DEFINING PERSONALIZED LEARNING ⤵

Personalized learning is often used interchangeably with other terms, but they don't all mean the same thing. According to CDE's survey, only 54 percent of K-12 leaders and 37 percent of higher education decision-makers believe most of the faculty at their institution understand the meaning of personalized learning. The path toward implementing personalized learning starts with understanding what it is and what it isn't.

Differentiated and individualized learning are often thought to be the same as personalized learning, but they are quite different. The key distinction is personalization starts with the learner, while differentiation and individualization start with the educator. When learning is personalized, students help design their education in a way that incorporates their interests and talents. In a differentiated model, the instructor teaches multiple groups of learners based on what the learners in each group need. In the individualized model, instructors teach individual learners and adjust their instruction for each student.[3]

Confusion over the term personalized learning prompted several education organizations to spend time defining it. One effort driven by iNACOL — with contributions from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and EDUCAUSE — provides a comprehensive definition, which is what will be used for this report: "Personalized learning seeks to accelerate student learning by tailoring the instructional environment

> **Personalized learning:** An education model that seeks to accelerate student learning by tailoring the instructional environment — what, when, how and where students learn — to address the individual needs, skills and interests of each student.

— what, when, how and where students learn — to address the individual needs, skills and interests of each student. Students can take ownership over their own learning, while also developing deep, personal connections with each other, their teachers and other adults."[4]

Technology plays a growing role in personalizing learning. For example, wireless access allows students to conduct online research, and devices and software enable them to create materials and presentations. With digital cameras, they can capture their work and present it to the class via interactive whiteboard. Furthermore, tools that apply data analytics give administrators and educators insight into student learning and help them identify gaps in knowledge.
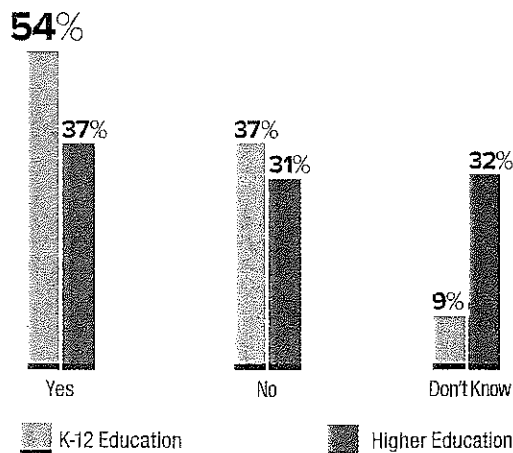
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> "Technology is key to all of this because we want learners to support their own learning with the use of tools."
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with the use of tools," said Kathleen McClaskey, co-author of *Make Learning Personal.* "Most importantly, we want learners to tell their story in how they need or prefer to access information, engage with content, and express what they know and understand. When learners acquire the skills with the tools, they then can remove barriers to their education and become independent, self-directed learners."[5]

According to the recent CDE survey, most K-20 students have access to mobile devices and digital content. And while not as prevalent, many also have access to technologies such as videoconferencing, adaptive learning software and lecture capture. For more information on how technology helps fuel personalized education, see "Powered by Tech: Making Personalized Learning Possible" on page 8. ■

Do most staff and faculty at your institution know how to define personalized learning?

54%
37%

37% **31**%

32%

9%

Yes   No   Don't Know

░ K-12 Education   ▓ Higher Education