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# Personalizing Professional Learning For Teachers: Pursuing Equity Through Systematic Personalization

Megan M. McCarter
*National Louis University*

PERSONALIZING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS:

PURSUING EQUITY THROUGH SYSTEMATIC PERSONALIZATION


Megan M. McCarter


Educational Leadership Doctoral Program


Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

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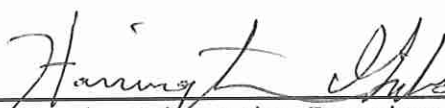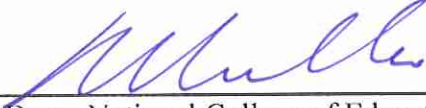
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Chair, Dissertation Committee

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Director, EDL Doctoral Program

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Member, Dissertation Committee

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Dean, National College of Education

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Dean's Representative

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Date Approved

**ABSTRACT**

Our school system has not changed much in the last 100 years, yet our society and the job market are drastically different.  In general, we are not preparing young people for life after high school in a meaningful way; the reality for minority and low-income students is even more depressing.  We need to change how education works for students, we need to personalize for their individual needs, push them to collaborate, to innovate, and to own their own learning. This can only happen if we change how we develop, support, and retain teachers.  This study examines models of and reflections on Personalized Professional Development (PPD) through a mixed-methods approach in order to provide recommendations for how to improve implementation of personalized professional learning systems and structures for educators. Based on learnings from the program evaluation and recommended change plan, three policies are proposed that highlight changes in how teachers and leaders are developed, how resources are aligned, and how accountability should be used to value personalization. This study proposes that system-wide personalization is one way to pursue an equity agenda and drastically change our schools to better serve ALL students.

**PREFACE**

I began my career in education serving as an AmeriCorps volunteer at an alternative outdoor high school. The following year I entered the classroom as a Teach For America Corps Member in Chicago. I spent 5 years teaching high school math, and during my final year as a teacher, I served as a Principal Intern after completing a Master's program in Educational Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. The following year I transitioned into an Assistant Principal role in a turnaround school and became Co-Principal of the school after three years. I am now in my fourth year as a Principal and am entering my second year at my current school. The work of a Principal is both amazing and challenging. It can be difficult to grow and develop adults, as well as build a collaborative team that can move metrics for students, especially in underserved schools. My goal as a principal is to ensure that every student in my building is prepared for success in life and provided the opportunities they deserve – something I argue requires personalization for every student. I do this through developing my teachers and teacher teams.

Each teacher brings a different set of strengths and needs to the table, which is what makes the principalship challenging. However, supporting each teacher with the right amount of support and challenge, building strong teams, and modeling personalization is what both shows and supports teachers in implementation of the same practices within their classrooms. After my first attempt to support teachers with implementation of personalized learning for students did not turn out how I had anticipated, I reflected on my own practice and became interested in how I could better personalize for my teachers. This launched my interest in researching and advocating for polices that address system-wide personalization in order to support teachers and students.

During this study, I looked at publicly available data from a Personalized Professional Development program I implemented at a school I led.  Additionally, I interviewed school and district leaders as well as experts in personalized learning who have previous experience with personalizing both professional learning for teachers and learning for students.  Patton (2008) writes, "high quality lessons learned, then represent principles extrapolated from multiple sources and independently triangulated to increase transferability as cumulative knowledge working hypotheses that can be adapted and applied to new situations" (p. 135). Thus, my goal was to study the model I had previously implemented and interview leaders with personalization experience in order to make suggestions about implementation of Personalized Professional Development both for the new school that I lead as well as other schools looking to implement personalized learning, better support teachers, and move student outcomes.

As a current school principal, I know that teachers are my biggest commodity, because they have direct impact on students. Thus, if I want to change the experience for my students, to change their opportunities and school trajectory, I must begin with teachers.  This study advocates for both school and district leaders to implement personalization at a system-wide level in order to meet the individual needs of leaders, schools, teachers, and students.  This system-wide personalization requires a long-term vision and strategic plan, collaboration and continuous improvement cycles, attention to individual needs and context, and building of capacity.  This system-wide personalization will ensure that every stakeholder is cared for and challenged in a way that allows for teamwork and innovation to take hold – allowing for leaders to purse an equity agenda, evening the odds for all of our students regardless of race, socio-economic class, or zip code.

**DEDICATION**

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends. A huge thank you and appreciation to my parents, Jim and Mary McCarter, who have supported me in all of my career endeavors and who have always encouraged me. Also, to my brother and sister-in-law, Mark and Britta McCarter, who have always been my cheerleaders. To my grandmother, Marilyn Blocksom, the "Grandest Mama," who worked as a high school English teacher and inspired me to go into education.

I also dedicate this work to my friends who have helped and supported me in many ways. From my thought partners in the work, Kylie Vadnais, Brian Hearns, Lindsay Pushies, Michelle Trojan, and Stacie Chana. To my best friend, Pamela Vlach. Who although we live far apart has been my cheerleader and support system since day one.

Lastly, I dedicate my work to all of the students and educators I have worked with throughout my career. Who have helped me to become the educator I am. A special thank you to the McCarter Advisory from Rowe-Clark, a special group of young ladies who continue to inspire me to pursue equity in education every day.

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

**Introduction**

Inequities dominate the landscape of education today. There is a clear divide between what opportunities are afforded to specific races and classes of students in this country (Blankstein, Noguera & Kelly, 2016). Furthermore, our current school system is not effectively preparing students for the workforce of today. Employers complain that students coming out of college and universities are ill prepared for the demands of the 21st century (Wagner, 2008). Wagner (2008) suggests that there are seven survival skills that students must learn to be best prepared to compete in the next century. These survival skills are aligned to the ideas of critical thinking, adaptability, communication, and problem solving more than recalling content or information that can be accessed immediately through today's technology. The reality is that the inequities of access, quality, and opportunity of educational experiences make it even more difficult for students from low-income areas to learn the seven survival skills, which in turn negatively impacts their ability to graduate from college and compete in a career field of their choice.

From 2013 until 2018, I worked at Adams Elementary, a turnaround elementary school in a large urban city, where I served as Co-Principal during my last two years and continually strived to ensure that my students were receiving the education they deserve; one that would prepare them for college graduation and career-readiness. Adams Elementary was a small school, serving only 420 students from PreK-8th grade, located in a high-poverty neighborhood where the median household income was $28,400 below the city average. Adams Elementary was a public school managed by a non-profit turnaround organization that had a commitment to turning around and managing the lowest performing schools in a large, urban district through a strong

emphasis on climate and culture, curriculum, teacher development, and principal support. When Adams Elementary was slated for turnaround in 2013, we were the 3rd worst school the state, with only 4% of students performing on-grade level in reading and 9% on-grade level in math. Over the first 4 years I worked at Adams Elementary, the school made significant improvements in student attendance, growth, attainment, and culture. Adams Elementary achieved Level 1 status, the second highest of five possible rankings in the large urban school district based on metrics including attendance percentage, the University of Chicago 5Essentials Survey, and nationally normed assessment data for both student growth and attainment (NWEA MAP). During my fourth year at Adams Elementary, myself and our math teachers participated in a personalized learning pilot to continue to increase and grow our practices as well as to figure out how to continue to move student achievement.  However, still more than 50% of students were not performing on grade-level in reading and math. Additionally, 53% of students who had graduated since the turn around had transferred high schools at least one time. This is an alarming statistic not only because it shows that students currently were not prepared for the rigors of high school, but also because students who transfer schools are twice as likely to dropout (Rumberger & Larson, 1998, p. 25). In order to prepare our students to be successful in high school, college, and career, there were changes that needed to be made to the student experience at Adams Elementary as well as many other schools throughout the country, especially in our chronically low-performing schools that serve minority and poor students.

During this program evaluation, I moved across the country and changed to a new principalship at a new school.  My current school, Monroe School, is K-5 public elementary school in a mid-sized city.  Currently Monroe School is designated as a Comprehensive Supports and Improvement (CSI) school serving 70% minority and low-income students. The school is

situated in a majority white city and within a neighborhood experiencing gentrification. This results in many diverse stakeholder groups within the school and community with different views, opinions, and needs. At the start of my principalship, I was the fifth principal in six years at the school. There was little personalization going on in classrooms and professional learning consisted mostly of informational meetings. During my first year as principal I focused on building relationships, implementing professional learning through the Data Driven Instruction model and supporting implementation of writing workshop (a previously selected school priority). Throughout the year teachers asked to have more choice and differentiation within professional learning as the staff had first year teachers through 33-year veterans and provided two different programs to students, one for Dual Immersion Spanish and another traditional English program. After my first year as Principal, we had increased regular attenders by 5% and increased the percentage of students meeting grade level expectations in math by 4%. However, the school remained in the bottom 5% of the state and only had 24% of students meeting grade level expectations in reading and only 19% in math. A clear achievement gap existed between white students and students of color within the school, which, based on state report cards had been a long-standing inequity within the school. Monroe was at a different place than Adams Elementary in terms of instructional practices and adoption of standards-based instruction. Most classrooms were based around a lecture model using scripted curriculum provided by the district. There was limited student discussion and differentiation, additionally, most classrooms provided instruction and tasks below the rigor demanded by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for the grade level. Teachers often asked me throughout my first year if I was actually going to stay at the school for another year and were surprised when I visited their classrooms, provided feedback, and ask my leadership team to conduct weekly instructional walks.

Although the contexts were different between Adams Elementary and Monroe, there was still a clear trend of minority students and students living in poverty being underserved by our outdated school system. A system that Wolf, Bobst and Mangum (2017) describes as, "based on a factory model created at the run of the twentieth century-often discourage[s] curiosity and questioning; they tend to encourage students to be passive and compliant" (p. 1). Personalized learning is one of the current movements in education reform that addresses how schools can grow into equity and more effectively teach Wagner's seven survival skills to students. Personalized learning focuses on each learner's strengths, interests, and needs while allowing learners to work at their own pace to demonstrate competency (Blankstein et al., 2016; Leap Learning Framework, 2017; Pane, Steiner, Baird & Hamilton, 2017; Wolf et al., 2017; Zmuda, Curtis & Ullman, 2015). Learners are pushed to become agents of their own learning by co-designing their experiences, assessing their own progress, and reflecting on their own learning. However, in order to make a change for students, we must start with teacher development. As Morrissey points out, "One cannot assume that schools can transform themselves into productive and successful places of learning without first addressing the learning that must occur among teachers" (Murphy, 2016, p. 66). I argue that teacher support and development should model what we want to see in classrooms, therefore, it should reflect the key components and values of personalized learning.

According to statistics, focusing on teacher development is the leadership move that has the largest effect on student achievement (Smith & Smith, 2015). Therefore, we must develop effective systems and structures for professional development that draw upon the principles of personalized learning. Teachers are the people who have direct interaction with students on a daily basis, thus, their development is integral to increasing student achievement. Smith and

Smith (2015) state that "the frequent presence of leaders within classrooms for the purpose of observing the impact of teachers' work on student learning and providing them with subsequent feedback is a hallmark of leaders in higher performing schools" (p. 69).  It follows that if we want to change the landscape of education we should start with how we develop and support teachers.

**Purpose**

During the 2017-2018 school year at Adams Elementary, I implemented a Personalized Professional Development (PPD) model based on the tenets of personalized learning. This pilot was created for a few reasons. First, math teachers participated in a personalized learning pilot for a year; however not as many personalized practices were implemented as I had expected. When reflecting on this experience, I realized I was asking teachers to personalize support for students, but I was not doing the same for teachers.  Second, based on informal conversations, survey data, and the 5 Essentials Survey, it was apparent that teachers didn't feel professional develop was meeting their needs.  Teachers expressed that they wanted more choice and differentiation.  For both of these reasons, I decided to implement PPD.  The goal was to model the types of personalization that teachers should be providing to students and also empower teachers feel a sense of ownership and purpose within their own development.

**personalized professional development program structure.**

At Adams Elementary School, I implemented a Personalized Professional Development (PPD) program that involved multiple components and aimed to support and develop teachers based on their individual needs and interests.  The program is comprised of the following components.

- **Personalized Professional Development Plans (PPP) -** At Adams Elementary School, teachers created their own PPP which includes\d their learner profile showcasing their strengths, challenges, interests, and needs (see Appendix A). The plan also asked teachers to set goals for the class they teach as well as another elective goal that they choose.  Teachers selected their Professional Learning Community track and identified any outside Professional Development in which they would like to participate.

- **Beginning- and End-of-Year Reflection Meetings -** Teachers shared their PPPs at Beginning-of-Year one-on-one meetings with the school administrative team. Teachers presented their plan and discussed their goals for the year as well as what support they thought they needed.  At the end of the year, teachers reflected on their PPPs and brought evidence to their End-of-Year meeting to show whether or not they met their goals.  The administrative team used the goals from teacher's PPPs to drive teacher coaching and feedback as well as next steps from formal evaluations in order to best support teachers in reaching their yearly goals.

- **Content Cluster Meetings -** Teachers attended weekly hour-long content cluster meetings with other teachers from similar grades. During these meetings, teachers studied the common curricular resource they used, spending three weeks focused on planning, three weeks engaging in collegial inquiry through a lesson study, and three weeks reflecting on student work and assessment data.  These cluster meetings were tailored to study specific aspects of reading and math instruction and were facilitated by teacher leaders to support teams with developing content knowledge and instructional strategies.

- **20% Projects (Independent Study) -** This part of the PPD program at Adams Elementary School was based off of the 20%-time model used by Google. Teachers could elect to spend 20% of the content cluster time (12 hours per year) doing an independent study project. Teachers filled out an application that asked teachers to outline their project and plan for executing their project. The goal of 20% projects is to allow teachers to spend time developing themselves in an area of their own choice/passion. It also provided teachers with the opportunity to own and direct their own development.

- **Differentiated, Choice Professional Learning Communities -** Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) met monthly for two hours. Teachers at Adams Elementary School selected from four different PLCs based on their self-assessed needs and interests. Teachers in their first year at Adams Elementary School were placed in a PLC that provided specific supports around learning the systems and structures of the school as well as the district. The remaining three PLCs were developed around themes within personalized learning for students. Two PLCs were designed for teachers who had implemented some personalized practices in their rooms, but who felt they still needed more support. One focused on creating differentiated stations and centers utilizing choice and menus. The other focuses on student conferencing so that students can own and understand their own data. The last PLC was designed for teachers who already had strong personalization practices in their rooms and wanted to push their innovation to the next level. This PLC was centered on the idea of how to develop a classroom that provides opportunities to scholars for student-led research projects.

- **Individualized Coaching Aligned to Evaluation -** In addition to the professional development provided to groups of teachers, teachers at Adams Elementary School received individualized coaching through both informal and formal observations and feedback.  Coaching was aligned to both the formal evaluation system for the district as well as the teacher's PPP.  Coaching frequency was based on need and established collaboratively with the teacher and administrator.

After serving as the Principal at Monroe School for one year, building relationships and learning about the programs that were already in place at the school, I heard from staff that they wanted more choice and differentiation within their professional learning.  This is the second school where these requests have been voiced by teachers, I am now thinking about how I can leverage what I implemented at Adams Elementary, adjusting based on my new context, in order to create systems and structures that ensure my teachers feel supported, feel ownership of their own learning, and are willing to implement new practices.

What I have seen through my work at Adams Elementary, Monroe, and through research is that students in all schools regardless of zip code deserve a high-quality education that prepares them to be competitive as they enter the 21st century job market, however, not many schools are achieving this goal.  Gleason and Gerzon explain in their book Growing into Equity that "A commitment to equity is a quest for every student doing well and means systematic personalization.  Successfully doing this requires continuously building educator skills, knowledge, and dispositions in and outside of the classroom -- ongoing professional learning" (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 6).  In order to provide students with a high-quality personalized education, we must leverage Personalized Professional Development (PPD).  Gleason and Gerzon also argue that all students deserve to feel like a favorite through the implementation of

personalization, something that can only be attained by a clear focus and commitment to building the professional capacity of teachers (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. xiii).  In order to implement personalized learning for students, we must change how we support teachers.

The purpose of this study is for formative improvement and learning as well as knowledge generation.  Formative improvement and learning will allow me to improve my own implementation of PPD and knowledge generation will "enhance general understandings and identify generic principles about effectiveness" (Patton, 2008, p. 141). This study provides the opportunity to study an innovative model of applying the tenets of personalized learning to professional development structures for educators as well as interview practitioners in the field to gather trends across schools and districts that have worked to implement Personalized Professional Development.  I will then analyze trends, make recommendations, and propose policy options that could remove barriers for implementing personalization in order to achieve an equity agenda. All participants, both schools, the teacher, and the non-profit organization mentioned have been given pseudonyms in order to protect confidentiality.

**Rationale**

I have served as a leader at two schools where minority students living in poverty were underserved.  In both schools gains and improvements were made, however, an opportunity gap still existed for our students, many of whom were not learning Wagner's seven survival skills, the skills needed to succeed outside of primary and secondary school life.  This issue of personalizing professional learning for educators is important to me because I believe all students deserve a high-quality education regardless of race or zip code. As a leader, teachers are your conduit to students.  Thus, changing outcomes for students requires changing support for teachers.

In addition, teachers and leaders are leaving our highest need, most underserved schools at a faster rate than other schools (The New Teacher Project, 2012). Lasting impact and meaningful change cannot take place unless schools and districts are able to retain effective, committed teachers and leaders to drive the change work.  This year alone I have had to hire four teachers after the beginning of the school year.  One of those four classes is in 2nd grade and has never had a consistent teacher for an entire school year. How we support and retain teachers is a necessity to changing outcomes for our students.

Wagner (2008) presents data from a variety of sources such as the high school dropout rate, percentage of students entering college needing to take remedial courses, and employers' dissatisfaction with recent college graduates as evidence that our schools are failing. Schools have approached how we educate children the same way for many years. What students need from education today is completely different from what we needed and how were taught, making it difficult for us to imagine what school should look like for children growing up in a new century where the job market demands are drastically different and ever-changing (Wagner, 2008, p. XXV). We must do away with the "one-size-fits-all" approach for students as well as teachers if we want to level the playing field for students.

Personalized learning is one method of school redesign that teaches students Wagner's seven survival skills and has had a positive impact on student growth and attainment (Zmuda, Curtis, Ullman, 2015, p. 7). As school leaders we must redesign our systems and structures for supporting teachers in making a change toward personalized learning. School leaders should create personalized systems for teachers so that teachers can experience and understand how personalization will help their students. How can we expect teachers to plan different learning experiences for students if we do not change and redesign teacher development?

Murphy (2016) outlines the Principles of Adult Learning that lead to successful teacher growth and development:

- Fosters a sense of ownership for learning
- Active learning that applies to real-world (or classroom) contexts
- Authentic, meaningful, and relevant
- Direct and obvious application
- Healthy balance of support and challenge
- Based on the needs of the individual
- Time for application, reflection, and feedback
- Teacher input in form, content and pacing

The best practices from Murphy (2016) outlined above also align to the characteristics of personalized learning for students. Thus, creating personalized adult learning experiences should support both adult growth and model what learning should look like to equip students with the survival skills they need to navigate the 21st century.

Currently, there is a large opportunity gap not only within our own country, but also a global achievement gap between our country and the rest of the world (Wagner, 2008). The need for memorization is gone now that we have technology at our fingertips -- yet, many classrooms look the same as 100 years ago. Although change is scary and difficult, we must as a country shift our structures for educating students as well as training and supporting teachers. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) write that to advance the goal of equity, schools and districts should personalize instruction and develop the professional capacity of staff (p. 6). There is a clear need for a change in how we structure learning experiences for students to prepare them for jobs of the next century. Therefore, we must also change the way we support teachers so that they can grow their instructional practice and prepare students for this change.

**Goals**

The goal of this evaluation was to help "open new possibilities, and help programs realize their full potential" (Patton, 2008, p.471). More specifically the first goal of this program

evaluation is to analyze the PPD structures used during my time at Adams Elementary and how those structures impacted teachers' feelings about their satisfaction with their professional learning, their sense of ownership over the professional learning, and their willingness to implement personalization practices within their classrooms.  The second goal is to analyze what other school leaders and practitioners in the field of personalized learning think about personalizing professional development.  Based on these goals, I will make recommendations for my new school context in order to ensure I effectively support teachers through personalizing their professional learning.  Lastly, I will make policy recommendations to eliminate barriers and promote system-wide personalization.

I wanted to tackle these goals, because how we support teachers directly impacts students.  I want to provide recommendations for changing the model for and approach to teacher support and development in order to change the school experience for our minority and low-income students who often are not offered the same opportunities as their more affluent, white peers.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question I used to drive this study was, what systems and structures can schools and districts put into place to better support teachers in professional learning in order to increase teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students?  In order to answer this question, I looked at quantitative data from when I implemented of PPD at Adams Elementary, reviewed research, and interviewed school leaders and an expert in personalized learning around the following secondary questions:

- How and to what extent does Personalized Professional Development increase teacher job satisfaction as measured through teacher's feeling of collaboration and influence?

- How and to what extent does Personalized Professional Development impact teachers' ownership of their own learning and willingness to implement new personalization strategies in their classrooms?

- What professional learning systems and structures do schools who have effectively implemented personalized learning and increased student outcomes utilize?

- How can a leader balance what teachers want for voice and choice with creating vertical and horizontal alignment and coherent professional learning?

**Conclusion**

The bottom line is that students in all schools regardless of zip code deserve a high-quality education that prepares them to be competitive as they enter the 21st century job market. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) explain in their book *Growing into Equity* that "A commitment to equity is a quest for every student doing well and means systematic personalization. Successfully doing this requires continuously building educator skills, knowledge, and dispositions in and outside of the classroom -- ongoing professional learning" (p. 6). In order to provide students, in my new school context, with a high-quality personalized education, I must leverage Personalized Professional Development (PPD). The following literature review and program evaluation will explore the systems and structures that myself and other educational leaders have used to personalize professional learning to more effectively support teachers in order to make recommendations for both my new context and in general for the profession. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) also argue that all students deserve to be a favorite, something that can only be attained by a clear focus and commitment to building the professional capacity of teachers (p.

xiii). In all reality, we all deserve to feel like we are favorite, that we are cared for, challenged,

and engaged in our own learning to reach our full potential.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Introduction**

Currently a child's race, zip code, and socio-economic class still determine how well he or she will do in school as well as the quality of school he or she will attend (Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 13). The inequities that exist today are not only within our country in terms of the Opportunity Gap, but also exist between the United States and other countries, what Tony Wagner (2014) calls the Global Achievement Gap. According to Blankstein et al. (2016), Wagner (2014), and Wolf (2017) our current school system is not preparing students for the demands of the 21st century and is producing students who do not know how to follow directions and recall information rather than problem-solve, innovate, and think critically. Wolf et al. (2017) points out that in our current education system, "We teach students that what we value in schools is success, not failure" (pg. 1), which encourages students to be risk-averse and deters innovation and creativity. To change the current state of education, we need to focus on equity -- on ensuring that every student is prepared for the demands of the 21st century in order to have the career and life of their choice, not one that has been determined for them. In order to do this, we must change how we support and develop teachers. Systems and structures for teacher support and professional learning must ensure that teachers feel valued, heard and empowered to make changes in their own practice that will help them to best prepare students for the 21st century.

**why equity should be the focus.**

In *Excellence Through Equity: 5 Principles of Courageous Leadership to Guide Achievement for Every Student* Blankstein et al. (2016) outlines the key reasons for why equity should be the focus for every teacher, school, and district. These key reasons include:

- It's the right thing to do
- The most advantaged and successful students perform even better when in an equitable school setting
- Financial support for schools could increase with equity
- It grows parent, staff, and community support
- The alternate is catastrophic and creates communities of despair (p. 9-11)

Besides simply ensuring that every student's needs are met, equity has the potential to positively impact schools and districts by providing the best opportunities for all students, ensuring every student and teacher feels valued, supported, and reaches his or her maximum potential.

**why other efforts to address equity have failed.**

Past efforts have been made to address the opportunity gap and equity issues that plague our current school system, however, the majority of these efforts have failed. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was a step in the right direction, but overall has largely left the achievement gap untouched as NCLB relied heavily on test scores and assumed that all students of the same age should progress and learn at the same rate (Blankstein et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2011). In a similar way, putting a focus on moving the scores of student sub-groups still misses the mark for students within those sub-groups who have different learning styles or paces. Focusing on sub-groups does not allow educators to get to know individual students and what they need to be successful (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013; Conchas, 2001, Conchas & Noguera, 2004; Conchas & Perez, 2003). Many schools and districts have visions for achievement for all students, and often these goals are simply aspirational, with schools and districts becoming satisfied when overall growth is shown even if there has not been actual improvement in student learning. These efforts are also derailed with exceptions that are too often made around the expectation that all students can learn, showing that many people still hold onto the belief that some students cannot (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 3). Blankstein et al. (2016) also describes the Zero-Sum scenario that an

equity agenda often leads to where people believe that if more is done for those who are disadvantaged then the advantaged will have less (p. 3). Lucas (2001) presents research on Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI), in which "social background advantages seem to work to effectively and continuously secure for the children of advantage advantaged locations of their own" (Lucas, 2001, p. 1681). Lucas's EMI explains that even when disadvantaged students are provided with additional resources and support to make certain levels of education universally attainable, then the socioeconomically advantaged seek out additional qualitative differences to ensure that they still have an advantage. Thus, even when advantages are quantitatively the same, the advantaged ensure themselves a qualitative advantage (Lucas, 2001, p. 1652).

