KPBSD Personalized Learning FAQ's

What is Personalized Learning?
The most commonly accepted definition, from International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), is:

> *Personalized Learning (PL) is tailoring learning for each student's strengths, needs and interests— including enabling student voice and choice in what, how, when, and where they learn—to provide flexibility and supports to ensure mastery at the highest standards possible.*

Personalized learning is the structuring schools, classrooms, and instruction so we can better respond to the individual needs of students, instead of expecting students to fit the current mold or adapt to structures that may not be successful for them. Many of our teachers implement elements of personalized learning in their classrooms right now. Key elements include:

- Integrated Digital Content: Digital content that allows for a differentiated path and pace
- Targeted Instruction: Instruction aligned to specific student needs and learning goals
- Data Driven Decisions: Frequent data collection that informs instructional decisions and groupings
- Student Reflection and Ownership: Ongoing student reflection that promotes ownership of learning

Personalized learning is about continuing and improving our shift away from the one-size-fits-all, factory model of education to better prepare students for the jobs and needs of their future. We want to directly connect students to rigorous learning that is relevant and prepares them for life, college, and careers they will encounter after high school, and create a system that supports this approach.

"The modern concept of personalized learning leverages technology tools, classroom organization, student ownership, and redefines the terms *teaching* and *learning* to help teachers truly meet the individual needs of students in their classrooms. Through this process, we create new classroom environments that allow students to do some work at their own pace, path and place, and some work directly with small group instruction from the teacher, which allows teachers to better focus instruction and target student needs." –Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

"Personalized learning is skilled educators connecting with individual students to meet that student's specific needs. Personalized learning shifts from a one-size-fits-all model of education to one which better prepares students for the jobs and needs of the future. The goal of this school district is to meet the learning needs of every learner. Personalized learning leads to measurable increases in student achievement and engagement." –Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Is *Personalized Learning* just the next fad in education or "one more thing"?
No, we don't believe it is. The concept of personalized learning has been around for decades, and it is rooted in the belief that great teaching understands that students have unique, individual needs, and as educators, it is incumbent upon us to help tailor our instruction to those individual needs. The challenge has always been limited time and resources. With a class of 25 students, *how* does a teacher find the time and resources to meaningfully meet the individual needs of students with such great diversity in every classroom? The modern concept of personalized learning leverages technology

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tools, classroom organization, student ownership, and redefining the terms "teaching" and "learning" to help teachers truly meet the individual needs of students in their classrooms.

Additionally, there really is nothing new in personalized learning in today's classroom. It is simply taking all the things we are currently doing and using them a little differently, and giving a clearer focus about how the various things we do fit in with each other and support each other. For example, teachers across our district are already working with tools such as:

Blended Learning; Professional Learning Communities; Video Conferencing (Skype); Digital Content & Resources; Online programs; Targeted Instruction; Centers/Stations/Small group work; Flipped Classrooms; Student Ownership; Project Based Learning; Data Driven Decisions; Differentiated Instruction

Most teachers use most or all of these things to some degree. Personalized learning allows districts, schools, and teachers bring all of those tools together in a unified way, and helps embed them in a way that they become an integrated piece of our regular teaching.

Will teachers be able to truly apply a *Personalized Learning* approach to all students in a classroom? Won't that be too much work for the teacher to manage?

Personalized learning has been around for decades, but the challenge has always been limited time and resources. Teachers often found it hard to manage because of the time it took to plan different lessons and find different activities and resources for each of the different needs of students. With a class of 25 students, *how* does a teacher find the time and resources to meaningfully meet the individual needs of students with such great diversity in every classroom?

The modern concept of personalized learning leverages technology tools, classroom organization, student ownership, and redefines the terms *teaching* and *learning* to help teachers truly meet the individual needs of students in their classrooms. Through this process, we create new classroom environments that allow students to do some work at their own pace, path and place, and some work directly with small group instruction from the teacher, which allows teachers to better focus instruction and target student needs.

It sounds like we're getting rid of teachers and putting kids on computers to do all of their work.

Unfortunately, a common misconception is that personalized learning efforts are simply a step toward replacing teachers with computers, which is unequivocally not true. With personalized learning, the teacher is more important than ever. The role shifts, however, from primarily delivering information to creatively facilitating and problem solving so all students can learn at high levels. Using real-time data, teachers frequently assess student progress, give immediate feedback, determine individual learning needs, and help them figure out the best path to success.

This seems like a lot of work, and for what? Why are we always being asked to change and innovate?

Sir Ken Robinson, a leading advocate for innovation in education, says that "Innovation is hard because it means doing something that people don't find very easy. It means challenging what we take for granted." This is challenging work, but it is important work right now! We are preparing students for a world that is vastly different than it was twenty years ago, let alone the world in which our education system was first created over a hundred years ago. Our students are entering a global environment unlike any experience in the past, and are entering a workforce where the top employer expectations are more different than the "factory model" of the past. In a 2013 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the top five skills employers say they seek are:

- Obtain and process information
- Work in a team
- Make decisions and solve problems
- Plan, organize, and prioritize work
- Communicate verbally with people inside and outside the organization

These types of skills are valued in today's economy. Personalizing education for our students is a means to ensure our kids are not exposed to them for the first time once they leave school.

