

# stories of impact

A Chronicle of Three Approaches from the Office of Personalized Learning in Dallas ISD



Stories of Impact chronicles three approaches the Personalized Learning (PL) Department in the Dallas Independent School District has taken to support educators in implementing PL on their campuses. In our partnership with the PL office we've seen firsthand the impact their work has had on students, on educators, and on the district at large.

PL instructional strategies allow students to take their own path depending on who they are and what they need, and the PL team in Dallas ISD wanted the same for educators in this district of 230 schools and more than 157,000 students. The three stories shared here highlight how the PL department has modeled PL practices in its support for campuses, allowing educators to walk the walk while simultaneously getting the support and training they need to begin implementing PL, and how they work at all levels of the system: individual educator, school, and networks of schools.

In this series we share how a Innovation in Teaching Fellowship, a Personalized Menu of Campus Support, and a Blended Learning Initiative have been key components of a strategy to equip educators to personalize learning for kids in Dallas ISD. These components of the work, along with others, have allowed the PL department to impact almost 100 schools and more than 20,000 students.

As partners to Dallas for almost five years , we share their stories to inform, inspire, and instigate impact elsewhere and to recognize the incredible work of a cohort of passionate, experienced, and innovative educators.



## Part 1: Innovation in Teaching Fellowship

**How a cohort of innovative educators use design thinking to redesign classrooms across Dallas**

### *What is the Innovation in Teaching Fellowship?*

Teachers know that each student is different, has their own strengths and needs, and moves at their own pace. In Dallas ISD, Personalized Learning (PL) — customizing instruction for each student's needs, learning styles, and aspirations — is taking root as an instructional model that best meets each student's educational needs. As teachers across the district are implementing PL, they too benefit from personalized support.

One way the PL department executes this personalized support is through the Innovation in Teaching Fellowship. Knowing that transformation in education must first start with adults, the Fellowship aims to equip any teacher in Dallas ISD with an interest in PL with the tools to rethink the model of teaching to the middle, and instead, start teaching to the individual. Over the course of 10 months, teachers from across the district come together to participate in the fellowship to change the way they teach and therefore, the way their students learn. Through research of best practices, design challenges, site visits, and designing their own classroom innovations, they begin to implement PL models in their classrooms. Tia Fuentes, a first grade teacher at Arturo Salazar Elementary School,

explains how she found the fellowship. “My mentor teacher told me about it thinking that I’d be great at it. I looked into it and I loved the idea, so I applied. Honestly, I had already been doing blended learning, but I didn’t even know some of it was blended learning! The fellowship really opened up my eyes and helped to enhance lots of what I was doing and it gave me the confidence and security to know that the sky’s the limit. It completely changed my life and I flourished as a teacher so much more.”

Andie Threatt, a second grade math and science teacher at Victor H. Hexter Elementary School had the opportunity to try project-based learning within a geometry class. Not only was it fun and engaging for her, she observed that it brought out a new side in her students she had not previously seen. Through this experience, she saw what one “small change” could do for her students, how her classroom could look and feel more welcoming to all her students — not just those who fell in the middle. This experience motivated her to apply for the Innovation in Teaching Fellowship.

Teachers like Tia and Andie who are student-centered, data-driven, continuously reflecting on their practice, and eager to improve their craft are a natural fit for the Fellowship. Some fellows are newer to these practices and get involved with the fellowship because they know they want to make shifts in their classrooms. Alexander Vega, the only teacher from Umphrey Lee Elementary School, felt strongly that the “one size fits all” model cannot and should not be applied to any classroom and that adaptation is key in a changing world. The Fellowship provides an on-ramp for teachers like Alexander to begin to explore personalized learning in their classrooms.

Brigid Moriarty-Guerrero, a coach and senior consultant at 2Revolutions, describes how this approach is unique. “The PL team in Dallas recognized a need to seed innovation among who we would call the early adopters, the folks who are already doing PL or who are motivated to try these approaches. In order to reach those educators, they knew they had to extend the invitation to anyone across the district and then create a space that gives them a sandbox to play in along with support from a community of their colleagues. This is what the fellowship serves to do: inspire and encourage the innovative practices already happening in the district. By creating this network of educators, the teachers get training, support, and inspiration, and the PL department gets connected to the emerging PL practices and the educators who are implementing them.”



## What Happens During the Fellowship?

The Innovation in Teaching Fellowship launched in the summer of 2016 with its first cohort of teachers. Over the course of ten months, fellows move through six phases to learn, design, prototype, and share their innovations with the great community.



### Part One: Reimagining the Classroom Design Sprint

*In-Person: Three days in June*

The fellowship will kick-off with a three-day design sprint that will introduce the LAUNCH process as a framework for Design Thinking. Fellows will be exposed to new ideas and models that reflect the future of learning, LAUNCH as a process for operationalizing those ideas, and personalized learning as one particular approach to support student growth at his/her zone of proximal development.



### Part Two: Exploration of Next Generation Models

*Virtually: June - July*

Fellows will have access to selected books, playlists, webinars, etc. that will continue to expose them to new ideas and models related to blended learning and project-based learning. Fellows will also be able to engage in an online discussion forum to dialogue with their peers about what they're learning, what they hope to try in their own classrooms, and what questions they have.



### Part Three: Deeper Learning

*In-Person: Selected dates between August and January*

Fellows will continue to dive deeper into blended learning or project-based learning (based on their pathway selection) to support implementation in his/her classroom. During these sessions fellows will be exposed to instructional strategies that support new learning models while they are simultaneously prototyping new ideas in their classroom.



### Part Four: Learning Excursions

*Local and National Site Visits*

Fellows who are in good standing (and have principal approval) will have the opportunity to take a Learning Excursion to visit innovative schools across the nation and/or Dallas metroplex.



### Part Five: Analyze, Synthesize, + Prepare to Share

*Virtually*

Fellows will reflect on what they've learned and observed through the fellowship and will prepare to share key insights, ideas, etc. with their new community of practice as well as the broader education ecosystem.



