EAB

Scalable Student Engagement Initiatives

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Active learning and personalized learning are two common models leaders at profiled district use to increase engagement in classroom material. Contacts at **District E**, who employ personalized learning strategies, explain that these strategies support broader district initiatives of student engagement. Similarly, leaders at **District D** established personalized learning as a district-wide initiative to increase engagement. Administrators at **District B** use active learning as a strategy to increase student engagement.

A database of successful teaching strategies gives administrators concrete examples of techniques to reference. Administrators at **District B** and **District C** collect effective teaching practices. At District C, teaching and learning specialists construct lists of teachers who demonstrate exceptional skills in particular strategies. Instructional leaders maintain these lists, which allows them to easily recommend a wide range of teachers for shadowing opportunities. At District B, administrators ask teachers to submit video evidence or other documentation of successful active learning implementation. The videos and materials then serve as references for teachers and administrators to use as they adopt new strategies.

Contacts encourage administrators to create engaging, customizable professional development sessions. At **District C** and **District D**, personalized, voluntary professional development opportunities yield teachers dedicated to improving their performance. Administrators at all profiled districts further emphasize that customized professional development where teachers can actively engage with new concepts help teachers feel comfortable with new teaching strategies. Contacts encourage administrators to incorporate the classroom engagement strategies they want to see with their students into their teacher professional development (i.e., teachers who experience active learning strategies will be more likely to adopt similar strategies in their own classrooms).

Personalized, one-on-one communications between administrators and teachers support teachers through a change in teaching strategies. Administrators and staff should dedicate significant time to personal conversations with teachers. At **District B**, **District C**, and **District D**, one-on-one conversations and coaching sessions serve as the most important way to build teacher buy-in, address concerns, and enact district-wide changes.

2) Impact of Student Engagement Initiatives

Student Engagement

Student Engagement is Essential to Effective and Impactful Learning

Scholars and school administrators interpret student engagement in a variety of ways. The High School and Middle School Surveys of Engagement operate with a general definition which states that student engagement is "meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment." Individual learners must connect with the content, the instruction methods, and the community of people around them in order to succeed.[1] Scholars also often use Dr. James P. Connell's, a professor at the University of Rochester, categories of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The categories provide ways to more narrowly define (and assess) students' levels of engagement with their classrooms and their schools.[2]

Connell's Three Types of Student Engagement[3]

Behavioral engagement is the extent to which a student demonstrates appropriate classroom behavior. It concerns a student's conduct, participation in school activities, and interest in academic tasks.

Emotional engagement is the extent to which a student feels positive and comfortable in the classroom. It concerns a student's sense of belonging, value, and inclusion in class and school.

Cognitive engagement is the extent to which a student applies mental energy to his/her work. It concerns a student's motivation and success in grappling with new content.

Administrators at **District C** and **District A** focus on the cognitive elements of student engagement. Administrators at District C strive to create classrooms and schools where students take ownership of their education. In particular, administrators at District A visit classrooms to observe how many students engage fully in content.

Contacts at **District E, District D** and **District B** describe student engagement as a concept that extends beyond a student's K-12 education. These district leaders interpret student engagement as essential to students' personal development and future career success. Contacts at District E understand engagement as a way for educators to help students grapple with real world problems. Leaders at District D view engagement as helping students develop a passion, identify their own future educational goals, and prepare students to succeed in those future endeavors. Administrators at District B further believe that active learning will help students

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1) Jonathan Martin and Amanda Torres. What is Student Engagement and Why Is it Important?" User's Guide and Toolkit for the Surveys of Student Engagement: The High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) and the Middle Grades Survey of Student Engagement (MGSSE). Accesed July, 19 2018. https://www.nais.org/Articles/Documents/Member/2016%20HSSSE%20Chapter-1.pdf
2) Kristy Copper. Eliciting Engagement in the High School Classroom: A Mixed-Methods Examination of Teaching Practices. Accessed July 19, 2018. https://www.curriculum.org/LSA/files/LSA-Cooper-engagement.pdf
3) Ibid.

succeed in school and eventually prepare students to engage in their community and the local economy.