It would be better to describe this as a *different* process, in contrast to *hard*. We will still be using curriculum materials like we have always done, but they may be adapted differently. We will continue to use Professional Learning Communities to talk about student progress, but will have real-time data to help guide decisions. Good teaching has always put student needs at the center, and great teaching has always differentiated instruction for individual student needs—going forward we will have better tools and training to fulfill that promise to our students.

I think my classroom works just fine and my students are learning just fine. Do I have to "do" this?

Personalized learning is not a *program.* Personalized learning is not a piece of technology that may or may not fit within the structure of any particular classroom. Rather, personalized learning is the structuring of schools, classrooms, and instruction so we can better respond to the individual needs of students, in contrast to the expectation that students fit a current mold or adapt to structures that may not be successful for them.

Personalized learning is about continuing and improving our shift away from the one-size-fits-all, factory model of education to better prepare students for the jobs and needs of their future. We want to directly connect students to rigorous learning that is relevant and prepares them for life, college, and careers they will encounter after high school, and create a system that supports this approach.

Because of this, all teachers are expected to work with their principals, school leadership teams, district leadership team and Education Elements. This process and commitment will allow our staff to explore, define, and implement strategies and tools that will allow all teachers to deliver effective instruction and empower all learners to shape their futures. KPBSD students will pursue their dreams in a rigorous, relevant, and responsive environment.

Who is Education Elements and what do they do?

- Education Elements website: https://www.edelements.com/
- Three minute video: *Ed Elements: What Good is Tech If You Don't Know How to Make the Most of It?:* https://youtu.be/6CnruSd2Tqg
- https://twitter.com/edelements
- https://www.facebook.com/edelements

Education Elements (EE) helps school districts throughout the United States develop the tools teachers need, then works directly with teachers in schools to develop plans to leverage those tools to meet the needs of all students, regardless of ability levels.

Education Elements is *not* a program—it is a paradigm shift of redefining teaching and learning

Education Elements works with districts and teachers to help us do exactly what good teachers know need to be done

From a KPBSD conversation with a Yuma, Arizona superintendent: "They are very responsive & customized. They really synthesized our conversations and used them to help guide our schools and district." And, "They are great problem solvers. They don't endorse any particular product or company, but have all the information we needed to help us evaluate the options and make choices that fit our needs."

Do we really need Education Elements? Can't we just do this ourselves?

At the conclusion of the January 2017 KPBSD Innovation Committee meeting, members agreed that this is exciting work the district is ready for. Members acknowledged our district has been working towards this for years. However, there were concerns about our district capacity to successfully implement this important work on our own. Each of us knows that every one of us is already working fulltime, every day.

Thankfully, Education Elements provides all the support and a proven process to assist KPBSD in this ongoing work and transformation that benefits students and education.

"We had great confidence in ourselves and decided we could make this transformation on our own, so we "went". We tried to go alone and failed. In retrospect we did a lot of things wrong because we thought we knew what we were doing, but we really didn't know." –Indiana school assistant superintendent

How exactly will Education Elements help me in my classroom?

- EE will come into KPBSD, and in addition to working at the district and school level, will also meet with individual teachers, in classrooms. EE will look at what is already in place, what needs exist, and will work on personalizing what an educator needs to successfully set up a plan to meet the needs of every student.

- Teachers will not need to reinvent wheel. EE will provide the guidance to assist teachers to design and implement new strategies.

- 25 kids … 25 needs! Some of those 25 need a challenge, some are on target, while others struggle. The responsibility of a teacher is to make sure every students receives what they need and deserve to progress and be successful. EE provides workshops and professional learning for school teams about defining personalized learning and the various ways PL can take place in schools and classrooms.

- EE visits schools. The process begins with a Readiness Assessment, classroom observations, and talking with teachers and principals about what is currently happening in the school and classrooms.

- EE returns to schools with data collected from the previous visit in order to help design personalized learning environments throughout the school, and in all classrooms.

- Teachers and school teams continue to work with each other and EE to define and refine design plans for personalized learning. Once schools and teachers are comfortable with their designs, EE helps schools and teachers launch their personalized learning environments.

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- Every 4-8 weeks, EE comes back to conduct school visits, check in with teachers, help adjust design plans, work directly with school teams and teachers to iterate PL instructional designs. This process can continue for 12 or more months, to ensure the instructional designs work for schools, teachers, and students.

- The district office will continually to provide support though this process.

As teachers, you will have powerful tools and strategies to help you differentiate instruction and personalize learning for each student.

• Digital content frees up time for small group instruction and provides better data to make instructional decisions. "Teaching to the middle" becomes less likely as you can reach every student effectively and efficiently. Realtime data and instant feedback on student progress allows you to intervene quickly to ensure a student is mastering a concept. You can also provide pathways for accelerated learning for students who are ready to move on sooner than others.

• In a personalized environment, teachers are designers of their own classrooms, and therefore have the opportunity to innovate, learn new skills, and develop themselves as professionals.

• We are committed to being a personalized learning district. That means we are not only personalizing learning for our students, but also for our staff. We want to make sure your needs as teachers are being met, and therefore will be moving towards providing more personalized professional learning opportunities.

• Personalized learning is not a new concept—we know you as teachers try to meet the needs of your students every day. What is new is our district's renewed commitment to personalizing learning at all levels, as well as a focus on making sure you are supported with the most effective resources, strategies, and tools.

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