On top of the reasons listed above, there are many competing demands on educators today that make ensuring equity difficult (Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 136; Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 6) and in many cases professional learning and support for educators is ineffective (Darling-Hammond, 2011; DeMonte, 2013, p. 4; Hill, 2009; Oberg De La Garza, 2011, p. 96). Thus, although many schools and districts strive for equity, there are many obstacles to pushing and achieving a true equity agenda.

These failed efforts at equity impact teachers and schools. The best teachers, what The New Teacher Project (2012) refer to as the "irreplaceables", leave the highest need schools at a more frequent rate than other schools (The New Teacher Project, 2012), only further exacerbating the equity issues in our country. The New Teacher Project (2012) attributes the "irreplaceables" leaving the schools that need them most to three main reasons:

1. Poor Leadership Practices
2. Poor Working Conditions
3. Counterproductive Policies

Low-performing schools, who mostly serve low-income and minority students, consistently lose their best teachers which makes achieving equity just that much harder. Improving professional learning and personalizing to meet the needs our "irreplaceables" could go a long way to increase retention of our best asset in our highest need schools.

      **a call for system-wide personalization.**

      Although equity can seem difficult, even impossible at times, an equity agenda is what every student, school, and district deserve. This Literature Review outlines why system-wide personalization is the key to advancing an equity agenda in schools and districts. The three main sections outline the following theory based on Gleason and Gerzon's 2013 study of Title I schools who are moving student achievement through personalizing to meet every student's needs:
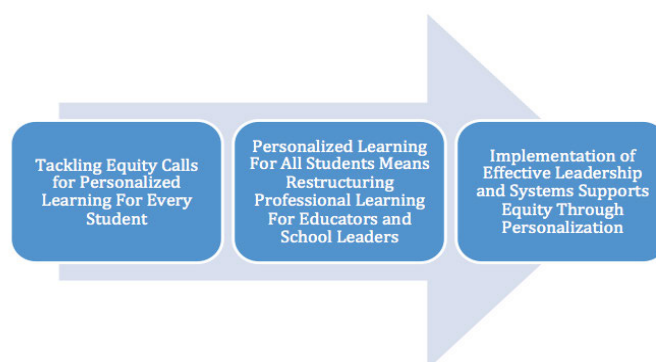


*Figure 1. Advancing Equity with Professional Learning (*Gleason & Gerzon, 2013)

This Literature Review draws from two primary studies, Gleason and Gerzon, *Growing into Equity: Professional Learning and Personalization in High-Achieving Schools*, (2013) and Wolf et al., *Leading Personalized and Digital Learning: A Framework for Implementing School Change*, (2017), which are both in depth case studies of specific schools successfully implementing personalization at a systems level to support adults in meeting individual student

needs. Both of these studies provide recommendations for creating district and school-wide systems for professional learning that mirror personalized learning for students.

**Tackling Equity Calls for Personalized Learning for Every Student**

Equity calls for meeting the needs of every single student. Blankstein et al. (2016) and Gleason and Gerzon (2013) attest that a commitment to equity and excellence requires personalization and valuing each individual child's unique story and needs -- that educators must work to uncover each child's gifts and talents. To address the developmental needs of all students, many schools and districts are trying to implement personalized learning, which aligns with best practices and research in child development (Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 16). Equity through personalized learning is also supported by neuroscience research. The brain learns by making new connections, thus the development of instruction and projects that tap into the already existing brain pathways and make connections to individual students will more effectively support student learning than more traditional whole group or one-size-fits-all instruction. This neuroscience research supports the idea that teachers must know their individual students in order to plan meaningful, personalized instruction that produces student learning (Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 17). Changing instruction to follow these best practices in child development and neuroscience require a paradigm shift away from the typical "factory-model" of schooling to a system that values and celebrates differences to meet the needs of every student -- equity through personalization (Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 11).

**personalized learning.**

Personalized Learning can look different depending on what school or district you observe. Since personalization is based on the needs of each student, there are different

personalization approaches and not a single model (Pane et al., 2017). Researchers even name

and group the types of personalization approaches differently as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Personalization Approach Names and Vocabulary by Researcher*

| *Rand Corporation* | *Leap Innovations* | *Wolf, Bobst, Magnum* | *Zmuda* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ● Learner Profiles<br>● Personal Learning Paths<br>● Competency-Based Progression<br>● Flexible Learning Environments | ● Learner Connected<br>● Learner Focused<br>● Learner Demonstrated<br>● Learner Led | ● Collaboration<br>● Critical Thinking<br>● Communication<br>● Creativity | ● Clarity<br>● Context<br>● Culture<br>● Capital |

Looking at the terms in Table 1, there are many patterns and trends across the different

researchers. For example, Competency-Based Progressions discussed by RAND are the same as

the Learner Demonstrated competency from LEAP Innovations. Many of the terms that are used

by one researcher are used to define terms used by another researcher. Although researchers

name these approaches differently, all of the research points to personalized learning as a way to

empower students to own their own learning and feel connected to it. It calls for standards-based,

content-integrated learning that has flexible pacing and leverages student choice and input as

well as providing time for students to create goals and track progress toward these goals

(Blankstein et al., 2016; Leap Learning Framework, 2017; Pane et al., 2017; Wolf et al., 2017;

Zmuda, Curtis & Ullman, 2015).

In order to effectively plan and engage students in the personalized approaches described

above, teachers must know their students both as people and as learners (Blankstein et al., 2016;

Darling-Hammond, 2011; Gleason & Gerzon, 2013; Leap Learning Framework, 2017; Sizer,

1999; Zmuda et al., 2015). Knowing and understanding students serves as the base for all

personalized learning, an idea based in neuroscience research (Blankstein et al., 2016). Zmuda explains that knowing individual students and personalizing instruction ensures that schoolwork does not feel disconnected from "real work" such as supporting a family, solving complex problems, pursuing personal goals and aspirations, and simply navigating and surviving in the world (as cited in Blankstein et al., 2016, p 135), all of which align to Wagner's seven survival skills. Attending to each student individually "puts an emphasis on students' individual gifts and needs [making] each one count and merit challenge and care" (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 3).

**the case for personalized learning: why our students deserve it.**

Many times, the case for personalized learning cited in research is our changing society and our graduates who are ill-prepared for the demands of a job market that looks much different than it did for previous generations of graduates (Blankstein et al., 2016; Sizer, 1999; Wagner, 2014; Wolf et al., 2017). This argument can be seen in Michael Fullan and Maria Langworthy's research (2014) where they state, "For the past century students who graduate have great skills in conforming to the learning expectations defined by others: doing what they have been instructed to do. But today when those students go into the workplace and the wider world, they are suddenly confronted with the expectation that they need to do very complex things without instructions" (as cited in Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 138). Much of the research around Personalized Learning started with Ted Sizer (1999), who points out that personalized learning helps our democratic society leverage and tap into the talents of students and future leaders by "knowing our students well" and making content applicable to students in their current context. By engaging students and personalizing for students, Sizer argues that we are able to tap into talents and interests that are often overlooked.

The case for personalized learning is also supported through research on what personalized learning offers to students and stakeholders. Personalization creates a student-centered learning environment that creates ownership and buy-in for students (Blankstein et al., 2016; Wolf et al., 2017). Wolf et al. (2017) explains that "Personalized learning provides an avenue to increase agency among all learners in our schools and ensures that instruction meets the needs of every student" (p. 2) and that personalized learning empowers all stakeholders to stay involved, committed, and passionate about the work they do every day (p. 4).

Additionally, personalized learning has shown positive results in a variety of research studies (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013; Leap Learning Framework, 2017; Pane et al., 2015; Pane et al., 2017; Wolf et al., 2017). LEAP Innovations discusses positive results under each of their personalization strategies:

- **Learner Connected -** There was a 40% increase in the high school graduation rate among students who were enrolled in a community-based support program
- **Learner Focused -** 9th Grade students who had experienced a culturally-relevant curriculum had a GPA 1.4 points higher than students who had not
- **Learner Led -** Students taught self-monitoring had a 41% increase in their skills
- **Learner Demonstrated -** Student who experienced a competency-based curriculum versus a traditional approach had 35% more A's and B's

Pane et al. (2015) discusses their results in terms of student achievement results, implementation findings, and outcomes:

- **Student Achievement Results** - there was a positive trend that the lowest-performing students made large performance growth gains in relation to their peers (majority of schools had statistically positive results)
- **Implementation Findings** - implementation is highly variable among schools, practices that were extensions of current district practices were more commonly implemented than more challenging and less common strategies (e.g. competency-based progression)
- **Relating Implementation Findings to Outcomes** - the three practices that are being implemented in the schools with the highest achievement results are
    - (1) Student Grouping
    - (2) Learning Space supports Model
    - (3) Students Discuss Data

Gleason and Gerzon (2013), Blankstein et al. (2016), and Wolf et al. (2017) all provide case studies with specific qualitative and quantitative research and deep dives into classroom-based and school-based strategies for implementing personalized learning that have had a positive impact on student outcomes.

**Personalizing Learning for All Students Means Restructuring Professional Learning for Educators and School Leaders**

School leadership and professional learning are important levers to moving student achievement and creating reform efforts in schools (DeMonte, 2013, p. 2; Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, Asghar, 2013; Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p.7; Wolf et al., 2017, p. 6). Although there are studies that show effective professional development systems increase teacher quality and student outcomes, our nation has failed to leverage these systems to ensure every school, teacher, and student reaps the benefits. Improved professional learning is a key step to transforming schools in our nation. (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree & Richardson, 2009; Drago-Severson et al., 2013). The bottom line is that the US is "substantially behind other OECD nations in providing the kinds of powerful professional learning more likely to build teachers' capacity and have significant impact on student learning" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 27). It follows that providing high-quality professional learning for teachers is imperative in supporting their efforts to implement personalization in their classrooms. Moreover, there must be a change in professional learning to support personalization for students because:

1. Personalized Learning is not how we learned
2. Personalization aligns to how adults learn best
3. Supports and coaching for teachers should model what is expected for students

**personalization is not how we learned.**

Dennis Littky points out that "What makes the job challenging is they [teachers] themselves did not attend schools that function in this way, so they were not subject to this type of instructional model. Simply, they were not trained to be teachers like this in college. This is why we have placed significant emphasis on staff development and training" (as cited in Blankstein et al., 2016, p. 162). Cator, Schneider, and Vander Ark (2014) agree that since teachers never experienced personalization in school, they need to experience it through professional learning so they can better understand how to implement personalization strategies. Since personalization may not be something teachers have seen modeled before or experienced themselves it is important that school and district leaders reconstruct how professional learning happens to ensure that teachers experience how personalization works and how it can be motivating and create meaningful learning opportunities.

**personalization aligns to how adults learn best.**

Even though many of us did not learn through a personalized learning model, personalization aligns with how adults learn best (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; DeMonte, 2013; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Oberg De La Garza, 2011; Wolf et al, 2017). Wolf et al. (2017) points out that "In a 2009 National Staff Development Council study, 'nearly half of all U.S. teachers are dissatisfied with their opportunities for professional development.' Personalizing staff development opportunities will increase teacher satisfaction as well as provide real opportunities for growth" (p. 84). Personalization as described in the section above calls for real-world application aligned to each individual's own context and prior knowledge. Oberg De La Garza (2011) explains how professional learning requires application in addition to the presentation of new knowledge or skills, "We know that teachers' theoretical knowledge doesn't necessarily correlate with classroom behavior, and solely providing teachers with

information about new instructional strategies does not impact their instructional behaviors" (p. 96). Moreover, Desimone and Garet (2015) explain the importance of active learning in such as opportunities for teachers to observe each other, analyze student work, give and receive feedback, and make presentations instead of passively sitting in lecture style development (p. 253). It follows that providing personalization and real-world, job-embedded opportunities will improve professional learning for educators.

Drago-Severson et al. (2013) argues that although most of the spotlight today lands on *students'* outcomes and educational experiences, there is a clear, significant, and many times overlooked need for strategic support for adult learning and growth. She continues by explaining that intentional support for adult learning and growth will have a positive influence on student achievement (p. 4). Drago-Severson et al. (2013) discusses a professional learning workshop where many of the participants reflected on the fact that while they consistently differentiate when working to support student growth, they "rarely" consider and plan for the different needs of the adults that they lead (p. 7). The model that Drago-Severson et al. (2013) proposes is called *Leadership for Transformational Learning (LTL)* and is comprised of four different pillars: teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring (p. 11). All four of these pillars, described in Table 3, align with the tenets of personalized learning described in the section above.

Table 2

*Alignment of Drago-Severson's Four Pillars and Personalization*

| Four Pillars | Alignment with Personalization | Misalignment with Personalization |
|---|---|---|
| **Teaming** | Drago-Severson et al. (2013) describes teaming as, "from a developmental perspective, working in teams enables educators to question their own and | As long as teaming supports collaboration, it strongly aligns with personalization. Sometimes people mistake personalization with |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | others' assumptions, values, and philosophies about teaching, learning, and leadership processes -- and provides opportunities for collaborative decision making and reflection" (p. 36). Teaming provides an environment to address the needs of each team member and allow them to reflect and make decisions within their own professional learning. Personalization at its core requires collaboration, which is the goal of teaming. | individualization as discussed by Zmuda et al. (2015), however, personalization requires collaboration. |
| **Providing Leadership Roles** | Providing leadership roles allows for differentiation for educators. Leadership roles can allow emerging leaders to have the right amount of support and challenge so that they can grow from the increased leadership experience (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 37). | When leadership opportunities are provided strategically based on what the leader knows about the educator, it can be personalized. However, if not done strategically, then providing leadership is not necessarily is a practice in personalization. |
| **Collegial Inquiry** | Collegial Inquiry is a call for reflective practice together. Reflective practice is aligned with personalization; however, it does not necessarily have to be done together. As Drago-Severson et al. (2013) points out, "Attending to developmental diversity when structuring, supporting, and engaging in collegial inquiry is essential in order to meet adults where they are and to create a safe and productive implementation of this pillar of practice" (p. 39). | Personalization calls for reflection and collaboration, although not necessarily always together. During personalization, it is possible for an educator to engage in reflection on his or her own. However, when engaging in Collegial Inquiry together, educators are aligning with personalization strategies. |
| **Mentoring** | Mentoring aligns directly to personalization strategies because it provides a 1-on-1 mentor for educators who will support them with their individual needs. For example, Summit Learning, a program that provides a personalized learning platform as well as support and training for schools, utilizes mentoring | N/A |

| | as one of their key levers of personalization. Mentoring directly aligns with individualized goal setting, which is part of personalization. | |
|---|---|---|

The key to ensuring that leaders are able to implement new practices such as the four pillars, or other personalization strategies, in schools or districts is to do this learning in context. According to Drago-Severson et al. (2013), when leaders are able to experience the practices themselves during either workshops or professional learning opportunities they attend, there are two important things that happen. First, leaders can make an informed decision about the practice and whether or not they felt it was effective through experience. Second, they experience the practices first-hand and walk away with a better knowledge of the practice and theory. This means that leaders who experience personalization practices in-context are better equipped to implement these practices in their schools and districts to support adult learning and growth as well as build capacity within their district or building (p. 12).

Both DeMonte (2013) and Drago-Severson et al. (2013) argue that teachers need different supports to improve their practices and that professional learning may need to look different at one school than another. According to Kegan's Constructive-Developmental Theory, described in Drago-Severson et al. (2013), each individual person has a particular, developmental way of knowing. This way of knowing influences how we view teaching, leading, learning, and even life. Since each person has their own way of knowing, it follows that understanding those ways of knowing explains how adults can experience the same event in different ways. Moreover, these different adults will need different supports and challenges in order to improve their practice and grow as educators (p. 27). Kassner (2014) and Rath (2007) also support this perspective, explaining that each adult brings his or her own strengths to the

table and that recognizing and building on these strengths will result in adults who are more willing to try new things and builds a larger repertoire of instructional strategies. All of this leads to a greater sense of professionalism (Kassner, 2014, p. 17). Ultimately, personalization of professional learning creates a safe space, what Drago-Severson et al. (2013) calls a "holding environment", where adults will be more willing to try new things and take risks, feel more supported, and will find more satisfaction within their job and career. Thus, "adults need more than a one-size-fits-all approach when facing new challenges and opportunities" (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 27).

However, there are also challenges that come with personalizing for adult learners within the school context. Personalization does not mean that every teacher is selecting and in charge of every piece of their own learning or that teachers are always working individually. Personalization calls for collaboration, so Personalized Professional Development also includes groups and teams. Moreover, according to Drago-Severson et al. (2013), adults with different ways of knowing will experience professional learning opportunities differently. Thus, leaders must consider and plan for these ways of knowing when they are building teams, pushing teachers to collaborate, and personalizing experiences. Table 4 outlines the three most common ways of knowing for adults that leaders should know and plan for according to Drago-Severson et al. (2013).

Table 3

*Drago-Severson's Ways of Knowing Most Common in Adulthood (Drago Severson et al., 2013, p.60-61)*

| Ways of Knowing | Instrumental | Socializing | Self-Authoring |
|---|---|---|---|
| How does the | Rule-based self | Other-focused self | Reflective Self |

| person orient to experiences (e.g. teaching, collaborating, sharing in decision making, learning, leading, and living?) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **How does the person define one's self?** | Orients to self-interests, purposes, and concrete needs | Orients to valued others' (external authorities and supervisors') expectations, values, and opinions | Orients to self's values (internal authority) and standards |
| **What are the person's orienting concerns?** | Depends on rules and the "right" way to do things and act; is concerned with concrete consequences. Decisions are based on what the self will acquire. Others are experienced helpers or obstacles to meeting concrete needs. Person does not yet have the capacity for abstract thinking or generalizing from one context to another. | Depends on external authority, acceptance, and affiliation. Self is determined by important others' judgements and expectations; it is oriented to inner states. Self feels responsible for others' feelings and holds others responsible for own feelings. Criticism and conflict threaten the fabric of the self. | Self-generates and replies to internal values and standards. Criticism is evaluated according to the internal standards and bench or judgement. Ultimate concerns is with one's own competence and performance. Ultimate concern is with one's own competence and performance. Self can balance contradictory feelings. Conflict is viewed as natural and enhances one's own perspective to achieve larger organizational and systematic goals. |
| **What are the person's guiding questions?** | "Will I get punished fi I don't follow rules or do something wrong?" "What's in it for me?" | "Will you (valued other/authority/supervisor) still like/value me?" "Will you (valued other/authority/supervisor) still approve of me?" "Will you (valued other/authority/supervisor) still think I am a good person?" | "Am I maintaining my own personal integrity, standards, and values?" "Am I competent?" "Am I living, working, and loving to the best of my ability?" "Am I achieving my goals and being guided by my ideals?" |
| **What are the "Tasks" at the person's growing edge?** | Grow to be open to possibilities for multiple "right" solutions and pathways to resolving issues and problems Grow capacities for abstract thinking | Grow to generate one's own internal values and standards Grow to understand that conflicting perspectives and points of view can enhance collaboration and shared decision making without threatening interpersonal relationships | Grow to become more open to seemingly opposing points of view, perspectives, and ideologies. Grow to embrace diverse problem-solving approaches |
| **In what ways can the person be** | Set clear and explicit expectations and goals; | Model how to engage in conflict and disagreement | Create opportunities for person to critique and |

| supported in his or her growth? | share step-by-step procedures for accomplishing tasks, goals, and practices; offer and model specific skills, concrete advice, models of best practices | without threatening relationships; create opportunities for growing one's voice, sharing one's expertise with colleagues and assuming leadership roles with support; acknowledge and confirm person's thoughts and encourage and support the development of self's own standards and internal values. | analyze one's own perspective and ideology; invite person to assume the role of facilitator; encourage consideration of seemingly diametrically opposed perspectives |

Each teacher will have their own way of knowing and it is important to support and challenge each teacher based on their way of knowing. Someone with an instrumental way of knowing will experience professional learning and personalization in a different way than someone with a self-authoring way of knowing. Drago-Severson et al. (2013) states that creating a strong "holding environment" requires a balance of high support and high challenge (p. 67). This means that personalizing PD requires thinking about how to provide the right amount of support and challenge that each person needs, thus personalization for an instrumental or socializing knower may look like more directed or supported work with less choice than a self-authoring knower. It follows that personalization of professional learning is therefore not simply providing freedom and choice, but rather planning for the specific needs and interests of teachers.

Improving adult professional learning requires more than simply differentiating learning experiences or understanding and knowing the adults you lead and how they view the world. It is important that adults have input on their own professional development program (Couros, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Lee, 2004, p. 39, 46; Park, Takahashi & White, 2014; Wolf et al., 2017; Zmuda et al., 2015). Providing adults with opportunities for input on their professional learning will include "participants as decision makers and consumers" (Lee, 2004, p. 39, 46). Olivero quotes a teacher who said, "Just once I wish our staff development days could be used to meet some of my needs, there are so many areas where I need help" (as cited in Lee, 2004, p.

41). Providing voice and choice into professional learning makes the learning more meaningful for teachers and helps them to feel more supported and successful in their work. Principal Troy Moore is quoted in Wolf et al. (2017) explaining how "Personalized PD is developing the process for passions to be infused in the PD process. For instance, for next year I am developing a pathway format for staff to choose from a menu of deep dives that they want to move forward in instructionally (choice of one per semester) and a passion-based opportunity that is personally enriching and possibly community building (for example, sewing, app development, etc.)" (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 87). However, it is also important to remember that an instrumental knower will not feel comfortable or may not want to provide input or make decisions about their professional learning. They would prefer to do whatever is most "right" as their professional learning. Instrumental knowers will need support with giving input and making decisions about their professional learning, as will socializing knowers, who would rather the authority figure make the decision. Thus, leaders must know and understand the adults they lead in order to implement effective personalization. Leaders must plan for how to personalize in different ways based on the needs and interests of the adults they lead. Adults learn best when they are supported through an environment where their leader knows their needs and interests, plans supports and challenges according to those needs, and provides space for input and voice in the professional learning process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; DeMonte, 2013; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kassner, 2014; Oberg De La Garza, 2011; Wolf et al, 2017; Zmuda et al., 2015). Thus, just as student-teacher relationships are key to supporting student learning and success, teacher-leader relationships are integral to ensuring that professional learning and coaching is effective.

     **supports and coaching for teachers should model what is expected for students.**
Teachers should experience coaching, support, and professional learning that models what is

expected for students (Benson, Dallas, Eller & Howton, 2015; Cator et al., 2014; DeMonte,

2013; Drago-Severson, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017). When educators participate in developmental

and personalized processes themselves, having their own first-hand experiences, and see these

practices modeled during their own learning process, educators are better equipped and able to

implement and sustain similar practices in their own work context with students -- thus

improving the conditions and outcomes for students (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 25).

Teachers and students should be developed as lifelong learners and both deserve a personalized

learning experience. Professional learning should be "teacher-centered" to ensure that teachers

are prepared to teach in a "student-centered" classroom (Benson, Dallas, Eller & Howton, 2015).

Since the role of students is changing as they begin to experience personalized learning,

professional learning for teachers must also change and model the personalized experiences that

students will also have. This is especially important because many teachers have never

experienced personalization themselves and therefore, need the experience through professional

learning to help them understand how to implement personalization strategies and approaches

(Cator et al., 2014; DeMonte, 2013). Moreover, to create a "holding environment" that supports

teachers to feel comfortable taking risks and pushing themselves to grow, leaders must create

and model a culture where making mistakes is valued and where teachers are encouraged to

innovate (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Wolf et al., 2017, p. 6, 88). This is the same environment

that leaders then want teachers to create for their students.

When looking at the best practices for professional learning, many align with the best

practices and approaches recommended for personalized learning (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013;

Wolf et al., 2017). However, there are also places where there is misalignment or challenges in

respect to personalizing PD. DeMonte (2013), Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011),

Kassner (2014), and Lee (2004) outline what research shows works in professional development:

- Alignment with school goals, assessments, and other professional learning opportunities/activities (Explanation of WHY the learning is important)
- Focuses on core content as well as models teaching strategies
- Uses active learning opportunities with new teaching strategies
- Provides time for teacher collaboration
- Differentiated and flexible
- Includes both follow-up and feedback

All of these aspects of professional learning align with Desimone and Garet's (2015) conceptual

framework for effective professional development. Desimone and Garet (2015) present five key

features that make PD effective.

1. Content Focus - leveraging activities focused on how students learn and subject matter.
2. Active Learning - engaging teachers in observations, feedback, analyzing student work, and making presentations instead of simply providing a sit-and-get.
3. Coherence - ensuring alignment with school, district, and state policies and reform efforts, as well as the needs of students and the school's curriculum, goals, and priorities.
4. Sustained Duration - PD should be ongoing and last at least 20 hours or more.
5. Collective Participation - providing PD activities to groups of teachers at the same grade, who teach the same subject, or work at the same school.

There are parts of the key features that align with the tenets of personalization. Additionally,

there are some areas of misalignment. This shows a need for the balance of personalization in

professional learning with providing coherent and sustained learning that is aligned to state,

district, and school priorities.

