



*Why the Time Is Now...  
and How to Do It*

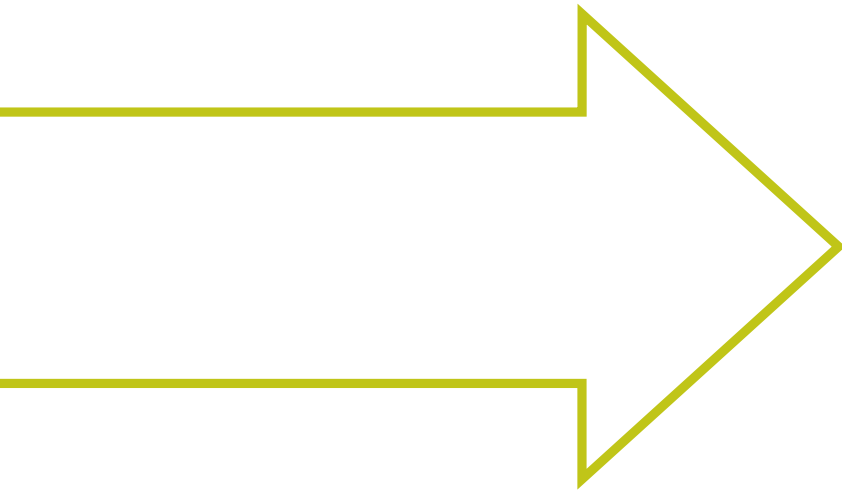


PERSONALIZED LEARNING  
***Playbook***

By Anthony Kim, Founder of Education Elements

*This Playbook belongs to:*  
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MY GOAL IS:  
.....  
.....



PERSONALIZED LEARNING  
***Playbook***

*Why the Time Is Now...  
and How to Do It*

By Anthony Kim  
FOUNDER OF EDUCATION ELEMENTS

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*To all the teachers and educators who have the passion—  
and make the commitment—to change lives every day.*



*"Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand."*

– CHINESE PROVERB

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***“When one is building a ship, one does not begin with gathering timber and cutting planks, but rather by arousing in people the yearning for the great wide sea.”***

**– ANTOINE DE ST. EXUPÉRY**

## **WELCOME TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND EDUCATORS**

**T**he role of educators is awesome—and I mean that literally. Teachers change lives. On a daily basis, teachers—including all of us who tutor, assist, mentor, lead, and create a community of learners—change the trajectory of students’ lives. Teachers change what students aspire to. They affect how students perceive themselves. They transmit tangible skills and ways of thinking that students will apply throughout their lives.

Underlying this awesome reality is another one: it is a challenge to maintain the inspiration, passion, confidence, and skills to make this potential a reality.

I speak from my own experiences as a 20-year veteran of educational organizations and the founder of Education Elements, a company that empowers teachers to personalize learning and helps district leaders to scale it across all schools. Although we’re in an era of high standards, Common Core requirements, high-stakes tests, and greater teacher and school accountability than ever before, I know our teachers and schools have the capacity to succeed.

I can’t say it loudly and clearly enough. *We don’t need a model of superhuman superhero teachers. We need to use the power of technology and educational design—combined with the high aspirations we all begin with—in order to create innovative learning environments that foster personalized learning for everyone.* It’s the teacher’s path to want to change the world—to work on the hearts and minds of our youth and to guide them to becoming empowered, engaged, creative, and productive. I hope this *Playbook* offers you inspiration and ways of thinking that will encourage you on your path as the great educator you are.

*“Education is not the filling of a bucket  
but the lighting of a fire.”*

– W. B. YEATS

## INTRODUCTION: THE PERSONALIZATION EQUATION

**The greatest common denominator in effective teaching and learning is personalization.**

We are at a new moment in our ability to make education relevant, individualized, and effective for students and teachers alike. 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.