### Part Six: Fellowship Showcase

*In-Person: January 24th*

Fellows will present their learnings, "ah-ha" moments, and ideas for the future at an in-person convening to conclude the fellowship experience.

Over the summer, teachers read *The End of Average* by Todd Rose and *Blended* by Michael Horn and Heather Staker to set the stage. Roberto Gonzalez, a fifth grade teacher at Casa View Elementary school and one of the first to take part in the 2016 cohort, says reading the books opened his mind to what was possible for him to do as an educator and what was necessary for his students. The books also opened Courtney Boykin's eyes to a new way of thinking about education. As a fifth grade teacher at George Herbert Walker Bush Elementary School she knew her students needed more preparation for this ever-changing world. She learned that critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, creative thinking skills, and innovation are vital in order for her students to be successful.

Fellows also participate in the three-day Summer Design Sprint, which initiates the teachers to what the Fellowship is all about: using design thinking to redesign classrooms. Teachers are asked to use the [Design Thinking Cycle](#) to reimagine their classroom, finding creative solutions for existing problems. Through this process, teachers also learn to take an equity-centered approach to rethink a classroom experience for the students.

Robert Gonzalez experienced both personal and professional growth with the design sprint. He engaged his students in the same exercise he went through and had them reflect on previous practices within the classroom that were not working for them.

## WALK the WALK

"So we were actually going through the Design Thinking process. Throughout the whole process you're designing and thinking and creating, and I just thought that was a part of their training style and then when I realized it this lightbulb went off — it's so easy, I can actually apply this with my kids!" says Tia Fuentes.

The fellowship expertly models the experience of personalized learning for teachers, so they don't just understand it academically, they go through it themselves and feel the transformative nature of it on an emotional level as well. Everything the PL department walks teachers through during the fellowship is a model of an instructional practice that can be used in their classrooms: design thinking, flipped, blended, deeper learning, and PL practices.



After the design sprint, fellows gain access to playlists, webinars, and resources to explore new ideas related to blended learning and project-based learning. Through exposure to new strategies for instructional models and coaching from the PL team, teachers are able to begin prototyping new learning models in their own classrooms. As they learn more about these next generation models, teachers begin to choose a pathway for themselves, either blended learning or project-based learning. The pathways allow them to focus their collaboration, research, and site visits, giving them some direction to what they are trying out in their classrooms. Through ongoing support from the PL team and their colleagues, teachers get help narrowing their focus so they aren't overwhelmed by thinking everything has to change all at once.

## Ongoing Peer Support

Teachers meet in-person between six and eight times during the Fellowship. Having other dedicated professionals to turn to or bounce ideas off of, and who will support and encourage new ideas is like having a life line when taking risks in the classroom. Andie Threatt was thrilled to find herself surrounded by other ambitious, inspiring teachers all working within a few miles of other in Dallas ISD, helping her feel less alone in her drive to bring change into her classroom.

For many teachers, this peer support and feedback are among the most valuable aspects of the Fellowship. Many stay connected to the Fellowship network beyond their 10-month experience. Tia Fuentes explains that, "the cohort is filled with other teachers just as excited and ready to dig into PL. Even though I'm not in the cohort now I still attend their events because it's great to have networking opportunities with all the people who were in the cohort before, with, and even after me." After her participation in the Fellowship, Tia moved into a role of PL coordinator at a new PL campus, Personalized Learning Preparatory at Sam Houston. She's not the only fellow who has taken on a leadership role. Again, this is part of how the PL department has been so strategic in their work, explains Brigid Moriarty-Guerrero of 2Revolutions, they support teachers so well that they can quickly catapult into becoming leaders across the district and can continue to inspire shifts towards best PL practices for students on their campuses.

### Why is this important?

Students will be entering a 21st century workforce with very different skill sets than previous generations. Projections by McKinsey Global Institute estimate that robots will replace more than 80 million jobs by 2030. This data concerns administrators like Jennifer Jackson, principal of Victor H. Hexter Elementary School. How are teachers going to prepare students for a world like this? How will they meet these students' needs? Jackson wants her students to be prepared for jobs in creative fields and this will require a shift for her educators.

In the first year of the fellowship, Jackson sent seven of her teachers. The teachers become students in these workshops and they take control of their own learning, driving the process themselves. Jackson knows the program builds their leadership capacity and as they return to their school communities, they can inspire their colleagues to shift with them.





Throughout the school year, along with the regular meetings and online support, teachers also participate in learning excursions that allow them to see the work in action in other places around the country. Moriarty-Guerrero explains, "this immersion in PL practices is crucial. When teachers see things they've read about or watched videos of they can analyze and understand it differently. They can gather important information and cues about how this work is actually carried out and they can connect with other practitioners who can answer questions and provide support in a mentor type of format having already implemented things themselves. Site visits are expensive and time consuming but can pay dividends, especially with early adopters who are motivated to try the practices they see."

## What does Innovation look like?

Innovation in the fellowship is happening throughout the 10 months. Teachers are encouraged to "just get started" and to make small changes. Each fellow has autonomy over what specific innovative prototypes they try out, such as station rotation model, playlists, flex seating, choice boards, learning pathways, project-based learning, or student led conferences. What is most important is that each fellow has come to their innovation through observing and getting feedback from their own students within their own context. No longer is station rotation a mandated practice, but station rotation can emerge as a result of empathy, observation, and prototyping. The Fellowship ends with a showcase of the teachers' new ideas and prototypes along with their reflections and insights.

In fellow Heather Houston's fifth grade science class at Rosemont Elementary School, her prototype was to ask students come up with a problem (in this case, to recycling) and use the



design thinking process to find a solution to their problem. Students are driving a process that not only engages them in a real-world problem using math, science, and social studies skills but that also teaches problem-solving, time-management, and instills a work ethic. They show up and do hard work without the carrot of an extra reward, they do it because, as Heather describes, "They realize that they are part of something bigger and they want to be involved. This is where this program has gotten us. This is the innovation in teaching."