Table 4

*Alignment of Desimone and Garet's conceptual framework for effective professional development and personalization*

| Key Features | Alignment with Personalization | Misalignment with Personalization |
|---|---|---|
| **Content Focus** | Wolf et al. (2017) explains that personalized PD is connected to practice, focused on student learning, and attends to how to teach specific curriculum content (p. 84). | Although content focus aligns with the ideas of PPD, PPD is not the only way to achieve content focus. Content focus can be achieved through more traditional PD models |

| | | as well. |
|---|---|---|
| **Active Learning** | Personalization calls for more active engagement and application-based learning. Personalization asks for the learner to be engaged in the learning and be able to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways. Desimone and Garet (2015) call for opportunities for teachers to observe, be mentored, look at student work, discuss, and make presentations instead of a more traditional lecture model (p. 253). | Similarly, to content focus, active learning aligns directly with personalization, however, achieving active learning during PD does not require the use of personalization. |
| **Coherence** | Desimone and Garet (2015) call for PD to align with school curriculum and goals as well as teacher goals, the needs of students, and school, district, and state policies and reform efforts (p. 253). Similarly, personalization calls for alignment of PD with individual teacher goals and the needs of the students in their classrooms. | Although coherence aligns in some aspects to personalization, there is still a challenge with ensuring that PD is aligned for all teachers with school, district, and state priorities. Although there is a need for personalization and differentiation, there is still a balance of ensuring that there is coherent and consistent PD so that there is vertical and horizontal alignment in and across schools. |
| **Sustained Duration** | Proponents of personalizing Professional Development, such as Wolf et al. (2017), also agree that professional learning should be intensive, ongoing, and sustained (p. 84). | Although reform activities, which align with personalization, tend to be more effective based on research, Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet (2000) explains that this is because most reform activities are longer in duration and therefore include more content focus, active learning and coherence. However, traditional activities that have a longer duration also tend to have more of the key features and therefore are also effective (p. 29). Thus, sustained duration aligns with personalization, however, personalization is not the only way to achieve sustained duration in professional learning. |

| Collective Participation | Personalization calls for teachers driving their professional learning and for collaboration, which can be done through grade level or content teams that are teacher-led. | Differentiation and individualization may not align with collective participation; however, personalization calls for collaboration and collective responsibility. Desimone and Garet (2015) argue that the goal is not to shift to completely individualized PD, but rather to provide collective experiences targets to meet the needs and challenges of groups of teachers (p. 255). |
|---|---|---|

Desimone and Garet (2015) clearly state that although reform activities, such as personalization, more often include the five key features, reform activities are not the only way to provide effective PD that includes these features. Based on Drago-Severson and Desimone and Garet, there is clear alignment between personalization and how adults learn best.

**Implementation of Effective Leadership and Systems Support Equity Through Personalization**

Leveraging system-wide personalization to support the growth of both students and adults requires more than simply changing professional learning to be more personalized. This type of shift requires change management that leverages leadership and supportive systems that push for equity through personalization (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017). This work does not happen haphazardly, but rather through strategic planning that utilizes distributed leadership (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 7). According to research, outside of instruction, school leadership is the key lever in moving student achievement (Blankstein et al., 2016; Gleason & Gerzon, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2015; Wolf et al., 2017). One example of a framework for advancing equity through professional learning is presented by Gleason and Gerzon (2013), pictured below.
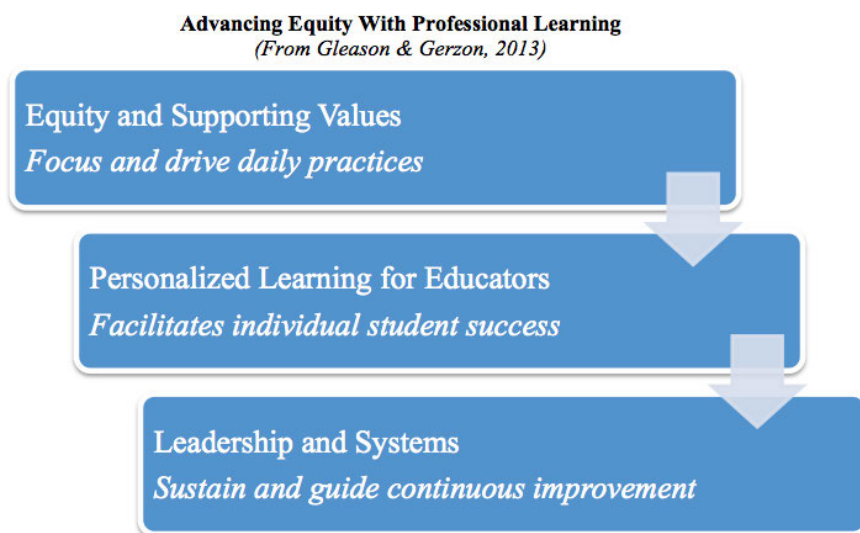
*Figure 2. Advancing Equity with Professional Learning (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013)*

The framework in Figure 2 shows that implementation of equity and supporting values will focus

and drive daily practices, personalizing learning for educators will allow those educators to lead

students to individual success, and the leadership and systems in place will guide continuous

improvement and ensure it is sustainable (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 7). In order to tackle

equity, teachers must know students individually and personalize to meet their needs. This

requires school leaders to create learning practices that support individual teacher learning, team

learning, and whole school learning (Gleason & Gerzon, p. 134). Additionally, schools and

districts must develop systems for continuous improvement and distributive leadership so that

practices continue to improve and become part of the makeup of the school (Gleason & Gerzon,

p. 144). Gleason and Gerzon (2013) point out that "there is evidence that sustained leadership

over time allows for deep innovation to take hold" (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 7), this implies

that effective leadership and systems must be in place in order for educators to be able to

innovate and be willing to try new practices in their classrooms. Wolf et al. (2017) describes a

similar framework for leading personalized learning, which include personalization for educators

and systems approach:

1. Create a vision for teaching and learning
2. Leverage stakeholders and engage them as part of the team
3. Utilize change management and distributed leadership
4. Build a culture that creates trust and where failure is valued and accepted
5. Personalize learning for educators
6. Empower students using creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication
7. Create sustainable and adaptable systems and structures
8. Develop your team's capacity (p. 9)

In addition, Zmuda et al. (2015) also provides a framework for leading the change for

personalized learning, which includes:

1. Clear articulation of the vision and urgency for personalized learning
2. Giving back the work to teachers (teacher choice/voice and personalization for educators)
3. Managing change as it occurs (p. 150-160)

All three of these frameworks suggest the need for visioning with distributed leadership,

personalizing professional learning, supporting teachers with implementation of personalized

learning, and creating systems for continuous improvement and support. Leading the charge of

system-wide personalization increases the demands placed on school and systems leaders --

expecting that leaders model personalization, help their school or district adapt to the new,

quicker pace of change, and articulate a shared vision (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 8). Although Gleason

and Gerzon (2013), Wolf et al. (2017), and Zmuda et al. (2015) all provide change management

frameworks specific to supporting system-wide personalization in an effort to support every

student, these frameworks align to change frameworks presented by other researchers such as

Smith and Smith (2015), Kotter (1995), and Reeves (2009). Therefore, leading system-wide

personalization requires strategic change management to ensure that new practices are supported

and eventually ingrained into the organization's culture.

Gleason and Gerzon's study from 2013 analyzed four successful Title I schools implementing personalization and making significant gains in student achievement. The findings of this study related to the systems and leadership level changes needed to support personalization are described below:

- Theory on how learning happens is applied to both adult and student learning to ensure that adult learning mirrors student learning.
- Shared leadership is necessary to support personalized learning for both adults and students.
- Sustaining and supporting the change to personalization requires selecting initiatives and approaches based on school needs and following through with support, assistance, and feedback until there is success.
- Leaders must attend to educator effectiveness and hire the right fit people.
- Creation of systems for responsibility, accountability, and feedback to keep people honest and working on the same standards.
- Leaders, teachers, and teams must engage in a continuous cycle of improvement (p. 141-155).

The schools in this study meet the needs of every student by utilizing learning systems and leadership that support and strengthen every educator to meet the needs of every student and make equity possible (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 155).

**Conclusion**

In order to ensure that the needs of every student are met, schools and districts must first meet the needs of educators, which requires the creation of leadership systems and structures that support personalization of professional learning and coaching. This change will ensure professional learning mirrors the type of personalization that students deserve in the classroom. Additionally, this change will support teachers and school leaders with changing the "how" of schooling to better support all teachers and students for success. This change aligns to how both students and adults learn best, ensuring that both student and professional learning are engaging, meaningful, and inspiring. Personalizing professional learning for teachers invests teachers in the

learning process and ensures that each teacher is provided the right amount of support and

challenge to reach their full potential.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

**Research Design Overview**

In order to effectively evaluate the professional learning program at Adams Elementary and to learn about best practices used with other schools and districts, I used a mixed-methods approach. Collecting both qualitative and quantitative data provided a picture of what systems and structures were most supportive to teachers and students. According to Patton (2008), "Both kinds of data should be valued and used" (p. 437); Patton also points out that research methodology and evaluation techniques should be derived by the research questions.

The primary research question driving this study is: what systems and structures can schools and districts put into place to better support teachers in professional learning in order to increase teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students? It was important to analyze both quantitative data points for each of these themes as well as qualitative reflections and feedback from professionals within the field in order to synthesize findings and results. As the current Principal of Monroe School, leveraging a mixed-methods approach to this program evaluation and applying it to my new context helped me ensure that "Evaluation becomes an executive leadership responsibility focused on decision-oriented use rather than a data-collection task focused on routine internal reporting" (Patton, 2008, p.226). It follows that the results of this study will help improve professional learning programs for staff members at Monroe School as well as ensure that professional learning is positively impacting student outcomes -- the ultimate goal in preparing our students to be competitive in the 21st century.

The secondary research questions addressed in this study include:

- How and to what extent does Personalized Professional Development increase teacher job satisfaction as measured through teacher's feeling of collaboration and influence?

- How and to what extent does Personalized Professional Development impact teachers' ownership of their own learning and willingness to implement new personalization strategies in their classrooms?
- What professional learning systems and structures do schools who have effectively implemented personalized learning and increased student outcomes utilize?
- How can a leader balance what teachers want for voice and choice with creating vertical and horizontal alignment and coherent professional learning?

**Participants**

I recruited a diverse group of participants, through purposeful sampling, in order to hear different perspectives and experiences around implementation of Personalized Professional Development (PPD).  I recruited participants with previous experience in both planning and facilitating professional learning as well as with personalized learning with both students and adults.  I first interviewed the Chief Innovation Officer from Personalization for Change (PFC), a non-profit organization in a large urban city that works with educators, researchers and other innovators to both implement and research personalized learning. PFC has created a framework for personalized learning that explains personalized learning and provides strategies that can be used within the classroom.  PFC also creates and delivers professional learning to educators to support with personalizing learning for students.  PFC runs pilot programs with schools and educators around personalization.  Lastly, PFC conducts research to measure the progress of personalized learning.  I chose to interview the Chief Innovation Officer for a few reasons.  First, he has been working with PFC since its inception, helped to develop the PFC Framework for Personalized Learning and Innovation, and could speak to PFC's philosophy about personalized learning. The Chief Innovation Officer has extensive knowledge and expertise on both personalized learning and Personalized Professional Development.  He has worked with many schools and multiple districts, so he provided reflections from a broad range of experiences within multiple, varying contexts. The Chief Innovation Officer's profile includes:

- 10+ years in education, including time as a classroom teacher

- Experience in educational research and working with an educational non-profit leading

  schools to implement personalized learning

Another participant that I interviewed was a Network Deputy from an urban turnaround school network. The Network Deputy was able to provide insight and reflections on implementation of personalized professional learning from a district level. He led a personalized principal independent study project based on the personalized learning he previously implemented as a school administrator. The Deputy also brought a wealth of experience in planning professional learning for a variety of educators from teachers to principals to principal supervisors to district leaders. The Network Deputy's profile includes:

- 10+ years in education, including time as a classroom teacher and school administrator

- Experience piloting personalized learning as a school administrator and leading

  personalized PD for principals

I also interviewed a Principal Supervisor from an urban turnaround network. The Principal Supervisor was able to provide insight on how she personalized learning for her principals and how she also personalized professional learning for teachers when she served as a school administrator. The Principal Supervisor provides extensive support to current principals and helps them to plan support and professional learning for their teachers. The profile of the Principal Supervisor includes:

- 10+ years in education, including time as a classroom teacher and school administrator

  Another participant I interviewed was a Principal Coach who had previously served as a Principal Supervisor in an urban turnaround network. The Principal Coach brings the perspective of both a supervisor and a coach of principals. Additionally, she has had experience

working with turnaround, charter, and traditional public schools implementing personalized

learning.  She has experience leading principals for two different organizations and has also

served as a school administrator herself.  The profile of the Principal Coach includes:

- 10+ years in education, including time as a classroom teacher and school administrator

- Experience developing principals in two different organizations and work with principals

  in turnaround, charter, and traditional public schools

My last participant was an Assistant Professor at an alternative teacher certification

program.  The Assistant Professor was previously a teacher at Adams Elementary and provided a

unique perspective from someone who experienced and helped provide Personalized

Professional Development at the school from this study.  Additionally, the Assistant Professor

now trains new teachers and can speak to the training going on in current teacher preparation

programs.  The profile of the Assistant Professor is:

- 10+ years of experience in education, including time as a classroom teacher and mentor

  teacher

- Experience working in a teacher preparation program and training new teachers

**Data Gathering Techniques**

Below I have listed a description of how I gathered data from four different data sources

in my study. I used both publicly available data as well as interviews. Data collection took the

form of analysis of the 5 Essentials Survey, a publicly available presentation describing the PPD

program at Adams Elementary, and individual interviews. Additionally, throughout the process, I

used reflective memos of my own experience during implementation of PPD at Adams, as well

as my reflections as a school leader.

**5 essentials survey.**

The 5 Essentials Survey provides quantitative data collected by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). ISBE requires the 5 Essentials Survey for all schools and districts in order to collect quantitative data on learning conditions through a survey. Every school must administer either the 5 Essentials Survey or an alternative survey a minimum of every other year. Research shows that schools that are strong in at least three of the five essentials are ten times more likely to show gains in student learning that schools that are not (UChicago Impact, 2019). I looked at data from the 2017 and 2018 5 Essentials Survey published by University of Chicago because these data points represent the year prior to and the year of implementation of PPD at Adams Elementary. In the table below, I have outlined the specific categories, subcategories and questions I analyzed that relate to teachers' feelings of influence, collaboration, and effectiveness of feedback from leadership.

**case study: presentation on personalized professional development.**  The network that managed Adams Elementary modeled a program for Principals off of the Personalized Professional Development Program implemented at Adams Elementary. This program included a Principal Independent Study Project that culminated in a TedTalk style presentation by five principals that was recorded and posted online. I presented my work around PPD at Adams Elementary in this presentation that is publicly available. I accessed the presentation from the network website and transcribed the presentation.

This presentation included both quantitative data from an anonymous, internal survey based off of the 5 Essentials Survey that was not tied to School Quality Rating scores as well as a case study of a specific teacher who participated in the PPD program. I analyzed the questions from the internal survey looking at the percentage of increase in favorable response from teachers on each of the survey questions that was given both before and after implementation of

PPD. I also analyzed the PPD program elements for the single teacher mentioned in the case

study example and the teacher's reflections and reactions to experiencing PPD that were shared

in the presentation.

**interviews.**

I recruited participants in two ways, the first was by emailing my IRB approval,

Interview Informed Consent (Appendix A), and Interview Invitation Email (Appendix B) to the

research director at PFC, who forwarded this information to PFC employees on the Professional

Learning Team. Any employee who responded to the online survey was invited to participate in

an interview. The second way was directly emailing educators within my professional network

who have previously worked with personalized learning my IRB approval, Interview Informed

Consent (Appendix A), and Interview Invitation Email (Appendix B). In this study, interviews

were used instead of a focus group in order to reach a broader audience of participants who were

not located geographically close to the researcher and ensure details of each participant's unique

experiences were captured.

Before interviews were scheduled, informed consent was obtained and participants were

reassured of the anonymity of the interviews. I informed each participant that the interviews

would be recorded and they would have the option to opt out at any time if they choose.

Participants were provided with an explanation of how data would be kept secure and

anonymous throughout the interview process.

**reflective memos.**

My experiences before and during this study influenced my research, as it was part of my

leadership development and reflection on my own practice.  According to Birks, Chapman, and

Francis (2007) and Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019), memoing is a tool that can both improve and

enhance qualitative research. Memos allow for the researcher to reflect on and understand the impact of "their own subjective influences on the collection and interpretation of data" (Briks et al., 2007, p. 69). As a school leader I kept memos of my reflective process, which I continued throughout my research. I analyzed these memos for trends as part of my research process.

This program evaluation involves analysis of multiple data sources in order to look at comparisons, correlations, and themes. How data was accessed from each source and which data sources were used to answer each of my research questions is outlined below in Table 5.

Table 5

*How data will be accessed and gathered*

| Data Source | Type of Data | Metric | How Data Will be Accessed | Description of How Data Will be Gathered |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Essentials Survey | Quantitative<br><br>publicly Available | Teacher feelings about satisfaction/ support/ ownership | Since this data is publicly available, it was accessed online through the published report | Questions from the 5 Essentials Survey were selected based on questions teachers answered about their satisfaction, support, and ownership. These questions were compared from SY 2016-2017 (2017 5 Essentials Survey) to SY 2017-2018 (2018 5 Essentials Survey) to see if there is an increase in how teachers feel the school implements coaching and professional learning. Specifically, I looked for an increase in positive responses to the following categories and subcategories based on how teachers answer questions on the survey:<br>● Teacher Influence (Measure Score)<br>● Collaborative Teachers (Essential Score)<br>  ○ Teacher-to-Teacher Trust (Measure Score)<br>  ○ Collaborative Practices (Measure Score)<br>  ○ Collective Responsibility (Measure Score)<br>  ○ Quality Professional Development (Measure Score)<br>● Instructional Leadership (Measure Score)<br>  ○ Provides Me with Useful Feedback to Improve My Teaching (Question)<br>  ○ Has Provided Me with The Support I Need to Improve My Teaching (Question)<br>These questions align to personalization and professional learning for teachers. I |

| | | | | wanted to know if personalized feedback and support was effective as well as how teachers felt about personalized professional learning structures. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Case Study: Network Presentation Titled: Everyone Deserves to be a Favorite: Personalization for the Adults We Lead | Quantitative and Qualitative<br><br>publicly Available | Teacher feelings about satisfaction/ support/ ownership/willingness to implement new practices | Since this data is publicly available, it was accessed online by watching the presentation/case study | I watched the presentation in order to analyze both the case study example of a teacher who participated in Personalized Professional Development as well as the quantitative data from an internal survey that was collected and presented.<br><br>I looked specifically at the change in participant responses to the internal survey before and after participating in the PPD program at Adams Elementary during the 17-18 school year as well as the individual case study of a teacher who participated in the program. |
| Interviews | Qualitative<br><br>Not Publicly Available | Teacher feelings about satisfaction/ support/ ownership | Data was accessed through the facilitation of the interviews that were recorded on zoom. | The goal of the interviews was to gather additional information on how personalized professional development increase teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students. Additionally, to gather information on systems and structures of professional learning that schools who have effectively implemented personalized learning and increased student outcomes implement. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and recorded. I then analyzed the responses from the interviews to look for trends and themes to show to what extent PPD increase teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students. |

**Ethical Considerations**

For this program evaluation to provide valid results, it was important that I was ethical in my research practices. It is important to first name that I was the administrator who implemented the PPD program being analyzed through the 5Essentials Survey and Case Study at Adams Elementary. Throughout my researched I worked to ensure that I was aware of my own bias from the position as the administrator. Additionally, at the basic level, I ensured that data collected was confidential and anonymous. I tagged participants with an ID number that was associated with all of their data, so that their names were not attached to any data collected. I made sure that participants knew that participation was voluntary and that candid, honest feedback provides critical guidance that as Patton says, "can open up new possibilities and help programs realize their full potential" (Patton, 2008, p. 227, 471). I used only quantitative data that was publicly available and my qualitative data was either publicly available or from interviews, which were completely voluntary and kept anonymous.

Although there were risks for this program evaluation they were minimal. I over communicated that all participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time without negative consequences. This was stated on all correspondence with potential participants, additionally, participants were reminded that they could leave the study at any time. All recordings of interviews were destroyed after the analysis stage of the program evaluation.

Confidentiality of participants was of the utmost importance during this study. For the interviews, I made sure that all identifying information was removed from responses. Additionally, all data was kept in password protected documents on my password protected computer to ensure that it was secure. As previously noted, there were also many potential benefits to this program evaluation.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis techniques for this program evaluation varied depending on the data source. Below is an outline of techniques for each data source.

**5 essentials survey.**

The 5 Essential Survey is analyzed with results published by the University of Chicago each year on behalf of the Illinois Department of Education (ISBE). The 5 Essentials Survey provides three different types of scores: Measure Score, Essential Score, and 5 Essentials Score. Measure and essential scores fall between 1-99. To calculate a measure score, scores from multiple questions are combined and a Rausch Analysis method is used. Then the measure score is compared to the benchmark score and put on a scale of 1-99. A standard deviation is 20 points and each standard deviation is coded with a different color. The Essential Score is the average of the measure scores. A final score is given as a summary indicator that is referred to as the 5 Essential Score, which represents the school's overall performance on all of the indicators (Five Essentials Support, n.d.).

Since Adams Elementary School had a 5 Essentials Score of "Well-Organized" every year since it went through school turnaround, I looked specifically at the Essential Scores, Measure Scores, and specific questions that relate to Personalized Professional Development. Below I have listed the Essential Scores, Measure Scores, and questions I analyzed:

- Teacher Influence (Measure Score)
- Collaborative Teachers (Essential Score)
    - Teacher-to-Teacher Trust (Measure Score)
    - Collaborative Practices (Measure Score)
    - Collective Responsibility (Measure Score)
    - Quality Professional Development (Measure Score)
- Instructional Leadership (Measure Score)
    - Provides Me with Useful Feedback to Improve My Teaching (Question)
    - Has Provided Me with The Support I Need to Improve My Teaching (Question)

My analysis looked at whether or not specific Essential Scores, Measures Scores, or questions increased or decreased between 2017 and 2018 during the implementation of Personalized Professional Development.

**case study: presentation on personalized professional development.**

I transcribed the presentation that I presented during my time as the Principal of Adams Elementary School. I then analyzed both the internal survey presented in this presentation as well as a case study of one teacher who participated in the program. This case study analysis allowed me to look at an internal and anonymous survey used with teachers that had no ties to school quality ratings in the way that the 5 Essentials Survey does. I looked specifically at increases in responses to the internal survey's questions. Analysis of these questions was done prior to the presentation and the presentation showed the data as a percentage of teachers who agreed with the following statements based on the Personalized Professional Development program:

- Professional Learning helps me look at my own practice and improve on it
- Professional Learning is differentiated to meet my personal needs
- Professional Learning structures support me in personalizing for students
- Professional Learning impacts and improves student outcomes in my classroom

This survey showed different information than the 5 Essentials Survey and provided additional insight around the themes of satisfaction with professional learning, ownership of professional learning, and willingness to implement new personalization strategies.

I also analyzed a case study of a single teacher who had participated in the PPD program at Adams Elementary that was described throughout the presentation. This case study provided insight into what this program looked and felt like for an actual teacher. This data helped me to triangulate the publicly available 5 Essentials Data as well as the interview data, which was

conducted with professionals within the field of personalized learning, in order to draw

conclusions specific to the program evaluation at Adams Elementary and generally for

Personalized Professional Development.

**interviews.**

The interviews were conducted and recorded over zoom. Then transcripts were created of

the recordings. Following transcription, I sorted the responses from the interviews around the

three themes of teachers' feelings of satisfaction around professional learning, ownership over

their own learning, and willingness to implement new personalization strategies with their

students. I was then able to identify trends and similarities between participants.

The interview questions were created to gather information around the most effective

practices in facilitating professional learning as well as systems and structures that participants

have used or seen used to address the three themes of increasing satisfaction with professional

learning, ownership of learning, and willingness to implement new practices. The questions also

probed around what professional learning strategies have had the largest impact on student

outcomes, how leaders can balance personalization with the need for alignment, and the biggest

barriers to implementing Personalized Professional Development. This allowed the participants

to dive into both the three themes around teachers feeling supported and valued as well as

discuss the barriers and obstacles of balancing personalization while systemizing a school or

district for alignment.

I then looked at the data, trends, and findings from all three sources, which allowed me to

draw final conclusions and make recommendations for the Personalized Professional

Development systems and structures in my new context, at my current school, as well as in

general for schools and districts.

**reflective memos.**

Reflective memos of my experience were analyzed and used to help provide context to the other data sources.  Birks et al. (2019) explains that memoing is ongoing throughout the research process and helps to foster momentum during analytical analysis, create intellectual assets, and inform findings. In this study, my own reflective memos were used to help synthesize both data collected as part of the study as well as my own leadership experiences in order to inform my results as well as my proposed policy.

