

MINNESOTA

STATE OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

DECEMBER 2023

Full Recommendations List

- 1. Codify a definition for personalized, competency-based education in statute.** The Minnesota legislature should consider codifying a definition of personalized, competency-based learning by specifically modifying language in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.018 and 120B.02.
- 2. Redefine “credit” in statute to reflect content mastery.** The Minnesota legislature should consider redefining the definition of a credit in statute to center fully on mastery of content based on the Minnesota Academic Standards, rather than time spent in a classroom, by adding to the definitions in Minnesota Statutes, section 102B.018.
- 3. Expand “seat time” in statute to include activities outside the classroom.** The Minnesota legislature should consider expanding the state’s statutory definition of ‘seat-time’ in Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.41 to include activities taking place outside of the traditional classroom setting. This could include, but should not be limited to, apprenticeships, work-based learning, community-based learning opportunities and other activities.
- 4. Improve MDE flexibility guidance to provide well-defined pathways for competency-based education.** Minnesota’s Department of Education should be encouraged to develop clear policy structures and guidance that gives local districts a well-defined pathway to develop competency-based structures around which to organize education. These structures and guidance should streamline the process to develop these structures. Guidance should include clarity on flexibilities such as the mastery alternative to academic year course completion for course credit, as well as programs such as the Site Decision-Making Grant Program, Innovative Delivery of Career and Technical Education Programs and Innovative Research Zone pilot.
- 5. Require a statewide “Model Portrait” in statute.** In order to advance deeper learning and college and career readiness, the Minnesota legislature should consider requiring the Minnesota Department of Education develop a ‘model’ statewide portrait of a graduate to serve as an exemplar resource for schools and districts seeking to implement and assess personalized, competency-based learning. The portrait should be co-developed with schools, districts and communities across the state - however, it

should not come with a requirement for adoption. It could be added to Minn. State Statute 120B.11.

- 6. Create a statewide intermediary organization to support districts implementing student-centered learning.** Minnesota should consider creating and funding a statewide intermediary organization to provide the policy knowledge, guidance and technical assistance necessary for schools and districts to develop and implement student centered structures. The intermediary could live in a number of locations, including MDE, as a public-private partnership, as a separate non-profit or within an institution of higher education.

 - a. The Minnesota intermediary should create a set of model competencies aligned to the statewide portrait of a graduate. These competencies should be co-designed with state level policy makers, and competencies should align to existing resources of similar design, such as the state's college and career ready competencies.
 - b. If the intermediary is not housed within MDE, Minnesota stakeholders should advocate for the creation of a staff position or an office within the Department of Education with the responsibility to coordinate policy and district support relative to school and district innovation toward personalized learning. This person/office would work with a statewide intermediary.
- 7. Establish a personalized learning network for districts and schools.** Minnesota should consider establishing and supporting a personalized learning network for districts and schools. This network should ideally be sustained with public funds to support its staffing and resource needs. The network should also be given funding to study the impact of emerging models for the purposes of replication and sharing best practices.
- 8. Create a legislative student-centered working group.** Minnesota's legislature should consider establishing a working group to study existing policy structures and identify and address potential or perceived constraints to student-centered and innovative education models, such as those that result from attendance requirements, funding and its connection to attendance, the number and nature of statewide reporting requirements and the use of "consistent attendance" as defined in the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) manual in school accountability determinations. This working group would be co-led by MDE staff and district leaders and the commissioner should ensure that representatives from all impacted departments are represented in its work in addition to community stakeholders. It could be housed within the intermediary proposed under recommendation six.
- 9. Establish a cross-agency, student-centered research body.** Minnesota's Department of Education should be encouraged to establish a cross-agency research and development team which would oversee the Evidence-Based Education Grants evaluation process and use the work to expand and deepen current efforts to identify

effective strategies which would support district implementation, with a student-centered focus.

10. Strengthen MDE guidelines on using state and federal funds for innovation.

Minnesota's Department of Education should consider establishing clear guidance on the ways that state and federal funding can be used to build the capacity of districts, schools and community partners in designing high-quality personalized learning experiences for students, particularly in areas with the greatest need. In developing this guidance, the state should emphasize opportunities to create funding efficiencies through blending and/or braiding of existing funding streams.

11. Explore a statewide student-centered funding grant. Minnesota should also consider whether creating a statewide funding grant with an accompanying application process related to personalized, competency-based education might be appropriate. This proposal could replicate the competency-based grant proposal under the 2022 state budget, which modified Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.02 and 124D.901.

12. Implement the 2020 gubernatorial student-centered recommendations. Minnesota policymakers should be encouraged to take action on recommendations relevant to educators in the Governor's 2020 Roadmap for Transformational Change in Minnesota Education. These include ensuring that the state's teacher preparation standards and standards for effective practice more clearly define competencies for educators, ensuring alignment with state academic standards and incorporating the use of student-centered learning strategies, promoting student ownership and engaging the whole student. This work would ideally be done in collaboration with teachers, local stakeholders and communities, the Minnesota Children's Cabinet, families, school leaders, policymakers, labor unions, education preparation providers and elected leaders. The state may consider reviewing Utah's Portrait of a First Year Teacher or Virginia's Profiles of educators and/or education leaders for support and guidance.