Tia Fuentes hadn't realized how much she had changed as a teacher until she went back through her reflections and saw how many times she had failed and then tried something else. Along the way, the fellowship program helps build teachers up to be the kind of educators that "fail forward" meaning they use each day as an opportunity to learn and keep improving. By modeling this resilience and perseverance - the very things that teachers want to instill in their students (the ability to try new things, to fail and try again, to get constructive feedback from peers and do better the next time) the students gain the courage and confidence to do the same. Once Tia began to innovate in her class and see the results, while it was hard at times, there was no going back. She says it was "like taking the roof off the house". Once you see the sky - the possibilities are limitless.

Since finishing her fellowship, Melanie Carnevale believes If you want innovation in the classroom, you need to personalize the learning. As a second grade teacher and robotics coach at Felix G. Botello Elementary School, she had her "aha" moment during the fellowship. In order for innovative learning to successfully manifest itself within her classroom, she came to understand her need to truly hand over "the keys to learning." Moments like this are what the Fellowship is all about. Shifting the instructional practice until the teacher becomes more of a facilitator and less of a sage on the stage. It's about the transfer of power, from teacher to student. As simple as that may sound, it can be daunting to do in an authentic way, notes Brigid Moriarty-Guerrero. Dallas' fellowship has the special sauce of learner agency, flexible pacing, authentic tasks, scaffolding, feedback and support, and strong relationships - all things we talk about wanting for student learners as well. The fellowship provides the foundation for teachers but gives them the freedom to learn through their own experience.



## Impact on Students

For Courtney Boykin, when she had her fifth grade students address academic barriers and then create plans on their own to address them as part of her innovation, she knows they truly care about their own learning. Including them in helping to determine how they will learn the reading standards they need in order to be successful, she found they were much more invested in school. By simply being part of the decision-making process of how and in what way they will learn best, her class increased their academic readiness by 42%.

Tia Fuentes brought the challenge of losing valuable time in transitions to her work in the fellowship. As hard as it was for her as a teacher to give up the control of a quiet classroom Tia found through prototyping that even at a young age, with more freedom to choose her students thrived and transitions improved. Tia discovered that creating choice boards and offering flexible seating was ultimately much better for her students to complete their tasks on their own time. No longer does she spend time managing transitions and asking students to sit still. By listening to the student's feedback and implementing a system they co-designed, her 1st graders now use choice boards with "Must Do's, Can Do's, and May Do's" during a work block where they choose their preferred seating. This shift has benefited their learning and instilled a greater confidence in her students, according to Tia. Letting go of the reins resulted in more engaged students.

Roberto Gonzalez had students in his class who he knew could do more and who he struggled to connect with them. During the Fellowship he did a lot of self-reflection around his instructional practices and found the feedback from his cohort extremely valuable. He then applied this same approach to the students. He sat down with them and together they developed smart goals and had the students track their own data. The students can now choose how to demonstrate their knowledge and master a skill based on what works best for their learning style and at their own pace. Then they receive feedback from their peers on how they can improve. These students shifted from being marginalized in their own learning to being the center of it.

The Innovation in Teaching Fellowship gave these teachers the time, space, and support to make changes that have led to improved outcomes for students. While the PL team is capturing tangible measures of this impact, the teachers' stories of success and of positive change empower them to continue on the path to PL, using the network they built, the learning, and the experiences from the fellowship as an ongoing inspiration.

## Part 2: Personalized Learning Menu of Supports

### How authentic voice and choice empower school leaders to implement Personalized Learning at the campus level

"Since our schools are at different places, it doesn't make sense to standardize supports," says Kristen Watkins, director of the PL team at Dallas ISD. One way they've approached this personalization is to offer a Menu of Supports. Take a moment to read through their menu [here](#). As each team plans for the upcoming year they use the menu to select the support they would like to receive through the PL department. This seems straightforward; however, the way in which the PL department has designed and used the menu is an innovative approach to scaffolding support to their schools implementing PL that goes well beyond what one might imagine a menu of options could offer.

This type of choice and flexibility of pacing is often hard to find at the district level, which is one of the reasons this approach is really special, says Brigid Moriarty-Guerrero of 2Revolutions, who has worked with the district for years as a coach and consultant. Districts sometimes struggle with truly allowing schools to work at their own pace and proceed authentically. "The menu of supports provides options that the district has defined, but that are based on experience, observation, and empathy. By giving teams autonomy in selecting their options, the PL team has struck a unique balance of structure, scaffolding, and guardrails while providing actual choice and agency to the campuses they support."

The PL Menu of Supports is organized like a restaurant menu with appetizers, main dishes, sides, and desserts. Read on the following pages to understand what each section offers, how they use it, and what makes it especially innovative.



**Vision:** Empowered kids who are college ready, career ready, and world ready.

**Mission:** To equip educators and their partners to personalize learning for kids.

*What does a PL school in Dallas ISD look like? Read [this story in the Hechinger Report](#) for a look at Dan D. Rogers Elementary School and its transformation through PL.*

## Appetizers

The first choice schools make is an appetizer. The appetizers are unique compared with the other parts of the meal, “these appetizers are our pulse check to figure out what we should be spending our time on for the upcoming year,” says Watkins. For example, the PL team spent the 2016-17 school year improving its website, the [PL Toolbox](#) after many schools chose that as their appetizer. This approach ensures that the PL team is spending their time and energy on resource development and tools that are actually what schools need, as opposed to developing resources that are underused or not even necessary. The appetizers are important, says Moriarty-Guerrero. “The PL office puts these appetizers in front of teams to select and use as they see fit. This lets the district see what schools are drawn to, and then they use teams’ experiences and feedback to drive their prioritization process.” Doing this allows the PL team to be innovative and nimble, while ensuring that energy spent on new ideas is in direct service of what the schools need. Below is a short description of the appetizers available to schools for the 2018-2019 school year; each school can choose two and this is the only section of the menu that has offerings available to school teams that aren’t part of the PL cohort of schools.

### [PL Coaching and Development Rubric](#)

This rubric, a non-evaluative tool that extends from Dallas ISD’s [Teacher Excellence Initiative](#) teacher performance rubric, is used to coach and provide feedback across the common expectations for effective PL defined within it. The PL rubric is purposefully open-ended - defining key practices without mandating, an example of how the PL office’s approach allows for true choice, but with enough detail to not leave schools confused as to where to begin or how to progress. Watch [this video](#) to learn more about the rubric and how to use it.

### [PL Toolbox](#)

The PL Toolbox is a resource hub and Dallas ISD’s go-to website for all things PL, including look-fors, questions to guide observation/ask students, resources and artifacts of practice and PL in action all aligned to each rubric strand on the PL Coaching & Development Rubric. Read [this blog](#) for an introduction to the new-and-improved toolbox and for more details of what you can find on the site.

### [PL Readiness Continuum](#)

A work in progress for over a year and half, and a great example of the district continuously and directly integrating user feedback to create a tool, the [PL Readiness Continuum](#) captures systems and actions at the campus and district levels that help to establish personalized learning campuses. Read this [blog](#) to see the detailed process they used.

### [Professional Development \(PD\) Series for Teachers](#)

Developed in the summer of 2018, this online PD series supports leaders with building capacity around PL in a reflective and empowering way. Through a learning management system, participants work through a series of tasks to identify, practice, and reflect on the five domains of the PL Coaching and Development Rubric.

## Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice are groups for educators focused on a concern or passion related to PL with the goal of learning more about it and piloting related ideas. **Here's a look at the Communities of Practices that are available:**

By offering this as an opt-in opportunity for teams, it gives the district a good pulse on whether Communities of Practice are a valuable collaborative improvement strategy to pursue. Sometimes districts plan and implement them without getting any insight or input from participants, and then people generally go in compliance." The PL team observes who engages in the Communities of Practice, in which content areas, and in what ways, and then uses that observation, plus feedback from participants, to make decisions about how to move forward with them.



**Blended Learning 1.0:** This virtual Community of Practice introduces participants to what blended learning is and is not, models of blended learning, and supports participants in building foundational skills for implementing blended learning. This community is designed for educators who are brand-new to Blended Learning, so no previous experience is needed. This Community of Practice starts off with a 30-minute virtual intro session via Google Hangouts to introduce participants to the platform and online community/course. Following the first session, participants engage virtually and are able to complete at their own pace, again modeling the practices they will implement.

**Authentic Assessment Network:** This Community of Practice, intended for educators who have several years of experience leading or teaching in a personalized learning environment, is designed to support participants in redesigning their approach to assessment to incorporate authentic assessment practices. Using the design thinking process, participants find opportunities that meet their campus' needs to integrate and/or deepen their use of authentic assessment within their existing assessment practices.



### ***DPL Educator Tours***

These monthly campus tours give visiting educators the chance to see PL in action in Dallas ISD. They allow schools to showcase the work they're doing on their PL model and allow them to connect with educators from all over the country.

### ***PL Book Club Series***

The book club series is a way to build capacity in PL through a cycle of learning, hacking, and reflecting on a book together. Choices vary based on interests and needs. For example, *Leading Innovation* for principals, assistant principals and system leaders; *Bringing Joy Into Education* and *The Vulnerable Educator* for teachers and instructional coaches; and *Braving the PL Wilderness* for educators in a personalized learning context.

## Main Dishes

The Main Dish section is where campus teams determine their PL campus identity for the upcoming year. Their selection helps the PL team to identify what level and type of PL campus a school is and allows them to plan their support as needed. If schools select a main dish they then need to select two sides to ensure that they are supported enough to meet their objectives. Providing these distinctions is another way that the PL team is modeling authentic choice, and the PL team takes this into account as they co-design support plans with each campus team.

### *Emerging PL Campus*

This identity is for campuses who are interested in moving towards PL and are in the beginning stages of the change management process. These teams are invited to opt in to light-touch supports, things like: knowledge building, visioning and application support.

### *Neighborhood PL Campus*

This choice is for campuses who are pursuing PL, but not Public School Choice innovation campus status. This choice provides the campus with support from the central PL team, but does not provide additional funding from the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) to pursue PL.

### *Innovation Campus (Public School Choice)*

This choice is for neighborhood schools that wish to redesign their school-wide "anchor model." The campus receives additional funding from OTI to support the redesign, and students who are interested in the model from outside of traditional attendance boundaries are able to transfer.

### *Transformation Campus (Public School Choice)*

This choice means the campus, a brand new school, will offer specialized academic programming similar to magnet schools, but will not have any academic entry requirements. Campus leaders receive additional funding from OTI and autonomies to pursue more innovative approaches.

### *"We'll Personalize Learning On Our Own!"*

This choice is a good fit for campuses who have consistently achieved "institutionalized" on the PL Readiness Continuum and need little to no support from the central PL team.

## Side Dishes

Sides are supplements to the main dish and are facilitated by the PL department. Every team is allowed to choose as many sides as they believe they need and are supported in making these decisions through strategic planning facilitated by the PL team, a process which includes visioning and annual goal setting. Moriarty-Guerrero explains that, "by offering these selections as options, the PL team is modeling how to use a framework of support versus one solely based on accountability to get teams to where they need to go. You can imagine that attendance at cohort meetings and evaluations in many districts are not seen as optional. With the way this is framed in Dallas, teams are asking for evaluations and deriving value from the feedback coming at times and in ways that align to the work they are trying to do. It's pretty brilliant."

### MAP Testing (required)

NWEA MAP testing was chosen because it's an adaptive measure of growth. Teachers and students at the PL campuses continue to use this to inform instruction and to set student learning objectives.

