

## SUCCESS ASSESSED

LEAP's Breakthrough Schools: Chicago (BSC) sites increased in their schools' first year of participation in BSC overall and relative to other sites, according to The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative at University of Wisconsin.

About 63 percent of elementary students met growth targets on universal math assessments after a year in the BSC cohort—up from 58 percent and well above non-BSC schools' 55 percent.

In reading assessments, BSC and non-BSC schools started with 58 percent of elementary students meeting growth targets; BSC schools increased to 61 percent after one year, while non-BSC schools' decreased to 56 percent.

teachers and principals can co-design classrooms to foster the varied learning experiences students need to reach their goals. In any given classroom, you might see small-group instruction, kids working together on projects or problems, or young learners working independently. Some schools I work with in Chicago use colloquia that allow students to pursue independent projects in the community. We work to get all students to the point where they can articulate why they are completing an activity, and how it serves their broader goals.

Shifts in practice can't be expected overnight. Schools begin the journey to transformation with a few early adopters—enthusiastic educators who understand the value of personalized learning and forge ahead. Principals often find these trailblazers easy to support, and they can spread their practices from a few model classrooms to the whole school by setting stakeholder expectations and articulating clear goals.

### A Personalized Pedagogy

Today's schools are at a crossroads: After a century of one-size-fits-all schooling that often left students from underrepresented cultures, high-poverty backgrounds, and nonwhite races behind, we are piloting a new paradigm that prepares every child to thrive. We can't just teach content; we must foster creativity and independence. We can't isolate the classroom from the real world, and we must help students connect their studies to their cultures, interests, and strengths.

To prepare every child to succeed today, we need to let go of an educational model built to prepare them for yesterday's jobs. We need to foster and empower learners to think critically, thrive through ambiguity, and guide their own futures. Principals are uniquely suited to support this innovative new model. They can help build consensus behind the "why"—and ultimately help teachers and students engage in the "how." 

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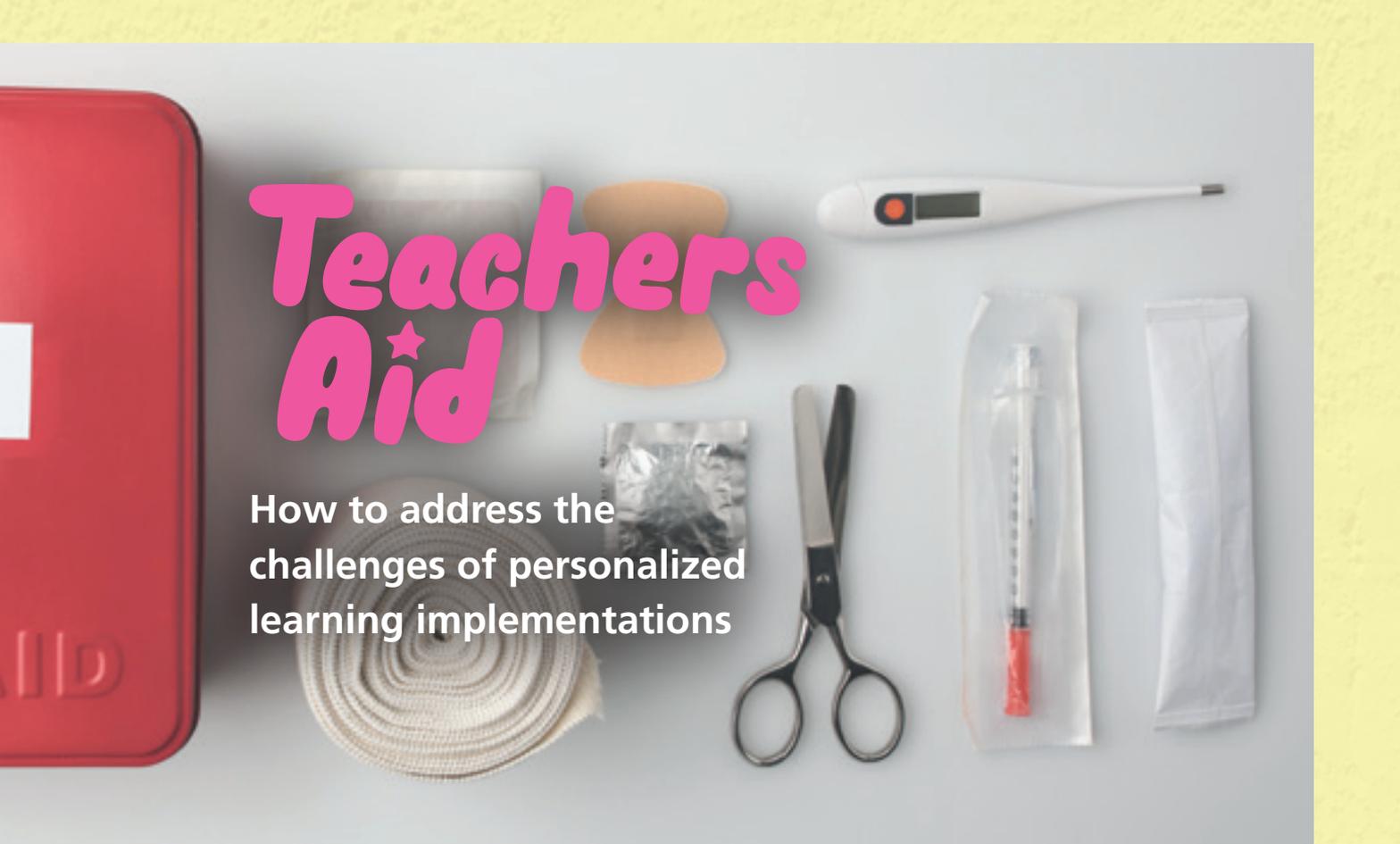