13. Incorporate student-centered elements into PELSB standards. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) should review and incorporate elements of personalization using a nationally recognized framework (such as educator competencies) for personalized learning at the next opportunity, either when standards are revised or in rule making.

14. Ensure statewide student-centered professional development opportunities.

Minnesota's Department of Education should be encouraged to partner with regional agencies, including the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, and other statewide stakeholders. These partnerships should ensure that all statewide professional development and training opportunities are student-centered and promote students as agents of social change, and should be funded through Title II-A or other state funding streams.

- 15. Ensure professional development opportunities on classroom-level data collection.** Minnesota's Department of Education should be encouraged to ensure that professional development opportunities include a focus on classroom level student data collection through ongoing formative, interim and summative assessments so educators can effectively work to personalize instructional and behavioral supports for students in the classroom.
- 16. Review Minnesota's teacher development and evaluation system from a student-centered learning lens.** Minnesota stakeholders should consider convening educators as well as school and district leaders to review the state's teacher development and evaluation system state example model and provide recommendations to update them to reflect a focus on incorporating personalization into school environments.
- 17. Create educator credentials focused on student-centered learning.** Minnesota stakeholders might work to identify opportunities to credential educator-learning related to personalized, competency-based education, for example, by creating new certifications, including microcredentials, certificates and others, that are aligned to student-centered learning practices. These could be incorporated into the state's licensure structures.
- 18. Revisit strategies that expand access to effective educators legislatively.** Minnesota's legislature should consider creating a task force to review and revisit, if needed, the state's strategies for expanding students' access to effective educators. This would ideally include an explicit focus on educators with expertise in personalized learning instruction who are also members of underrepresented populations or who reflect the diversity of enrolled students within districts, and work to improve equitable distribution of said educators. This task force should consider strategies such as educator compensation, licensure advancement and career development.
- 19. Track impact of high-quality personalized learning teacher prep and professional development.** Minnesota's higher education sector and non-higher education preparation programs should consider tracking and studying the impact of high-quality personalized learning preparation, professional development and other supports on student outcomes, including measures of student growth and student engagement and wellbeing. These data could be collected through PELSB's Data Summary Report or other similar data collection process in the state.
- 20. Develop an MDE strategy for evolving the state's assessment system.** Minnesota's Department of Education should develop a strategy for evolving Minnesota's system of assessments to better support deeper learning. The agency should revisit the Future Assessment Design Working Group recommendations from 2017 and leverage the expertise of the MN TAC. Final recommendations should serve as the basis for application to the federal CGSA or IADA program as applicable.

- 21. Establish formal peer learning communities in assessment literacy & Deeper Learning.** As part of a statewide personalized learning network, Minnesota should consider establishing formal peer learning communities to support assessment literacy and creative thinking around improvements to support deeper student learning at the state and local levels related to assessment. The state might also consider leveraging existing teacher and leader networks for this purpose. The state should ensure that participation includes districts with the largest populations of historically marginalized yet resilient students. As a place to start, this could be an assessment coordinator mentoring network, as was recommended by the Future of Assessment Design Working Group.
- 22. Create a student-centered assessment pilot legislatively.** Minnesota should consider developing a legislative pilot program for districts to test and evaluate student-centered approaches to assessment. The pilot program should give districts authority to pilot deeper learning assessments in non-ESSA required subjects or in lieu of traditional graduation requirements. The state should ensure that participants in the pilot program have the resources and support to equitably participate, including access to a network of peers and additional funding.
- 23. Develop model performance task banks for assessment in classrooms.** Minnesota's Department of Education should explore development of a model collection of performance tasks that educators could consider integrating into their curriculum to support high-quality student-centered learning. These tasks could also provide a basis for awarding credit based on mastery as defined in state statute. Educators and districts should also have an opportunity to contribute locally developed tasks to this bank.
- 24. Ensure educator training on innovative, student-centered assessments.** Minnesota should ensure that teacher preparation programs, initial teacher licensure and re-licensure and professional learning opportunities support knowledge of and training around innovative assessment practices, including performance assessment design for competency-based learning and assessment literacy.
- 25. Expand responsibility of the LAAC.** Minnesota's Department of Education could expand the responsibilities of the Local Assessment and Advisory Committee to create stronger coordination between state and local stakeholders as it relates to assessments, specifically to promote greater integration of local assessments into state accountability measures. Minnesota could also study best practices around state and local assessment practices and consider ways to audit assessment practices to ensure all assessments are of high technical quality and aligned to state standards.
- 26. Advocate for federal assessment & accountability reforms.** Minnesota stakeholders could collectively advocate for more student-centered approaches to assessment at the state and federal level. This could include changes to legislation, regulatory language or guidance and a push for Minnesota to apply for federal flexibilities.