PERSONALIZED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

25 Focus Areas for Schools and Districts

Education Elements

Learners of today. Ready for tomorrow.

Overview

In 2015 we published the first edition of our [Personalized Learning Implementation](...) [Framework](...) (PL Implementation Framework) based on lessons learned from working with schools and districts over the previous five years. Since that time the framework has been used in hundreds of schools and districts around the country, downloaded more than 2,000 times, and leveraged as an invaluable tool to help teams articulate their strengths and areas of need when it comes to designing, launching, and scaling personalized learning. This white paper is meant to provide context around why the framework was created, provide sample activities for using the framework, and, most importantly, share stories of how schools and districts have utilized the framework to make transformational changes in teaching and learning.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

STRATEGY	DESIGN	CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION	SUPPORT	OPERATIONS
PL Vision Alignment	Culture of Innovation	Curriculum Inventory	Roles to Support PL Teachers	Devices and Digital Tools
PL Rollout Plan	PL Instructional Models	Online & Offline Curriculum Alignment	PL Professional Learning Plan	IT Support Plan
Multi-Year Roadmap	Students As Self-Directed Learners	Digital Portfolio and Usage	PL Resource Bank	Infrastructure Upgrade Plan
Initiative Alignment	Schedule Aligned to PL Design	Grading, Assessment, and Data Culture	PL Coaching and Evaluation System	3-5 Year Budget
PL Expectations & Success Indicators	Teacher Role in PL Instructional Model	Strategy for Special Student Populations	PL Communication Plan	Workforce Plan

DATA ANALYSIS TO MONITOR SUCCESS AND CONTINUALLY IMPROVE

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I. Why Was The Framework Created?

After five years of working with schools and districts to design, launch, and scale blended and personalized learning, we wanted to codify some of the lessons we learned along the way. The result is our Personalized Learning Implementation Framework, which was inspired by hundreds of conversations and workshops with school and district leaders. After much consideration, we landed on 25 areas (not the 100 we originally brainstormed!) that are essential for a district to effectively design, launch, support, sustain, and deepen personalized learning.

The inspiration for this framework came from the question we asked ourselves repeatedly: "How can we help districts know if they've met a goal, if they're on track, and if they're close to achieving a benchmark?" Every time we sat down with a superintendent, CTO, CAO, teacher, principal, coach, board member, or dean to discuss their goals for personalized learning, they always wanted to know: "**Where should we start? What should we learn from other districts' mistakes? What should we focus on next?**" After answering these questions countless times, we started keeping a list. We saw that if a district lacked a clear vision for personalized learning, schools and staff wouldn't understand the rationale behind the initiative. Likewise, if there wasn't a culture of innovation present, it was difficult to build ownership and sustain excitement and support. Even things like budgeting and staffing became major issues if districts did not account for how they might need to shift in this new, personalized environment. We took this list of lessons learned and came up with five key categories, with five focus areas in each category. We use these 25 focus areas to guide our work at both the school and district level and to help school systems identify strengths, areas of need, and potential roadblocks.

We've found that the PL Framework has been helpful to district leaders at all stages of the implementation process. For district leaders just starting their journey, the framework has given them clarity on priorities. For district leaders who have been moving towards personalized learning for several years, the framework serves as a check to make sure they haven't lost sight of essential building blocks and gives them guidance around what to do next. Below we share some specific examples of how the framework has been and can be used. We hope you are able to take some of these ideas and use them right away.

II. How Has The Framework Been Refined?

As we began to use the framework, we continually reflected on the categories and language of the framework. In 2016, based on these reflections and feedback from our school and district partners, we made a few key changes to the framework:

- **District PL Vision → PL Vision Alignment.** We've found that while it's relatively easy for district leaders to describe why they want to move to personalized learning, it's a more challenging task to make sure the "why" of personalized learning is aligned to their overall district vision, strategic plan, values, and priorities. We made this shift to ensure conversations focused on alignment versus creating another new (and unconnected) vision.