### Design Studios

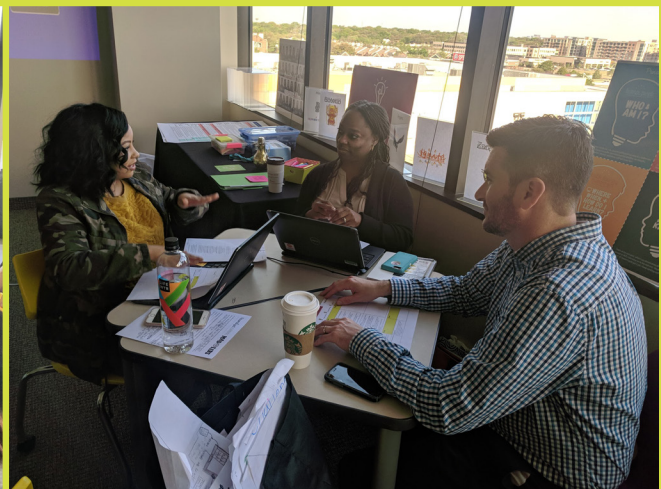
Design studio sessions are in-person meetings with all PL schools that provide an opportunity for teams to refine, learn and plan for personalization back on their campus. "Design studios are a day that we bring all the PL schools together for learning and support that's both differentiated and cohort-wide," says Watkins. "It's similar to a full day of PD. We often go through all the emotions at design studios. It's a vulnerable day because we dig into their work deeply, but we also try to do something fun." The flow of the studios follows the arc of a school year. In September, the studios focus on revisiting the campus priorities, benchmarking where they are, and creating plans aligned to meeting their annual goals. In December teams share progress and problems of practice, as well as analyze their data to inform what is working and what shifts might be needed. April is about celebrating the year and looking towards the next year. There is also always an element of design thinking and new learning folded into the day, as well, for example in December of 2017, the design studios focused on having the school leaders serve as co-designers on the [PL Readiness Continuum](#).

Jason Broussard has attended design studios as a participant, when he worked at Innovation, Design, Entrepreneurship Academy (IDEA) and now facilitates them as a member of the PL team. "We're such a large district and these schools are spread throughout, so that's one of the most valuable opportunities that design studios offers [is being together]," says Broussard. "Campus leaders share experiences and learn from each other and build the community needed to do this work."

"Our team is really intentional that the work participants are doing during the design studios is differentiated," says Broussard. The PL team knows each of



the teams well through regular check ins that keep them well-attuned to the strengths and areas of growth for each campus. They leverage this and each campus' PL Coaching and Development Rubric data to design the sessions. "They [the design studios] are really interactive and I like that," says Nafia Hamilton, Personalized Learning Coordinator. "Your leadership team is able to get off of campus and focus on planning. When you are on campus you are pulled here or there, but during these you really get together and action plan and set goals against what you're working on." Most design studios emphasize deep and rich conversations that end with an output. "What ends up happening is you are given a task that really makes the campus team think and have tough conversations that might not have happened," says Broussard.



## Campus Support Visits (CSVs)

This choice gives PL campuses the opportunity to have teacher classroom observations as often as every six weeks using the PL Coaching & Development Rubric. These observations provide feedback on fidelity of PL implementation to the campus team. "CSVs is an observation framework - that could very easily have become a tool for evaluation," says Moriarty-Guerrero. "By making these visits a choice, the PL office ensures that campuses see this as a support and not an accountability measure." If school leaders know that they are not yet meeting many of the indicators in the PL rubric they can opt out. "I remember sitting in a meeting with a school and the PL team and the school leader explained that they knew they still had a lot of work to do and an CSV wouldn't give them valuable information right now and would cause stress for the teachers." The PL team was fine with skipping it. "Districts sometimes struggle mightily here," continues Moriarty-Guerrero. "Accountability measures are so cachet, that sometimes districts over do it and they end up stifling work, especially when the work is rooted in innovation. The PL team's approach here is smart and has allowed the PL rubric to remain a tool for support and growth versus accountability."

## Learner Profiles

[Learner Profiles](#) empower campus leaders and educators to drive their own learning and advocate for what they need in order to be successful when it comes to PL and beyond. The Learner Profiles include strengths, areas for growth, interests, aspirations, goals and descriptions of how the individual learns best. They are used to drive [educator development](#) empowering individuals to set and reach their own goals, and providing coaches a tool for supporting the educators they work with.

### Learner Profile

#### Why:

To empower individuals to drive learning and advocate for their needs in order to be successful.

#### What:

A learner profile tells an individual's academic + personal story over time and helps to establish a coaching relationship. It includes strengths, areas for growth, interests, aspirations, goals and how the individual learns best.






## Coordinator LEARNER PROFILE

### Table of Contents

[Profile](#) [Goal Plan Action](#) [Tracking Progress](#) [Check ins](#) [End of Year Reflection](#)

[2016-2017 Learner Profile](#)

### Profile

	<p><b>Nafia Hamilton</b></p> <p>I was born and raised in Denver, CO. I went to college at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, VA. I received my Bachelor's Degree in 2008 in Elementary Education with a concentration in English. After graduation, I moved back home to Denver and was privileged to teach in the very neighborhood that I grew up in, Hallett Fundamental Academy, the school where I taught for six years, was within walking distance from every significant memory I had as a child. I received my Master's Degree in Teacher Leadership from University of Phoenix in 2014. I decided to move to Dallas in March of 2015. I worked at Cabell Elementary School, a Personalized Learning campus, for the 2015-2016 school year.</p>	<p><b>What is important to you?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My relationship with God</li> <li>• My family</li> <li>• Helping others as much as I can in any aspect</li> <li>• My students discovering a lifelong sense of learning</li> <li>• My students being globally competitive</li> <li>• Mentoring change agents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Interests and Motivators</b></p>	<p><b>At Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive school culture</li> <li>• Strong support system</li> <li>• Feeling appreciated</li> <li>• Good communication</li> <li>• Getting Results</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outside of Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My family (my grandparents are truly the most important part of my life) they motivate and inspire me to be better</li> <li>• Going to concerts</li> <li>• Going to all kinds of museums</li> <li>• Going to the theater</li> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• I'm starting to love to cook</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Shopping</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preferred Work Style</b></p>	<p>I work better in a quiet, organized environment. I work well under pressure.</p>	
<p><b>How would you like feedback delivered?</b> <i>(i.e., written, verbal, with positive first, with positive)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive feedback first</li> <li>• Direct feedback with suggestions for improvement or pointing me in the right direction for improvement</li> <li>• Written or verbal is fine.</li> </ul>	

### Tracking Progress Towards Goals

I will help each teacher in every grade level implement a sustainable station rotation model or flipped classroom/learning pathway model in their classrooms that will incorporate teacher created authentic task.

#### Progress Towards Goals

Month	October	November	December	January	February
How's it going? General overall feeling				I believe it's going pretty good. About 75% of students participate in a blended/personalized learning setting each day.	The percentage is still about 75%. The station rotation model is inconsistent in K-2.
Evidence to Support				-Blended Learning 1.0 presentation for NEW teachers <a href="#">here</a> -Peer observation schedule found <a href="#">here</a> -Peer Observation pre-brief document <a href="#">here</a>	N/A
What went well				Peer observations and providing teachers with feedback and actionable next steps has helped teachers new to PL excel with implementation.	N/A
Area(s) for continued growth				Building capacity and sustainable structures for the station rotation model in each class. Teachers start out with a bang and it some cases it falls by the wayside with outside district pressures come into play.	Finding a way to motivate teachers to persevere through the implementation of station rotations in grades K-2 has been somewhat difficult. I am still searching for ways to build sustainable structures for station

Here's an excerpt from Nafia Hamilton's learner profile.

## Monthly Planning/Coaching Support

This choice provides full-day support from the PL team to help with fidelity of implementing the PL model of instruction. Campuses have flexibility and co-plan for how this day is used with the PL team, examples include: co-observations, co-planning professional development, co-planning of instruction, and more.

## PD Sessions

This choice provides 60-90 minute PD sessions that focus on developing specific teacher actions (as defined by the PL Rubric). Sessions are facilitated by the PL team and can be face-to-face or flipped. The sessions not only provide direct training and support to educators, they also help to model personalized professional development practices that school leaders themselves can then implement.

## Desserts

Everyone deserves a little treat. These options are external resources that provide additional supports for the year. Funding for these opportunities are covered by Dallas ISD's central PL department. "Another way the PL department is modeling the future of learning is in recognizing that great learning can take place outside of the classroom - or in this case, the district PD training rooms. They have intentionally partnered with numerous external organizations that they believe can support their school teams. They cultivate these partnerships carefully and find ways to create deep and meaningful opportunities for schools to work with them," explains Moriarty-Guerrero.

### *PL Student Teacher(s): Partnership with Tech Teach (Texas Tech University)*

Student teachers going through related undergrad programs with Tech Teach are matched with current PL classroom teachers. Student teachers are involved in site visits and PL training, in order to support them in becoming prepared to teach in a PL classroom when they graduate. When campuses select this dessert, they agree to host and support PL student teachers on their campus

### *PL Graduate Certificate/Master's Course: Texas Tech University*

In collaboration with Raise Your Hand Texas' Raising Blended Learners team, Texas Tech University, the Dallas PL team has helped to establish a five course graduate certificate in blended and personalized learning. Beginning in the spring of 2019, participants will have the option to continue taking coursework to receive a Master's degree too.



*Video on Texas Tech Blended and Personalized Learning Graduate Certificate.*



### *Learning Excursions*

Learning Excursions are two to three day visits to several schools in a another city, which include tours, classroom observations, and teacher panels. Visits allow educators an opportunity to see different instructional models being implemented across the country.

### *Blended Learning/Project-Based Learning Graduate Courses: Southern Methodist University*

This semester-long graduate level course helps educators apply research-based principles of blended learning or project based learning in their classroom.

### *SchoolWorks Visit (3 day commitment)*

A [SchoolWorks visit](#) is designed to give feedback on the school's implementation of PL by an outside observer. Visits are three days of review of the school's priorities through classroom observations, focus groups, and evidence collection. The last day consists of a debrief of the overall results and action planning for the leadership team. Schools then use the feedback to monitor their campus PL priorities and develop an action plan.

### *BetterLesson*

BetterLesson Coaching is classroom embedded, learn-by-doing professional development for teachers. This high-quality coaching is a great support for teachers who have foundational skills of PL and are shifting from a focus of implementation to sustainability.

## 2Revolutions Coaching

Schools can select to work with us, 2Revolutions, to receive personalized professional development tailored to school teams needs, and/or personalized instructional and strategic coaching. We offer these supports aligned to all areas of [2Rev's Building blocks](#) and school teams can select an area or areas of focus. Here's one example of what [our coaching](#) looked like for the Dallas ISD schools.

## Education Elements Coaching

School teams can also select to work with Education Elements to receive coaching support. Education Elements specializes in supporting school teams to implement personalized learning.

Each school team selects the supports that will help them meet their specific goals and within the context of their campus. This looks different across the PL schools. Dan D. Rogers, for example, has been implementing PL for three years now, and under the leadership of Lisa Lovato and her team they have intentionally developed strong capacity among her staff making their team more self-sustaining now. In order to reach this point, they used campus support visits, school works observations, 2Revolutions coaching, Site visits, PD days, design studios, have sent many teachers to SMU grad courses and more. Through this strategic planning to implement PL, they are now a school with an Accomplished rating from the district and an A score from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Lovato now helps to support other principals in Dallas ISD by co-facilitating the Blended Learning pathway.

*"The PL team in Dallas has a keen ability to find that delicate balance of keeping the complex simple and fun. These school teams are doing complex work of shifting instructional practices and improving outcomes for all students, by relying heavily on modeling PL, using design thinking to address challenges, and being a continuously learning organization themselves the PL department has created something really special and important."*

~Brigid Moriarty-Guerrero



## Part 3: Blended Learning Feeder Pattern Partners

### How a Foundation and a public school district teamed up to transform instruction

When Angel Hernandez's fifth-grade students walk into his math classroom at Thelma Richardson Elementary School, they are greeted by their teacher and a QR code projected on the whiteboard. Without wasting any time punching in long URLs or passing out sheets of paper, students use their tablet to scan the QR code and are immediately presented with a starter problem, a set of slides, or a personalized task. Minutes later, they break into small groups and begin rotating through stations: independent problems using adaptive math software that responds directly to their needs; hands-on, kinesthetic activities that let them work together to solve problems using physical materials; or targeted instruction led by Hernandez. Throughout the 120 minutes they are together, like a well-choreographed dance, the students move through their stations with their tablet in hand, the devices helping to show them how they have progressed in their learning.

These tablets are part of a grant partnership funded by the [Jiv Daya Foundation](#) and facilitated by [Dallas ISD's Personalized Learning Department](#). In 2011, Jiv Daya, a Texas-based Foundation, selected education as "an area where catalytic impact could be made," and used technology integration as its point of entry. The foundation has since donated devices to more than 450 classrooms across 42 schools. In the 2018 and 2019 school years more than 120 schools will be supported.

Hernandez, who has been teaching for five years, is exuberant in his description of how much these digital tools have impacted learning and teaching in his classroom and the opportunity these devices provide his students. "Access is always the most difficult part. This is the first time we get to have 1-to-1, which is an incredible thing," he says.

"Our school community is 97 percent free and reduced lunch. They live around the neighborhood and it's a beautiful community, but you also see that because of the zip code they live in the limited access they have." The District's partnership with the Jiv Daya Foundation is helping to change that, explains Brigid Moriarty-Guerrero, a coach and senior consultant with 2Revolutions, "the PL team in Dallas has been very thoughtful about how they engage with external partners. There are times when the capacity just isn't there within the district or the process will move too slowly. The team has developed many meaningful partnerships that can sometimes fill those gaps, this is a perfect example of that. Rather than going through the district IT approval Jiv Daya is able to quickly get devices into students' hands." As Hernandez notes, access is a big first step in moving towards the catalytic impact Jiv Daya intends to have.

## Structure of Partnership

The tablet program is a partnership between Dallas ISD's Personalized Learning Department and the Jiv Daya Foundation. To help support the schools receiving the tech tools, the organizations each take on a different role. The District handles instructional support, with a focus on learning how to transform instruction using blended learning and the tools. Jiv Daya focuses on technical support: making sure the tablets are working, teachers know how to connect to wifi, access materials they need, tips on how to navigate the hardware, and more. Keep reading for deeper descriptions on how each organization supports the schools to be successful.



## How It All Began

Before Kristen Watkins was Dallas ISD's director of personalized learning (PL), she was a middle school English teacher, and technology was an ubiquitous part of her instruction. "I struggled my first year teaching. I remember having 36 kids looking at me, and me thinking I couldn't reach all of them, let alone figure out what they were thinking at one time!" Watkins realized that using technology would be a huge game-changer in helping her to better meet students' needs. In the beginning, she regularly checked out laptop carts and used a class website for students to share and submit work and give each other feedback. Recognizing her hunger for technology, her principal encouraged her to apply for a grant from Jiv Daya to receive tablets for her students. She received the grant and was part of the foundation's initial cohort of teachers. "I got enough tablets for all of my kids to have a device. It was huge. There was little technology on campus at the time, besides the few laptops."

That experience was in 2011. By 2015 the Foundation needed a more effective and scalable strategy for supporting the educators and schools who received the technology, and shifted from funding individual classrooms to donating tablets to every student in grades third through fifth-grade classrooms across feeder patterns. (A feeder pattern is a collection of schools that all feed into the same high school(s).) Watkins, who by then was the director of the PL department, had already begun working with a cohort of principals from the Bryant Adams feeder pattern to help them begin to integrate more technology and blended learning back on their campuses. When Jiv Daya approached her about the idea to fund tablets across feeder patterns she was thrilled, and the next stage of the journey began.

Now there is an entire arm of the PL team dedicated to Blended Learning, who focus specifically on instructional support for teachers who are intentionally using technology in their classrooms to better facilitate student learning. Dr. JoAnn Hughes, who leads this team, was one of those first principals in Bryan Adams to receive the devices. Now she trains principals across the district in how to roll out Blended Learning at the campus level.





## Training and Support

Purchasing devices and putting them into the hands of students is by no means enough. “When we say blended learning, what we really mean is integrating technology into the curriculum in a smart way. It’s not just putting students in front of computers — it’s helping students learn better through a blend of technology-enhanced instruction and face-to-face teaching,” says Watkins. No one knows better than Dr. Hughes, who shared that when buy-in from leadership is lacking, devices can “just become paperweights.” To ensure the devices are used effectively, the PL team and Jiv Daya provide intentional support, training, and technical expertise. This strategy of ongoing support is a critical part of the program’s process.

The personalized learning team meets monthly with principals of the feeder patterns who receive the tablets. In the beginning, these meetings introduce principals to the concepts of blended and personalized learning. The meetings are a mix of doing and learning as the PL team intentionally exposes leadership to the same types of learning environments that they are working to cultivate in their schools. Courtney Loy, principal of Thelma Richardson Elementary School explains, “Each time we met with Kristen I learned something new. We were really rocking and rolling. She would introduce us to something and I’d think, ‘Why didn’t I think of that?’...and then immediately I’d share it with my teachers and we were all so excited we would just jump right in and try it.”

This bias to action that Loy and her team embodies is part of the “hack mindset” that the PL team has brought into the learning experience from Stanford University’s School Retool fellowship. “I think what’s inspiring about the bias to action, is just taking that first step and seeing how easy it really is. One small thing has this domino effect that can truly transform a classroom or campus,” says Watkins.

As in all that they do, the personalized learning team works to demonstrate what these small things could be, starting with demonstrating how to flip meetings so content is covered beforehand and meeting time can be spent discussing and collaborating, or using online polls to quickly gather

data in real time. Moriarty-Guerrero shares that the PL team is consistently and effectively modeling the design principles for the teams: try, try, try, and iterate, iterate, iterate. "Just the fact that we would use Poll Everywhere in PD, or Screencastify to record meetings. It was neat to just build up their confidence and to show that this isn't really that hard," explains Watkins.

The personalized learning team also uses these meetings to help feeder pattern schools set goals for the use of devices for student learning. "These goals ran the gamut depending on the needs of the school," explains Watkins. For example, some principals may share that they want "teachers in fourth grade to implement a station rotation," while others say they want to have students spend a certain number of minutes each day on adaptive software." Some reach beyond device use to transformative learning: "I want kids to use the Kindles to produce authentic work and projects." The personal nature of these goals is a driving force in this initiative. "I think why it's been so successful is the campuses have been given the autonomy to take into account their students, their teachers, and where their campus is at currently," says Watkins. Again modeling that agency is crucial to the process and modeling how that type of choice and agency can look while still moving a large cohort of folks towards a shared goal of personalizing learning for Dallas ISD students.

