

Design Thinking for Personalized Learning: 5 Strategies for Effective Whole School Design

By

[Megan Mead](#)

-

October 27, 2015

[Share](#)94

[Tweet](#)2

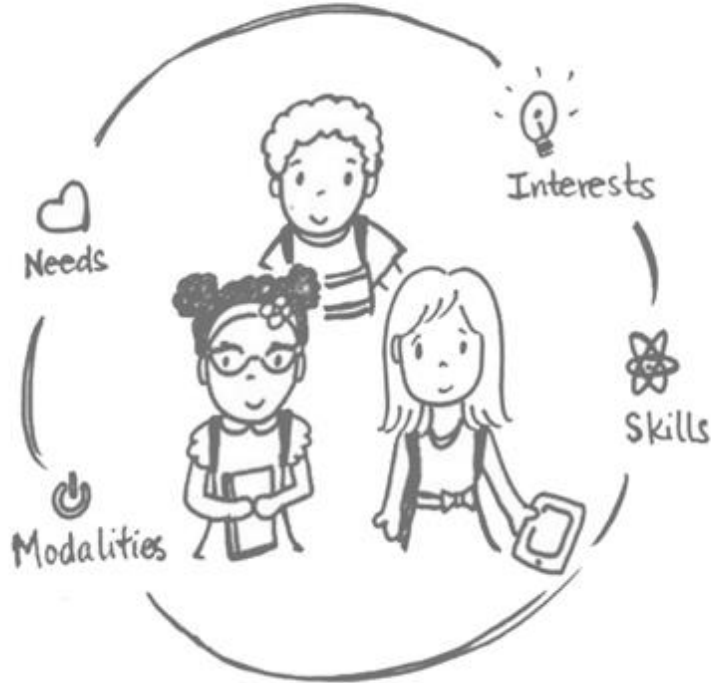
[Share](#)138

[Pin](#)

SHARES **234**

Technology has drastically and quickly changed the way we live, work and play. It has also opened new doors for how we learn, teach and engage. Developing a personalized path for students that engage them more deeply and accelerate their learning is not only possible, but necessary to improve the way that we currently do school.

We may not be able to list the jobs that will exist 30 years from now, but we can assume that critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, empathy, communication and passion will be in high demand. Personalized Learning allows schools to be more responsive to the future needs of society by engaging students in the right lesson at the right time, encouraging them to take ownership over their learning and placing an emphasis on interest that is often missing in more traditional models.



What is
PERSONALIZED LEARNING?

Save

From Personalized Learning Playbook by Anthony Kim

In the [Personalized Learning Playbook](#), Anthony Kim outlines the what, why and how of personalized learning. According to Anthony:

“The components of customized education have always existed, but never before have we had the capability to extend that personalized approach to all students of all abilities. The accessibility and effectiveness of technology is at a ‘tipping point’ where it can deliver on its promise while creating more room for creativity and connection than ever before.”

[Education Elements 2014-15 Impact Report: The Positive Power of Personalized Learning](#)

- Students in blended learning classrooms in one district outperformed their peers

by **45% in reading** and **56% in math**

- Students in another district grew **4x more in math** and **5x more in reading** than in their first year of implementation (So yes! It gets better!)
- **100% of teachers agree** that in personalized learning classrooms students take more ownership over their learning...and 100% also agreed that students are more confident in their abilities

Ed Elements is leading the charge in encouraging schools and districts to think differently when it comes to personalized learning. This is evident in the way that Kim writes about whole school design. Here are five things to keep in mind as you seek to transform the way that you do school:

5 Strategies for Effective Whole School Design

1. Design begins with empathy — Put yourself in your students' shoes. In product design, companies think a LOT about UX or user experience. As educators, we have to do the same for our students. Being thoughtful about what we want students to do, engage with, be surrounded by, etc supports the development of a [quality Learner Experience](#) (LX). Kim suggests really putting yourself in their shoes. “Sit in their chairs, follow their timetables and instruction. Track your engagement, excitement, boredom and learning.”

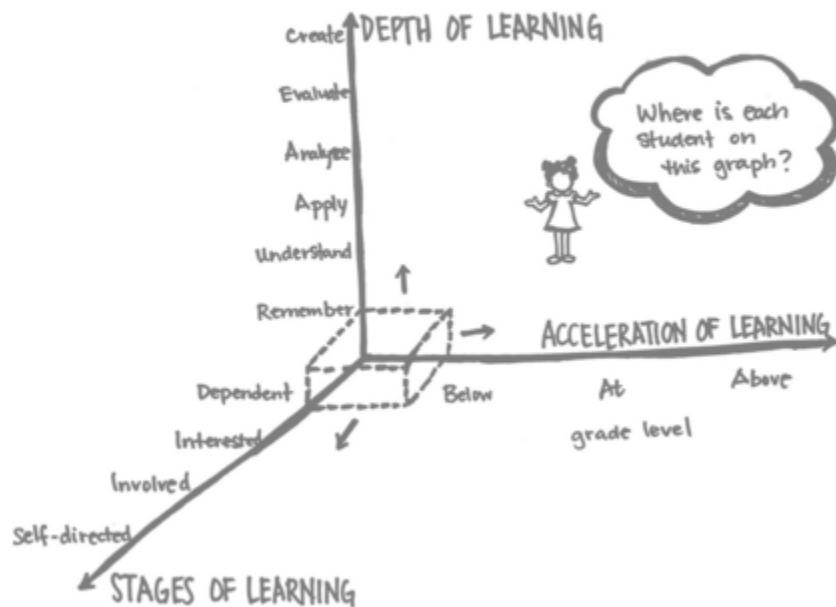
2. Observe your own learning process. Technology has changed how we seek and receive information. Think about your most meaningful learning experiences:

