

# Student-Centered Learning Fact Sheet

**Personalized learning** includes a range of instructional approaches that are designed to address the skills, knowledge, needs, interests, and aspirations of individual students.

Personalized learning requires formative assessments of students' skills and knowledge so that individually-paced, targeted learning strategies can be developed to meet each student's needs and interests.

A personalized learning approach allows students to pursue their own pathways to meet high school graduation requirements.

*Examples:*

- College courses while in high school
- Career and technical education
- Internships
- Expanded learning opportunities outside of the school day or building
- Online courses
- Independent-study projects

...designed to meet college and career readiness standards.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Benefits of Personalizing Learning

- Makes school feel relevant to students
- Keeps students engaged in school
- Fosters strong relationships between students and teachers
- Improves student achievement
- Increases the likelihood that students will graduate from high school and be ready for success in college, careers, and life.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

## Personalized Learning

### Supporting Educators in Implementing Personalized Learning Approaches

- Personalized learning approaches require rethinking of many longstanding teaching and learning practices.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Teachers will be called upon to assess student abilities, needs, learning styles, and motivations; help students achieve rigorous college and career standards; promote collaborative work among groups of students; integrate learning experiences outside of the classroom; and foster student voice and autonomy.<sup>8</sup>
- Rhode Island's Secondary School Regulations currently require that all educators in middle and high schools participate in at least 15 hours of ongoing professional development annually, focused on the priority areas of literacy, numeracy, graduation by proficiency, and personalization.<sup>9</sup>
- Understanding the competencies that teachers need to support personalized learning will be important for designing and updating teacher preparation program curricula and for ensuring that current educators receive ongoing professional development and other supports.<sup>10</sup>

### Technology Improvements to Support Personalized Learning

- A robust, reliable technology infrastructure, reliable Internet access, and computers and other devices are all needed to support personalized learning. These resources can be used to conduct online assessments to gauge students' comprehension and learning and to support blended learning.<sup>11</sup>
- Many Rhode Island school districts are working on large scale 1:1 computer initiatives with the goal of providing a computer to every student in their district. Among the 36 school districts in Rhode Island, 17 implemented 1:1 computer initiatives during the 2015-2016 school year. Of the remainder, 7 districts were planning 1:1 computer initiatives for the coming year, and 12 were not focusing on 1:1 computer initiatives at this time.<sup>12</sup>

## Rhode Island's Secondary School Regulations Support Personalization

- Rhode Island's current Secondary School Regulations include a requirement that middle and high schools be structured in ways that support personalized learning.<sup>13</sup>
- Every middle and high school student must be assigned a responsible adult, in addition to a school counselor, who is knowledgeable about that student's academic, career, and social/personal goals. This can be accomplished through student advisories, schools within schools, academies, and/or interdisciplinary teams supporting a group of students.<sup>14</sup>
- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are planning and monitoring tools that are developed collaboratively by students and school staff. They describe each student's academic, career, and personal/social goals and the path they will take to achieve their goals.<sup>15,16</sup>
- All school districts are responsible for helping students in Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 develop an ILP and for helping students revise this ILP and revisit their goals at least twice each year. School personnel, such as guidance counselors and teacher advisors, as well as parents, should be asked to support this process.<sup>17,18</sup>

## Rhode Island's Strategic Plan for Public Education: 2015-2020

- *Personalized Learning Statewide* is one of six priority areas in *Rhode Island's Strategic Plan for Public Education: 2015-2020*.
- The Strategic Plan identifies three major areas of focus to increase personalized learning
  - (1) Building statewide capacity to personalize
  - (2) Blended and digital learning
  - (3) Career readiness and pathways

Source: *Rhode Island's strategic plan for public education*. (2015). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Board of Education.

## Recommendations

- Review and revise as needed Secondary School Regulations to promote student control over their own learning and provide examples of how to implement personalized learning in schools and districts through model policies, guidance, or other means.
- Ensure that all middle and high school students have robust individual learning plans (ILPs) and that they are regularly reviewed and updated to support each student's needs, goals, and personalized learning pathway to achieve these goals.
- Ensure that teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities provide current and incoming teachers with the skills they need to personalize student learning.
- Provide funding to support the technology needed to support personalized learning.

## References

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- <sup>4,6</sup> Yonezawa, S., McClure, L. & Jones, M. (2012). *Personalization in schools*. Boston, MA; Jobs for the Future.
- <sup>5</sup> Balfanz, R., et al. (2014). *Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in ending the high school dropout epidemic*. Retrieved February 17, 2016, from [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)
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- <sup>9,13,14,15,17</sup> Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2015). *Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Secondary School Regulations - Amendment*. Retrieved February 17, 2016, from <http://sos.ri.gov>
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