

How Can Families and Communities Support Personalized Learning?

Posted March 20, 2017 in New Learning Models by iNACOL Staff

This is the fourth blog in a series on What's Possible with Personalized Learning? Read the first post, second post, third post, or download the entire report.

Families, communities, teachers, parents and students around the country are coming together to explore how schools can better prepare students for postsecondary success. They are examining the promise of personalized learning as a means to better educate all students and prepare them to contribute to a more equitable, free, just and open society. Education leaders can help families and communities understand the promise of personalized learning by sharing student stories and teacher perspectives, found in our recent report.

Families are excited about personalized learning because:

- The unique needs of their children are being met.
- Families and teachers have a shared understanding of the learning goals for students and can work together to determine how they will get there.
- Personalized learning provides new educational resources, new learning opportunities and new ways to use knowledge while students engage with the world around them.
- Families will have better information and more details about what and how their children are learning instead of waiting for end-of-quarter letter grades. This allows families to be more involved in supporting their children and helping them at home.
- Students can work at a pace that is right for them, and school work is tailored to their interests and needs.
- ★ Families have the opportunity to really help teachers to understand what they know about their own children and their strengths, weaknesses, goals and passions.
- Families have more opportunities to form relationships with the teachers and leaders in the school.

There are many ways that families and communities can support personalized learning, whether their school or district is just getting started with exploring the “big questions” (at the start of this report) or whether they are many years into implementing these new practices. One of the best ways to support personalized learning is to consider your own beliefs and behaviors. Just as personalized learning will require some changes for students and teachers, it will also require some new ways for families to think about how schooling works.

In personalized learning, families change the way they talk about learning with their kids. For example, instead of emphasizing getting “All A’s,” parents engage their children in conversations about what they are curious about, how they like to learn best, what their interests are, how they have learned from a recent failure, and so on. In other words, the emphasis is on the process of learning and not just the end grade.

Families and community members can take advantage of opportunities to inform changes in the school by attending parent information nights, filling out online surveys, sending emails, mentioning concerns to teachers or leaders and sharing their ideas. Ideally, families and communities will have opportunities to be involved in the early phases of the shift to personalized learning and as new ways to teach and learn are put into practice.

Family and Community Engagement Standards - Rubric

Improving Schools Through High-Impact Family Engagement Practices

Standard 1: The school provides a welcoming and engaging environment for all families.	
<i>Families and students are active participants in the life of the school; and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.</i>	
STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families perceive the school as a fortress. Teachers believe families are not capable of helping their children with school work. Teachers believe parents do not value education.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers do not believe it is their job to reach out and collaborate with families. Teachers believe barriers are too great for families to be involved. School personnel do not receive professional development in family engagement.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While families believe the school cares, it appears that the school has too many other priorities to pay attention to and invest in family engagement. Teachers believe families want to be involved but they think families are too busy and face too many personal issues that prevent them from partnering with teachers. Teachers make repeated efforts to invite families to school events but only some families are willing to attend. The district/school leadership team believes family engagement is important, but not a priority. School personnel do not receive professional development in family engagement.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families believe the school is committed to engaging all families and makes it a priority. Teachers believe that all families, if treated respectfully and given the necessary information, tools, and strategies, can be meaningfully engaged and make great contributions toward student learning and achievement. The district/school has adopted a research-based model of parent-teacher collaboration focused on academics and uses implementation outcomes in evaluating teacher and administrator effectiveness. Teachers are unwavering in ensuring that every student's family is engaged in its student's success. The school is persistent and creative in reaching all families. The district/school leadership team believes family engagement is a critical factor in student academic success. All school staff participate in research-based professional development focused on best practices and desired outcomes for family engagement in education. Teachers are provided paid planning time to organize effective classroom parent meetings. The school has a parent resource room equipped with computers, books, and home learning activities and materials. Front office staff are informed, attentive, polite, and helpful to all families and visitors who enter the school. The school building is clean and well lit, and proper signage directs families and visitors. Parent parking is available close to the front office.

Family Engagement Rubric

Improving Schools Through High-Impact Family Engagement Practices

Standard 2: Every family is personally invited by the classroom teacher to participate in student-centered activities linked to academic achievement.	
<i>Families are invited and highly encouraged to participate in student-centered activities organized by the school faculty. The families' role and responsibilities are clearly outlined and explained.</i>	
STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School flyers are sent home to families before each event. • Events are advertised as they come up. • Teachers hope parents attend, but expect a poor turnout. • Students are not fully aware of the details of the events their parents are invited to attend.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School flyers are sent home to families a week before an event. • Reminder flyers are sent home with students several days before the event. • The teacher hopes parents attend. • Students are made aware of the details of the parent classroom event and are highly encouraged to ensure their parents are present.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of respect for parents' time, schools prioritize the number and type of school events for parents, giving priority to student-centered, academically focused events. • The teacher writes a personal invitation letter to parents to ensure that they are well aware of the event's importance. • The teacher follows up with a phone call to ensure that parents understand the importance of their attendance to the classroom event. • Events are planned for the entire year, giving families time to organize their calendars. • The teacher extends an invitation to other family members or caretakers when parents are unable to participate. • The teacher briefs students on the information that will be shared with parents. • The teacher holds students responsible for encouraging their parents to attend classroom event. • The teacher sends emails, text messages, tweets, or other forms of communication reminding parents of the important event. • The teacher expects all families to attend the event. • The teacher does a home visit with families who were unable to attend the classroom event.

Family Engagement Rubric **Improving Schools Through High-Impact Family Engagement Practices**

Standard 3: Families have regular access to clear and actionable student performance data.

Schools share aggregate and individual student performance data with families regularly to define and explain expected grade-level performance. Data are presented in an explicit, simple, and straightforward manner so that all families can understand and use the data to take action on behalf of their student.

<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE 1 EXPLORATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report cards are sent home quarterly. • The teacher reviews student performance and behavior at parent-teacher conferences.
<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE 2 EXPANSION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report cards are sent home quarterly. • The teacher reviews student performance and behavior at parent-teacher conferences. • Student folders with graded work are sent home weekly. • The school schedules, and teachers are present for, student-led conferences.
<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE 3 INTEGRATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-friendly report cards are sent home quarterly. • Student folders with graded work and comments for parents are sent home weekly. • The teacher uses parent-friendly graphs to review and explain whole-class and individual student performance on assessments at the beginning of each quarter with all families in the classroom. • Parents understand how their student performs on assessments compared to their classroom peers and are given specific strategies for academic improvement. • Parents set short- and long-term academic goals based on the formative assessments shared by the teacher. • Students in middle and high school participate in setting their own academic goals in collaboration with parents and teachers. • The teacher provides parents with feedback and updates on student academic goal progress based on formative assessments.

Family Engagement Rubric
Improving Schools Through High-Impact Family Engagement Practices

Standard 4: Teachers and families set and evaluate short-term and long-term student academic goals. <i>Based on up-to-date aggregate and individual student performance data, families, teachers, and students collaboratively set academic goals and create individual student action plans that expand student learning opportunities beyond the classroom.</i>	
STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher and families do not set student academic goals together. • The teacher tell parents they are available to talk if the parents make an appointment.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher and some families talk about student learning and student progress informally. • The teacher tells parents they are available to talk if the parents make an appointment, and they provide parents with contact information. • The teacher makes general suggestions to parents on reading materials and activities to practice at home.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher makes sure every family in their classroom understands its student's performance progress, and they give specific, time-bound activities and materials to practice at home. • The teacher sets individual appointments with parents and students to create individualized student learning plans; they also review progress and collaborate on next steps toward meeting new goals specified by the student's learning plan. • The teacher makes clear to parents that student learning and performance are a shared responsibility and that through collaboration and learning support at home students can be more successful in school. • The teacher participates in professional development that builds their capacity to successfully engage families.

Family Engagement Rubric

Improving Schools Through High-Impact Family Engagement Practices

Standard 5: All families are provided with the necessary information, strategies, and tools to be meaningfully engaged in grade-level student learning.

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support student learning and healthy development both at home and school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively. School staff ensure that families gain the necessary skills and confidence to support student learning at home.

STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are invited to attend schoolwide workshops on different topics. • Parents are invited to attend schoolwide Title I meetings.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are invited to attend schoolwide workshops on different topics. • Parents are invited to attend schoolwide Title I meetings. • Parents are invited to participate in school-sponsored classes (such as literacy, technology, safety, nutrition). • Parents are invited to attend monthly meetings with the principal.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are invited to attend classroom meetings, led by the teacher and focused on grade-level student learning goals. • The teacher shares and explain whole-class and individual student performance data, coach parents on setting short and long-term academic goals, provide coaching and practice time on activities to use at home, and provide parents with take-home practice materials. • The teacher reminds all parents in the classroom that student learning and achievement is a shared responsibility between home and school, and teachers model high expectations. • The teacher helps families understand how to create a rich, structured, and supportive learning environment at home that supports high achievement. • The teacher provides families with specific academic goals, activities, and materials to practice over the summer to prevent summer learning loss and help prepare students for the next grade level. • The teacher offers additional assistance and coaching to individual families with specific needs. • The teacher helps all families feel part of a committed classroom learning community focused on making every student successful. • The teacher requests parent classroom volunteers to assist in all areas of classroom activity. • Parents are invited to attend schoolwide Title I meetings and are informed on how their student can benefit from targeted funding services. • Parents are invited to participate in classes sponsored by expert community partners (such as literacy, GED, technology, safety, nutrition). • Parents are invited to attend monthly meetings with the principal to discuss school academic improvement goals and progress toward meeting those goals using facts and data.

Family Engagement Rubric
Improving Schools Through High Impact Family Engagement Practices

Standard 6: The school creates opportunities for families and teachers to develop trusting and collaborative relationships. <i>Schools provide teachers and staff with regular professional development that builds capacity to develop meaningful relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Schools create opportunities for teachers and families to communicate and collaborate in ways that build a strong community.</i>	
STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate are the school's open house event and parent-teacher conferences. • The teacher sends notes home when there is bad news to report.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate are the school's open house event and parent-teacher conferences. • The teacher sets individual appointments with families when there is bad news to report. • The teacher contacts parents to share academic improvement and positive changes in behavior.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district/school adopts a research-based model of parent-teacher collaboration focused on academics, and implementation outcomes are used in evaluating teacher and administrator effectiveness. • The school provides parent-child kindergarten readiness classes to ensure that parents gain the necessary knowledge and skills to prepare their children for school success. • The teacher schedules classroom team meetings with all families together to promote relationship building, collaboration, idea sharing, and mutual support. • Parents feel part of a classroom community focused on high academic expectations and mutual support. • Parents, teachers, and students feel they are members of a collaborative team.

Family Engagement Rubric
Improving Schools Through High Impact Family Engagement Practices

Standard 7: The school partners with community agencies and organizations that assist the school in meeting its improvement goals.

Families, school staff, and students, as appropriate, collaborate with community members and community partners to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation. Schools invite key community partners to assist in reaching school improvement goals.

STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners and school officials coexist, but do not regularly plan or discuss progress toward established goals. Community partners and school officials compete for parent attendance at events due to lack of common planning.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships are actively maintained. Community partners and school officials meet once or twice a year to collaborate on mutually agreed-upon annual plans. Community partners and school officials collaborate on an annual calendar, preventing events that compete for parent attendance and participation. Community partners are actively engaged in the life of the school, and families are aware of what the partners can offer in the way of expert assistance.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners and school officials actively pursue collaboration, because the needs of the students and families and the partner's expertise are a match. Community partner and school officials meet regularly to ensure progress is made on mutually developed annual plans. Community partners are actively engaged in the life of the school, and families are aware and understand what the partners can offer in the way of expert assistance. All school community partners know one another and collaborate to develop well-orchestrated service plans and outcomes. Business and community partners highly value the academic achievement of their employees' children and they demonstrate it in their company's evaluation procedures and policies.

Family Engagement Rubric

Improving Schools Through High-Impact Family Engagement Practices

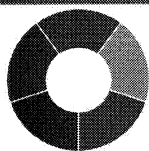
Standard 8: The district adopts performance evaluations, policies, and procedures that support high-impact family engagement efforts. <i>The district school board, superintendent, and district leadership team study current research in family engagement, understand best practices, and set high standards for school-based family engagement program implementation and outcomes.</i>	
STAGE 1 EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-teacher conferences are not outcome oriented and differ in quality and effectiveness from classroom to classroom. • A Title I school has a generic school-parent compact that all families sign once a year.
STAGE 2 EXPANSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-teacher conferences are student-led and have guidelines and outcome expectations for which teachers and parents are accountable. • A Title I school has a school-parent compact that is developed collaboratively with parents and is updated and improved every year.
STAGE 3 INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district/school adopts a research-based model of parent-teacher collaboration focused on academics, and implementation outcomes are used in evaluating teacher and administrator effectiveness. • The district/school employs a parent liaison or family engagement coach. • A district administrator is responsible for overseeing all family engagement efforts and outcomes. • A Title I school has a school-parent compact that is academically focused, grade-level specific, developed collaboratively with parents, and updated and improved every year. • All district/school staff members participate in family engagement professional development at least once a year. • The teacher has paid planning time to organize effective classroom parent meetings. • Funding sources are strategically allocated to ensure development and alignment of resources to impact effective family engagement practices.