- What got you motivated and excited to learn?
- What were your steps in the learning process?
- What tools, resources, peers, and experiences did you utilize?
- What combination works best for you?
- Where and when did you get stuck along the way?
- At what point did you feel like you mastered it, or are “good enough” at it?
- How does this reflection affect your understanding of your students' learning approaches?
- What changes would you consider?

The above questions are a great resource for thinking through your own learning process, but they could also be used to help students reflect on their learning process. Part of increasing student ownership is helping them to understand how they learn best.

3. Redefine goals. Staying flexible is key and redefining goals for each individual student is extremely important to their success. You need to have a good understanding of where students are at and where they need to be. Reflecting and redefining these goals should be done regularly.

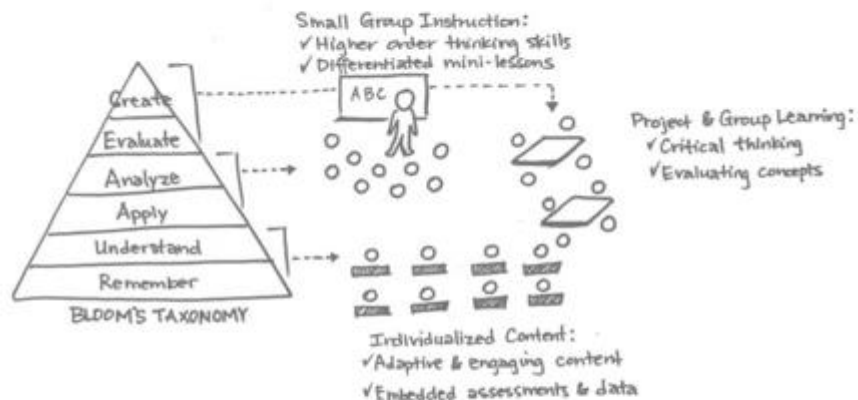
FROM A TEACHING TO A LEARNING MODEL



from Personalized Learning Playbook by Anthony Kim

4. Rethink the environment. The image of a traditional workplace has shifted drastically, what school looks like should change too. Learning is no longer confined to a desk, in a classroom, in a school between the hours of 8am and 3pm. Set the stage for powerful learning and create an environment that fosters that culture.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY meets CLASSROOM DESIGN



from PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLAYBOOK
by
ANTHONY KIM, founder of EDUCATION ELEMENTS

Save

5. Develop a mindset of iteration. Design thinking is dependent on the idea of trying new things, reflecting on their success and making the adjustments necessary for the next attempt. Embracing this mindset encourages a dramatic shift in practice while allowing a safe place to try new things without a fear of failing — this is important for leaders, teachers and students. Don't spend so much time planning that you forget to act. Try something and change it up as needed. Anthony said:

“New ideas get traction, they are used and refined by users (and students) and gradually they become so familiar and intuitive that we don't remember the origins of the process or the product. It takes time, experimenting, iteration, and evolution to get new processes to reach their potential and become nearly automatic.”

The work of transforming opportunities for students is difficult yet exciting. As we seek to better prepare our students for tomorrow and beyond, it is important that we utilize the tools that we have with talented and dedicated teachers that make learning exciting and engaging for students. [Education Elements](#) is dedicated to empowering teachers to personalize learning and helping district leaders scale across all schools. They have built a large [network of partners](#) that support this mission and create a comprehensive experience for educators and students.

From the Personalized Learning Playbook:

- Focus on the right stuff, iterate and try. Don't just think and plan. You have to start somewhere.
- Reflect on how you've recently learned something first before thinking about how to teach others. How we learn today has changed significantly from the past.
- Technology enables global real-time collaboration and information. Information is free.
- Personal brand reigns with our current generation of students.

Kim's [Personalized Learning Playbook](#) is a great tool for changing hearts and minds and getting people excited about personalized learning. It will empower teachers to personalize learning and help district leaders to scale it across all schools.

Want to learn more? You can buy the book [here](#), download an excerpt [here](#), see the image gallery [here](#) or see some of the resources that inspired it, and join an online book club, [here](#). Education Elements will also be at iNACOL next week: