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THE PATH TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

AN OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

PRESENTED BY: G&D ASSOCIATES

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THE PATH TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

THE EDUCATION CRISIS

We are currently experiencing a crisis in education. Not because the current system is broken, rather because it is quickly becoming less relevant to the needs of the global community. The gap between rapid industrial innovation and traditional education systems widens with each passing day. Prescriptive, “one size fits all”, models have done little more than to help learners pass one-dimensional standardized measures that do not address the needs of a society that is developing at exponential rates. Through such rigid models, current educational practices perpetuate a narrow view of learner outcomes rather than foster the dynamic skills needed to be more than a passive participant in today’s global community.

For years, educators have pushed for more learner-centered approaches despite the limitations of the systems they operate within. Pockets of innovative change have been highlighted at all levels, however, significant systemic change has not yet occurred. The lack of paradigm shift is not to be attributed to indifference, rather to the absence of a clear model for achieving significant educational change that can be personalized to individual classrooms, schools, districts, and wider communities.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Most on the national landscape will claim that personalized learning has many meanings. However, we believe that personalization has a clear definition. At its most mature state, personalized learning enables students and educators to have a wide choice of what, how, when and where they learn. This choice extends to how learners demonstrate mastery of a range of academic and metacognitive competencies. Personalization is not a program or a single class to be accessed occasionally; rather it is a philosophy embedded into all learning activities from kindergarten through career.

Although strategies such as choice, differentiation, blended learning, and the infusion of technology rich environments can be parts of a personalized model, the main feature of personalization lies in the level of agency that each learner has over their future. This high level of ownership fosters the drive and mindset that employers have been demanding from graduates for decades. Author Ted Dintersmith states, “if we don’t have kids coming out of school being innovative, we are going to have kids coming out of school being unemployed.” Ultimately, personalized learning enables students and educators to not only visualize, but become the most innovative contributors to the wider community while achieving the highest levels of personal satisfaction.

COMPONENTS OF PERSONALIZED LEARNING

It is our belief that schools and districts must foster an innovative culture that celebrates learning through action. We work with clients to develop the capacity to truly know their learners, educators, and communities through regular assessment, two-way communication, and personalized opportunities for growth. G&D Associates approach to personalization focuses on developing agency for students and staff within six key areas:



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TIME

Time is the most coveted commodity in the world today. It is critical to consider how it is currently used, and how it might be more effectively managed when developing systems that are personalized. Schedules must be responsive to the learning environments of tomorrow where anytime, anyplace access is the norm. We work with schools to reimagine time in a way that enables learning experiences for students and staff that better align with preferences and needs. We help clients design schedules, identify embedded time for collaboration, professional learning, and passion based opportunities for all without time as a barrier.

ENVIRONMENT

Environments that support learning both in and out of the brick and mortar setting are a key component to personalization. Digital learning environments that empower students and teachers to build and complete learning pathways from the location of their choice leads to higher levels of motivation and ownership. Point of need access to physical spaces that are deliberately designed around a wide variety of learning needs enhances the teaching and learning experience for students, staff, and the wider community. We help clients assess current space and coach them through the design and implementation of the most effective environmental approaches for their community.

PEOPLE

Having options around who we access for support is another critical component of our personalized learning model. The choice in human resources enables students and educators to access best fit options to ultimately improve learning outcomes. G&D Associates assists our clients to better leverage individual educator skills and interests with student preferences and data driven needs. In addition, we facilitate deliberate design around educator recruitment and hiring. Through our approach, the expertise and passions of the individual are highlighted to better meet the needs of the entire learning community.

TOOLS

The tools we access can enhance or hinder our success in demonstrating our learning. Exposure to and choice of a variety of resources for educators and their students should be considered in all settings. No longer is it acceptable to expect that all will work in the same way, using the same common toolbox. We assist our clients in identifying tools that fit the specific needs of educators and their students to account for preferences and needs. This level of customization enables the development of learning models that are creatively more engaging and unique in their delivery.

METHODS

Data clearly illustrates that traditional instructional methods with pre-determined pathways are only effective for a fraction of students who experience them. Likewise, a single-minded approach to the delivery of professional learning inadvertently excludes a large percentage of educators from the desired growth outcomes for which the experience was designed. We feel it

is essential to build the capacity to enable a variety of inquiry based and experiential approaches both in and out of the classroom. Delivery methods that account for learner choice, interests, and needs based on data and feedback loops lead to more motivated learners and ultimately more agency in one's own educational and professional growth.

INDUSTRY

To truly prepare learners for the world beyond the educational realm, it is essential that administrators, teachers and students have close connections with industry. The development of reciprocal partnerships that include internships, staff externships, leveraging of industry members as mentors and instructors, as well as community outreach and resource sharing foster the collaborative relationships necessary to develop personalized experiences beyond the classroom.

MANAGING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

To effectively foster the strategies necessary for systems-wide change, leadership capacity must be developed to move beyond management of status quo initiatives. To facilitate this shift, G&D Associates employs The Knoster Model for Managing Complex Change. Knoster suggests that five components must be securely in place to ensure that innovative change occurs and is sustainable.



