

Student-Centered Learning Spotlight

Personalized Learning: Spotlight on 360 High School

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:

- Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs)
- Dual and concurrent enrollment
- Internships
- Community service

...designed to meet college and career readiness standards.^{1,2}

360 High School, Providence, RI by the Numbers

Opened in September 2015 with only 9th grade and is adding one grade level each year

156

students in
grades 9-10

10%

receiving special
education services

90%

low-income

27%

English learners

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016-2017 school year.

Designing a High School With Students at the Center

- In June 2014, the Carnegie Corporation of New York awarded a \$3 million grant to the Providence Public School District to create two new high schools (360 High School and Evolutions High School) modeled on their 10 Integrated Design Principles for High Performing Schools.³
- School design teams, including students, school district staff, teachers, community partners, and parents, met regularly over a nine-month period to design 360 High School to be personalized to meet students' needs and to prioritize mastery of rigorous standards aligned to college and career readiness.⁴
- Kerry Tuttlebee, Principal at 360 High School, believes that students should be at the center of any school design effort. She says, "Keep what is right for kids as your North Star," and believes that "360 High School wouldn't be what it is today without youth as leaders."
- Tuttlebee also recognizes the value of thought partners and encourages other principals who want their schools to embrace more personalized learning to network with schools in Rhode Island and nationwide that are practicing personalized and mastery-based learning. In addition to the seed funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, 360 High School benefited from technical assistance from Springpoint, which included connections to a national network of schools doing similar work.

A Principal's Perspective: Get to Know the Whole Student

- For Tuttlebee, personalized learning matters because "all kids don't learn the same way or at the same pace, and we need to come up with strategies to support kids in learning differently."
- At 360 High School, students are able to demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways. For example, for a final project in a humanities class, students can write an essay, create a podcast, or conduct and film an interview.
- Tuttlebee recognizes that "students' interests and talents outside of school are very diverse, and the more we can tap into their unique abilities and what excites them about life, the more meaningful their academic learning becomes." Tuttlebee and her staff try to get to know their students deeply as individuals – who they are as a whole person and a whole student.

A Teacher's Perspective: Collaboration and Personalization Improve Learning

Ellen Foley is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Learning Facilitator at 360 High School. Foley previously received her Ph.D. in Education and worked at Brown University's Annenberg Institute for School Reform. She decided to become a high school classroom teacher focusing on math because she believes that math can open doors for students.

For Foley, teaching with the goal of personalization means:

- Creating a democratic school that takes students' voices seriously. At 360 High School, students participate in the hiring process for new staff, and make regular presentations to the leadership team about concerns or ideas.
- Meeting students where they are by giving students access to the high school curriculum whether they have completed prerequisites or not and whether they speak English or not.
- Using technology to differentiate lessons for students.
- Allowing students to progress at their own pace.
- Having meaningful relationships with students and taking the time to get to know their ambitions, families, and perspectives. Teachers at 360 High School have regular meetings with students during multi-grade advisories, called "hubs."
- Determining students' passions and connecting them to opportunities, like the Advanced Coursework Network, electives, Expanded Learning Opportunities, and summer learning opportunities.
- Collaborating with community partners to co-teach classes on engaging topics. For example, Foley co-taught a coding class with Computer Science students from Brown University. In this class, students learned to code simple video games.

Acknowledgements

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References

¹ *Centered on results: Assessing the impact of student-centered learning*. (2015). Quincy, MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

² *What are personalized learning pathways?: Leadership in action briefing #6*. (n.d.). Portland, ME: New England Secondary School Consortium.

^{3,4} *Providence Public School District presents an Opportunity by Design school: 360 High School*. (April 2015). Providence, RI: Providence Public School District.

A Student's Perspective: Prioritize Students

Maddison Fazio is an 11th grader at 360 High School. She describes learning at 360 High School as personalized because:

- Teachers provide lessons that are best suited to students' learning stages and styles.
- Each student has a Chromebook so they can work on programs that are tailored to their own learning needs.
- Students don't sit in rows of desks working on the same assignment. Instead, a class, such as Foley's math class includes the following: greeting, warm ups, one-on-one support, partner and small-group work, and individual work on Chromebooks. Groups of students rotate through a variety of learning activities.

Fazio believes that "everyone's opinion counts" and that "if something isn't fair or isn't working," students should have the opportunity to address these issues. Fazio is able to provide feedback to teachers and administrators by serving as a student representative on the student council and meeting daily with the same teacher during advisory.

"I really feel like I matter," Fazio reports. She believes that "teachers legitimately care about students...They go out of their way to see how I am doing."

According to Fazio, "It is important to keep in mind that we, as students, and our education should be first and foremost because we are going to be the future. We are going to be the ones out there in the world, and you need to prepare us for that. We need to be properly funded, listened to, and our needs to be addressed so we can be successful."

Next Steps

- The big challenge of mastery-based learning, according to Foley, is it "relies on student proactivity and unfortunately a lot of students have learned how to be passive in learning. We need to teach students to take ownership of their learning."
- Since it is hard for many adolescents to have unstructured learning time, Foley imagines that 9th and 10th grades can be more structured and 11th and 12th grades can be more student-driven. As students progress through high school, they will have the time to develop the skills and dispositions needed to be more self-directed.



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