

Four Elements of Personalized Professional Learning

Professional development is shifting. And the Future Ready Schools initiative is one way that professional learning is poised to meet the needs of today's schools. The Future Ready Schools framework for personalized Professional Learning is comprised of four distinct elements.

Element One: Shared Ownership and Responsibility for Professional Growth

When educators take personal responsibility for their learning, amazing opportunities unfold. And these opportunities become exponentially more fruitful when teachers create strong professional networks.

Social media—and Twitter in particular—is a great way for teachers to join an educator community or simply to trade advice on how to make learning more engaging for students. It also provides principals and administrators with the opportunity to “eavesdrop” and learn more about what teachers are talking about.

Hash-tags such as #edtechchat make Twitter one of the simplest ways to connect with other educators. Plus, it allows educators to hone their skills wherever they are, whenever they want: 24/7. Twitter also provides educators with direct access to content experts and thought leaders to which they otherwise wouldn't have access.

Educators can begin by starting a school district hash-tag or by participating (or even organizing) an online **EdCamp**. Like with most things, the more you put into social media, the more you will reap. Your meaningful contributions and interactions will result in more engaged followers and an expanded network of high-quality resources.

Element Two: 21st Century Skill Set

The term “21st Century skills” refers to certain core competencies such as creativity, collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving that students will need to be successful in school, career, and beyond.

STEAM-learning and Maker opportunities are some ways for teachers to develop their own 21st Century skills while embedding them into their curriculum. A healthy school culture encourages creativity and risk-taking not only in students, but also in the educators—and, therefore, in the school's professional learning strategy. If not, there is a disconnect that will stunt learning. Schools should work to establish personal learning networks (PLNs) with a focus on the 4-Cs (collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication). Time should be carved out for PLNs to meet as a part of a school's or district's professional learning plan.

Element 3: Diverse Opportunities for Learning through Technology

One size does not fit all when it comes to professional learning. And, with educational technology evolving at such a hectic pace, no one educator can be expected to have a complete understanding of what is both available and possible with modern learning.

Technology, however, can hold the key to differentiating new learning. Social media (Twitter chats, EdCamps, hash-tag searches, and professional Facebook interactions) can reveal innovative new ideas and tools for enhancing classroom instruction. Digital Badging can also be a way of motivating learners by gamifying the process. This involves listing specific targets, random targets as well as challenging targets. The awarding of badges can be not only a “push” to get learners to work harder, but also a compelling way of tracking and sharing progress.

Technology provides multiple ways of demonstrating individual and collective growth beyond seat time, such as online professional learning networks, online courses, and online MOOCs.

Element 4: Participative Evaluation

Personalized professional learning should include:

- Both face-to-face dialogue for educators as well as options for digital learning
- Self-paced learning and collaboration
- A focus on personal goal-setting and self-assessment
- Reflection on the teacher evaluation system to consider the diverse sources of data that can represent the growth and development of professional educators.