**Conclusion**

By utilizing a mixed-methods approach, I was able to maximize the amount and types of data that I collected for this program evaluation. Having a more robust data set improved my ability to analyze the data, synthesize findings, and make recommendations. Resulting in my ability to clearly identify themes that emerged from my research. As James, Milenkiewicz, and Bucknam (2008) points out, "Triangulation is defined as using a variety of research methods to compare diverse sources of data pertaining to a specific research problem or question. This process helps to enhance the validity of results, since they do not overly rely on any particular method of study" (p.81). The combination of interview data, reflective memos, and descriptive statistics helped me to learn about what systems and structures were most supportive of teachers increasing their job satisfaction, sense of ownership, and willingness to implement new personalization strategies for students. The next chapter will describe the findings derived from the methodology described above.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

**Findings**

Changing outcomes for students requires more than developing teachers' competencies and skills. As Wagner and Keagan (2006) point out in *Change Leadership: A practical guide to transforming our schools*, "We have to come to understand the limits of competency building as a stand-alone strategy for change… [it is] insufficient for reinventing schools" (p. 99). Although we can build competencies, the ability to put these competencies into action is impacted by other parts of the system. These other parts must also change in order to ensure the new competencies can stick and make a difference. We need systems thinking and understanding of the "whole" while working on each individual part of the system. Wagner's 4C's - competency, conditions, culture, and context provide a framework for analyzing and planning systematic change (Wagner & Keagan, 2006, p. 98). Therefore, in order to advance an equity agenda for students and families in this country, simply teaching competencies for personalization is not enough. I saw this through Adams Elementary's first and second attempts at personalized learning between 2016 and 2018. Although competencies were built during the first year, significant change did not follow. Moving into the second year, I made additional changes to how I was leading to ensure that my leadership reflected personalization practices, attempting to change the conditions of the school in order to impact competencies and culture. After the second year of implementation, I saw greater change in both teacher's feeling of satisfaction with their professional learning and with their educational practices. However, this change was still not enough to close the opportunity gap faced by our students or create an equitable learning experience. Below I have analyzed Wagner's 4C's AS-IS framework at Adams Elementary during both the first and second year of implementing personalized learning, highlighting the

differences observed during the second year when I also implemented Personalized Professional

Development. In Chapter 5 I will outline the Wagner's 4C's TO-BE Framework, making

suggestions for how my learning from Adams Elementary can apply to my new context at

Monroe Elementary in order to see an increase in teacher job satisfaction, ownership, and

implementation of personalization techniques for students through professional learning. Figure

3 below shows a summary of the 4C's AS-IS framework also described below.



**CONTEXT**
- Turnaround school
- Large population of minority and low-income students
- High mobility rate among students
- 50% of students performing below grade level in reading and math
- High staff retention rate
- Variety of teacher experience and years in the classroom
- Focus on both personalized learning and grade-level curriculum implementation
- Over 80% of staff trained in the same alternative certification program
- "Well Organized" on 5 Essentials for 5 years
- Lack of teachers trained in personalized learning

**CULTURE**
- Teacher-to-Teacher Trust, Teacher Collaboration, and Collective Responsibility increased after implementation of PPD as shown on 5 Essentials Survey
- Personalized Professional Development implemented for 1 year
- Quality Professional Development Score on 5 Essentials Survey decreased with implementation of PPD
  - PD seems less coherent and lesson connected to the school improvement plan

**CONDITIONS**
- Implementation of Choice PLCs and 20% Independent Study Projects to increase teacher collaboration and choice
- Teachers feel they have influence over the instructional program and professional learning content
- Teachers feel professional learning is differentiated to meet their needs
- Teachers attend content cluster meeting each week
- Students receive grade level curriculum lessons aligned to CCSS that culminate in a performance task
- Student schedules include blocks for grade level lesson and personalized learning

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**
Need for a comprehensive change management plan to increase student outcomes leveraging personalization

**COMPETENCIES**
- 5 Math teachers have developed personalization skills through a Personalized Learning pilot
- All staff members developed their competencies around a personalization strategy of their choice through PLCs
- Teachers felt their practice, ability to personalize, and student outcomes improved based on the PPD they received

*Figure 3. 4C's AS-IS Framework at Adams Elementary*

   **context.**

   As a turnaround school, Adams Elementary served a large population of minority and

low-income students. Adams Elementary had a high mobility rate, as students frequently moved

or stayed in temporary living situations. Adams Elementary began the turnaround process in 2013 with only 4% of students reading on grade level and 9% of students on grade level in math. Over 80% of the staff at Adams Elementary were trained in the same alternative certification program focused on turnaround work and were entering their first year of teaching at the start of turnaround.

During the first year of turnaround, Adams Elementary received a "Well Organized" rating on the 5 Essentials Survey and has maintained that rating every year. It is important to note this "Well Organized" rating, because during the analysis of the measure scores, essential scores, and questions on the 5 Essential surveys below there are limited areas for growth in some of the metrics due to the already high scores. Table 6 below shows Adams Elementary's 5 Essential Survey overall rating starting from 2013, the year prior to school turnaround.

Table 6

*Adams Elementary's overall 5 Essentials rating from 2013-2018*

| | Before Turnaround | During Turnaround | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** |
| 5 Essentials Rating | Not Yet Organized | Well Organized | Well Organized | Well Organized | Well Organized | Well Organized |

Following the 2016-2017 school year, 44% of students were performing at grade level in reading and 46% of students were performing on grade level in mathematics. The school had a high staff retention rate where most teachers who started the turnaround were now entering their 5th year of teaching. Since the school's enrollment had continued to grow each year, the school had added first year teachers along with more veteran teachers and now had a staff with more diverse needs than in previous years.

Adams Elementary aligned its priorities with the turnaround network, focusing on reading and math instruction aligned with CCSS and implemented through a curriculum used network-wide as well as small group instruction. Although differentiation was valued through small group instruction, there had not been a large network focus on personalized learning prior to the 2017-2018 school year.

Both within Adams Elementary, the network, and the larger educational community, there are different definitions of personalized learning, which was discussed previously in Chapter 2 above. In addition to these different definitions and interpretations, there is also an overall lack of training for teachers around personalized learning, since this training is not received during teacher preparation programs. The Chief Innovation Officer stated:

> But I think there's so much on the teacher pipeline piece, not just practicing educators. How do you get some of this modeled in pre-service programs or alternative cert programs that can really scope it out and get it to them [teachers] coming in because right now we need a lot more of that?

This shows that part of the context for Adams Elementary was developing a set of skills in teachers that were not previously taught within their teacher preparation programs.

**conditions.**

It is imperative that changes in competencies and eventually culture are supported by changes in conditions. New opportunities to apply or develop new competencies can be easily undermined if the conditions have not also changed. Wagner and Keagan (2006) describe conditions as "The external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources" (p. 101).

Prior to the roll out of PPD at Adams Elementary, teachers felt pulled in multiple directions when trying to teach both grade level content and personalize learning for all students. Teachers had blocks during each part of the day that supported different school priorities for student learning. There was a grade-level content block, personalized learning block, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MtSS) block. In the grade-level content block, students experienced daily lessons from a vertically and CCSS-aligned curriculum that culminated in either a performance task or conceptually-based math assessment. In previous years, the school had emphasized the importance of the grade-level block over the other blocks. Almost all professional learning structures were aligned to supporting teachers with implementation of the grade-level curriculum and there was a lack of planning time or professional development devoted to planning for personalized learning. Additionally, teacher professional learning did not model personalization. This included a lack of teacher choice in professional development and no opportunities for independent study or individual research based on needs and interests.

During the 2017-2018 school year, when I implemented PPD at Adams Elementary, I worked to change these conditions. Specifically, I implemented choice PLCs where teachers were able to select a PLC based on two things: 1) where they felt their current implementation of personalized learning was and 2) a topic within personalized learning that interested them. In order to understand how conditions changed at Adams Elementary, I examined a case study of one teacher, Ms. Smith. In 2017-2018, Ms. Smith was entering her 9th year of teaching. She was a teacher who had consistently high scores on her evaluations and year after year grew students in the 95th percentile or higher for reading nationally. Ms. Smith read books on her own time and wrote grants to cover the cost of professional learning experiences she could participate in over the summer months. Ms. Smith had previously told me that the professional learning

offered at Adams Elementary did not push her practice or make her a better educator. As part of the implementation of PPD, Ms. Smith selected a PLC around student conferencing. She worked with a group of teachers who researched and participated in the Improvement Science process of Plan, Do, Study, Act as a PLC to figure out how to implement student conferencing in the context of their classrooms. I also provided the option for teachers to be released from 12 hours of professional development time to pursue an action research project of their choice, which was called 20% Time Projects. In Ms. Smith's case, she engaged in a project she called "Project Virtue", which was centered on her teaching and living out the four Cardinal Virtues from Greek Mythology in her classroom. She wanted to analyze her own behavior and how it impacted students. At the end of the year each teacher, including Ms. Smith, who participated in a 20% Project presented out their reflections to the entire staff. During this presentation Ms. Smith shared that in the past, when students would misbehave she would raise her voice, perhaps yell, kick them out of class, or give them what many of our students called "the Ms. Smith death glare." Now, Ms. Smith said she would take a deep breath and tell the class, "I am practicing my temperance." Ms. Smith's hope was that this in turn would help her students see how to practice their temperance. Ms. Smith shared the following findings from her action research:

- Classroom removals decreased by 50% in one year

- On an end of year survey, students agreed that Ms. Smith did not yell in class (something that Ms. Smith said previously students would not have agreed with)

During a panel discussion with all the teachers who participated in 20% Projects, Ms. Smith encouraged all Adams Elementary staff members to pursue a passion project of their choice through 20% Projects in the upcoming year (Everyone deserves to be a favorite: Personalization for the adults we lead, June 22, 2018)

The goal of the changes made through PPD at Adams Elementary in 2017-2018 was to model personalization strategies through increasing teacher choice and collaboration. I leveraged the Choice PLCs and 20% Independent Study Projects to address this goal. When analyzing the 5 Essentials Survey, the internal survey, and my interview transcripts, the data suggests that teachers felt an increase in choice or influence and differentiation to meet their needs. On the 5 Essential Survey there was an increase in the Measure Score of Teacher Influence and question scores under Teacher Influence around establishing the curriculum and instructional program as well as determining the content of in-service programs (professional learning) as seen in Table 7.

Table 7

*5Essentials Survey Results for Teacher Influence Comparing 2016-2017 to 2017-2018*

|  | **Teacher Influence (Measure Score)** | **Question - Establishing the curriculum and instructional program.** | **Question - Determining the content of in-service programs.** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2016-2017** | 49 | 74 | 74 |
| **2017-2018** | 56 | 90 | 97 |

On the internal survey given to Adams Elementary teachers, and presented in the case study presentation Everyone Deserves to be a Favorite: Personalization for the Adults We Lead (June 22, 2018), teachers expressed feeling that professional learning was more personalized to meet their needs after the implementation of PPD as seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Internal Survey on Teacher's Feelings on Professional Learning Before and After Implementation of Personalized Professional Development: Professional Learning is Differentiated to Meet My Personal Needs

*Figure 4. Results of pre/post internal survey of Adams Elementary teachers on their feelings of whether professional learning was personalized to meet their needs*

Both the 5 Essentials Survey and the internal survey data suggests that implementation of PPD increases teacher's feelings of input in the school and their professional learning as well as feeling that their professional learning needs were being planned for and better met.

During interviews of educators leading professional learning for schools and districts, similar ideas about teacher input and choice came up. For example, the Chief Innovation Officer stated:

You know, it's like how do you in all honesty just respect the profession enough to allow people to have choice as adults and professionals and how much they aren't given that. And on some level, I think they just get a little bit numb the same way as when kids are in a high disciplinary kind of environment, they'll just start to fade back and not really look for their own self efficacy or leadership.

Similarly, the Network Deputy explained:

I think the other big piece is you want other teachers as a part of that process. So, it

shouldn't just be district leaders trying to figure out what the teachers want. It should be

teachers really guiding that direction, and really doing a lot of the heavy lifting. You

know, treat teachers like professionals.

Thus, including teachers in the process and providing them with true decision-making input

changes the conditions in a school or district and increases how teachers view and experience the

profession. Although I looked at a few specific conditions that changed at Adams Elementary

through the implementation of PPD, there are still many other conditions that could be addressed

and improved to support the change process.

**competencies.**

Competencies are usually the main focus of school improvement efforts and are

considered the skills and knowledge needed to change student learning outcomes. As Wagner

and Keagan (2006) point out, "Skillful, competent adults are a foundation of this work" (p. 99).

School leaders must develop teachers' competencies through focused, collaborative, job-

embedded professional development. Competencies can then help to develop the culture of "how

we do things here" that is necessary for meaningful change. During the 2016-2017 school year,

prior to the roll out of PPD, five of seven math teachers at Adams Elementary had developed

some skills and knowledge in personalization through participation in a personalized learning

pilot. These teachers fell on a continuum of skills, knowledge and implementation. None of the

literacy teachers participated in the personalized learning pilot, and therefore literacy teachers

lacked personalization skills beyond pulling small groups and utilizing adaptive software with

students. This idea of the lack of training in personalization came up during my interview

analysis with four of five participants as well. For example, the Chief Innovation Officer pointed

out that:

> I can get people that are not teacher-centric and they're on the same page philosophically,
>
> but their training still doesn't match up with the skill sets they need in the classroom. And
>
> so, there's just a real learning curve there.

The issue of lack of competency around personalized learning is not unique to teachers or leaders

at Adams Elementary, but rather a larger issue that many schools and districts face.

When looking specifically at the implementation of professional learning at Adams

Elementary prior to the 2017-2018 school year, administrators had the knowledge of

personalization, but did not apply these ideas to professional learning. Additionally, teacher

leaders who lead professional development did not have the skills or knowledge necessary to

differentiate and personalize the professional development that they led.

After implementation of PPD during the 2017-2018 school year, Adams Elementary saw

an increase in the competencies of teachers and leaders in personalization. Increases in leader

competencies were suggested both through the types of PPD provided as well as data from the 5

Essential Survey question under the Instructional Leadership Measure Score stating, "My leader

provides me with feedback to improve my teaching" which increased from 94 to 97. This is a

small increase, however, there is little to no room for increase on this question of the survey as

the highest possible score is 99. Additionally, favorable responses from teachers to the internal

survey around if professional learning helped them to improve their practice, personalize for

students, and increase student outcomes also increased as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Internal Survey on Teacher's Feelings on Professional Learning Before and After Implementation of Personalized Professional Development
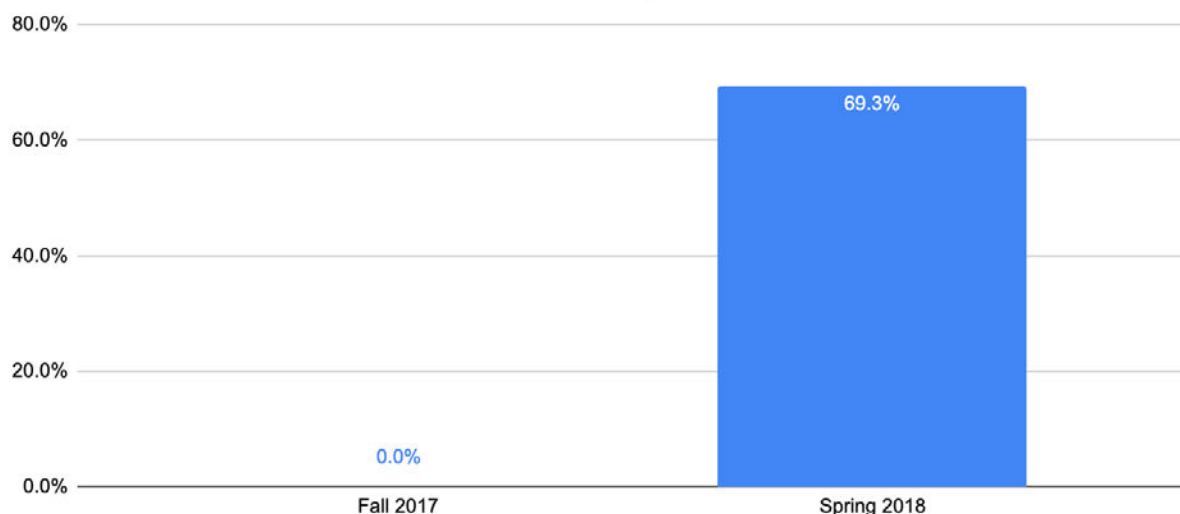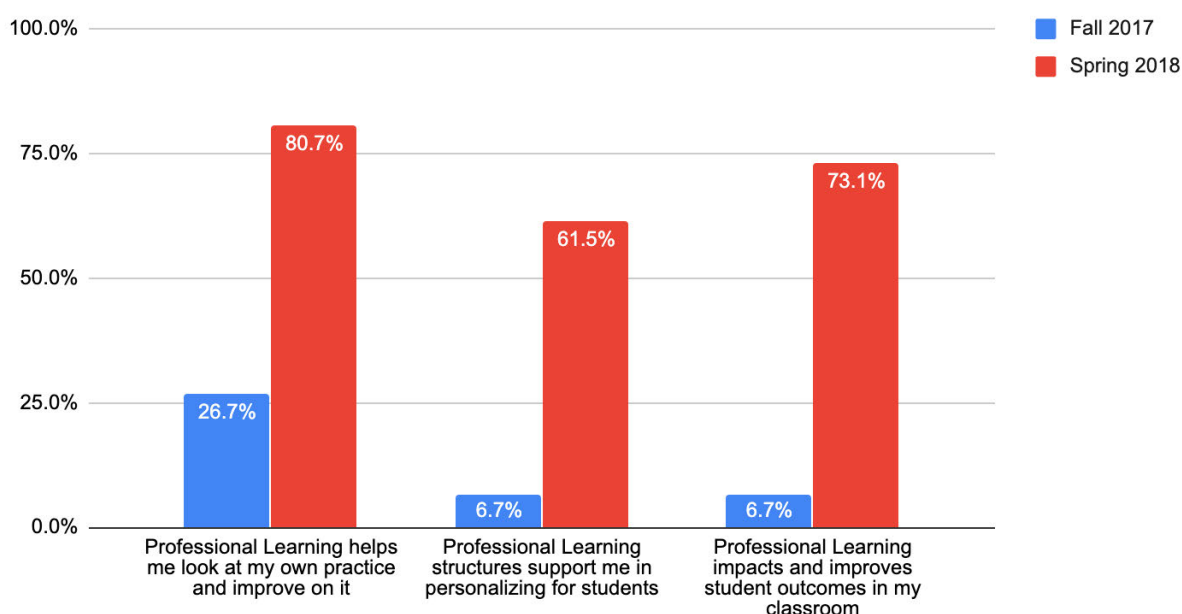
*Figure 5. Results of pre/post internal survey of Adams Elementary teachers on their feelings of whether professional learning helped them improve their practice, personalize for students, and increase student outcomes*

This data suggests both that leaders provided more targeted, meaningful, and effective PD experiences and that teachers feel that those experiences were not only worthwhile, but moreover that those experiences helped them to improve their practice or their competencies. In this case, it seems that Choice PLCs and 20% Independent Study Projects helped increase how teachers viewed professional learning as well as their own ability to meet student needs, personalize, and move student outcomes, which is ultimately what should be impacted by professional learning.

**culture.**

Wagner and Keagan (2006) describe culture in comparison to conditions as "the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets that are held individually and collectively throughout the system" (p. 102). Similar to conditions, the culture of an organization greatly impacts the organization's ability to change. In a school setting, school culture has a large impact on the

ability of teachers and leaders to implement new competencies to impact student learning. It is ultimately a school or district's culture that we want to influence in order to ensure that the change process can occur. As was found in Korn Ferry Hay Group's study in 2016, which included more than 7,500 executives coming from 107 countries:

> Driving culture change ranks among the top three global leadership development priorities. "Culture is no longer seen as an afterthought when considering the business focus of an organization," said Noah Rabinowitz, senior partner and global head of Hay Group's Leadership Development Practice. "Culture is the X-factor. It's the invisible glue that holds an organization together and ultimately makes the difference between whether an organization is able to succeed in the market or not." (Rodman, 2019, p.14)

During 2015-2017, Adams Elementary was a school that has focused on a grade-level curricular resource. This meant some teachers valued this resource and teaching grade-level lessons over personalization, when in fact every child deserves to have access to both grade level instruction and instruction at their level. There were also some staff members who thought the grade-level resource was too scripted and did not meet the needs of all students. Therefore, there were a few different cultural mindsets at play in terms of personalized learning. Most teachers at Adams Elementary believed that personalized learning was pulling small groups or having stations and centers, when in fact, personalized learning is about opportunities for student choice, voice, and ownership, which can be achieved through many different structures, models, and practices.

The culture of professional development at Adams Elementary prior to the 2017-2018 was mostly one-size fits all. Teachers had complained that they did not have enough choice in professional learning and that some professional learning did not meet their needs and/or

interests. Professional development was differentiated by content and grade band (meaning PreK - 2nd Math, PreK - 2nd ELA, 3rd - 8th Math and 3rd - 8th ELA). Each teacher attended a weekly Content Cluster Meeting with their grade band content team, a monthly PLC around the curricular resource with the same team, and had one-on-one coaching from an administrator. In general, teachers received most of the same support and professional learning opportunities, with the exception of the Math Team who participated in a year-long personalized learning pilot. The culture at Adams Elementary heading into the 2017-2018 school year did not value a true model of personalization.

With implementation of PPD through Choice PLCs and 20% Independent Study Projects trust and collaboration increased. The Essential Score of Collaborative Teachers increased slightly from 74 to 78. Three of the four measure scores listed below in Table 8 increased, while one, Quality Professional Development, decreased.

Table 8

*Summary of Measure Scores for Essential Score of Collaborative Teachers on the 5 Essentials Survey*

| Year | Collaborative Teachers (Essential Score) | Teacher-to-Teacher Trust (Measure Score) | Collaborative Practices (Measure Score) | Collective Responsibility (Measure Score) | Quality Professional Development (Measure Score) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **16-17** | 74 | 48 | 80 | 70 | 99 |
| **17-18** | 78 | 67 | 93 | 72 | 90 |

The 5 Essentials Survey data under Collaborative teachers is interesting because many people think of personalization as individualization, which it is not. All five interview participants who have lead work in personalized learning explained the importance of collaboration in both personalized learning and personalized professional development. The Chief Innovation Officer stated:

Then for the shared camaraderie, there's just so much stuff out there around learning in

group settings and how that's powerful so you are not turning around on your own, but

you have a study buddy of classrooms that you can visit and there are people growing

within it...I think of it like sports. You don't create a team that's all the same player. You

intentionally diversify in terms of skill sets. Then, you can really have better outcomes.

The Network Deputy similarly described the need to, "Give them the collaborative space and

time to plan on how they're going to implement." In the 5 Essentials Survey taken in 2017-2018,

the 19-point jump in Teacher-to-Teacher Trust was the Measure Score with the second largest

overall increase at Adams Elementary, with the 13-point jump in Collaborative Practices also

making a significant increase. While teacher trust and collaboration increased during the 2017-

2018 school year, Quality Professional Development decreased from 99 to 90. While this is still

a "strong" score, it does represent a decrease. This could be due to the difficulty of providing

different options, sessions, pathways, and supports. The Principal Coach described this as:

It takes a lot of work to differentiate. And so, I think sometimes we do the same thing that

teachers do, right? Like it's easier for us to plan whole group because we plan everything

for everybody. But we have to differentiate to really meet the needs of each individual, or

in this case each individual teacher, that just becomes a little bit harder to do. And it's

time consuming.

It is not surprising that in the first year of implementing a new professional learning model that

quality might not be as high as previous years when the professional learning model was more

traditional and less personalized.

Digging deeper into the Measure Score for Quality PD on the 5 Essentials Survey, Table

9 below breaks down the individual questions that make up the Measure Score for Quality PD.

Table 9

*Summary of Questions for the Measure Score of Quality PD on the 5 Essentials Survey*

| Questions in the Quality PD Measure Score | Question - Been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated. | Question - Included enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas. | Question - Been closely connected to my school's improvement plan. | Question - Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school. | Question - Included opportunities to work productively with teachers from other schools. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16-17 | 100 | 97 | 97 | 100 | 59 |
| 17-18 | 92 | 91 | 91 | 94 | 71 |

The data above shows overall small drops in four of five questions under Quality PD, each of which still maintains a "strong" score. It makes sense that PD may seem less coherent and less tied to the school improvement plan when more choice is involved. This also surfaces a trend that came through during interviews, when all five participants voiced the importance of an overarching vision and strategic plan to which personalized professional development must be aligned. As the Chief Innovation Officer stated, *"*Don't sit here and try and be like, oh, we're going to personalize everything, just to try and make people happy.*"* The Principal Supervisor extended this idea, discussing the importance of starting with a vision and priorities:

> You have to start with the big picture. What are the school priorities? What are your
>
> classroom priorities and goals and what do you need to do to in order to meet those
>
> goals? There has to be a consistent common language that everyone knows. Here's the
>
> drivers that we're using and the specific areas that we're focusing on to meet those goals.
>
> So that alignment really has to show what we need to do and then how we need to do it.
>
> But then what happens is each part person comes into it at a different place. And you
>
> have to understand the different places in which your teachers are going to be able to
>
> tackle the challenge of reaching that goal. And so, within those individual challenges, the

personalized learning thing comes into play not only for teachers but also for students.

And I think that's where districts have to see the balance of doing both. Not only being

able to provide school level, grade level, district level support, but it has to be able to

triple down [utilizing each level of support] to meet the individual needs that people bring

to the table.

This data suggests that the culture at Adams Elementary increased in trust and collaboration

during the implementation of PPD, which aligns with the work of personalized learning experts

such as Gleason and Gerzon (2013), Wolf et al. (2017), and Zmuda et al. (2015) as well as

experts in adult learning such as Desimone and Garet (2015) and Drago-Severson et al. (2013).

Also, in alignment with the research from these experts, is a continued need for a clear vision

and strategic plan with communication of how personalizing professional learning supports and

fits into that plan.

**Interpretations**

After reviewing interview transcripts and analyzing both the 5 Essentials Survey and the

case study presentation through the lens of Wagner's 4C's framework there were some clear

themes that surfaced.

**theme 1: a school or district's vision and strategic plan should drive the**

**personalized supports provided to schools, leaders, and teachers.**

Every participant, although they all work in different positions within education all

clearly articulated the importance of all personalization work stemming from a clear vision and

strategic plan as a driving force to ensure that personalizing professional learning results in a

change in outcomes for students. During interviews, the Principal Coach said:

The whole school vision and mission for staff is clear. They're able to provide staff with

here's the vision. By saying, ultimately, if we do this well, here's what this could

potentially look like in year one and year three and year five. And then they're able to tie

that to the specific metrics that they're going to use to hold themselves accountable to

ensuring that they are on track to meeting those goals.