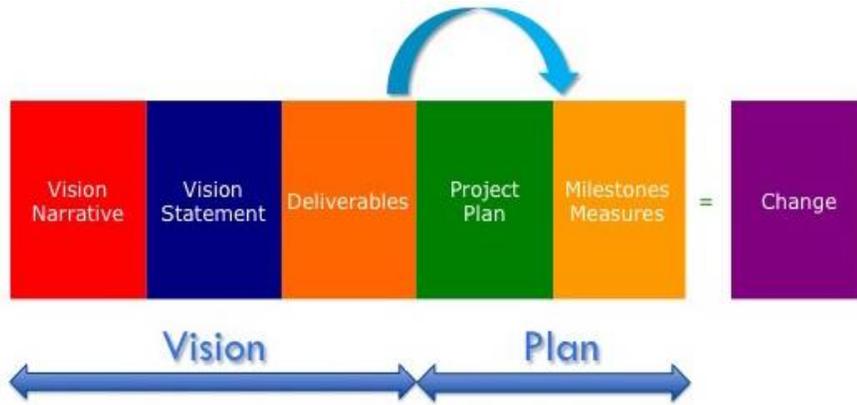
VISION

For organizations to move forward quickly and successfully they have to have a very clear picture of where they want to go, this is the vision. G&D Associates' approach moves beyond a collection of traditional broad statements to enable the development of a comprehensive narrative which envisions teaching and learning outcomes over the next five years. We take an innovative approach to learning, leadership, professional growth, and engagement of the wider community. Beyond narratives, we collaboratively create clear deliverables which communicate what you plan to do and how you intend doing it. The most critical aspect of the vision is that it is commonly understood by all stakeholders and is adopted as the work of the organization rather than as a separate initiative.

ACTION PLAN

Planning is drawn from the vision. The first stage of planning is to identify priorities and break them down into logical steps through a manageable scope and scale. Our eleven-point planning process includes specific milestones and success criteria in SMART goal format that enables schools and districts to easily align the work with school improvement plans and other reporting criteria. G&D Associates believes in applying a close coaching model to develop and manage

your plan towards success. When this approach is coupled with the vision, it provides a comprehensive strategy toward the implementation of innovative learning models.



The G&D Model

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Concurrent with vision and plan creation is the need to develop a set of skills required to implement change. By first working with our clients to assess readiness and need, we avoid “one size fits all” approaches to professional learning and pride ourselves in being thought partners around an organization’s specific requirements. G&D Associates uses a blended approach to learning opportunities that include online pathways, face-to-face engagements, phone and video conferences, and immersion activities such as site visits and human-centered design thinking experiences. Leadership support is a key component of our approach. Point of need access and our close coaching model has proven to benefit even the savviest of leadership teams in schools and district across the country.

RESOURCE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Having the right resources to implement an innovative vision is essential to avoiding frustration amongst those working towards change. However, resources should not simply be confused with purchases. Although the purchase of technologies or other physical resources will almost certainly be necessary, we often find that existing resources are being underutilized or have yet to be discovered. G&D has the expertise and tools to better utilize what you have, reimagine time, and assess the need for new resources that align with the greater vision.

INCENTIVE

Incentive empowers early implementers to change the world. All too often organizations assume that incentive means pay. However, research has shown that people who are passionate about innovative change and the betterment of the community are incentivized by several factors beyond financial rewards. Job satisfaction, pride in one’s community, and the

knowledge that a difference is being made are common motivators for educators. G&D Associates invests time into empathy building with leadership, staff, and stakeholders to identify the proper incentives that will lead to successful navigation of the successes and challenges of vision implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION

A significant risk factor for vision implementation is having an overambitious plan for scale and time. Through our approach, manageable scope and scale of work are emphasized while being mindful of the balance between moving too slow for change to occur and risking project stalls due to an unrealistic workload. To ensure success, G&D Associates supports clients through regular project health checks, dynamic assessment of developing needs, the celebration of accomplishments, and annual planning that is personalized to each client's vision. We work as a partner to not only develop effective pathways to reach the stated outcomes of your vision, but provide structures around short-cycle innovation processes that align with professional learning community work while pushing the thinking toward true innovative practice.

One approach is a tiered roll-out of personalized learning beginning at third grade in elementary, sixth grade in middle school, and a departmental approach for high schools. In addition to this grade level/departmental approach, educators who are most ready, willing, and able join the initial movement. G&D Associates develops a system of targeted professional learning, short-cycle innovations measured by clear success criteria, scale of successful work, and sharing of the learning along the way to ignite vision implementation. In subsequent months and years, the same process (with lessons learned) is scaled to adjacent grade levels and departments until school-wide vision attainment has occurred.

COMMUNICATION

Beyond planning for change and implementing innovative teaching and learning models, is the need to communicate this shift across the wider community. Support and buy-in from staff, parents, district, and local industry not only generates excitement and access to much needed resources, but also significantly affects recruitment and retention of students as well as the highest quality of educators. G&D Associates collaboratively develops internal and external communication tools that have been proven to significantly improve even the highest performing school's image. We help develop:

- Branding that communicates a client's vision and values
- A dynamic online presence
- Physical environments that excite the community and reflect innovative thought
- Marketing materials that will attract learners and talent
- Internal and external communication tools

SUSTAINABILITY

The key to wide spread change is sustainability of systems and values. G&D Associates works with each client to develop shared leadership models that are supported by close coaching and thought partnership. Communications around the greater vision as well as the positive outcomes of personalized learning for students, staff and outside stakeholders incentivize others to follow suit in

implementation. Planning and success criteria that are grounded in proven change management approaches ensure that clients not only improve outcomes for learners, but prepare the next generation of students to be the innovative thought leaders who will drive us toward the future.



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