There are pitfalls to personalized learning that can derail its successful implementation. Teachers and administrators may not understand what the approach should look like, and their visions for success might not be aligned. While adjusted to each individual student, instruction must continue to be standards-based and align with state and district learning goals.

Teachers must have strong classroom management skills and not get overwhelmed by the variety of activities needed. Teachers must also use informal assessments to learn about their students' strengths, needs, and preferences. Teachers—and especially new teachers—can find these tasks difficult.

Another challenge is that schools often focus more on the purchasing and implementation of new devices than on instructional goals and classroom setup. There are a variety of ways educators can incorporate personalized learning into their instructional practices by designing meaningful, authentic activities that give students a reason to be engaged.

This kind of personalization doesn't have to include technology. Ask students how they want to learn and how they would like to show mastery of what they



# Teachers Aid

## How to address the challenges of personalized learning implementations

learned. Help students create clear learning goals based on where they are and where they need and want to be.

When asked, educators offered a variety of viewpoints on what personalized learning means to their instruction. Here are a few of their comments:

- **On ownership:** “Helping students create a learner profile that includes interests, strengths, learning styles, etc. [can] help them take ownership.”  Jeremy Engebretson, @jengebretson75
- **On getting students involved:** “Find ways to foster student agency. This will empower students to take ownership of their learning and use their voices to advocate for what they need. When students are involved in goal-setting and planning, their education becomes more personalized.”  Dawn Childress, @dawnchildress
- **On self-directed assessment:** “Now that we have studied [a topic], how would you like to show me that you understand? Here are a couple of choices, or maybe you have your own idea.”  Rebecca Lugo, @rlugo0320
- **On establishing goals:** “Learning contracts, individual goal-setting with learning plans, small-group instruction, passion projects/Genius Hour, service

learning to solve authentic problems.”

 Jenn Simeone Daddio, @daddione

- **On attaining goals:** “Let students talk with you and learn to own their goals. This can include data tracking and student-led conferences, but it is more—it is having personal goals to attain and to celebrate with each learner. I have never seen anything that matters more.”  Wanda Shelton, @sheltonwc74

When in doubt, keep it simple. Donna Stofko, elementary math coordinator at Prince William County (Virginia) Schools, uses an old-fashioned file box with an expandable folder for each student and a folder for each subject. That’s where she keeps anecdotal notes, differentiation tasks, and work samples. “It’s always better when teachers do this rather than [use] a computer,” she says.

**Andy Jacks** and **Hamish Brewer** are principals in Prince William County, Virginia, and fellows of NAESP’s Center for Innovative Leadership.

Do you have personalized learning strategies you want to share with your colleagues? Submit your ideas on NAESP’s Center for Innovative Leadership web page, and we might feature you in an upcoming video podcast interview. Visit [www.naesp.org/center-innovative-leadership](http://www.naesp.org/center-innovative-leadership).