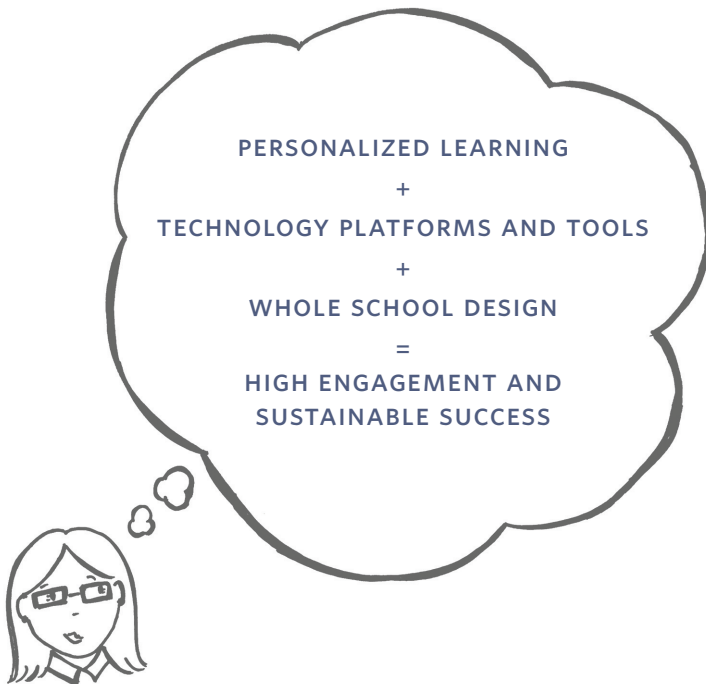
For the past 30 years, technology has been making its way into classrooms in fits and starts. We’ve seen computers on carts, computer stations, iPads or laptops for every student, computer labs, and all kinds of smart boards and other tools to enrich our classrooms and teaching. But the benefits have been uneven, frustrating, and unreliable.

However, we are at a unique moment in the evolution of technology in the classroom. The tools and capabilities themselves have caught up to the demands of teachers and students:

- The “cloud,” digital content, teacher tools, and “dashboards” make resources available at all times and from anywhere.
- There is ease, accessibility, affordability, and reliability with today’s software and hardware.
- The latest learning tools and standardization of curricula produce results when used properly. The time and attention invested in technology is time and attention that is rewarded.

We can finally bring the ubiquity of technology in the “real world” into our classrooms. We are able to provide a level of personalization and customization that can transform the educational experience of teachers and students.

A useful model is to think of personalization as a simple equation with three elements:



## PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Personalized learning allows students to get the instruction and direction they need, when they need it. Personalized learning means that students’ needs are known to the teacher. It means that students’ learning styles, skills, and even personal issues affecting their learning ability are known as well. Through personalized learning, teachers can “catch” students before they get stuck, plateau, give up, and disengage.

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## TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS AND TOOLS

Carefully chosen and relevant technology platforms and materials give teachers more time for personal, in-depth interaction with students. Students are accustomed to technology in every aspect of their lives and see technology as something “personal”, or meeting their individual needs and interests, and part of their everyday experience.

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## WHOLE SCHOOL DESIGN

Integrating technology, relevant instruction, and facilitating deeper learning and personal connections happens through creative and effective classroom design. The elements of classroom design—layout of a classroom, instructional models used, timing of lectures, group projects, and independent work—are among those that create the environment for engaged and optimal learning.

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## HIGH ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

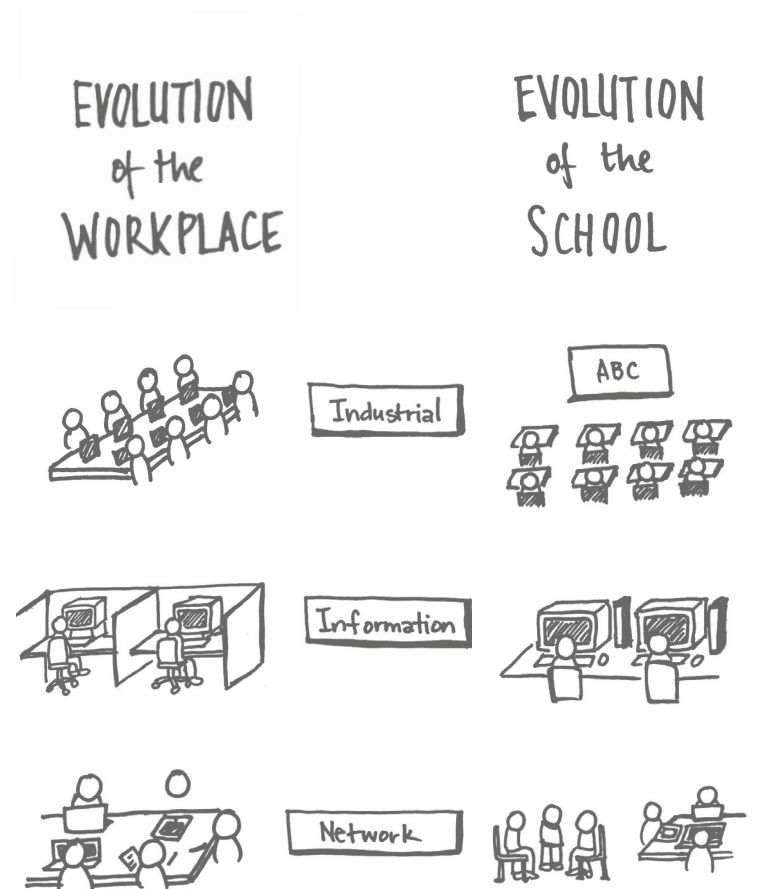
When all three of the elements work together, we see students receiving regular feedback from the use of relevant tools and more individualized time with teachers which results in more ownership of learning, excitement, and pride over progress.

