

Personalized Learning Overview

By Shawn Galvin (January 2016)

District Support & Activity

The School District of Janesville has many great programs and schools that are leading in many different ways. Lincoln Elementary has been leading with technology and with Personalized Learning (PL). As we continue to pursue the best ways to engage students in their learning we have learned that technology and PL are two separate avenues that complement each other to provide a rich learning environment. Yes, I did state that technology and PL are separate from each other. A common misunderstanding is that PL can only be done with technology or that using technology means you are personalizing education. Both of those statements are false. It is the marrying of those two that we get great results in providing an exciting and engaging learning atmosphere.

In the spring of 2014 a couple staff from Lincoln went to visit a school in the West Allis area to see what they were doing with technology. This is when we first saw PL in action. This small team then shared what they observed with regard to technology but also mentioned the aspect of PL they observed. That summer 5 staff decided they were ready to tackle the challenge of trying PL in their classrooms. These 5 staff (three Kindergarten, one 2nd grade, and one 3rd grade teacher) worked with the Principal and Academic Learning Coach that year as they discovered and worked through this process. As Lincoln leadership began sharing what was happening at Lincoln, two other elementary principals and one middle school principal gathered interest and decided to make plans to pilot PL in some of their grade levels. District leaders and their departments including the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Chief Information Officer (CIO), and Director of Administrative and Human Resources all got behind this innovative practice. These teams financially supported this work as well as provided support from their staff to be part of the collaborative planning work that developed our School District of Janesville [PL Phases of Implementation](#).

Visits to Lincoln

Lincoln started out this work by doing site visits to many local districts as well as one in Charleston, South Carolina. The trip to Charleston was funded by a Brightspots grant that Quint Studer set up to honor and in memory of the work that former principal Lori Burns did. Numerous staff were able to attend these visits and able to see many variations on PL. As the leadership of Lincoln pursued to network and connect to area districts on technology and PL, it became evident that many other schools wanted to come and see the work we were doing. Lincoln started hosting visits in 2013-2014 as part of the Spotlight grant that was awarded to us by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This was to see the general instructional practices that resulted in consistent success. That year we hosted 3 district visits. Then in 2014-2015 schools and districts started to hear about the innovative work we were doing at Lincoln through presentations that staff were selected to do at state conferences and through collaborative work with some of our neighboring districts. We hosted 11 school visits that year. We realized that having many visits causes a bit of a disruption to staff schedules so we decided to stream-line these visits for the 2015-16 school year. We decided we would offer one visit per month this school year. This plan has worked out well for the visiting schools as well as for our staff and students.

Personalization of Staff Implementation

During the 2015-16 school year, I have asked all teachers to embrace Personalized Learning (PL). I have promoted the idea that we need to work with students in a personalized manner that best meets their

needs and learning style. I want to model the same with my staff. I have not asked them to take on the 'whole' of PL, rather I have asked them to choose one component amongst the initial phase and focus on doing that well. Once that component is working then select an-other component. This may mean staff select different components than their colleagues. This may also mean that staff may move through certain components at a different pace than others. This is truly practicing a model of readiness with staff. There are staff here at Lincoln that are continuing to stretch and push each other to take the next step. We don't sit idle on things here. We are continually adding things with the balance of success and just being out of our comfort zones.

Click here for a Lincoln Link school newsletter featuring personalized learning.

<http://lincoln.janesville.k12.wi.us/Portals/15/documents/2015-2016/lincoln-link-january-2016.pdf>

Click here to be directed to Lincoln Personalized Learning weebly site of the resources we are gathering along our PL journey. <http://lincolnpl.weebly.com/>