The Chief Innovation Officer also explained:

If people move straight to the what then, you know, when things get hard, they will lose

the commitment because they never really understood why we're doing it in the first

place...Without that, you can get all over the place.

Alignment to a vision and strategic plan ensures that the personalized support will have the

intended impact and eventually move student outcomes. Similarly, it invests stakeholders in the

purpose for the change so that the change sticks. Lack of visionary leadership, is one of the three

main reasons that the "irreplaceables" leave our highest needs schools (The New Teacher

Project, 2012). When looking to close the opportunity gap for students, this means we must have

strong leadership practices, one of which is having a vision and strategic plan in order to support

all of our teachers, but especially our teachers moving metrics for underserved students, the

"irreplaceables," so that we can change outcomes for kids.

On top of wanting to ensure we retain the best talent at our schools that need it the most,

the theme of needing a driving vision and strategic plan is supported by Kotter (1995), Smith and

Smith (2015), and Wagner et al. (2006). Desimone and Garet (2015) also outline as one of their

key five features of professional development coherence, which is ensuring alignment with

school, district, and state policies and reform efforts, as well as the needs of students and the

school's curriculum, goals, and priorities. Without a driving vision, personalization for teachers

won't lead to any changes in outcomes, instead it will be personalization simply for the purpose of personalization.

**theme 2: PPD is about collaboration and building capacity around continuous improvement rather than a set of skills and knowledge of personalized learning.**

The second theme that emerged during my analysis was that personalizing professional development, similar to personalized learning, is about collaboration and building the capacity of teams to engage in a continuous cycle of improvement more so than teaching specific personalization strategies. The Chief Innovation Officer described his organization's struggle with teaching continuous improvement versus providing teachers learning about specific personalization strategies saying:

> We have really good debates about this internally because it could be a quick win. For example, we have menus or whatever kind of practices, and you know, people can then take that and implement it with good intentions, but it's almost like the giving everybody Advil type of thing. But if we get more specific and more importantly, teach them how to ride the bicycle of PDSA [Plan, Do, Study, Act] and self-improvement so they can make continuous improvement over time. That's the long game here.

The idea of teaching continuous improvement is important because how personalization looks should change based on the context and needs of the school or district. So, using the example from the Chief Innovation Officer, providing a bunch of schools with choice menus that they can turn key with their students may help teachers and leaders feel satisfied in the moment because they can quickly implement something new, however, it will not have the same intended effect in each distinct setting. It is more worthwhile to develop each district, school or team's capacity to think through their needs, align to their vision, and then create their own personalization strategy

that they can try out and then continuously improve.  Gleason and Gerzon (2013) outline three values, based on their case studies of four high performing Title I schools, that enable equity: continuous learning, collaboration, and collective responsibility, all of which align with this theme.  For schools to be able to move the metric on student outcomes and pursue an equity agenda, they must create structures for collaboration and continuous improvement among teachers, personalizing to support each person and team to develop those skills.  Similarly, Desimone and Garet (2015) name one of their key features to professional learning as collective participation, which again shows the importance of collaborative structures (p. 124-125).  Moreover, Drago-Severson et al. (2013) outlines her four pillars of adult learning, one of which is teaming (collaboration) and another which is collegial inquiry (continuous improvement).

This research as well as the trends from interviews aligns with the quantitative data from Adams Elementary's 2017-2018 5 Essentials Survey were teacher-to-teacher trust increased by 19 points, collaboration increased by 13 points, and collective responsibility increased by 2 points.  Changing the conditions to increase the culture of trust, collaboration, and collective responsibility is one way to ensure that teachers do not have poor working conditions, one of the three reasons that the "irreplaceables", the teachers who can best move student metrics, leave high needs schools.

The continuous cycle of improvement is important, because it helps teachers understand how to improve their practice by implementing new strategies and also builds the capacity of teachers so there can be more shared leadership and teacher input or influence in decision-making.  Gleason and Gerzon (2013) outline the importance of shared leadership with teachers in moving equity work forward.  As Adams Elementary provided PPD and teachers had more choice and input, the 5 Essentials Survey may suggest that teachers felt their influence had

increased as seen by the Teacher Influence Measure Score increasing by 7 points.  Four of the five interview participants discussed the importance of collaboration and teacher input on teachers feeling professional learning is meaningful as well as moving student outcomes.  The Network Deputy said, that professional learning should be, "Customized, but centered around a certain focus, which then allows teachers to choose their own path and it puts them in a space where they're collaboratively learning with their peers."  The Principal Supervisor stated:

> I think, you know, teachers, the greatest teachers are lifelong learners. And when they feel like they can learn more and be able to apply that learning and see the results with their students of something that they've been passionate about, the results and the wins are what keep them happy.

The Chief Innovation Officer takes it a step further to explain how it feels when collaboration isn't at the center of personalization by stating:

> Some of the work out in D.C. comes to mind where they really, really invested deeply in teachers in this fellowship model. And so, you had these like rock star teachers with mindsets there. But, you know, they would always just be like, 'it's me against the system, you can't do anything or I'm the rebel' or the whole dynamic of like them not being respected by their other staff members because they're trying to beat up so much against the grain. So how do we make people learn and work together through this shift and then obviously customize it to the local context?

The key takeaway from this theme is that although when people hear personalization they think of individualized plans and individuals, when personalizing professional learning is about building teams and collaboration and then developing the capacity of that team to engage in

continuous improvement within and attending to their own context, which leads to the third theme outlined below.

**theme 3: PPD requires understanding and planning for the needs and context of districts, schools, leaders, and educators.**

Once a vision, collaboration, and continuous improvement are in place, personalizing professional learning is about understanding and planning for the specific context of the district, school, leader or educator. This attention to context and needs should help teachers themselves plan for the needs and contexts of their own students. Both DeMonte (2013) and Drago-Severson et al. (2013) explain that teachers will need different supports based on their context. Drago-Severson et al. (2013) specifically points out that teachers need different support and challenges to ensure that they are in a "holding environment" that optimizes their learning, meaning they have just the right amount of support to know they can do it, while also having enough challenge to keep them learning and improving. On Adams Elementary's internal survey of teachers, teachers' favorable responses about feeling that professional learning was differentiated to meet their individual needs increased by 69.3% with the implementation of PPD. The survey also showed that personalized professional learning helped them implement personalized learning for students, showing an increase from 6.7% before implementing PPD to 61.5% after implementing PPD.

Reviewing of interview transcripts also showed the need to attend to context when planning effective professional learning. The Network Deputy explained that the most effective professional learning for supporting teachers is when:

> They [people providing professional development] know the context in which they sit
> and they've done a really nice job of crafting professional development that can help

them. That can teach them something that can better their practice. But also, give them the space to practice and plan collaboratively with others.

Similarly, the Principal Supervisor explained, "I think having the professional learning that is catered to teachers' needs, catered to their desires and catered to their students is really most beneficial in teachers actually being able to impact their individual students with that learning." In order to best support teachers, we must attend to their context and their needs.  Similar to Theme 2, this theme supports the idea of creating effective and supportive work conditions for teachers, which will help them feel more heard and valued and therefore more satisfied with their jobs. Moreover, this attention to context and needs will help to ensure that teachers are supported and developed so that they will be even better for their students thus eventually impacting student outcomes.

**theme 4: there is a lack of and need for leaders and educators with the capacity to carry out equity work through personalization.**

This theme came through strong in every interview that I completed.  Currently, not many teacher or principal prep programs provide instruction or training around personalization. Thus, as the Network Deputy stated:

People who believe in personalized learning aren't just growing on trees for lack of better terms, right. Those who will try it. Who believe in it. Who continue to develop themselves so that they can make meaning of what it means for them and their students. And so just really being ready to invest a lot of time and energy into that effort.

Similarly, the Chief Innovation Officer said:

Schools can basically hire teachers that have really good mindset and paradigm around personalized learning and don't have any of the practice. I can get people that are like not

teacher-centric and they're on the same page philosophically, but their training still doesn't match up with the skill sets they need in the classroom. And so, there's just a real learning curve there as well.

The Principal Supervisor explained the necessity of the work saying, "when we think about retention of high-quality teachers, this is the way that we keep people engaged in the career," and then continued by explaining that although that equity through personalization is tough work, "the right leaders and the right teachers can make this happen."

After one year of PPD at Adams Elementary, teachers felt that professional learning had helped them improve student outcomes, increasing the number of favorable responses on the survey by 66.4%, however the school still had over 50% of students performing below grade level in reading and math. It will take much more than what has been done so far to truly push the needle on student achievement. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) explains that, "sustained leadership over time allows for deep innovation to take hold" (p. 7). The Principal Coach stated during the interview said with regard to the type of leadership necessary to provide effective professional learning and move student outcomes:

Those leaders who have internalized the type of teachers that they have in their schools, the type of the population that they serve, coupled with the things that they know in terms of implementation and rollout where their challenges could potentially lie. Those people who have thought about those things and really purposefully created plans to fill some of those gaps and misconceptions both on the student and the teacher part. Those to me are the schools who have been more successful in the implementation and buy-in to personalized learning, because they put the time in on the front and to ensure that when they roll this out that it's going to gleam them, the outcome that they think it will produce.

It takes a special type of leader to do this work, to support an equity agenda through

personalizing for the adults they lead.  Not every attempt at personalization for adults or students

has had the intended impact or resulted in improved outcomes for students.  As the New Teacher

Project (2012) outlines, one of the three reasons the best teachers, what they call "irreplaceables"

leave their jobs in underperforming, high-need schools is due to poor leadership.  Even with the

right leader, personalization is a process.  During interviews, the Chief Innovation Officer

explains his approach to rolling out personalization:

> I'm much more of a do it in a controlled setting with a minimum number of variables so
>
> you can like learn and tinker before you scale, but there's no need to like roll it out across
>
> your four elementary schools and high school in the same year.

This message was echoed by the Principal Supervisor who stated:

> You gotta go slow to go fast, this isn't something that you just are going to do year one,
>
> day one and it's going to work for everybody. But really starting slow with a small group
>
> of teachers or one school and then being able to develop and progress as soon as you can
>
> build capacity to do so.

This idea of going slow and piloting aligns with the work of both Wolf et al. (2017) and Zmuda

et al. (2015) about how to implement personalized learning in schools and districts through the

change management process.  Wolf et al. (2017) and Zmuda et al. (2015)'s processes for

implementation of personalized learning align with Kotter's (1995) change management

framework.  These experts show that in order to build capacity of leaders and teachers to best

meet the needs of students, an effective change management process is necessary, a process that

is often slow and takes time, but ensures lasting results.  Results that the Principal Supervisor

described as being, "More individualized professional development for school leaders, which is what we do for teachers and what we ultimately want teachers to be able to do for kids."

**Judgements**

When looking at my original research question of, "What systems and structures can schools and districts put into place to better support teachers in professional learning in order to increase teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students," I have concluded that schools and districts must first ensure they have a vision and strategic plan, then they should put in systems of teacher collaboration, involve teachers in the decision-making process, and personalize to fill gaps and to meet the needs for individual schools, leaders, and teachers. With the implementation of PPD, Adams Elementary showed increases in how teachers felt about the following:

- Increase in teacher's feelings about Teacher-to-Teacher Trust (+19 on a 100-point scale)

- Increase in teacher's feelings about Teacher Collaboration (+13 on a 100-point scale)

- Increase in teacher's feelings of influence on the instructional program (+16 on a 100-point scale)

- Increase in teacher's feelings of influence on content of in-service training (+23 on a 100-point scale)

- Increase in teacher's feelings about the effectiveness of PD

    ○ PD was differentiated to meet my individual needs (+69.3%)

    ○ PD helped me to reflect on my own practice and improve on it (+54%)

    ○ PD helped me in personalizing for my students (+54.8%)

    ○ PD helped me improve student outcomes (+66.4%)

During my research, ideas outside of my original question also arose. The first was about misconceptions with personalization and the second was capacity for personalization work. Even within the participants I interviewed, who had experience with personalized learning, there were different understandings and definitions. Based on my interviews and on the areas with the largest survey question increases for Adams Elementary, it is important that people understand that personalization at the heart is about collaboration and continuous improvement. It is not a single strategy or set of strategies you can implement. As the Chief Innovation Officer said, "We knew there was a hearts and mindset aspect to the work of personalized learning." The second idea was around the lack of capacity of leaders and teachers to drive this work. Personalized Learning is not taught in teacher or leadership preparation programs. Many times, schools and districts look for educators with the right mindsets and are then tasked with developing their understanding and skills in personalized learning on the ground. If personalizing for leaders, teachers, and students is one way to close the opportunity gap and to lead an equity agenda in our school system, there needs to be a larger system-wide framework for developing the mindsets and skills necessary to implement this type of work. Work based on collaboration, relationships, and continuous improvement for every leader, teacher and student.

**Recommendations**

With the implementation of PPD at Adams Elementary, although teachers' perceptions of professional learning changed, there is still a long way to go in order to truly pursue an equity agenda where all student and adult needs are met within the building. Currently, about 50% of students are still not reading or performing math on grade level. Although this is a significant increase since the beginning of turnaround, true equity requires us to meet the needs of all, not just *some* students.

Now that I am in a new context at Monroe School, I want to take what I have learned and apply this learning to my new context. In my new context, which is not nearly as aligned to a vision, supported by a district or have as knowledgeable of staff, I will make recommendations based on my learning around the four themes that I outlined above:

- Theme 1: A school or district's vision and strategic plan should drive the personalized supports provided to schools, leaders, and teachers

- Theme 2: PPD is about collaboration and building capacity around continuous improvement rather than a set of skills and knowledge of personalized learning

- Theme 3: PPD requires understanding and planning for the needs and context of districts, schools, leaders, and educators

- Theme 4: There is a lack of and need for leaders and educators with the capacity to carry out equity work through personalization

Based on these themes, I recommend using Gleason and Gerzon's (2013) framework for Advancing Equity with Professional Learning, which was discussed during the literature review and is pictured below in Figure 6.
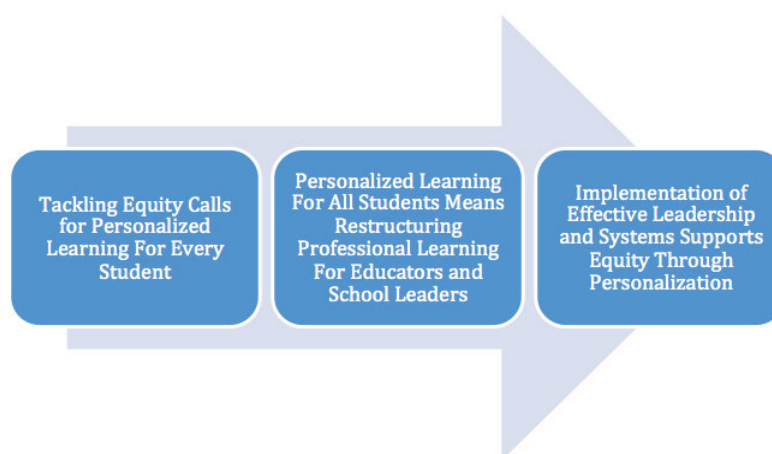


*Figure 6. Advancing Equity with Professional Learning (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013)*

Gleason and Gerzon's (2013) framework directly aligns with and leverages all four themes from my findings as shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10

*Alignment of Gleason and Gerzon's (2013) framework for Advancing Equity with Professional Learning*

| Framework for Advancing Equity with Professional Learning Components | Equity and Supporting Values<br><br>Focus and drive daily practices | Personalized Learning for Educators<br><br>Facilitates individual student success | Leadership and Systems<br><br>Sustain and guide continuous improvement |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Themes from Research Findings** | *Theme 1:* A school or district's vision and strategic plan should drive the personalized supports provided to schools, leaders, and teachers | *Theme 2:* PPD is about collaboration and building capacity around continuous improvement rather than a set of skills and knowledge of personalized learning<br><br>*Theme 3:* PPD requires understanding and planning for the needs and context of districts, schools, leaders, and educators | *Theme 4:* There is a lack of and need for leaders and educators with the capacity to carry out equity work through personalization |

In order to tackle implementation of this framework, school and district leaders will need to plan for change in a systematic way. I recommend using Kotter's 8 step change management process or another change management system when moving toward equity through personalization. In Chapter 5, I will outline what the 4C's in my new context at Monroe looked like when I began my tenure as principal and what I envision the 4C's will look like, the To-Be, after implementation of my recommendations to use Kotter's 8 step change management process to

implement an equity agenda through professional learning.  Then in Chapter 6, I will describe

the strategies and actions recommended to actualize this vision.

**CHAPTER FIVE: TO-BE FRAMEWORK**

**Introduction**

Professional learning should support equity and personalization in underserved schools in order to increase student outcomes. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) describe the culture of schools that make gains through this method as "Determined to meet the needs of each student, personalization takes hold, and learning for both students *and* adults becomes engaging and effective. Significant practice shifts provide adults with daily opportunities to focus their own learning, in support of each student's success. Leaders and systems keep the efforts focused, accountable, and sustainable" (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 1). Similar to the 4C's described in Chapter 4 above for Adams Elementary, many schools personalize for *some* students in *some* capacity, however, many teachers feel they do not know how or have the capacity to impact every single student in their classroom. This is precisely the feeling that many of my teachers at Monroe School have.  They are frustrated because many of them have been at the school for years, one of the only majority minority student and staff schools in the district that has been plagued by administrative turnover, and continues to perform in the bottom 5% of schools in the state.  In this chapter I will outline my envisioned TO-BE framework for Monroe based on Wagner's 4C's, shown in figure 7.  I will also describe the current AS-IS state for each of the 4C's at Monroe to provide context to the changes I hope to see.

**CONTEXT**

- Public elementary school
- Majority population of minority and low-income students
- Majority minority students and staff school in a majority white city
- High mobility rate among students

- High staff retention rate
- Sustained principal and school-based leadership
- Situated in a neighborhood experiencing gentrification
- Majority of students reading and performing math on grade level
- Improved outcome for student ensuring school is no longer in the bottom 25% in the state

- Sustained district vision and leadership
- Increased knowledge or training on CCSS and best instructional practices
- District work on GVC and MtSS/PLC structures
- School alignment of Personalized Learning to GVC and MtSS/PLCs

**CULTURE**

- The school values strong relationships between all stakeholders
- All stakeholders believe that all students can learn and achieve
- All stakeholders believe that students need to have more than high test scores, and believe in the power of Wagner's 7 survival skills
- There is a culture of optimism and belief in students, staff, leaders, and the school itself
- Teachers feel collective responsibility for all students and hold each other accountable for meeting student needs and maintaining high expectations
- Doors are "open" and practices are shared
- Stakeholders "Do what is best for kids" no matter what

**CONDITIONS**

- Better teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student relationships that reflect high expectations for students and staff
- Protocols and frameworks to ensure PLCs and team collaboration among teachers is productive and results in personalization for students
- Collaborative and respectful conversations amongst staff
  - Personalization for teachers through PLCs, 20% Independent Study Projects, and co-creation of PD options that align both to the school vision and improvement plan as well as teacher needs and interests
    - School staff understands grade level rigor and values personalization as a support for students to actualize that level of rigor
    - School emphasizes personalization as the way to support teachers with developing student's 7 survival skills

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Personalized Professional Development Structures and Coaching close the opportunity gap by leveraging personalized learning for students and adults

**COMPETENCIES**

- Strong knowledge of CCSS and personalized learning
- Strong planning and personalization skills
- Instructional Leadership Team has knowledge of adult development theory and PPD
- PLC facilitators understand how to facilitate effective PLC that increase collaboration and trust
- Adults know how to collaborate and have productive yet respectful disagreement and difficult conversations

*Figure 7. 4C's TO-BE Framework at Monroe*

**Envisioning the To-Be Success**

 **context: focus and intensity on personalization.**

  Monroe is a public elementary school serving over 70% minority and low-income students. The interesting dynamic at Monroe that greatly differs from Adams Elementary is that although Monroe serves a majority of minority students and has a majority minority staff, the school is situated in a majority white city and within a gentrifying neighborhood. Monroe is currently performing in the bottom 5% of schools within the state and has been designated as a school needing Comprehensive Supports and Improvement (CSI). There is a high staff retention rate, as many of the teachers have been at Monroe for years and outlasted many administrators,

which will show in the conditions and culture of the school outlined below.  The district has had

a lack of focus on instruction for years and has gone through multiple superintendents in recent

years.  The new superintendent has led the district in writing a new vision focused on instruction

and with a graduate portrait that includes many of Wagner's 7 survival skills.  As a start to

support this work, he has had a focus on the implementation of a Guaranteed and Viable

Curriculum (GVC) and the implementation of MtSS through PLCs. The district as a whole,

schools, and teachers lack knowledge of CCSS and best instructional practices. Including a

resistance to data driven instruction and assessment.  This trend is also seen at the school level,

where last year I entered Monroe as the 5th principal within 6 years' time.

        When pushing an equity agenda, although the goal is personalization for all students,

Gleason and Gerzon maintain that "this shift in student learning demands a reframing of

professional learning for individual educators, collaborative teams, and schools as a whole. To

address a more complex understanding of each student learner, adult learners need a support

system and collective expertise" (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 10). Ideally, Monroe would see

specific shifts around knowledge of CCSS and instructional best practices, as well as a shift from

simply implementing the GVC and MtSS supported by the district to an understanding that both

grade level instruction and skills specific to individual student needs through personalization

allows students to move at their own pace and own their own learning in a way that will help

close the achievement and opportunity gaps. Hopefully Monroe teachers will see how

personalization supports MtSS, PLCs and the GVC to help create a context where the school

values personalization.  Although much of the context for Monroe will stay the same, I also

envision sustained leadership at the school can support these personalization efforts and result in

improved outcomes for students.

Table 11

*AS-IS and TO-BE for the Context at Monroe*

| Context: Monroe AS-IS | Context: Monroe TO-BE |
|---|---|
| ● Public elementary school<br>● Majority population of minority and low-income students<br>● Majority minority students and staff school in a majority white city<br>● High mobility rate among students<br>● High staff retention rate<br>● High principal turnover rate<br>● Situated in a neighborhood experiencing gentrification<br>● Less than 30% of students reading and performing math on grade level<br>● School is 1 of 9 schools within the 90 schools of the district that are performing in the bottom 5% of the state<br>● 1st year of new district vision and leadership<br>● Lack of district and teacher knowledge or training on CCSS and best instructional practices<br>● District work on GVC and MtSS/PLC structures | ● Public elementary school<br>● Majority population of minority and low-income students<br>● Majority minority students and staff school in a majority white city<br>● High mobility rate among students<br>● High staff retention rate<br>● Sustained principal and school-based leadership<br>● Situated in a neighborhood experiencing gentrification<br>● Majority of students reading and performing math on grade level<br>● Improved outcomes for students ensuring school is no longer in the bottom 25% in the state<br>● Sustained district vision and leadership<br>● Increased knowledge or training on CCSS and best instructional practices<br>● District work on GVC and MtSS/PLC structures<br>● School alignment of Personalized Learning to GVC and MtSS/PLCs |

**conditions: building space and time for personalization for all.** According to Wagner, without the proper conditions, changes in competencies won't stick. Thus, in order for Monroe to make changes in teacher competencies, first, there needs to be a change in conditions. The current conditions at Monroe center on uneven trends in relationships between staff and between staff and students. There are also uneven relationships, and even poor relationships between teachers and families. Interactions between staff at times fluctuate between passive aggressive and hostile, and some staff members do not want to collaborate with each other or only collaborate with certain people. Some staff members have low expectations and lack of belief in

students, while others have a lack of belief in themselves and their abilities to move student

outcomes. Some teachers believe they should be provided with more district support as well as

materials in order to personalize for students, because this is outlined in the teacher contract.

Prior to my arrival at Monroe, PLCs were run as logistical meetings to discuss field trips and

student issues.  Over the last year, we have worked to ensure that PLCs follow the Data Driven

Cycle, however, teacher facilitation of PLCs is uneven.  During my first year at Monroe there

was a focus on building relationships and crafting a unifying vision and school improvement

plan. Therefore, personalization for professional learning was limited. Currently the conditions

of the school are not set-up to support developing students in the area of Wagner's 7 survival

skills.

   With implementation of the recommendations made in Chapter 4 and outlined in Chapter

6, hopefully Monroe's conditions will change to support personalization and student outcomes.

Ideally, teachers will build strong relationships with students and families enabling teachers to

understand and meet the unique needs and interests of each student. Moreover, teachers will

build strong relationships with each other so that they can better collaborate and work together to

move student outcomes.  Teachers leading PLCs will become more skilled in facilitation and will

leverage protocols to help ensure PLCs are effective for teachers and students. Teachers will be

provided personalized learning opportunities, such as applying for 20% or independent study

projects where they can propose an area of study and the resources and materials they will use

for professional learning. These projects will release teachers from other professional learning

time on topics or in areas where they are already proficient or distinguished in their practice.

Teachers will also be involved in co-creation of professional learning scope and sequences.

With the implementation of personalized professional learning, Monroe will emphasize personalization as a way to teach students Wagner's 7 survival skills and best prepare students for the 21st century. If the conditions at Monroe value personalization and provide the time and space for teachers to learn and work on personalization, then there will be stronger implementation of personalized learning for students, which will have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Table 12

*AS-IS and TO-BE for the Conditions at Monroe*

| Conditions:  Monroe AS-IS | Conditions: Monroe TO-BE |
|---|---|
| ● Relationships are uneven, with some staff having good relationships while others are more hostile or passive aggressive.  Additionally, some staff have strong relationships with students, while others do not. <br> ● Originally, PLCs were run as logistical meetings to plan field trips and discuss student issues.  One year has been spent changing PLCs to follow the Data Driven Cycle although teachers struggle to effectively facilitate the PLCs and stay focused. <br> ● Some conversations among staff are disrespectful and some staff refused to collaborate with other staff. <br> ● There is limited personalization since the focus has been on crafting a vision and mission as well as implement the GVC provided by the district. <br> ● School staff believes that some students cannot perform at the level or rigor demanded by the grade level. <br> ● Some staff members believe they cannot personalize to meet student needs. <br> ● Some staff members refuse to differentiate for individual student | ● Better teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student relationships that reflect high expectations for students and staff. <br> ● Protocols and frameworks to ensure PLCs and team collaboration among teachers is productive and results in personalization for students. <br> ● Collaborative and respectful conversations amongst staff. <br> ● Personalization for teachers through PLCs, 20% Independent Study Projects, and co-creation of PD options that align both to the school vision and improvement plan as well as teacher needs and interests. <br> ● School staff understands grade level rigor and values personalization as a support for students to actualize that level of rigor. <br> ● School emphasizes personalization as the way to support teachers with developing student's 7 survival skills. |

| needs unless materials are provided to them and quote the contract as the reason. • Currently the conditions of the school are not set-up to develop students in Wagner's 7 survival skills. | |
| --- | --- |

**competencies: increasing educators' knowledge of personalized learning strategies.**

The goal of professional development "should be to support educators in developing the skills necessary to become self-directed learners" (Rickabaugh, 2016, p. 100), which is similar to the goal we have for our students. When I started at Monroe, some teachers were more self-directed than others. Overall, teachers lacked competencies around CCSS, planning, execution of instruction, and personalized learning. There was no Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and therefore, most teachers had not been trained in leadership or Adult Development Theory. During my second year, I have developed an ILT, however we have just started to develop their knowledge and capacity to lead adults and there is still much room for growth. This can be seen in our PLCs that are up and running, however, teacher leaders struggle with facilitation and so they are not effective PLCs. Lastly, some adults in the building lack competencies around having difficult conversations with colleagues and/or their abilities to collaborate, which make collaboration and trust issues within the school.

Through personalizing professional development at Monroe, we should see teachers receive training and support around the skills necessary to implement both strong CCSS-aligned instruction and personalized learning: mentoring, competency-based learning progressions, project-based learning, conceptual math instruction, use of real-time data, and use of personalized learning platforms. Additionally, teacher leaders within the school should be trained on Adult-Development Theory and personalized learning strategies so that they can personalize

professional development sessions that they facilitate for their respective teams (i.e. PLCs). Although both Rickabaugh (2016) and Gleason and Gerzon (2013) point out that adult learning should mirror student learning, teacher leaders need time to collaboratively learn and develop how personalization will best work with adult learners on their respective teams. Lastly, adults will be able to collaborate and engage in difficult conversations in order to best serve students.

All of these competencies should be learned through training and supports that are personalized and are based off of a continuum of learning as well as each teacher's individual needs and interests. This way the professional development can "focus on building efficacy and ownership among educators, offer voice and choice, and meet educators where they are, and address their specific needs in the context of a shared vision" (Rickabaugh, 2016, p. 100).

*Table 13*

*AS-IS and TO-BE for the Competencies at Monroe*

| Competencies:  Monroe AS-IS | Competencies: Monroe TO-BE |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Lack of knowledge of CCSS and personalized learning.</li><li>Lack of planning and personalization skills.</li><li>Instructional Leadership Team lacks knowledge of Adult Development Theory and PPD.</li><li>PLC Facilitators struggle to keep their PLC focused, PLCs have wasted time, and PLCs are not resulting in continuous improvement or changes in teacher practice.</li><li>Adults struggle to collaborate productively with all colleagues and difficult conversations are often avoided or result in someone feeling disrespected.</li></ul> | <ul><li>Strong knowledge of CCSS and personalized learning.</li><li>Strong planning and personalization skills.</li><li>Instructional Leadership Team has knowledge of Adult Development Theory and PPD.</li><li>PLC facilitators understand how to facilitate effective PLCs that increase collaboration and trust.</li><li>Adults know how to collaborate and have productive yet respectful disagreement and difficult conversations.</li></ul> |

**culture: investing teachers in the value of trust, collaboration, and personalization.** The ultimate goal is to create a culture at Monroe that lives and breathes an agenda for equity. Although when I arrived at Monroe, there was consistent discussion of equity, the culture was not set-up to support the work. Culture must be changed in order to ensure that organizational change can take place.

When I entered Monroe, optimism, relationships, and accountability were lacking. Staff member selected who they had strong relationships with and did not feel they needed to change their relationships with students, families or other staff members if they were lacking. Optimism was low, with only 36% of staff feeling optimistic about the school improving in the future based on the Successful Schools Survey, although this statistic has improved to 70.3%, there are still staff members who do not believe all students can learn or only feel responsible for the learning of the students in their own classroom. Previously there was little to no accountability structures in place, now teachers have adjusted to administrators holding teachers accountable, however, teachers do not generally hold each other accountable. When I first walked down the Monroe hallways, all doors were shut and locked, now many doors remain literally open and although teachers don't often observe each other, teachers are sharing resources and instructional practices much more. Lastly, the culture is slowing shifting from teachers feeling that they can "do what they want" because the administrator is just going to leave to "doing what they will be held accountable for." The goal is to have a culture where everyone functions by "doing what is best for kids."

At Monroe changes in our school culture must be made in order to create a truly personalized school for both students and staff where each individual student is valued, cared for, and challenged. This culture must have a laser-like focus on personalization at every level of the

school and for every school stakeholder. Teachers will need to value and understand that

personalization for students includes mentoring, goal setting and tracking, reflection,

competency-based learning progressions, and individualized supports. Professional Development

must also be personalized. Professional development should include weekly and monthly

collaborative meetings as well as differentiated coaching and time for independent study

projects. The monthly and weekly professional development should allow teachers to work in

different groups on sustained learning that meets their needs and interests. The culture of

personalization for adults at Monroe would then seep down into the culture for students. With a

goal to improve relationships, belief and optimism among stakeholders. To create a culture

where stakeholders hold each other accountable and put students first. A culture where doors are

"open," strategies and best practices are shared, and every stakeholder feels collective

responsibility for the success of each student.

Table 14

*AS-IS and TO-BE for the Culture at Monroe*

| Culture: Monroe AS-IS | Culture: Monroe TO-BE |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>The school does not value strong relationships with all stakeholders, adults at the school feel they can pick and choose who they have relationships with.</li><li>Some stakeholders believe all students can learn and achieve while others do not.</li><li>Optimism has increased during my first year as principal, but still is not where it should be.</li><li>Teachers feel some collective responsibility; however, teachers still feel they are mostly responsible for</li></ul> | <ul><li>The school values strong relationships between all stakeholders</li><li>All stakeholders believe that all students can learn and achieve</li><li>All stakeholders believe that students need to have more than high test scores, and believe in the power of Wagner's 7 survival skills</li><li>There is a culture of optimism and belief in students, staff, leaders, and the school itself</li><li>Teachers feel collective responsibility for all students and hold each other accountable for meeting student needs</li></ul> |

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| only students in their classroom (and some even only students they feel can learn).<br>● The entire school had little to no accountability prior to my start, now teachers expect administrators to hold everyone accountable and there is little accountability between teachers or between students.<br>● Doors are sometimes "open" and practices are sometimes shared.<br>● The culture is shifting from "I do what I want" to "I do what I am held accountable for" | and maintaining high expectations<br>● Doors are "open" and practices are shared<br>● Stakeholders "Do what is best for kids" no matter what |

**Conclusion**

Managing and creating lasting change takes careful planning and strategic monitoring. Many times, in my own practice, I have taught teachers a new skill during professional development and then been frustrated when I didn't see these skills put into practice in classrooms. However, creating change and impacting student outcomes requires planning around changing more than just competencies. We must also plan for how to change the context, conditions, and cultures in our schools so that teachers are able to navigate other obstacles that may prohibit them from implementing new learning. Additionally, if I want a culture of personalization for students, then I must also create that same culture of personalization for adults. Zmuda et al. states, "Releasing the work back to teachers signals a dramatic shift in culture and the way work gets done in schools. It creates an environment in which teachers can own their work, build sustained relationships with peers, and continuously improve their knowledge and skills" (p. 154). The goal of building out the Personalized Professional Development structures at Monroe is to empower and support teachers in creating personalized learning systems for students. Systems that equip students with the skills they need for success in

our ever-changing world. Skills such as critical thinking, analysis, innovation, and ownership

that they can apply in any field of study and in any career of their choice. Skills that will push an

equity agenda to level the playing field for students who need it most and who have untapped

talents, passions, and potential that need to be leveraged in our ever-changing world.

## CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

**Introduction**

In order to move Monroe from the current AS-IS into the ideal TO-BE, strategies and actions should be implemented that align both to research around personalized learning and personalized professional development as well as change management. Personalized Learning requires a complete shift in how we normally "do school." This change can be intimidating and difficult for educators as well as leaders, but is a necessary change to meet the needs of every student -- ensuring we close the achievement and opportunity gaps. According to research from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on personalized learning, schools that implement personalized learning strategies are making greater progress increasing student outcomes over two years than schools that do not. Moreover, students who start behind grade level at schools implementing personalized learning practices are catching up to perform at or above grade level (Pane et al., 2015, p. 34).

As George Couros points out in *The Innovator's Mindset*, "If you want learning to be personalized for students, help personalize it for staff (and yourself)" (Couros, 2015, p. 184). This shift takes more than implementation of Personalized Learning strategies, it requires that a leader effectively manage adaptive change while changing his or her own professional development and coaching style. Kotter suggests that there are eight steps for transforming organizations, which lead to lasting change. These eight steps must all be completed and often take years, Kotter (1995) notes that skipping or rushing steps can negatively impact transformational change and often ends in either the development of a compliance culture or organizations returning to their "old ways" (p. 59). Through change management, I recommend

that Monroe implements practices in professional development that mirror design principles for

personalized learning including:

- Teacher choice/control over time, pace, path, and/or place

- A balance of teacher-driven and district or school-driven goals

- Learning that is job-embedded, meaningful, and connected to classroom practice

- Competency-based progressions (Cator et al., 2014, p.6)

Implementation of these design principles through Kotter's change management cycle will

change the context, competencies, conditions, and culture of the school providing support and

opportunity for personalization. In order to take Monroe, as well as other similar schools, from a

culture of one-size-fits all that lacks collaboration and continuous improvement to a culture of

trust, collective responsibility and personalization, in Table 15, I have outlined recommendations

of strategies and actions aligned to Kotter's eight steps for change management.

**Strategies and Actions**

Table 15

*Strategies, Actions, and Plan for Measuring Success Through Kotter's 8 Steps for Change*

*Management*

| Change Step | Strategy | Actions | Plan for Measuring Effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1 Establishing a Sense of Urgency** | **Create a need for and investment in personalized learning and professional development through the use of data and surveys**<br><br>Kotter (1995) as well as researchers and advocates for Personalized Learning explain that there must be an established "why" behind the shift to | **Survey teachers about how they feel about professional learning, how it meets their needs, and what their needs and interests are**<br><br>**Analyze survey data as well as school level data to plan for what personalization** | Survey after presentation around the sense of urgency will show if people agree with the issue and reasoning why |

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| | personalization. Kotter (1995) suggests that the sense of urgency should be high enough that at least 75% of the management team truly believes that continuing in the same way is completely unacceptable (p. 61). More specifically, Personalized Learning researchers emphasize the importance of a sense of urgency and a vision for change because of the fact that personalization "pushes our thinking about virtually every aspect of schooling as we know it" (Zmuda et al., 2015, p. 150). | **will look like**<br><br>**Create a presentation or leverage a State of the School Address to present and explain the "why" behind the change and create the sense of urgency** | a change is needed.<br><br>Additionally, asking teachers why personalization is important will also provide feedback on how effectively the sense of urgency was communicated. |
| **2**<br>**Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition** | **Leverage a team of instructional leaders to learn more about personalization and observe its effectiveness to build more buy-in**<br><br>Kotter (1995) outlines how not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition will result in "nothing much worthwhile" happening. As Kotter (1995) states, "Companies that fail in phase two usually underestimate the difficulties of producing change and thus the importance of a powerful guiding coalition" (p.62). Knowing that personalization in schools can be a difficult change, it is imperative that the leader has a guiding coalition to help with the work. Gleason and Gerzon's (2013) research concludes that leaders in schools focused on equity and personalization share and divvy up the responsibility for planning and leading professional learning. These leaders use evidence of practice to collaboratively plan the right professional learning opportunities (p. 149). | **Analyze data from studies of schools implementing personalized learning**<br><br>**Train school and teacher leaders on Adult Development Theory and personalization strategies**<br><br>**Visits schools who have already implemented personalized learning for students and/or adults in order to observe what personalization looks like** | Survey data from each meeting with the guiding coalition will provide evidence of the development of the team and effectiveness of team meetings.<br><br>Informally watching and observing how the guiding coalition talks about the sense of urgency with stakeholder groups will also provide insight on the effectiveness of the guiding coalition. |
| **3**<br>**Creating a Vision** | **Create a vision for personalized learning and Personalized Professional Development**<br><br>As Kotter (1995) points out, "In failed transformations, you often find plenty | **Leverage the guiding coalition to create a personalized learning vision statement and scaffolded support plan** | Feedback from stakeholders on the vision will provide feedback on effectiveness of |

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| | of plans and directives and programs, but no vision" (p. 63). Zmuda et al. (2015) also explains the importance of understanding the vision of personalization prior to implementation. This will help the leader create a sense of direction for professional learning, student learning, outcomes/goals, how the work will be accomplished, and a system for evaluating effectiveness (p. 151). Without a clear plan, driven by a vision, it will be difficult to implement personalization system-wide. | **Ask for feedback on the vision from a variety of stakeholders in order to make revisions** | the vision. |
| **4 Communicating the Vision** | **Present the vision and scaffolded support plan to all stakeholders (and re-communicate/brand the vision)**<br><br>According to Kotter (1995), "Transformation is impossible unless hundreds or thousands of people are willing to help, often to the point of making short-term sacrifices" (p 63). Everyone must be communicating the vision or it won't stick. Communicating the vision starts with the leader, but must be embraced by the entire organization. | **Present the vision and scaffolded support plan**<br><br>**Brand the vision through a variety of manners:**<br>● **Have key stakeholders practice making elevator speeches they can use to communicate the vision**<br>● **Create a graphic of the vision to post on social media and in the header/footer of meeting agendas**<br>● **Create posters of the vision to post throughout the school**<br>● **Promote the vision and strategies for implementing the vision in weekly newsletters** | Asking a variety of stakeholders to re-state the vision and explain why it is important will show whether or not the vision was effectively communicated.<br><br>Branding can be measured by looking for the posters and other advertisements for the vision. |
| **5 Empowering Others to Act on the Vision** | **Co-create a scope and sequence for adult learning that mirrors and models what personalized learning should look like for students and aligns to the vision**<br><br>Kotter (1995) reminds us that | **Co-create personalized professional learning plan with teachers to model how teachers should do this with students and meet individual teacher needs** (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. | Professional Development Plan or Scope and Sequence will provide evidence of whether |

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| | "Communication [of the vision] is never sufficient by itself. Renewal also requires the removal of obstacles" (p. 64). In order for personalization to be successful, professional learning must model what personalization should look like for students (Couros, 2015, p. 182). Moreover, leaders must empower others to act through removing obstacles and providing strategic support. | 137) (Bray & McClaskey, 2017, p. 74)<br>(Rodman, 2019, p.27-28)<br><br>**Provide opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively in groups based on needs and interests (PLCs or Critical Friends Groups)** (Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, 2013, p.123) (Zmuda et al., 2015, p. 153)<br><br>**Provide individualized coaching and feedback on personalization strategies to help teachers successful change their practice** (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 143) (Zmuda et al., 2015, p. 153) | personalization was implemented during professional learning<br><br>Surveys following all professional learning will provide evidence of whether or not the professional learning was effective and whether or not it met individual teacher needs and interests<br><br>Classroom observations will provide evidence of whether or not personalization practices are being utilized with students. |
| **6<br>Planning for and Creating Short- Term Wins** | **Provide collaborative opportunities for teachers to see improvements in their practice and to model groups based on choice, interest, and need**<br><br>Kotter (1995) explains that in order to anchor changes in an organization's culture, that there "First is a conscious attempt to show people how the new approaches, behaviors, and attitudes have helped improve performance" (p. 67). In order to create short-term wins, it is important for teachers to have the opportunity to work together in teams based on their needs and interests. This will provide them with "time to practice, develop interest and | **Creation of teacher teams based on teacher needs and interests**<br>(Zmuda et al., 2015, p. 153-154)<br><br>**Data analysis in teacher teams of assessments and student work to reflect on personalization strategies and make continuous improvements** (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 143)<br><br>**Recognize and reward teachers who are implementing personalized** | Observation of professional learning, surveys about professional learning, and presentations by those participating in professional learning will show the effectiveness of teacher teams<br><br>Reflections and action plans |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | knowledge, evaluate usefulness for own classroom and students, try new skills with students, and to adopt or reject the innovation based on these opportunities" (Schifter, 2016, p. 229) As teachers collaborate and evaluate their progress, they will be able to see short-term wins. | **learning through highlighting their practice and providing positive feedback** | from data analysis will show the effectiveness of data analysis<br><br>Classroom observations will provide evidence of whether or not personalization practices are being utilized in with students. |
| **7 Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change** | **Creation of larger scale systems that promote and value personalization including competency-based learning progressions for teachers, teacher independent study projects, and hiring processes**<br><br>**Implementation of personalization strategies for students in every classroom**<br><br>Kotter (1995) suggests during this phase to hire, promote, and recognize teachers who are aligned to the school's work with personalization. Additionally, Kotter (1995) explains the importance of reinvigorating the change process with new projects and initiatives (p. 4). This is the time to create larger scale systems and initiatives such as independent study projects that will continue to invest and invigorate teachers in the personalized learning vision. This is also the time to ensure that personalization strategies are happening in all classrooms for students and to continue to recognize teachers who are effectively implementing personalized learning. | **Creation of playlists of learning for teacher teams to choose from and/or develop on their own (i.e. videos, books, articles, protocols, activities that support mastering a new strategy or skill with a built-in assessment or evaluation tool at the end)** (Zmuda et al., 2015, p. 154) (Couros, 2015, p. 187)<br><br>**Creation of Independent Study projects or systems for learning (i.e. modeled after Google's 20% projects)** (Couros, 2015, p. 186, 189)<br><br>**Creation of hiring processes that looks for people who value:**<br>● **Collaboration**<br>● **Shared responsibility for student learning**<br>● **Use of data to improve practice**<br>● **Flexibility**<br>● **Hard work**<br>● **Eagerness for participating in peer** | Observation of professional learning, surveys about professional learning, and presentations by those participating in professional learning will show the effectiveness of playlists and independent study projects<br><br>Reflection on the hiring process and analysis/evaluation of interview questions as well as recently hired employees will show whether the new hiring processes are effective<br><br>Classroom observations |

| | | **observation to improve student outcomes**<br>(Gleason & Gerzon, 2013, p. 153)<br><br>**Implementation of:**<br>● **Competency-based grade-level curriculum (e.g. Summit Learning)**<br>● **Project-Based Learning options related to each unit of study within the curriculum**<br>● **Flexible learning environments**<br>● **Opportunities for students to discuss their learning data with teachers**<br>● **Learner Profiles**<br>(Pane et al., 2015, p. 3) | and discussions/surveys of students will show the effectiveness of the implementation of personalization in classrooms |
|---|---|---|---|
| **8**<br>**Institutionalizing New Approaches** | **Provide a clear connection between student achievement/growth metrics and personalization strategies as well as continue to develop leaders to ensure lasting organizational change and leadership succession.**<br><br>The final step in Kotter's (1995) change management process involves making clear alignment between the change initiative and success of the organization. Additionally, Kotter (1995) points out the importance of ensuring there is another leader who has been trained and prepared to take over the organization and continue the change process (p. 4). In the case of implementing personalized learning and professional development, the school should analyze data and make connections to the personalization practices used. Additionally, the leader should continue to develop teacher and mid-level leaders through | **Review and analyze effectiveness data in order to connect personalization strategies with student outcomes**<br><br>**Continue to develop teacher leaders and mid-level leaders to personalize professional develop and coach teachers around personalization strategies for students -- ensuring personalization of support for each of these leaders** | Data analysis will show whether personalization practices have been effective in moving student achievement and closing the opportunity gap<br><br>Evaluation of mid-level leaders and teacher leaders through observation of professional learning facilitation and feedback conversations with teachers will provide |

| | personalized support. | | evidence of how effectively the leader is developing others |
|---|---|---|---|

## Conclusion

In order to move a school, such as Monroe, from a more traditional model of schooling to a more personalized model, the leader must strategically plan for change. By leveraging Kotter's (1995) change management cycle, the leader can plan for how to create lasting change by changing the context, conditions, competencies, and culture of the school. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) describe this process as:

> As we push to increase the number of students who succeed, we hit a wall unless we take children, one by one, and put our heads together to make sure that they make enough progress toward high standards. And then we must recognize that for individual students to do well, individual teachers must and can do well, when they have professional lives that support tapping each other's genius and expertise. (p. 160)

Through leveraging a strategic plan to manage change, Monroe, as well as other schools, can make the change to focus on equity and personalization. This can be accomplished by creating personalized support for every adult and student learner in the building. Ultimately, this focus on personalization will increase the capacity of ever adult and student, better preparing students for the demands of the 21st century and ensuring every learner is pushed to his or her maximum potential.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Introduction**

Currently our school system was not created to support innovation and personalization, but rather stability. There are divisions within districts and schools that provide technical training from an expert but rarely support for schools through a systematic process of discovery and innovation (Gross & DeArmond, 2018, p. 23) Although there is nothing wrong with stability, and often stability is a good thing, it impedes school and district leaders' ability to be creative and try new things that may produce better outcomes than what we currently have. The rigid system makes it difficult for leaders to innovate with their time, money, and programming - another barrier to implementation of personalization.

Additionally, "In most cases, policies and procedures still convey what we expect teachers to 'learn and do,' rather than engage in ongoing activities that foster learning as part of a teacher's work day" (Couros, 2015, p. 182). Instead we need collaboration, exploration, and reflection for continuous improvement. The application of new learning will then lead teachers to innovate in their ideas and practices that work within the unique context of their school -- better serving their learners and impacting students (Couros, 2015, p. 182). The same holds true for school and district leaders. Currently the system is set-up to tell people what to do and how to do it, when in actuality, each school district leader, school leader, and teacher has a different context they are working within. We must create systems and structures that acknowledge these differences and support leaders in personalizing to best meet the needs of their stakeholders.

Moreover, our current policies such as NCLB, "Race to the Top", and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) focus on accountability as measured through single assessments. ESSA takes a step toward a more integrated approach to accountability that I will discuss below. This

creates a tension between innovation, trying new things, and ensuring that schools make progress based on attainment scores at the end of the school year. Prior to ESSA, policy looked at grade-level attainment performance, not growth. Looking solely at attainment discounts a whole group of students in each school and district who may have made a large amount of growth within the year, but who started so far below grade level that the growth will not show up when we look at grade level proficiency.

Both research and this program evaluation suggest that implementing a model of Personalized Professional Development (PPD) both increases teachers' satisfaction and ownership of professional learning as well as teachers' ability to implement personalized learning for their students. To this end, both state and local policies should be changed in order to better support personalization for all. The goal of this personalization is to increase engagement of all stakeholders. "Engagement is not about baiting a hook. It's about helping students (families, teachers, principals, and districts) find their spark and make their own fire" (Ferlazzo, 2017, p. 31).

My proposed change plan leverages Kotter's change management cycle in order to move from compliance to align with wide spread policies, metrics, and best practices of continuous improvement through support of personalization at every level of education. This type of personalized continuous improvement is how we promote an equity agenda and ensure that every student succeeds. Patrick, Worthen, Frost, and Truong (2017) state in iNACOL's *Current to Future State* report:

> The prevailing approach in state education systems of accountability is based on compliance. Compliance-based accountability is about narrow, time-based metrics of student achievement, benchmarks for cohorts of students, after-the-fact use of data, and a one-size-fits-all approach to school improvement. Compliance-based accountability goes hand-in-hand with a top-down bureaucratic culture and management rather than distributed leadership that engages and empowers educators, leaders and communities.

> Compliance-based accountability is about collecting, reporting and using information because it is required by laws and regulations, rather than because it supports student success (p. 21).

Patrick et al. (2017) continues to explain that in contrast, accountability through continuous improvement means having benchmarks for every student with a focus on equity that provides the supports needed for every student to reach high standards of rigor. It is important that our accountability systems focus on continuous improvement, as our society and the demands on the workforce are continually changing. Thus, accountability should be focused on creating iterative and adaptive systems that promote improvement over time (p. 24).

As I dive into suggestions for policy changes based on research and this program evaluation, I want to note that the key to policy change is including the consumers into the development of policy. The suggestions below are an outline of ideas that can help to change policy to better support personalization. I suggest that policymakers and district/school leaders work collaboratively on state and district policy to ensure that policies have the intended impact. Policies will need to be personalized in each state and district in order to best meet the needs of each school system and school. It is important that policy makers and practitioners have an ongoing, sustained, and bidirectional dialogue in order to make a meaningful difference for students, teachers, and leaders (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 237)

**Policy Statement**

I am identifying three potential policies that address Personalization for All and outline multiple components for each policy that are needed for effective implementation of personalized learning. In the spirit of personalization, I have identified policies that have multiple options and that require collaboration between policymakers and intended users in order to flesh out and finalize for the context of implementation. These policies could be implemented

at the national, state or local level depending on how they are structured and which parts of each

policy is selected for implementation.  The three policies, pictured in Figure 8, are: (1)

Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers, (2) Aligned Resources for Personalization,

and (3) Accountability that Values Personalization.
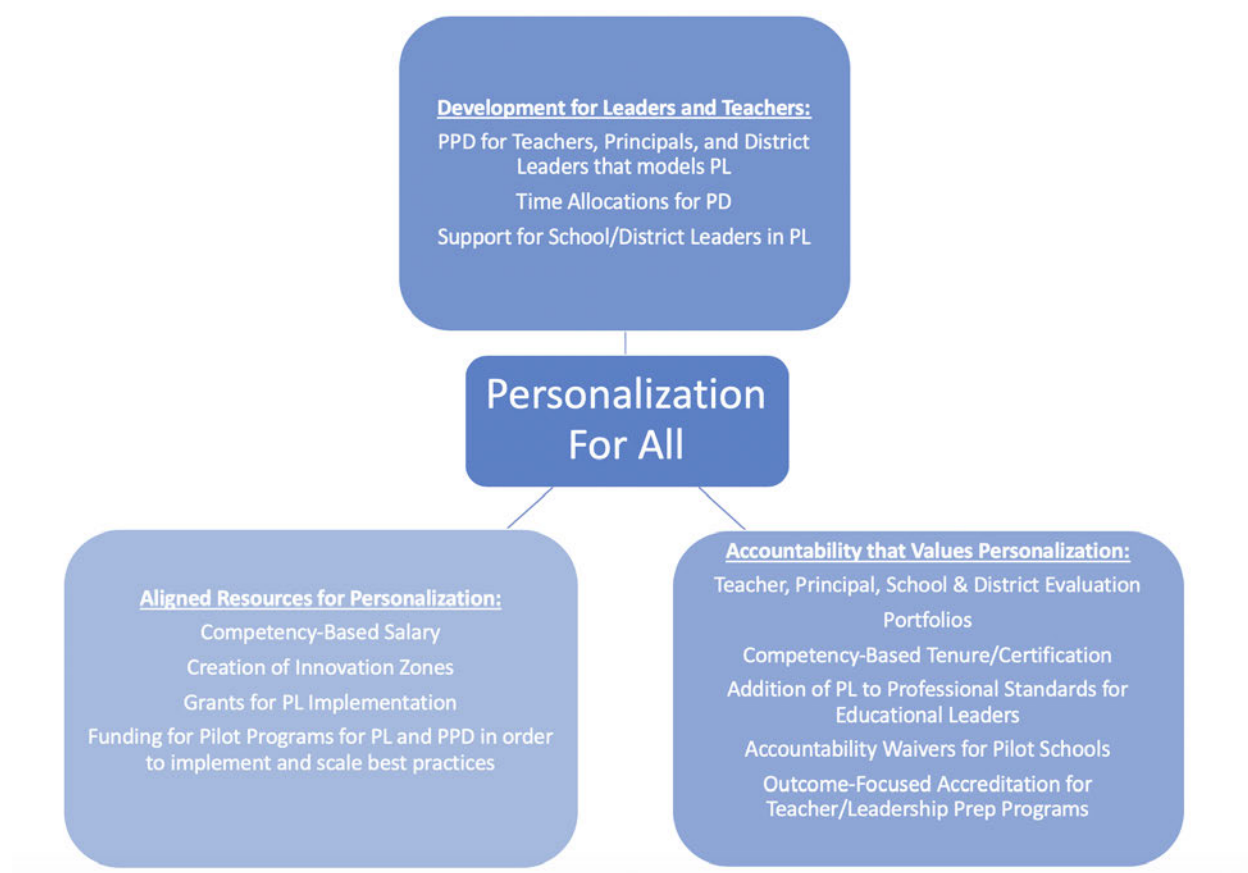


*Figure 8. Personalization for All Policies*

Below I have outlined each of my policy recommendations, in Tables 16, 17, and 18, that

support a system of continuous improvement and personalization for all stakeholders within the

system to ensure that the individual needs of each stakeholder are met, resulting in increased

personalization and achievement for all students. As stated in the introduction, it is imperative

that policymakers and practitioners work collaboratively to decide which policies and initiatives

are implemented to ensure the policy is useful to practitioners.

Table 16

*POLICY 1: Personalized Development for School/District Leaders and Teachers*

| What is Recommended | Why it is Recommended | How it will be Effective |
|---|---|---|
| *Personalized Professional Development (PPD) for school district leaders, principals, and teachers.* | PPD should be used throughout both schools and districts as a way to ensure that professional learning is meaningful for the user. Additionally, PPD increases the sense of ownership teachers and principals have over their own learning. There are many different models of PPD (such as choice pathways, independent study projects, and competency-based progressions) all of which leverage collaboration and continuous improvement, districts and schools will need to analyze the needs of their stakeholders to create a program that meets their needs. | Using PPD as the main form of professional learning will impact student achievement. According to Smith and Smith (2015), focusing on teacher development is the leadership move that has the largest effect on student achievement. Additionally, personalization aligns with how adults learn best and will provide the most effective professional learning system for teachers and leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; DeMonte, 2013; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Oberg De La Garza, 2011; Wolf et al, 2017). |
| *Increased Time Allocations*<br>● *Addition of at least 10 professional development days (not including regular weekly meetings/PLCs* | There are limited hours for professional learning in the United States versus other parts of the world (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Moreover, additional professional learning time for teachers, principals and district leaders would provide more time for collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. | Odden (2012) suggests what he calls an "ambitious set of professional development resources" including at least 10 student-free days of professional learning (p. 32). These days should be used to support teachers in PPD centered on how to implement personalized learning for students. These days can include release time for independent study projects as well as other personalized learning experiences. |
| *Support for School District Leaders in PL (Aligning district and school professional learning and improvement plans with personalization)* | In order to support a school-wide system of personalization, district and school leaders will need support with learning about personalized learning and how to personalize for those they lead. This should start at a smaller level through the creation of Innovation Zones (described under resources). Districts and States should ensure that leaders who are part of Innovation Zones experience personalization through their own learning. As programs scale, all leaders in the new schools and districts will need to have their learning personalized prior to implementation with their school or students. | When leaders within the district and school have experienced personalized learning themselves and understand the components of personalization, they will be more prepared to personalize for those they lead. Teachers should experience coaching, support, and professional learning that models what is expected for students (Benson, Dallas, Eller & Howton, 2015; Cator et al., 2014; DeMonte, 2013; Drago-Severson, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017). When educators participate in developmental and personalized processes themselves, having their own first-hand experiences, and see these practices modeled during their own learning process, educators are better equipped and able to implement and sustain similar practices in their own work context with students -- thus improving the conditions and outcomes |

| | | for students (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 25). |
|---|---|---|

Table 17

*POLICY 2: Aligned Resources for Personalization*

| **What is Recommended** | **Why it is Recommended** | **How it will be Effective** |
|---|---|---|
| *Competency-Based Salary Structure*<br>● *States provide incentives for districts to revise salary schedules based on effectiveness instead of experience*<br>● *States develops the minimum salary amounts and schedules as a base line*<br>● *States create initiatives for administrators and district leaders that are also competency- based* | Teacher salary should be designed to link pay to effectiveness levels, this mirrors the idea of students earning their diploma based on mastery instead of seat time.<br><br>Salary based on competency/effectiveness will add to the profession of education, which often is thought of as a lesser profession.<br><br>After the first three to four years of teaching, experience is not correlated with teacher effectiveness, however, the salary scale is still linked to experience. Currently nothing is linked directly to student performance, thus, the current teacher salary structure does not provide a strong incentive for improving teaching and learning (Odden, 2012, p. 93). | Odden (2012) provides a sample salary schedule that includes 4 effectiveness levels, with steps in each level and increases for degrees earned within each level. This salary schedule can be created with the current budget, it is just redesigning how salaries are calculated. This policy would be phased in over a number of years for new hires or others who opt into the program.<br><br>Using a Competency-Based Structure (based on effectiveness) will link salary with our main priority of improving teaching and learning. Additionally, district/school leaders and teachers will have a salary structure that mirrors the competency-based structure expected of students (once personalized learning is fully implemented). |
| *Creation of Innovation Zones* | Innovation Zones provide flexibility from state and local policies for innovative and pioneering districts to implement personalized and competency-based learning (Patrick et al., 2017, p. 46). States should provide flexibility with districts who are working on personalization so that they can innovate and best practices can then be adapted and scaled for other schools and districts. | The creation of Innovation Zones will encourage districts and schools who have the capacity and drive to implement personalized learning. These zones can then be used as laboratory sites for other schools and districts to visit and learn from. As Patrick et al. (2018) writes, "State education agencies interested in shifting their role from enforcing compliance to one of supporting innovation and building capacity in districts are working to spur new innovative instructional models and create space for competency-based pathways in student-centered learning models. States can create an innovation zone by passing enabling legislation to set up a program or offering certain waivers or exemptions from administrative regulations and statutory provisions" (p. 1). |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Grants for PL Implementation including Pilots for PL and PPD* | Grants for a set number of schools and/or districts should be made available based on an application and 3-year plan for piloting implementation of personalization for both teachers and students. This will provide additional funding for resources, professional development, school visits, and extended planning time needed to begin the implementation of personalized learning. | There is a large shift in mindset and a large amount of work when switching to a personalized system of teaching and learning that requires true collaboration and collective responsibility as well as professional development. Schools and Districts may need additional funding in order to provide time and space for educators and leaders to prepare for and implement this change. |

Table 18

*POLICY 3: Accountability that Values Personalization*

| What is Recommended | Why it is Recommended | How it will be Effective |
|---|---|---|
| *Teacher, Principal, School, and District Evaluations that Include PL* | Evaluations for all stakeholders within the educational system should be based on student growth, professional practice (including personalization), and portfolios of work. ESSA already moves school districts in this direction, requiring schools to be measured using four academic indicators and an "indicator of school quality" (Patrick et al., 2017, p. 22). I recommend that this final indicator should be aligned with personalization. Ensuring that accountability measures for evaluation are aligned with growth and personalization will encourage educators and leaders to implement personalized learning even though it is requiring a change in practice. | What is measured is what happens. If we want personalization to take hold, we must ensure that our evaluation systems value personalization and that personalization will help schools and personnel perform well on evaluations. Currently, evaluations are mostly meaningless. At federal level, previously NCLB set next to impossible standards of every student performing at grade level and did not evaluate for student growth. According to Weisberg et al. (2009) as cited in Odden (2012), "the most recent study of teacher evaluation systems concluded that 99+ percent of teachers are found to be satisfactory, accomplished, or advanced, even in districts and schools were student performance is abysmal" (p. 83). This shows that we need a better system for evaluation, which I argue should include student growth, professional practice that includes personalization techniques, and a digital portfolio of work (see below). |
| *Portfolios for District Leaders, Principals, Teachers, and Students* | Portfolios should be included in the new evaluation metrics that are aligned with personalization as described above. Portfolios provide strong evidence of practice. | Portfolios will help to round out the evaluation process so that it is not solely based on a few single observations or test scores. Additionally, portfolios can be used to share work and replicate best practices throughout a school or district. Wagner (2008) suggests that portfolios, showcasing a collection of work, be required for both educators and to receive an administrator license, explaining that |

| | | this would be a good start as compared to having to take and pass courses or exams (p. 153). |
|---|---|---|
| *Addition of PL into Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* | Currently the Standards for Educational Leaders do not include a standard about either innovation or personalization. This should be spelled out within the standards. In the Danielson Framework, which some districts use for teacher evaluation, the distinguished category has many attributes of personalized learning. We should make sure to align our expectations for school and district leaders with personalization. | If school and district leaders are evaluated based on standards that align with personalization, then they are more likely to implement personalization strategies. Personalization is a key to pursuing equity for all students, this could be put into Standard 3 (Equity and Cultural Responsiveness). Additionally, it should be included in Standard 6 (Professional Capacity of School Personnel) and 7 (Professional Community for Teachers and Staff) or it could be added as an additional standard. |
| *Accountability Waivers for Personalized Learning Schools* | Creation of Innovation Zones and Pilots is discussed under the resources section. There should also be accountability waivers for a set number of years for schools piloting PL and PPD. Having PL/Innovation waivers "would allow states, schools, and district to try bolder, more transformative approaches" (Hyslope & Mead, 2015, p. 38). The goal of these waivers would be to facilitate growth as well as evaluate innovative educational approaches. The waivers should be limited to those schools and districts piloting or implementing truly innovative models and would still have other key requirements for those schools and districts to meet. These waivers would still require schools to complete all federal reporting and would also require schools to continue to provide families with information about their child's performance (Hyslope & Mead, 2015, p. 41). | Providing schools with waivers that allows schools to bypass requirements such as procurement rules, staffing and class size restrictions, and seat-time requirements allow for more innovation and less time leaders have to spend stuck in the red tape of bureaucracy.<br><br>"The ultimate purpose of waivers is not just to provide space for innovation, but also to learn from that innovation and evaluate new accountability systems for personalized learning schools" (Hyslope & Mead, 2015, p. 42). |
| *Outcome-Focused Accreditation for Teacher/Leadership Prep Programs* | Teacher/Leadership prep programs should require demonstrated competence not simply courses and credits to earn certification. Moreover, programs should have to reapply every 5 years for accreditation and accreditation should be granted based on program design that aligns with best practices (including personalization) as well as the demonstrated effectiveness of the program's graduates within the field. Ravitch (2013) argues that we should "raise the standards for entry into | Personalization and competency-based learning should permeate every level of education. Thus, certification programs should follow the same expectations that will be put in place for personalization in schools. Additionally, this policy will require programs to invest in the long-term success of their graduates and ensure graduates have shown their ability to teach or lead prior to receiving certification. As Hyslope and Mead (2015) point out, "Even more than accountability, the biggest barrier to |

| | teaching" (p.8). | personalized learning is human capital and culture, not accountability...At the end of the day, it's about teacher knowledge, capacity, and having the tools and support they need to do [personalization] well at their school" (p. 22). |
|---|---|---|

The policies described above provide a menu for states and districts to choose from as they begin to implement personalization practices. Districts and states will need to make decisions about exactly which policy to implement based on the needs of their stakeholders. The policies they choose should be a marriage of accountability (the current system) and personalized learning (Hyslop & Mead, 2015, p. 32). Moreover, policy decisions should be made with both practitioners and policymakers at the table. As Gleason and Gerzon (2013) write, "Neglecting capacity building because it is not mandated can set back or sabotage a school's trajectory. And blindly following the best-intentioned government requirements can be equally damaging. Each school community must discern the right mix of professional learning, and the right combination of theorists and frameworks" (p. 147).

**Analysis of Needs**

In order to analyze the three policies recommended above against needs, I will look at six distinct disciplinary areas for a fuller understanding of the problem involved. In each of these areas, I will look at the key buckets for the policies described above: Flexibility and Development, Resources, and Accountability.

**educational analysis.**

Currently, our school system is not preparing graduates for the demands of the 21st century workplace and there is a large opportunity gap not only between students of different backgrounds within our country, but also between our country and the rest of the world (Wagner,

2014). "If your goal is to improve student learning-and that is the only goal that really matters--

the first problem that you have to work on is to improve teaching and coaching of teachers"

(Wagner, 2014, p. 128). Wagner (2014) goes on to suggest that portfolios should be used for

both teacher and administrator certification and evaluation, similar to the way National Board

Certification is run (p. 149). Wagner's key arguments for the necessity of the seven survival

skills directly aligns with the need for personalized learning. Gleason and Gerzon (2013) as well

as Blankstein et al. (2016) call for personalization as the means for how to attack the inequities

that exist within our country today. Thus, there is a need for these policies that support

personalization to be implemented in order to improve teaching and learning. In Table 19 I

outline the educational analysis and policy implications for each policy.

Table 19

*Educational Analysis and Policy Implications for Personalization for All Policies*

| Policy | Analysis | Policy Implications |
|--------|----------|---------------------|
| Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers | ● PPD, increased time allocations, and support for district/school leaders with PL implementation is needed because currently personalized learning is being implemented without changing the way we train and develop our teachers and leaders. This leads to ineffective models of personalization. | ● This policy should change how we support and develop our adult learners so that our systems mirror what we want systems to look like for students. <br> ● Increasing support and personalization for adults and providing more flexibility for schools and districts implementing personalized learning should increase the number of schools and districts providing personalization for students. |
| Aligned Resources for Personalization | ● Changing the salary structure, creating innovation zones, and providing grants will provide the structures and frameworks needed for teachers and leaders to innovate. Without the support of resources, it can feel frustrating to implement change and can deter schools and districts from innovation. | ● Resources must be aligned with priorities and what we want teaching and learning to look like. Ensuring resources are aligned to personalization and developing teachers and leaders will ensure that this policy is not simply aspirational. |
| Accountability that Values Personalization | ● Changing the leadership standards, evaluation, accreditation/certification, creating a portfolio system, and providing personalized learning waivers will help to align accountability with | ● Personalized Learning and accountability, although currently in tension need each other. Personalized Learning cannot continue to grow and scale unless there is evidence that it |

| | personalization, create new systems for accountability, and will provide teachers and leaders who are worried about change or innovation a way to take risks and try new practices. | works to improve student outcomes (there is some current research, but not enough). Additionally, accountability structures need to continue to find new and better ways to measure student learning, for example using real time data that is collected in personalized learning models, if these structures are going to work for schools (Hyslope & Mead, 2015, p. 43). |

**economic analysis.**

Different parts of the policies suggested will have a larger economic cost and/or burden on the state or school district. Some parts of the policy can be implemented with minimal cost, while others will need strategically planned funding. Table 20 below outlines the analysis and implications of each policy's cost.

Table 20

*Economic Analysis and Policy Implications for Personalization for All Policies*

| Policy | Analysis and Takeaways | Policy Implications |
|---|---|---|
| Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers | • PPD can be provided to all stakeholders through professional learning time that is already in the schedule. However, there will be a cost for supporting and developing both school and district leaders with how to implement PPD.<br>• LEAP Innovations provides a professional learning for teachers for 1.5 years to implement Personalized Learning for $25,000 for a single school team of 4-7 teachers. We could approximate a partnership with a similar non-profit that would cost a district $100,000 per year to train 25 school and district leaders at a time. These leaders could then go back and provide the professional learning at their own school. Depending on the district's size, this could run between $100,000 (25 people trained) to $1.2M (300 people trained). Bigger districts could have just district leaders trained and not Principals, cutting the cost to something more affordable for the district.<br>• According to Odden (2012), 10 days for professional learning can be added by adding a few additional days to the work year for district | • As Odden (2012) explains, "The key policy implication is for states to include in their school finance formulas sufficient funds for new teacher induction/coaching programs or to require 5.4 percent of each district's operating budget to be set aside for...key professional development resources." (Odden, 2012, p. 89). By setting aside 5.4% of each district's operating budget for professional learning, coaching, professional development days, and money for training will be covered (Odden, 2012, p. 89). |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | employees and that these costs can be covered through the state funding formula (p. 89). | |
| Aligned Resources for Personalization | • A Competency-Based Salary Structure can be created with the current money used for salaries (Odden, 2012, p. 93-97).<br>• The creation of Innovation Zones will not cost additional money to create, however, there should be at least one person hired by the district or state to oversee the Innovation Zones. This could be someone already employed at the state or district if there is already a Chief Innovation Officer, however, some districts and states would need to create a new position that would most likely run at least $150,000/yr.<br>• Providing grants to schools who are piloting or implementing Personalized Learning will cost states and districts money. However, there are non-profit partners around the country that have grants for personalized learning. It is possible that districts and schools can apply for grants that are already available. | • According to Odden (2012), "A salary structure of this type is affordable by almost all school districts if they reallocate current salary dollars to this structure over time" (p. 96). This means that a Competency-Based Salary Structure can be implemented with little change in overall cost.<br>• Additional funding from either the district or state would need to be provided for a Chief Innovation Officer, unless this position already exists, to oversee Innovation Zones.<br>• Grant money could be provided by the state or district; however, it is more economically affordable to seek out and apply for personalization and innovation grants that are already available. |
| Accountability that Values Personalization | • Revamping evaluation and creating/supporting electronic portfolios will require the use of district or state level personnel. I recommend the creation of a task force to evaluate evaluations at all levels. The task force would require time from current employees' days, but would not require additional compensation. This group could then create a plan for changing the evaluation process to include personalization. There would be a cost of providing professional learning to all district employees about these changes.<br>• Providing accountability waivers and working to make certification programs competency-based are both state level policies and initiatives. There will be a large cost in revamping certification programs, I suggest partnering and piloting with one local program first and trying the change with a single cohort of educators or leaders. For accountability waivers, there will need to be a state level employee designated to work on accountability waivers, approving the waivers, and following up with the other accountability requirements for schools and districts involved. | • Changing evaluations for teachers, leaders, schools, and districts will require money be spent on development of the new evaluation program as well as training for staff.<br>• Competency-based accreditation and certification will require a quality partnership with a university or alternative certification program that is willing to create and pilot the new model.<br>• Accountability waivers will cost money if the state needs to hire someone to oversee and manage this process. |

**social analysis.**

The current climate and circumstances support a policy change toward personalization. Outside of education everything is becoming personalized, from your iPhone case to the gifts you give your loved ones (my brother recently received socks with images of his dog's face on them, conveniently named "Pup on Socks"). Many restaurants now special in "designing your own" food, from pizza to pasta to sushi, cars have designer license plates, and almost anything can be engraved with a personal message.

However, our current education system has not caught up with our social reality. We currently work in a system that tells teachers what should be taught and how to do it. According to Wagner (2014) this is not an effective system to support modern education (p. 152); an education that must prepare students for jobs that do not currently exist. Moreover, our climate of isolation is actually the enemy to our improvement. Personalized Learning for students requires students to collaborate as well as teachers and school leaders. As Wagner (2014) points out, "Teachers cannot figure out all by themselves how to get *all* students to be proficient, and administrators, working alone, do not know how to create a system where *all* their teachers improve continuously" (p. 157). Couros similarly points out that if we want learning experiences to change for students then we must also change the professional learning experiences that we provide teachers (Couros, 2015, p. 182). Our past social norms made school and district leaders as well as teachers feel that they must be experts at everything, when in fact, what we want our educational teachers and leaders to be is co-learners (Couros, 2015, p. 182). As it is now impossible to be an expert at everything, instead it is better if we are facilitators of learning and we allow our students (or our teachers/principals) to do the heavy lifting of learning. Table 21 outlines the social analysis of each policy.

Table 21

*Social Analysis and Policy Implications for Personalization for All Policies*

| Policy | Analysis and Takeaways | Policy Implications |
|---|---|---|
| Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers | ● Wolf et al. (2017) points out that many teachers are dissatisfied with their professional learning and that personalizing professional development would both increase satisfaction and positively impact growth.<br>● Teachers and principals want to have a voice as well as ownership over their own learning. It is something that I have heard from teachers at both of the schools I've led and is also the same feedback I always give to my supervisors. | ● There is a clear want and need for support and development around personalization. In order to implement personalized learning for students, principals must personalize for teachers, and district leaders must personalize for principals. The largest issue is that although we are primed for this change, there are not many people with extensive knowledge of personalized learning, so there must be strategic implementation of support and development at every level of the state and district. |
| Aligned Resources for Personalization | ● In education budgets always feel tight. During my first principalship, there was a year where I had to cut over $200,000 from my budget mid-year and other year when there was a spending freeze. My current state has increased per pupil spending slightly over the last few years, however, per pupil spending in my current state is $4,000 lower than in than the previous state where I worked, which when you multiply that by the almost 500 students at my school, it is a yearly increase of $2 million.<br>● Odden (2012) focuses his entire book on how to improve student learning when budgets are tight. | ● There is not likely to be an increase in funding to support personalization. States and districts will have to be innovative in how they utilize their current finances to support the work.<br>● Odden (2012) suggests schools leverage the power of technology and online learning, which directly aligns with Personalized Learning. These could be potential ways to maximize resources. Additionally, Odden (2012) also suggests increasing class size slightly in order to save money for other high impact academic initiatives. |
| Accountability that Values Personalization | ● Currently most people are either pro or anti-accountability. The move to accountability that values personalization will push on both sides to compromise.<br>● There is a middle ground in the tension between accountability and personalization. "As personalized learning develops, the conflict between the risk takers (in favor of more personalization) and the risk averse (defending accountability) could be eased by bringing both back to where they agree: the need for all students to graduate college-and career-ready" | ● Hyslop and Mead (2015) explain that, "For 30 years, education policy has been living in a standards-based world. If the future includes personalization, the question policymakers now face is how to get there" (p. 31).<br>● I believe that personalization is standards-based, however, at individual paces, which makes measuring grade-level performance an ineffective measure of personalized learning.<br>● In actuality, the current standards-based accountability system and personalized learning (competency-based progression) should be integrated to create a new |

| | (Hyslop & Mead, 2015, p. 21). | effective measure for student growth on standards. |
|---|---|---|

**Political Analysis.** The first policy, Personalized Development and Support for Leaders and Teachers, will be well received by teachers who are hoping for more autonomy, choice, voice, and ownership. Similarly, principals will be excited to have district leadership involve them in their learning and differentiate to meet the individual needs of principals and schools. However, when we move into the realm of funding and accountability, parts of this policy will not be well received by teachers and unions. In both the legal and moral/ethical analysis below I mention the need for a strong, effective change management plan specifically for the Competency-Based Salary Structure as well as changes with evaluation, implementation of portfolios, and revamping of certification programs. These are highly political topics; however, they should not be avoided for this reason if they are logical and can make a difference for students. Noguera points out that in the current system students are the main stakeholder being held accountable for failure. "Although students are required to pass rigorous exit exams, schools are not required to ensure that all students have been adequately prepared so that they have the opportunity to learn the relevant material" (Noguera, 2008, p. 175). Although it will take planning and intentionality, these policies will help to move the responsibility for student learning onto the district, school, and teacher/leader preparation programs. Table 22, below, outlines the political analysis of the Personalization for All policies proposed.

Table 22

*Political Analysis and Policy Implications for Personalization for All Policies*

| Policy | Analysis and Takeaways | Policy Implications |
|---|---|---|
| Personalized Development | ● Personalizing professional learning for adults will score political points for the | ● This policy is a quick win politically for the implementation of these |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| for Leaders and Teachers | state, district, and school. This should be something that teachers' value and want.<br>● Teachers will appreciate additional professional development time, especially if they have a voice in what topics are covered during that time. | policies. Hopefully this win can be used as a leverage point for some of the other more controversial policy changes proposed. |
| Aligned Resources for Personalization | ● Many high performing teachers will not oppose the salary structure change, however, both unions and a majority of teachers will oppose changing the salary structure to be based on competency and effectiveness. Families will most likely support the change in salary structure, as they have a vested interest in their students receiving instruction from high-performing teachers.<br>● On the other hand, Innovation Zones and grants for PL will be easy wins with most educators. | ● Changing the salary structure to be competency-based will be the most difficult policy to pass politically. As stated in the next two sections, there is a need for a strong and effective change management plan. |
| Accountability that Values Personalization | ● There are many politically charged aspects of this policy, including, changing evaluations, implementing digital portfolios and revamping certification programs and the way they earn accreditation.<br>● Teachers will not want to change the evaluation system, simply due to the unknown. Even if the evaluation system will be better and more useful, change, especially in terms of job stability is difficult. Additionally, teachers will want to know when they will have time to create digital portfolios.<br>● Teacher and leadership preparation programs are not going to want to change their structure to competency-based certification. Additionally, they will mostly likely oppose tracking the success rates of their graduates and reapplying for accreditation every 5 years. | ● A strong change management plan will be needed to lead the push to competency-based evaluation at all levels.<br>● School and district leaders will need to plan time and support for teachers in creating digital portfolios of their practice.<br>● States will need to create a plan for how to support universities and alternative certification programs in this policy change and show them how and why this change will be beneficial. |

**legal analysis.**

There are many current policies and informal traditions that would be greatly disrupted and not align with the three new policies that I recommend. Personalized Learning is an innovative change that will disrupt the current structure of education. The implementation of these policies would require extensive piloting, marketing, and change management. There are many people who will disagree with some of the proposed changes, however, that shouldn't stop

us from considering these options. If shown effective on a small scale, then these practices can be slowly adapted and replicated.

Current accountability structures have started to change toward personalization. Noguera describes the issues previously with NCLB testing only for grade level proficiency and generally blaming students instead of schools or teachers for failure (Noguera, 2008, p. 175). With the adaption of ESSA, there are now more growth metrics included as well as other indicators for school evaluation. This is a start toward a system that can show the progress made by students through personalization of learning.

Generally, how school works does not align with the tenets of personalized learning. Students move through years of schooling based on their age, not based on what they know or need. Classrooms tend to be led by the teacher who is the expert and provides all the information that students need. Personalized learning asks for us to group students in multi-age groups, push teachers to serve as facilitators, coaches, and mentors, and allow students to move at their own pace, not at a predetermined pace based on age.

Additionally, the policies I propose push the idea of competency-based learning onto teachers and principals as well, changing salary structures, evaluation and certification. These are long-standing systems supported by unions that will be difficult to change. I have outlined the legal analysis and policy implications in Table 23.

Table 23

*Legal Analysis and Policy Implications for Personalization for All Policies*

| Policy | Analysis and Takeaways | Policy Implications |
|---|---|---|
| Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers | • Changing support and development systems for teachers and leaders will challenge the informal structure and routine of school and district leaders making decisions and telling teachers | • Although I believe that teachers will enjoy this change, I believe that it will be frustrating at first, as it will be new territory for many. When implementing PPD at my school for the first time, teachers often asked me for what they should do and exactly how they should do it. It |

| | what and how to do their jobs. | took time for teachers to understand that there is not one right answer and that I didn't have all of the answers. This policy change will take time as all stakeholders adjust. |
|---|---|---|
| Aligned Resources for Personalization | • A competency-based salary structure is going to be a huge legal issue with unions. This idea is not in line with the current practice of salary increases based on seniority. | • There will need to be a strong change management plan for this proposed policy as well as a few pilots with data to show its effectiveness prior to roll out at the state level.<br>• There is the possibility that this change will bring more favorable opinions of the teaching profession, since salary will be based on performance (more similar to a business model). |
| Accountability that Values Personalization | • Similar to a competency-based salary program, changing accreditation/credentials, evaluations, and accountability with waivers will pose political issues especially with teacher unions. | • Similar to the suggestion above, there will need to be a strong change management plan for this policy as well as clear examples of where this has worked effectively. |

**moral and ethical analysis.**

There are two main reasons that these three policies for Personalization for All should be implemented: (1) our students deserve it and (2) our educators deserve it. Currently there is an opportunity gap in the United States, and all, not just some of our students deserve to have their needs and interests met through our education system. Moreover, past efforts at trying to achieve equity, as outlined Chapter 2 (literature review) have failed. In addition, Darling-Hammond (2011), DeMonte (2013), Hill (2009), and Oberg De La Garza (2011) all agree that much of the current professional development and support for educators is ineffective. As Wagner (2014) writes, "So just as we must facilitate the evaluation of students' classes and assessments from memorization to mastery, we must do the same for those of adults. We need to identify the *competencies* that are most important to be an effective teacher or administrator and then develop ways that adults can show proficiency" (p. 148). It is both our students and our adults that

deserve personalization in their support and development to become their best selves. I have

outlined the moral and ethical analysis and policy implications in Table 24.

Table 24

*Moral and Ethical Analysis and Policy Implications for Personalization for All Policies*

| Policy | Analysis and Takeaways | Policy Implications |
|---|---|---|
| Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers | • It is our moral and ethical obligation to ensure that our teachers and leaders have effective support and development structures to be successful in their positions. Knowing that most find professional learning ineffective, there is an imperative to make this change towards more personalized support. | • As the move is made to personalize, it is important that district and state leaders are trained first so that they can support school leaders and teachers through the process and ensure that state and district policies align with personalization - aiding to the work instead of impeding it. |
| Aligned Resources for Personalization | • It is important to back our initiatives with funding and resources, otherwise policies are simply aspirational.<br>• Students deserve to have effective teachers and effective teachers deserve to be paid based on their performance. Thus, the Competency-Based Salary structure is a moral and ethical obligation. | • Although it is moral and ethical to make the suggested policy moves, these moves go against the current structure. It is important to use change management with the new salary structure and to make sure to have monitoring systems to ensure that grant money is used effectively and impacts student outcomes. |
| Accountability that Values Personalization | • Evaluations, portfolios, accreditation, and certification are all necessary for improving the profession and teacher practice. These changes will create a competency-based system of certification and evaluation.<br>• You can make a claim that accountability waivers are either ethical or unethical depending on your perspective. The importance of the waiver is to allow innovation to take place without the pressure of year-to-year score increases, as it can sometimes take a few years for results to begin. | • As I have stated above, these changes are necessary, but do not align with current practices and likely will be opposed by unions. A strong change management plan will be necessary.<br>• It is imperative that there are clear progress requirements for schools with accountability waivers. If end-of-year state assessments will not be used, then there should be clear indicators of progress to hold those schools accountable to implementation of personalized learning as well as student growth. |

## Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

Stakeholder relationships will be important in moving the recommended policies

forward. Additionally, these policies impact all of the stakeholders within the school and/or

district community. Below I have outlined the implications for each stakeholder group based on

the three suggested policies in Table 25.

Table 25

*Implications of Personalization for All Policies on Stakeholder Groups*

| Stakeholder | Implications |
|---|---|
| Students | Students are the consumers who we want to impact with the changes toward personalization. These policy changes should help support teachers and school leaders to build better instructional programs that meet the individual needs of students. Although these changes should be for the betterment of students, there is still a significant change that will take place for students and there should be messaging and support provided to help students make the transition to a more personalized program. |
| Families | Families will need to be informed of the changes being made at the school, district, and state level. Personalizing instruction should help to build better relationships between the school and families. Students will be able to run their own conferences and explain what they are learning and why. Families should be positively impacted through ensuring accountability for individual student progress as well as changing teacher/principal salaries and evaluations to be based on performance. Overall, these policies should increase the quality of instruction for students, and therefore positively impacting relationships with families. |
| Teachers | As described in the needs assessment above, parts of the policies advocate for additional support, development, and funding for teachers, while other parts of the policy require a large change in how teachers are paid and evaluated. Pay and evaluation are topics that can break trust with teachers. It will be important to only implement these changes through a clearly thought out plan and to start with schools who already have a strong foundation in personalization. Hopefully schools with this foundation will have teachers willing to pilot these new ideas that leverage competency and effectiveness as key factors for pay and evaluation. This type of change can only take place when trust has been built between teachers and school/district leadership. |
| Principals | Principals are key stakeholders in the change process and will determine whether or not change takes place in individual schools. It will be important to build a sense of urgency with principals as well as the why behind the changes (both of these steps should be done with teachers as well). Principals who do not have a background in personalized learning will need additional support with implementation of the new policies otherwise the policies will either be ignored or implemented simply for compliance. District leaders will need to build trust with principals and ensure they follow through with support. If Principals feel the district is either unsupportive or a hindrance to implementation it will be difficult to work towards the stated changes from the recommended policies. |
| Central Office | There will be multiple changes in how central office functions and what they |

| | oversee and support with these policy changes. For example, central office may begin to oversee accountability waivers as well as provide personalized professional learning for principals. It will be important for the state, school board, and superintendent to ensure that every division of central office and staff member understands the changes that will take place, why these changes are important, and how each job will be affected. Additionally, all central office staff will need to be trained in personalized learning. It will be important for central office to coach principals and facilitate their learning rather than tell principals what to do. This is the same shift the policy is asking for principals and teachers to make as well. |
|---|---|
| Superintendents | The state will need to invest and develop superintendents in the main components of personalized learning. It will be important that the superintendent help to message the policy changes with all of the stakeholder groups. Additionally, to make this push, personalized learning will need to be a key tenet in the district improvement plan and superintendent's priorities. The Superintendent will need to make recommendations to the board on how to fund these policies. It is important that the superintendent be a driving force in the change plan toward personalization as to be successful personalization strategies should be implemented at every level of the district. |
| School Board | Each school board will also play a key role in the implementation of these policies, including approving the budget to fund the policies. The board should also ask for data and accountability measures on how personalization is progressing. The board will help hold the superintendent, district, and schools accountable for ensuring that implementation of these policies increases personalization and positively impacts student learning. |

**Conclusion**

I have identified three potential policies, (1) Personalized Development for Leaders and Teachers, (2) Alignment of Resources for Personalization, and (3) Accountability that Values Personalization in order to work toward a vision of equity through personalization for all. Our country needs to change our educational system, which has been outdated for years. We must fight for equity through personalizing to meet individual student needs and enact innovative and controversial policies to support that work. I have noted that these are suggested policies that practitioners and policymakers should collaborate around and adapt to meet the individual needs of states, schools, and districts. As Ravitch (2013) points out, "Good schools cannot be mass-produced like automobiles; every good school has its own culture, reflecting the character of the

community and competence of its staff...Schools should not operate like factories to turn out identical products. Good schools are akin to families, in which every member of the family is different and every member of the family matters; they are akin to orchestras, a cooperative effort that requires skilled performers in every role, guided by a skilled conductor" (p. 276). To this end, personalization will look different in every state, district, school, and classroom because it will be tailored to the needs and interests of the stakeholders it serves.

**CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION**

**Introduction**

This literature review, program evaluation and policy recommendation show a need for changing outcomes for students in our schools, especially our low-income and minority students who are not afforded the same opportunities and access as their more affluent peers. In order to tackle an equity agenda, there must be a change in how we support and train teachers and leaders, so that they can change their practices to better support students. As Sean Slade, ASCD's senior director for global outreach, states:

> Understanding the needs of each student can only occur in environments which respect and cater to the individual needs of each teacher also. These two things are inseparable. If we truly want to personalize learning, it can only take place when we allow teachers and school staff to personalize teaching, taking the whole person into consideration. (as cited in Rodman, 2019, p.110)

Personalizing professional learning for teachers requires alignment with a vision and strategic plan while attending to context and promotes collaboration and continuous improvement. This personalization helps teachers to feel more satisfaction with and ownership over their professional learning as well as increased ability to implement personalized learning, or other new practices, in their own classrooms. In addition, there must be consistent leadership to support and lead this charge. As Ravitch (2013) explains, "Successful schools in distressed communities have stable leadership and a shared vision for change" (p. 61). I am excited to apply my learning from this program evaluation to my new context as well as throughout my career in the future -- ensuring that teachers are cared for and supported in a way that will impact outcomes for our most vulnerable populations of students.

**Discussion**

The process of reviewing current research, evaluating a Personalized Professional Development model, interviewing school and district leaders, and recommending policies aligned with personalization at a systems level addressed my initial purpose of learning for improvement and gathering knowledge about effective PPD practices. Moreover, this program evaluation allowed me to dive deeper with experts and practitioners to think about the systemic change necessary to address the inequities that exist in schools and how systemwide personalization has the potential to address those inequities -- potentially evening the odds for our low-income and minority students.

Furthermore, this program evaluation provided me the opportunity to look both at my own work as well as that of other educators and researchers.  The themes that came out through my program evaluation were less about personalization strategies and more about systemic ways to support and build a culture of personalization.  Through my evaluation I found that first, personalized support must be aligned to and derived from an overarching vision and strategic plan. Wolf, Bobst and Magnum (2017) warns that "the failure to develop a vision focused on teaching and learning is often cited as the biggest pitfall in a personalized and digital learning effort" (p. 17). Wolf et al. (2017) also notes the importance of using that vision to establish a culture that supports change, where educators are encouraged to take risks, fail, grow, and improve their own instructional designs and strategies, because this will then help teachers to provide students with the same opportunities to take risks and explore within their own learning (p. 6). Additionally, personalizing professional learning at its core requires the work of teams and a focus on collaborative practices. As Wagner (2008) writes, "isolation is the enemy of improvement." Although many people initially think that personalization is about individualizing

everything, in fact, personalization is about collaboration and integrating the work for both adults

and students.  Similarly, instead of providing blanketed strategies to implement everywhere,

personalization is about developing the capacity of teams to engage in the continuous

improvement process so that they can create the systems and strategies they need themselves

based on their context.

Another theme that came up, outside the scope of my original research questions, was

around the lack of people with the capacity and will to personalize. This theme leads to many of

the policy options that I proposed, because it sheds light on the fact that educators are not

receiving training in personalization and there is no incentive for schools or districts to provide

that training on the ground.  Moreover, teachers and leaders are leaving our lowest performing,

highest need schools at a rapid rate (The New Teacher Project, 2012). Wagner (2008) also

describes this epidemic when stating:

> Lack of adequate teacher preparation and support is considered the primary cause for the
>
> astounding public-school teacher attrition rate. Studies show that nearly one in two
>
> teachers who start out in the classroom leave after just five years! The National
>
> Commission on Teaching and American's Future (NCTAF) estimates that the national
>
> cost of this teacher dropout problem is *over $7 billion dollars a year.* (p. 146)

 Not only do people lack the capacity to lead this work, many of the best educators that do have

the capacity are not staying long-term in the positions we need them in in order to close the

achievement and opportunity gaps. This program evaluation also made clear the need for a

change management plan when implementing Personalized Professional Development (and

personalized learning).  Personalization requires a significant mindset shift as well as change in

practice, which requires an effective change management plan to ensure that true change in culture can take place.

Using takeaways from the program evaluation, I crafted a change plan based on Kotter's (1995) eight step change process.  This change plan outlines the steps that I will take in my new context, at Monroe, and that others can take that want to implement Personalized Professional Development.  The plan focuses on creating a sense of urgency and need, building a guiding coalition to create a vision, and then co-creating the learning experiences and short-term wins that can eventually lead to a culture of personalization for adults and students. This change plan requires the collaboration of the intended users, in my case, teachers at Monroe, in order to flesh out all of the details of how personalization will look within the school's specific context. Writing the change plan led me to think more critically about what policies could be put in place to truly break down barriers and support the personalization necessary to lead an equity agenda, as this work is far from easy.

As stated previously, the current policies in our country do not support innovation or personalization, but rather stability.  In this case, where our school system has stayed the same for over 100 years and is currently failing students of color and students who live in poverty, stability is not what we need.  The policies I proposed as options to removing barriers and promoting personalization were selected in order to promote innovation and change.  I outline progressive policy options that should be collaboratively selected and implemented with both policymakers and educators, the intended users. As Rodman (2019) states:

> One of the first lessons teachers learn in their certification courses is how to find (and use) their "teacher voice." Yet, once they are in the classroom, too often this voice

becomes muted, overshadowed by education policies, programs, and processes

constructed by individuals who will never be called upon to implement them. (p. 11)

Having teachers and principals at the table during the development of future policies will be

integral to ensuring policies are not simply aspirational. These suggested policies center on

personalizing development for teachers and leaders, aligning resources to support innovation,

and changing accountability to value personalization.  Gleason and Gerzon (2013) charge us with

"the responsibility of discerning how these policies can be organized to serve our best hopes and

plans for equity and achievement.  Government policies and mandates, at every level, may help

raise the bar of equity and personalization, but they do not set the ceiling on what achievement

can be" (p. 159). Some of the policies I recommend are controversial, politically charged, and

expensive, although these policies could help remove barriers, we as leaders cannot wait for

these policies to begin our equity through personalization work, because students and teachers

deserve personalization now.

**Leadership Lessons**

I have learned a lot in my research of trying to figure out how to best provide

personalized development to teachers in order to impact student outcomes.  I have realized that

personalization is much less about skills and strategies and much more about the change process,

collaboration, and capacity building.  As Jennifer Orr, a 3rd grade Nationally Board-Certified

teacher from Fairfax County, VA highlights:

Teachers often feel isolated in their classroom or building and do not have meaningful

opportunities to talk to, learn with, and be challenged by others. These opportunities are

critical for teachers to grow and improve their instruction. In addition, I think such

growth is a factor in strong teachers remaining in the profession. (as cited in Rodman,

2019, p. 64)

I have reflected on how policies can remove barriers as well as discourage or impede true equity

work. Many of the previous policies put in place were aiming to close the achievement gap,

however these policies have driven compliance culture and technical solutions instead of

innovative strategies to change outcomes for students. Even at a school like Adams Elementary

where we changed the school rating to get in "good standing" and drastically increased test

scores, there were still students who were not being served.

This program evaluation has pushed me to look systematically beyond a single school to

think about larger systems, structures, and policies that are needed to provide an equitable

education to all students and support teachers in an effective and meaningful way to achieve that

end. Through analysis and reflection, I have also realized how unique each school and district

context is and how different implementation of Personalized Professional Development will look

in each context. For example, putting the same Choice PLCs and 20% Projects in place at

Monroe as I did at Adams Elementary would only be a band-aid strategy, and would not garner

the result my school is seeking. Rather, I need to engage in the change process collaboratively

with my stakeholders, intended users, so that I both build their capacity, but also attend to our

context and needs at Monroe.

Moving forward, I will continue to advocate for innovation and drastic change to our

school system that is currently failing students. I will push for equity through personalization

both in my current context, at Monroe, as well as in my future work, because I believe that every

child deserves to have an educational experience that prepares them to compete in our global

society.

**Conclusion**

Teachers and students alike deserve to be developed and supported in an engaging, exciting, caring, and challenging environment.  Our demands of teachers, when we ask them to pursue equity through personalization, are extraordinary and can only be accomplished together as a collaborative community.  As Gleason and Gerzon (2013) explain, "Personalizing learning for students school wide can happen when adult collaboration and learning is central in the context of an ambitious equity agenda. It's about changing the way work in schools happens" (p. 157). This change that Gleason and Gerzon (2013) describe must be made because, "Our teachers are worthy of this change, our students deserve the benefits [and] effective professional learning must be focused, sustained, job-embedded, and personalized.  Otherwise, it is simply a hope...not a practice" (Rodman, 2019, p. 9). No matter how difficult or how many barriers there are, both our teachers and students deserve personalization that pushes them beyond what they thought possible. I will continue to pursue an equity agenda through personalization because my students, our students, and all students deserve it.

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**Appendix A: Interview Informed Consent**

My name is Megan McCarter, and I am currently a doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago. I am asking you to participate in this study, "Preparing Schools for the Demands of the Next Century: A Program Evaluation on the Impact of Personalized Professional Development." I intend to gather data around what systems and structures schools and districts can put into place to better support teachers in professional learning to increase teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students. This program evaluation will look for themes within both qualitative and quantitative data about teachers' perceptions of professional development and support and teachers' willingness to implement new personalization strategies in their classrooms. This form outlines the purpose of the evaluation and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant in this focus group interview.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Megan McCarter, doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to explore the strengths and weaknesses of personalized professional development structures and supports for teachers and *not* to evaluate teachers. Participation in this study will include interviews with employees from LEAP Innovations as well as my professional network. The interview will be conducted in a semi-structured format over Zoom or Google Hangouts. The interview consists of 10 questions about professional learning. It is estimated that the interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. While an audio-recording of the interview will be done to assist with the analysis of transcripts, your identity will remain anonymous. Your responses will be coded by P1, P2, etc. Any other identifying information will not be connected to your interview responses. Your identity will remain anonymous in all data records, analyses and reporting of data.

Only I will have access to the digital interview recordings and transcript notes. They will be physically safeguarded on my password protected device. Upon completion of the research, I will delete/destroy all recordings and notes from these focus group interviews.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences, and used to make recommendations about the professional learning structures but participants' identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants).

There are no anticipated risks, no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Upon request you may receive summary results from this program evaluation and copies of any publications that may occur.  Please email the researcher, Megan McCarter at to request results from this evaluation.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, Megan McCarter at

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact:

- Dr. Elizabeth Minor, Assistant Professor/NLU Director for Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, by email at                         or by phone at                    ; or
- Shaunti Knauth, Chair of NLU's Institutional Research Review Board, by email at                              or by phone at                    ;
- The IRRB chair is located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

*Consent:*  I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study (Preparing Schools for the Demands of the Next Century:  A Study on the Impact of Personalized Professional Development).  My participation will consist of the activities below during October 2019 through November 2019:

- One 45-60 minute interview

Thank you for your consideration.


_____                    _____
Participant's Signature                                        Date


_____                    _____
Researcher's Signature                                        Date

**Appendix B: Interview Invitation Email**

Dear (insert name of person here),

   I am working on a program evaluation of the effectiveness of personalized professional development on teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning, and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students.  The purpose of this program evaluation is to analyze personalized professional development strategies implemented in a previous school I led and gather data on best practices in personalizing professional development in order to make recommendations for effective practices in professional learning for the new school I lead and other schools/districts.

   You are invited to participate in an interview.  It should last approximately 45-60 minutes. I am interested in documenting your experience with planning and facilitating professional learning and personalization professional learning as well as your opinions on how professional learning impacts teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their professional learning, ownership over their learning and willingness to implement personalization strategies for students.  Lastly, I want to learn more about how to effectively balance providing personalization while still ensuring that all teachers have enough support and the school has vertical and horizontal alignment.

   Please indicate your willingness to participate by responding to this email with a few times you are available for the interview.  If you volunteer, I will provide you with an informed consent form and a meeting date/time.  Please be assured that your identity and interview responses will remain anonymous.  All data will be assigned to your participant ID number and will not be associated with your name or identifying characteristics.  Recordings and transcripts will be held my password-protected laptop and destroyed at the conclusion of my study.  If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration,
Megan McCarter

**Appendix C: Interview Questions (Personalized Professional Development)**

1. What was the most effective professional learning experience in which you have participated?  Why was it so effective?
2. How does the professional learning you create and implement for LEAP differ from your previous professional learning experiences?
3. What professional learning practices have you seen that have the largest positive impact on teachers' feelings of job satisfaction?  How so?
4. What professional learning practices have you seen/implemented that had the largest positive impact on teachers' feeling of ownership over their own learning?  How so?
5. What professional learning practices have you seen/implemented that had the largest positive impact on teachers' willingness to implement personalization strategies in their own classrooms?  How so?
6. What trends do you notice in professional learning systems and structures in schools that have effectively implemented personalized learning for students and increased student outcomes?
7. How would you recommend that principals/district leaders balance the need for personalization PD with ensuring alignment and support for all teachers?
8. What are your recommendations for school and district leaders looking to implement personalized professional development?  Why are you making these recommendations?
9. What have you seen as the biggest challenges or barriers to success with implementing Personalized Professional Development?
10. Is there anything else you would like me to know about this topic?