4 Versions of Family-School Partnerships

Check the boxes that have the most statements under them marked or circled. Check only 1 box in each row

Partnership School		Open-Door School		Come-if-We-Call School		Fortress School
All families & communities have something great to offer—we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family center is always open, full of interesting materials to borrow Home visits are made to every new family Activities honor families' contributions Building is open to community use & social services are available to families 	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers contact families once a year Parent coordinator is available if families have questions or need help Office staff are friendly Staff contact community agencies & organizations when help is needed 	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better-educated parents are more involved "Many immigrant parents don't have time to come or contribute" Staff are very selective about who comes into the school 	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families do not "bother" school staff "Minority families don't value education" Parents need security clearance to come in It is important to keep community influences out of the school 	Parents are welcome when we ask them, but there's only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is help their kids at home. We know where to get community help if we need it.	Parents belong at home, not at school. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support. We're already doing all we can. Our school is an oasis in a troubled community. We want to keep it that way.
<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All family activities connect to what students are learning Parents & teachers look at student work & test results together Community groups offer tutoring & homework programs at the school Students' work goes home every week, with a scoring guide 	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers explain test scores if asked Folders of student work go home occasionally School holds curriculum nights 3 or 4 times a year Staff let families know about out-of-school classes in the community 	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open house Parents can call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homework Workshops are offered on parenting 	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum & standards are considered too complex for parents to understand "If parents want more information, they can ask for it" "We're teachers, not social workers" 	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum & standards are considered too complex for parents to understand "If parents want more information, they can ask for it" "We're teachers, not social workers" 		
<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translators are readily available Teachers use books & materials about families' cultures PTA/PTO includes all families Local groups help staff reach families 	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office staff will find a translator if parents ask in advance Multicultural nights are held once a year "Minority" parents have their own group 	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We can't deal with 20 different languages" "Parents can bring a translator with them" "This school just isn't the same as it used to be" 	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Those parents need to learn English" "We teach about our country—that's what those parents need to know" "This neighborhood is going downhill" 	<input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Those parents need to learn English" "We teach about our country—that's what those parents need to know" "This neighborhood is going downhill" 		
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a clear, open process for resolving problems Teachers contact families each month to discuss student progress Student-led parent-teacher conferences are held 3 times a year for 30 minutes 	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal will meet with parents to discuss a problem Regular progress reports go to parents, but test data can be hard to understand Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year 	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School calls families when children have problems Families visit school on report card pick up day & can see a teacher if they call first 	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents don't come to conferences Problems are dealt with by the professional staff Teachers don't feel safe with parents 	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents don't come to conferences Problems are dealt with by the professional staff Teachers don't feel safe with parents 		
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents & teachers research issues such as prejudice & tracking Parent group is focused on improving student achievement Families are involved in all major decisions Parents can use the school's phone, copier, fax, & computers Staff work with local organizers to improve the school & the neighborhood 	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can raise issues at PTA/PTO meetings or see the principal Parent group sets its own agenda & raises money for the school Resource center for low-income families is housed in a portable classroom next to the school PTA/PTO officers can use the school office A community representative sits on the school council 	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal sets agenda for parent meetings PTA/PTO gets the school's message out "Parents are not experts in education" Community groups can address the school board if they have concerns 	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal picks a small group of "cooperative parents" to help out Families are afraid to complain. "They might take it out on my kid" "Community groups should mind their own business; they don't know about education." 	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal picks a small group of "cooperative parents" to help out Families are afraid to complain. "They might take it out on my kid" "Community groups should mind their own business; they don't know about education." 		

—from "Beyond the Bake Sale—The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships" (2007) by Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies



Essential Personalized Learning

Placing students at the center of their learning

Essential Personalized Learning School Conditions

The goal of this needs assessment is to determine readiness for Personalized Learning and to support the strategic planning process.

Conditions for Personalized Learning:

1. School Leadership & Vision
2. Aligned District and School Autonomies
3. Professional Collaborative Communities
4. Family and Community Partnerships
5. Cultural Relevance and Attention to Equity
6. Campus Technology & Infrastructure

Rating Scale:

- 1-Evidence that is in planning or beginning stages
- 2-Partially in place
- 3-In place across the school
- 4-In place at a high level

School Conditions for Personalized Learning

Condition 4: Family and Community Partnerships		1	2	3	4
1	The school has opportunities, including groups, teams, and events, for families and community members to serve in significant roles towards fulfilling the school's vision/mission.(CCSSO,III.2.c)				
2	Families are informed of school-wide student achievement data and their own child's data, and are included as partners in conversations about how to improve outcomes. The school provides consistent opportunities for families to attend parent/student/teacher conferences and student presentations in which students are asked to reflect on their learning.(CCSSO,III.2.c.i,IV.2.b)				
3	The school has established substantial reciprocal community partnerships which help address identified needs and support the achievement of the vision/mission of the school.(CCSSO,III.2.c)				
4	The school implements culturally appropriate communication practices of the school, including printed materials in all major languages, to ensure that all prospective and current students and families understand the school's vision/mission and programs offered.				
5	There is a shared vision for personalized learning; teacher union, parents, students, and other community stakeholders support the changes necessary to implement personalized learning.(CCSSO,III.2.b&c)				

