostly a way to ramp up screen time.
- So far, the research evidence for personalized learning is relatively weak.
- Some feel that PL is being pushed by companies and organizations rather than by educators and schools themselves.
- It's still unknown what PL means for diverse learners and equity. More research is expected to come about regarding the movement's impact on students with disabilities, English language learners, and others.



### 5 Big Mistakes Ed Companies Are Making in Design Personalized Learning Strategies

**Intro:** Education Week Associate Editor Sean Cavanagh and Chris Liang-Vergara of LEAP Innovations talked about how K-12 vendors' ambitions for personalized learning can fall short. LEAP Innovations pairs companies using personalized learning strategies with Chicago-area schools.

- The five big mistakes we used as a starting point to this discussion are: 1) vendors and schools not focusing enough on promoting student agency in their strategies for personalized learning; 2) companies' platforms lacking content to many different learners' needs; 3) vendors' "personalized" data lacking usefulness for educators; 4) assessments that aren't aligned to the personalization goals; and 5) too little focus on whether personalized strategies can be integrated into existing classroom structures.
- Too many companies overpromise with their personalized learning products and programs. They tell schools they can make grand changes but lack clear blueprints for doing so.
- Companies need clear plans for implementing personalized strategies, and they need to consider what implementation means for that school.
- Many of audience members for this booth were new to personalized learning and wanted advice on evaluating companies' products.
- Among the red flags for schools to look for when evaluating companies: no clear plan of how a product or program fits in the school or district context; and a lack of evidence to back-up company claims.