

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, a male teacher in a dark suit and striped tie is seated, looking at a tablet. A female teacher in a blue shirt stands behind him, pointing at the screen. In the background, several other teachers are seated at desks, working on computers. The scene is brightly lit and appears to be a professional development session.

# PERSONALIZED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rodel Teacher  
Council  
Policy Brief

## Introduction

*Any teacher will tell you that all students have different strengths and learn in different ways. Teachers are no different. In order to truly personalize the learning environment for students, we must also personalize professional development for teachers. This means leveraging technology and other tools to personalize professional development, so that educators are equipped to teach in a more personalized way. In fall 2015, our working group formed to focus specifically on how professional development for educators can become personalized. Our research and recommendations centered around these guiding questions:*

- ◆ *What would it look like for educators to become the center of their professional learning?*
- ◆ *How can schools, districts, the state, and institutes of higher education support educators to become the center of their professional learning?*
- ◆ *What policy shifts are needed to support and/or encourage the transition to a more personalized professional development model?*

The recommendations in this brief outline the shifts needed to transform Delaware's current professional development landscape into one that is both more responsive to educators' individual goals and interests and better aligned to schools' and districts' initiatives.

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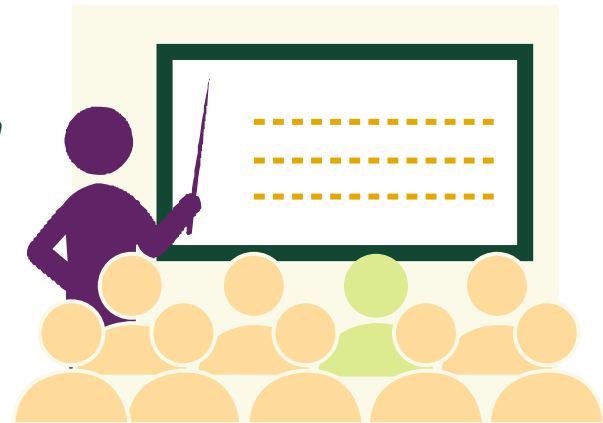
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## Vision Statement

*We envision a system where educators have a personalized professional learning plan and portfolio that they carry with them throughout their careers. Starting from their initial preparation and certification, educators should be the directors of their own professional growth. Once educators start their careers, they would be prepared to work with colleagues and supervisors on an ongoing basis to develop personalized plans aligned with their professional goals and local/state/national initiatives and opportunities.*



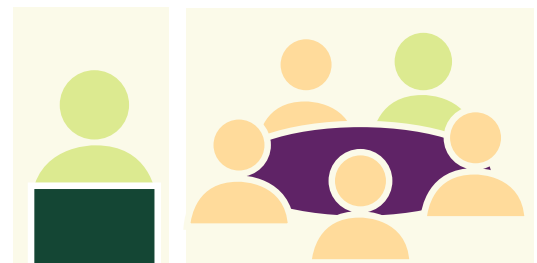
**Just as students can drive their own learning, teachers also have choices when it comes to their professional development, including where, when, and how they receive their professional development as well as the content of that professional development.**

### What is Personalized Learning?

Great teachers already know that students have different learning styles and learn at different paces—what works for one student does not necessarily work for the rest of the class. Personalized learning offers a new vision for education—one in which students become the center of the learning environment, and where students and teachers work together toward students' individual learning goals.

### What is professional development?

Educators need feedback, resources, and training to continuously improve their practice and ultimately improve student outcomes. Professional development encompasses a wide range of formal and informal opportunities for educators to improve their professional knowledge, competence, skills, and effectiveness.



## Making it Possible: Personalized Professional Learning Plan

*Teachers are lifelong learners, and as we personalize the student experience, it only makes sense to extend what we know about personalizing teaching and learning to how teachers learn and acquire new skills.*



### Spotlight

Ten schools in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) are currently piloting a program called myPD, which provides educators with choices about what, when, and how they learn new skills. Each site creates a “menu” of professional development options based on student population and the school’s initiatives. These could include in-person trainings, online opportunities, coaching, or other opportunities. Then, teachers work individually with mentors to select items off the menu for their personalized professional development experience. **This model ensures that teachers have choice over when, how, and what they learn, but also ensures that the skills and knowledge they acquire are targeted to the needs of their school and their students.**

(Source: <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2015-02-17-all-you-can-learn-dc-public-schools-personalized-pd-buffet>)

**Recommendation:** LEAs should take advantage of federal Title II funding available through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to develop and implement personalized professional learning plans (PLPs) for educators. LEAs and school leaders should work with educators to create and implement the plans. Ultimately, all educators in the state should have a PLP, which should be:

- Educator-driven
- Aligned to Delaware Professional Teaching Standards
- Tailored to individual educators
- Flexible to allow a variety of delivery and content options

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):** The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) was signed into law by President Obama in 2015, and is a reauthorization of the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the United States federal education law. Many provisions of ESSA provide increased flexibility to states.

**Local educational agency (LEA):** As defined in ESEA, an LEA is a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for direction of public PK-12 schools in a city, county, township, or school district.

## Making it Possible: Exploring Innovative Professional Development Possibilities

*Just as educators are moving away from the “sage on the stage” model of teaching, so too should professional development move away from “sit and get” or “spray and pray.”*

**Spotlight:** The 2013 Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Delaware Survey, an anonymous, statewide survey of licensed school-based educators, surveyed participants about a variety of aspects of their teaching conditions, including professional development. There is work to be done to make Delaware’s professional development more effective for educators, as the following survey responses show:

**56%** **strongly disagreed/ disagreed** with the statement that, “Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.”