- **Under our "Strategy" and "Design" columns, we removed the word "District" from multiple squares.** While it was always our intention that the word "district" was inclusive to schools, we wanted to be more clear that both the district central office and schools should have a plan for all these areas. For example, vision alignment must also happen at the school level, and it's insufficient for a district to have a plan on how to roll out personalized learning across schools, but not support schools individually in their local rollouts. We've also seen amazing shifts in the culture of innovation begin at the school level and permeate throughout the district in a grassroots manner.

III. How Has The Framework Been Used?

"It has been a key tool to help us determine the most important pieces of our work as we have implemented Personalized Learning in our district. Each stage of our journey has led us to work on new pieces of the framework. It has truly provided a way for us to look at our implementation and what our strengths are, what we already have in place, and what our next path needs to be."

– SUZIE ALKA, ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT, YUMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE

"It truly provided us with a blueprint of where to direct our energy. It allowed us to see where we do well and where we need to improve."

– RICH HUGHES, SUPERINTENDENT, CENTRAL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

"The PL Framework has been foundational in the process of implementing personalized learning in our district."

– RICH MERLO, SUPERINTENDENT, CORCORAN JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

"The framework has provided us the opportunity to look for gaps in our system, identify strengths and weaknesses in our implementation, and to prioritize the next area(s) to focus our resources…it allows our leaders to use the framework as a reference point to start conversations without it being one person pushing an agenda."

– DEAGAN ANDREWS, DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, GREELEY-EVANS SCHOOL DISTRICT 6

"The PL Implementation Framework has had a significant role in our design and implementation. From the very beginning, the framework has been a guide for our thinking, brainstorming, and innovating. More importantly, it brought to light all of the details and key planning that we may not have been thinking about in our early stages."

– KATE SCHWARTZ, DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, MSD WARREN TOWNSHIP

"It has given us information on where we are and guidance on where we need to go to successfully implement Personalized Learning."

– RINDY WARD, DIRECTOR OF LEARNING SERVICES, YUMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE

"The PL Framework served as a foundation for our design, implementation, and review."
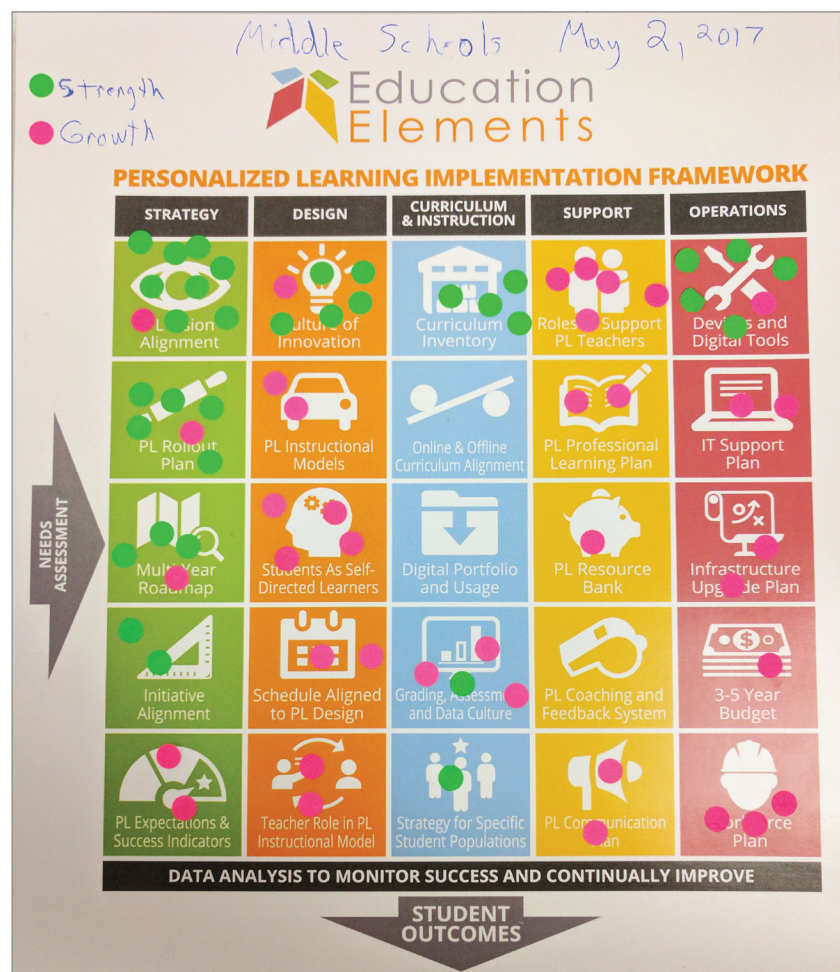
– TIM HANSON, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, MSD WARREN TOWNSHIP