### The Personalization Equation Works Because...

- 1 Teachers' passions are ignited when they have personal connections with their students.
- 2 Students experience personalized learning everywhere and expect it everywhere.
- 3 Students are excited by technology.
- 4 Students experience technology as personal and use technology in ways that are personal to them (even if the teachers and adults in their lives don't feel the same way).
- 5 Our environments—including our schools and classrooms—have a significant impact on how students and teachers feel about themselves and how they communicate.
- 6 Responsive and flexible school designs are able to respond quickly to the changing needs of student learning and multiple modes of teaching.
- 7 When student engagement is high, persistence in learning is high.
- 8 Students thrive when they feel seen, recognized, and understood.

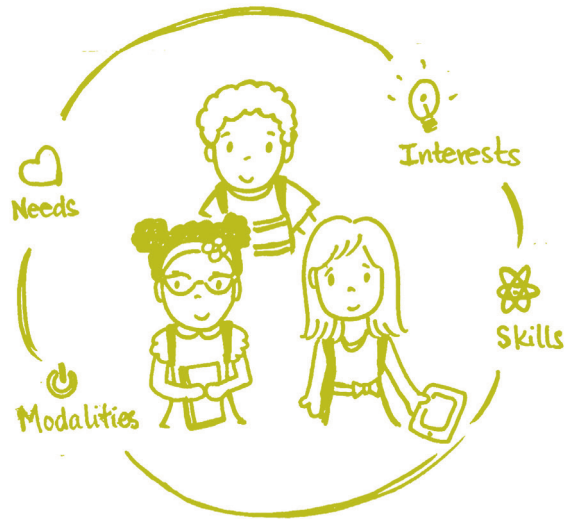
### PERSONALIZATION IS NOW POSSIBLE— AND SCALABLE

The world has changed and education is part of that possible and positive transformation, as we see in this visual blast to the past and future.

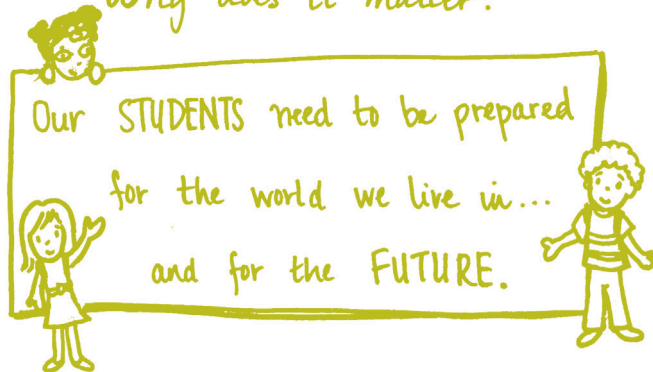


# What is PERSONALIZED LEARNING?

Knowing and meeting each  
Student's needs and more...



Why does it matter?



## Part 1

WHAT IS PERSONALIZED LEARNING  
AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

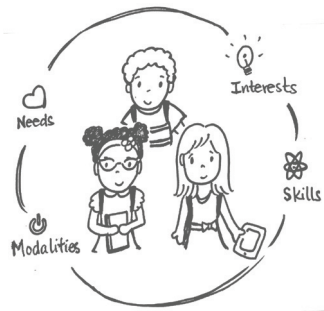
*"Unlike grit, agency is about empowering young people to use education to take control of their lives."*

—PEDRO NOGUERA, PH.D., NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

## PERSONALIZATION MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

**P**ersonalization is the practice of dynamically tailoring any service or product to the wants and needs of each user (student, customer, partner).

What is  
PERSONALIZED LEARNING?



Based upon a study from the University of Texas<sup>1</sup>, we prefer personalization because: a) we feel more in control, and b) we avoid information overload.