**45%** **strongly disagreed/ disagreed** with the statement that, “In this school, follow up is provided from professional development.”

**58%** **strongly disagreed/ disagreed** with the statement that, “Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.”

<https://telldelaware.org/results/report/3/1346#PD>

Each of these survey items identify crucial aspects of the professional development system that could be improved by exploring more innovative approaches, such as how some districts in Delaware are currently utilizing microcredentials to provide additional follow up to current professional development topics.

**Recommendation:**  
DDOE should build upon existing online professional learning opportunities to create a system of microcredentials allowing educators to demonstrate mastery of skills relevant to their practice. The system should provide opportunities for educators to design and pilot microcredentials with and for their peers. Over time, this system could replace the current clock-hour professional development requirements for licensing.

**Recommendation:**  
Schools, districts, and DDOE should collaborate to ensure that Delaware’s professional development ecosystem is user-friendly and cohesive, allowing individual educators to access content tailored to their needs and interests. This could include:

- Building on the use of adaptive online platforms to support content delivery
- Providing opportunities to educators to provide meaningful feedback on professional development opportunities
- Encouraging partnerships among schools and districts to offer professional development to more educators at scale.



### Microcredential:

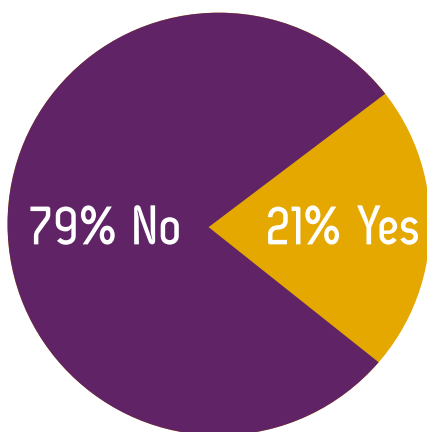
Focused, competency-based units of study that outline how educators can demonstrate that they have mastered a very particular concept or skill.

## Making it Possible: Professional Development to Support Personalized Learning

*As more and more classrooms adopt student-centered models, the content of professional development should also shift to better equip educators for this model—from induction through continuing education.*

In a survey of over 200 Delaware teachers in 2014, the Rodel Teacher Council found that most respondents are unfamiliar with the term “personalized learning:”

**Are you familiar with the term “personalized learning,” and do you incorporate it into your daily instructional practice?**



**In order to shift to a personalized, student-centered model, teachers need training and support to develop the skills and strategies to prepare students for the 21st century.**



### Recommendation:

DDOE should support the development and implementation of new educator induction programs with an emphasis on personalized content and mastery, to ensure that new educators are familiar with the practices necessary for personalized learning.



### Recommendation:

DDOE, LEAs, and higher education should build upon existing partnerships to provide continuous, relevant, and effective professional development for personalized learning. This could include:

- Showcasing “model learning environments” reflecting best practices in personalized learning and share results via site visits and research.
- Increased flexibility with educator schedules/roles to allow additional expert educators to serve as adjunct professors/instructors in higher education and/or professional development settings.
- Strengthened partnerships and incentives to encourage more higher education faculty to conduct action research in innovative learning environments to gain exposure to personalized learning.

## Conclusion

*With personalized learning on the horizon, and already a reality in many Delaware classrooms, teaching and learning in the state is at a turning point, and educators must be part of shaping the future of the profession and the student experience.*

*By shifting how teachers access professional development opportunities, as well as the content they learn during professional development, Delaware can put educators at the center of their own learning and ensure that all teachers are prepared to teach in a personalized, student-centered environment.*

*Educators will play a critical role in preparing our students for life and work—the professional development they receive should reflect the importance of their mission.*



Rodel Teacher Council member Robyn Howton's classroom at Mount Pleasant High School.



The **RODEL TEACHER COUNCIL** was convened by the Rodel Foundation of Delaware in 2013 to elevate the voices of teachers, represent the diversity of the teaching force in Delaware schools, provide a venue for teachers to weigh in on important issues affecting their work, and help set the course for education improvement in Delaware. The council is a group of teacher leaders dedicated to finding solutions, improving their craft, and leveraging their voices for the benefit of their students.

In October 2014, the Rodel Teacher Council published the *Blueprint for Personalized Learning in Delaware*, which identifies state and local policy improvements that would enable personalized learning. The document is one of the first examples of educators developing policy recommendations for personalized learning in the nation.

To read the Blueprint, and to learn more about the RTC, visit: [www.rodelfoundationde.org/who-we-are/teachercouncil/](http://www.rodelfoundationde.org/who-we-are/teachercouncil/)

[www.rodelfoundationde.org](http://www.rodelfoundationde.org)

**THE MISSION OF THE RODEL FOUNDATION OF DELAWARE IS TO HELP DELAWARE BUILD ONE OF THE FINEST SYSTEMS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE WORLD BY 2020.**

- **Promoting policy changes** that can have a huge impact statewide, such as raising academic standards, using timely data to make decisions, and investing in our youngest learners.
- **Provide seed funding** to innovative, potentially high-impact initiatives. Whether our ideas come from Seaford or Singapore, our strategy is simple: Do more of what works.
- **Creating and leading** diverse statewide partnerships that catalyze action, such as the Rodel Teacher Council.