When we created the PL Implementation Framework we believed districts should generally move from left to right — starting with a needs assessment, developing a vision, strategy, and roadmap, and making design, curriculum, and support decisions after that. However, through our work we realized that in many instances a budget is set or staff roles are very difficult to change and therefore we started designing conversations and activities to ensure the PL Implementation Framework could provide the flexibility to move through focus areas based on each district or school's specific context, strengths, and needs.

Regardless of where a district or school is in the process of implementing personalized learning, the PL Implementation Framework has become a foundational tool for conversations, workshops, and strategy sessions across the country, including:

Alignment Activities

We developed activities to help build a common language for talking about personalized learning. These activities help district and school teams align on what their vision is and how they'll make changes to instruction, curriculum, operations, support, and more. We've included a sample activity you can use on page 11.
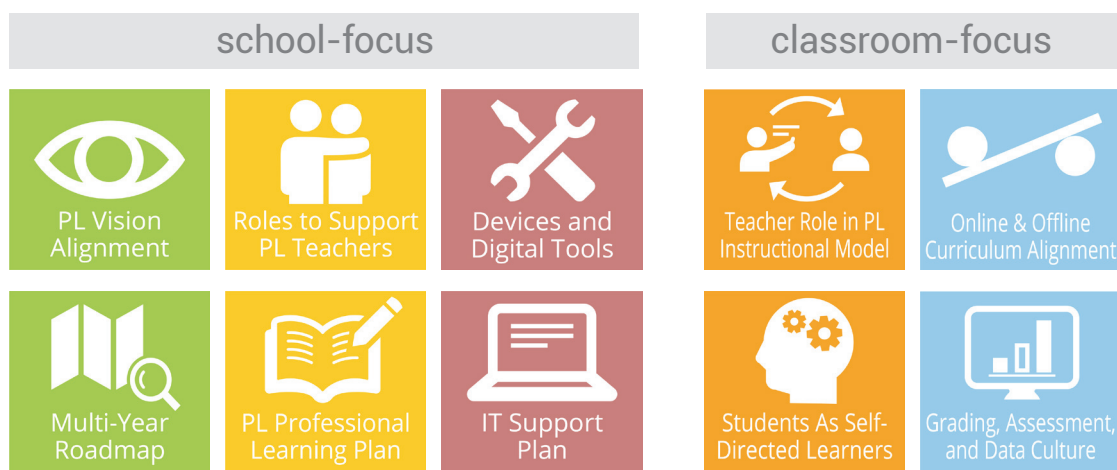
Readiness Assessments

The PL Implementation Framework forms the foundation of our readiness assessment. We ask schools to reflect on ten areas of the framework to determine their starting strengths and areas of need for personalized learning.

Readiness Focus

Identifies the challenges, strengths, and opportunities that stakeholders will face as they begin personalized learning. Helps schools prioritize specific areas for growth.