While the PL team handles instructional support, the Jiv Daya team takes on the technical side, visiting schools that have the tablets each week. In the beginning, they might spend a few hours at each school, making sure tablets are connecting to wifi, showing teachers how to easily maneuver around the different applications, and troubleshooting any hardware issues. Later in the year, these visits would cover various tips for how to get the most out of these devices. "It was a huge help," says Loy. Hughes agrees, "We had a much higher adoption rate than I anticipated, and one reason is that the foundation dedicated three people to our nine schools. They would troubleshoot, which was a huge issue. For example, if the wifi didn't work with the Kindles, or if a child changed a setting and a teacher didn't know how to fix it." Although these might seem like small actions, the technical challenges can create a roadblock to adoption, so this attention to detail is critical.

## Mindset & Practice Shifts

In a blended learning classroom students are often in groups, moving through learning objectives at their own pace based on their own needs. While tablets can enable a move to a blended classroom, the most important component is practice and mindset shifts among teachers, and this has become a huge part of the training as well.

Moving mindsets and practices takes time and relationship currency. "There are always a few [leaders] who are going to step up, and they become your messengers, the early innovators," says Hughes. "I think those early adopters could see the value it would bring to their campus." Teachers also had to trust those leading the process, says Hughes, and build relationships before they were going to totally buy-in. (Just like our students!)

"The biggest thing that my teachers struggled with was letting go," says Loy. "They were so used to being the show, and they are the ones that are up there [in the front of the classroom] teaching and students are listening. They had to let go of some of that power and control...some of them still struggle a little bit, but I don't even know how I taught that way before!"

The mindsets have changed so much at Thelma Richardson that in the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, the staff applied for a grant to become a full personalized learning innovation campus through Dallas ISD's Public School Choice process -- which they excitedly received in Spring 2018. Even if they weren't awarded the funding, Loy explains they would have done it anyway. "We want to do this," says Loy. "Even if we don't get the grant, we are going to be a personalized learning school. That's what's going to be happening on our campus. We will be doing blended learning and really individualizing the instruction for students to get the maximum potential for all our kids. We are no longer teaching to the middle."

A person's perspective does not often change overnight, especially when you have been teaching in a certain way for years, or even decades. The PL team knows that, so they use a variety of techniques to help. First: exposure. You can't adopt new ideas without knowing new ideas are out there! "We would talk about mindset and how we are using technology," says Watkins. "What is technology's role in education?" Bite-sized exposure to technology was next, like when Watkins could not attend a meeting so she "flipped" it, recording herself ahead of time to cover the material. For many principals, that was an entirely new concept.

After establishing a foundation in blended learning the group dove into a study on empathy to explore what the experience is like for teachers who are asked to transform their approach to instruction. "We started to talk about the ways to model this in professional development and how important it was for the principal to lead and start to personalize and differentiate PD before you ask teachers to do it." The principals engaged in a design challenge where they did empathy interviews about professional development and how might they reimagine professional development to support teachers. The school leaders interviewed teachers and collected artifacts.

"It was really powerful, and I think that helped them develop a mindset of, 'If I'm going to ask every teacher to give a student a device, I need to also learn how to do this too,'" says Watkins. "I think it helps them empathize with the end users. When they tell their teachers to make it a priority to differentiate, can you also do that for your teachers? Their reflections demonstrated that this is a lot harder than we thought! Empathy has not stopped there. This year the feeder pattern principals have shadowed students for a whole day to really understand what the experience is like. Experiences like these have been most transformative for some principals who were most resistant to tech and innovative practices," says Watkins. All of these approaches that the PL and Jiv Daya teams employ build new muscles and perspectives — without this, no real change can happen.

## Tablet's Impact on Student Learning

There is no limit to what a class with tablets for each student can do, says Watkins. The unique approaches are a testament to the creativity and imagination of the teachers and students, and the learning goals that are the center of the work. For math teacher Hernandez from Thelma Richardson, he and his co-teacher have enjoyed thinking up new ways to use the tools for student learning. For example, they have a few students who are particularly shy, especially when it comes to presenting their work in front of their peers. As they work on developing their confidence, Hernandez and his co-teacher also want to help expand the way public speaking and presentations can be approached in their classrooms. They found an app that lets students animate virtual sock



puppets to present the material they have learned. When it comes time to present, they show the video of their sock puppets explaining the math with recordings of their own voices. “We give them this alternative and they are so happy and so proud,” says Hernandez. “The presenters love it, and so does the class!”

“Students are taking more ownership of their learning,” says Loy. “You will see kids saying, ‘I really need to work on this.’ They understand what their own needs are a little more.” Devices like the tablets can also help students with the metacognition, awareness, of their own learning goals. “There’s such beauty in having student autonomy and control,” says Hernandez. “My job is to facilitate — pushing questions and prepping and planning — they are taking ownership of their own learning.”

Many schools use data trackers so students can go online and see how they are doing on each individual concept. “My students can see, I’m doing really good with multiplication of decimals, but I still need to work on division of models.” This specific, targeted instruction is helping to close the gap in performance, says Hernandez.

“These devices also open students up to the digital landscape, and to learn how to navigate and use these technology tools in a savvy and sophisticated way. Just because a kid can send a direct message on Instagram or snapchat doesn’t mean they know how to download a PDF and fill it out correctly and upload and send it to an appropriate email,” explains Hernandez. “Or to understand how to vet what a quality website is for obtaining information, how to use Google docs, or collaboration software — all tools that they will use in their careers. By giving us access to something we didn’t have before, in my desire to teach math, I also teach how to work in a professional setting with technology,” says Hernandez.

“If we can start preparing them to live in the world where technology and connectivity is [everywhere], if they feel comfortable and are prepared,” says Hernandez, “it’s not just inspiring them to change the world, it’s providing them with the tools they need to go and do it.”