Information is everywhere, easily accessible, and overwhelming. When you personalize for your stakeholders, they feel more in control, which has a positive effect on their psyche. Personalization provides information in a manageable framework, making it easier to engage. When information is personalized, students (or teachers, for that matter) don't have to spend as much time sorting and filtering. Instead, they can go straight to the act of consuming the information.

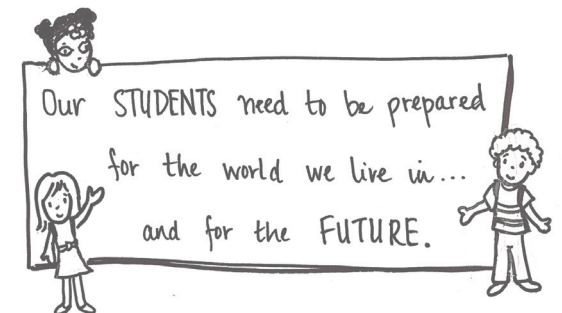
<sup>1</sup><http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/18054>

## WHY PERSONALIZATION MATTERS

Our students need to be prepared for the world we live in: a world with universal access to information and where the trick is not finding the information, but understanding it and applying it to improve our work and lives.

A 2013 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), lists the 10 skills employers say they seek, in order of importance:

- 1 Ability to work in a team.
- 2 Ability to make decisions and solve problems.
- 3 Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work.
- 4 Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization.
- 5 Ability to obtain and process information.
- 6 Ability to analyze quantitative data.
- 7 Technical knowledge related to the job.
- 8 Proficiency with computer software programs.
- 9 Ability to create and/or edit written reports.
- 10 Ability to sell and influence others.



*"Life doesn't come with four choices."*

– LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, ED.D, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

How do these imperatives align with our educational approach today?

I recently visited a Midwestern school district and met with 25 of their senior administrators. They showed me their blueprint for personalized learning and career and college readiness. The basic framework included 6 assessment systems, detailed tracking of standards-based indicators, and online content.

When I asked the assembled group what kinds of students they were hoping to graduate, they said, "Thinkers."

The goal is excellent. But neither their approach, nor their strategic plan, addressed the greatest needs of our current workplaces as listed above — and I said so. Overall, the district's approach represented an industrial age mentality. Just like an assembly line manager's job would be to monitor and report on production quality and ensure that workers follow the factory's policies and procedures to generate products with efficiency, this district's strategy was to lay out policies and procedures and measure how efficiently they were followed by their teachers.

When we shift to a model of personalized learning, we ensure the attainment of essential skills while staying focused on each student's ability to engage, apply, extend, and build on what they learn. We have benchmarks and assessments that identify gaps and target instruction, which leads to competency-based instruction while allowing more time for deeper learning.

## ARE YOU READY FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING? EVERYONE ELSE IS...

### *What Do Students Want from Teachers and School?*

- Students want to be in school but are not always completely satisfied with what the school has to offer or why they need to learn the way the material is taught.
- Instruction tailored and relevant to their needs— not inefficient, as it seems to many of them.
- Feedback received in real time — and positive reinforcement for being right.
- To be better learners, and to find answers more efficiently.
- For students who believe they can find information anytime and anywhere, they want to know what they can do with all that information. What can they create, discover, innovate?







### **What Do Teachers Want?**

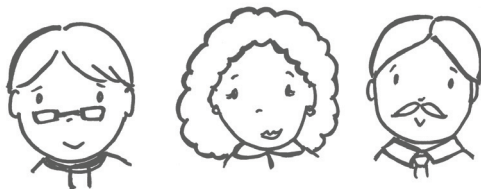
- To make a positive and lasting impression on students.
- To influence, motivate, and change the lives of students.
- To create the communities of our future by helping students become thinkers and problem solvers.
- Meaningful and engaged relationships with their students.
- Respect from their students and community.

### **What Do Principals/Administrators Want?**

- A team, board, and community that support their vision.
- To make a meaningful impact on the community and local economy.
- To pursue excellence; not perfection.
- To be significant and leave a legacy.

### **What Do Parents and Communities Want?**

- Schools and teachers who listen to their needs and are flexible.
- Equal opportunities for their children.
- Students who are prepared for the future, who are ready for college, and careers and who become productive citizens.
- Choices based upon family interests.
- Safe environments that foster social interaction and positive relationships with peers and adults.



Write down  
your thoughts!

***You like what you read and you want more?***

Click [here](#) to download the complete playbook.