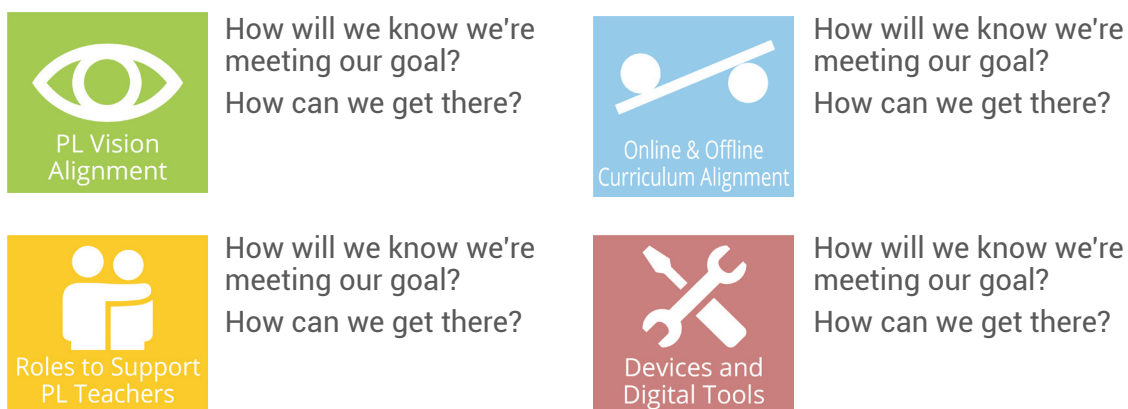| school-focus			classroom-focus	
PL Vision Alignment	Roles to Support PL Teachers	Devices and Digital Tools	Teacher Role in PL Instructional Model	Online & Offline Curriculum Alignment
Multi-Year Roadmap	PL Professional Learning Plan	IT Support Plan	Students As Self-Directed Learners	Grading, Assessment, and Data Culture

Charting Our Course

We've worked to help districts and schools better chart their course—set goals and priorities and determine the progress they are making throughout the year. The PL Implementation Framework helps to articulate focus areas that we then set goals and actions around.

District Focus Areas

To support our schools to design and implement PL based on the above goals and expectations, we commit to the following district focus areas and actions.

PL Vision Alignment
How will we know we're meeting our goal?
How can we get there?

Online & Offline Curriculum Alignment
How will we know we're meeting our goal?
How can we get there?

Roles to Support PL Teachers
How will we know we're meeting our goal?
How can we get there?

Devices and Digital Tools
How will we know we're meeting our goal?
How can we get there?

District Blueprint

We use the PL Implementation Framework to help districts identify four focus areas for the first three to six months of implementation. We document these in our District Blueprint, which becomes a key communication tool across the district.

District PL Design Blueprint

How will we message why PL?

To provide purposeful experiences where learners take risks, grow from challenges, and lead succesful lives in a changing world.

How will we define PL?

Targeted Instruction	Student Reflection & Ownership
Integrated Digital Content	Data Driven Decisions

How will we implement PL?

School Design Expectations: *see deails on the next slide*

How will we supply PL?

PL Vision Alignment | Roles to Support PL Teachers | Online & Offline Curriculum Alignment | Devices and Digital Tools

What do we expect PL to result in?

We believe PL will lead to increased teacher satisfaction and increased student academic growth.

District Stories

We developed videos for districts to tell their stories, based on their areas of focus from the PL Implementation Framework.

- [Fulton County Schools: Getting Digital Content Right](#)
- [Warren Township: Creating a Culture of Innovation](#)
- [Syracuse City School District: Rolling Out PL](#)
- [Yuma School District One: Helping Teachers Succeed](#)

New Resources

Based on what we heard from schools and districts we know that some squares are currently more critical than others in supporting a successful shift to personalized learning. Often times these critical areas (e.g. online & offline curriculum alignment or initiative alignment) were also the topics with the fewest quality resources and tools. We focused 2016 and 2017 on building out resources for these high-need areas.

Which are the most important areas of the framework for your school or district?

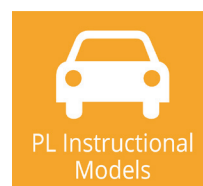| Culture of Innovation	PL Vision Alignment	Online & Offline Curriculum Alignment	Initiative Alignment
Students As Self-Directed Learners	Roles to Support PL Teachers	Digital Portfolio and Usage	PL Instructional Models

"Culture of Innovation and Students as Self-Directed Learners. These areas have challenged our old thinking of what school and student learning should look and sound like."
— *Tim Hanson*
Assistant Superintendent
MSD Warren Township

"The areas of the PL Framework focused on PL Vision Alignment and Roles to Support Teachers were crucial in our district's implementation of personalized learning."
— *Martin Rotz*
Superintendent
Romulus Central School District

"Right now our focus is on aligning online and offline curriculum. This area highlighted the need for multiple departments in our organization to tackle this complex challenge."
— *Deagan Andrews*
Director of Instructional Technology
Greeley-Evans School District 6

"I would say those squares in the strategy and design were the most helpful to us in thinking about how to change our culture to a more personalized approach for our students."
— *Suzie Alka*
Associate Superintendent
Yuma Elementary School District One

EE RESOURCES

Ten Tips for Creating A Culture of Innovation	How to Create A PL Vision	Guide to Selecting Curriculum To Support Personalized Learning	Personalized Learning Communications Guide
A Realistic View for Self-Directed Learning	6 Personalized Learning Risks Districts Should Avoid	Aligning Curriculum Goals with Personalized Learning Vision	The Core Four of Personalized Learning

IV. How Can You Use the PL Implementation Framework?

We believe the PL Implementation Framework is an incredibly helpful tool, whether or not you partner with Education Elements. We use this activity with districts all over the country and believe it is a great first step for identifying trends in strengths and needs across your district or school.

Activity: Four Votes

1. Gather together a diverse group of team members - we recommend school and district representatives
2. Give each participant a copy of the Personalized Learning Implementation Framework (you can print out copies or link to a digital version)
3. Give participants 3-5 minutes to review the guiding questions on the second page of the framework

> **DESIGN**
> **Culture of Innovation** - how can you develop and formalize a culture of innovation across the district?
> **PL Instructional Models** - what will schools' personalized learning instructional models look like? Will they share common design elements?
> **Students As Self-Directed Learners** - how will you develop students as self-directed learners?
> **Schedule Aligned to PL Design** - how much are you willing to change bell schedules or annual calendars to support PL?

4. Before discussing anything whole group, have each team member vote for:
   a. Two areas they feel the district is strongest in (by placing two green stickers or green x's on a central bingo card. You can also make it more fun by using M&Ms or Skittles to mark your votes). See page 4.
   b. Two areas they feel the district needs support with (by placing two red stickers or red x's on a central bingo card).

5. Depending on the size of your group, remain in a whole group or break into smaller groups of 3-4 people to discuss trends from the vote and what it means for your district. Here are a few guiding questions:

   a. Do we see any clear trends in terms of strengths or areas of need?

   b. Is there a difference between how school level and district level participants see strengths and needs?

   c. What led to our current strengths?

   d. What steps might we take to address our current areas of need?

Example of one district team's sticker distribution in the four votes activity.

V. Where Will The Framework Go Next?

We will continue to use and refine the PL Implementation Framework with our district and school partners and offer it as a free tool for all of you!

The framework has also inspired the way we think about new types of instructional shifts. This year we published a [Competency-Based Education (CBE) Framework](#), inspired by the structure of our original PL Implementation Framework. The CBE Framework has already been used by districts around the country as part of Digital Promise's League of Innovative Schools. Districts used the framework to reflect on focus areas for competency-based learning and to develop action plans to address critical aspects of CBE. The CBE Framework forms the foundation for a toolkit we published with Digital Promise in May 2017. Ten districts documented the work they've done to move CBE forward in their communities.

We will also be using the PL Implementation Framework as the inspiration for our 2016-17 impact report. Here is the [2015-16 impact report](#) which also used the framework as a foundation.

If you want to know the latest on the PL Implementation Framework and the resources we've created to support each of the 25 focus areas:
- Contact us at info@edelements.com
- Subscribe to our [weekly blog](#)
- Subscribe to our [monthly newsletter](#)
- Follow us on [twitter](#)
- Sign up to learn about out next [national PL Summit](#)

Author

Keara Duggan is a Partner at Education Elements. As a leader on the consulting team, she supports more than 500 district and school partners. Keara's research interests include: how to build and scale a [culture of innovation in large systems,](#) how to create [national communities of collaboration,](#) and how to keep [laughing](#) when pursuing daunting, large-scale changes.

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