Because student engagement includes a wide range of topics, profiled districts focus on specific teaching strategies to increase student involvement in the learning process. Active learning and personalized learning are two of the common strategies district leaders prioritize to drive student engagement.

Increased Student Engagement Leads to Improved Student Outcomes

Leaders at profiled districts explain that anecdotal evidence and student performance data motivated them to implement more rigorous student engagement strategies. At **District D**, postgraduate performance data and anecdotal evidence encouraged administrators to evaluate classroom engagement across the district. Contacts explain that while students graduate and enroll in postsecondary programs at high rates, only approximately 45 percent of District D graduates ultimately earn a degree. Administrators attribute low college completion rates to the fact that students did not feel in control of their own education in high school.

At **District A**, administrators rely on academic literature about engagement to encourage teachers to adopt specific strategies. Quantitative studies consistently demonstrate that higher levels of engagement correlate with improved student performance. For example, a 2012 study of 1,399 fifth and sixth grade students reviewed classroom observations, student reports, and report cards to determine student engagement levels and academic performance. After controlling for all factors, researchers found a positive relationship between classroom emotional climate, engagement, and final grades.[4] A 2014 correlative study of 304 students similarly found statistically significant relationships between students' academic achievement and their cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement levels.[5]

Active Learning

Active Learning Strategies Help Students Connect Individually with Course Material

Active learning is one strategy profiled districts use to prioritize and advocate for student engagement in the classroom. Scholarly literature credits the 1991 report by Charles Bonwell and James Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom* with the widely accepted definition for active learning. The report defines active learning as "instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing."[6] The research further explains that a traditional, lecture-style class where students only listen to the instructor present material will not lead to learning. Students must engage with course content and with their peers to truly master material.[7]

Administrators at **District A** recently implemented pilot active learning spaces in schools to encourage active learning strategies. Administrators believe comfortable and flexible seating is the first step towards helping students actively engage with their material and their classroom. Leaders at **District B** adopted active learning as a formal strategic initiative to scale across the district. After a strategic planning process, leaders set goals to increase graduation rates and the number of students

4) M.R. Reyes Et Al. "Classroom emotional climate, student engagement, and academic achievement". *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *104*(3),2012. Accessed July 26, 2018.http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0027268
5) Selim Gunuc. "The Relationships Between Student Engagement And Their Academic Achievement." International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications. Volume: 5 Issue: 4 Article: 19, 2014. Accessed July 26, 2018. http://www.ijonte.org/FileUpload/ks63207/File/19..gunuc.pdf
6) Charles Bonwell and James Eison. "Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom." ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No 1, 1991. Accessed Jul 30, 2018. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED336049.pdf
7) Cynthia J. Brame "Active Learning." Center for Teaching and Learning, Vanderbilt University. Accessed Jul 30, 2018. https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/Active-Learning.pdf

who earn college credit, to improve teacher retention, and to increase technology use in schools. Leaders determined that focusing on active learning would allow the district to achieve these goals.

Active Learning Techniques Lead to Improved Student Performance

Research studies demonstrate that active learning strategies yield deeper learning for students. At **District B,** administrators' assessment of student test scores in the district supports the effectiveness of active learning. In the 2016-2017 academic year, students in math classes in grades three through 12, where teachers received active learning coaching, had an average final grade of 80.8 percent, compared to 73.4 percent for students in classes where teacher received no training. In addition to district-specific results, national studies demonstrate that students perform better on assessments when instructors include opportunities to actively engage in the material. A national analysis of performance in STEM courses found that "student performance on examinations and concept inventories increased by 0.47 standard deviations when classes incorporated active learning strategies (n = 158 studies)."

Additional research focused on primary and secondary schools further indicates active learning strategies improve student performance. For example, a 2007 study of active learning on high school biology courses found that "students gained significantly more content knowledge and knowledge of process skills using the [active learning] labs compared to traditional instruction."[8]

Administrators at *District C* Implemented the Pause Procedure as a District-Wide Active Learning Strategy

One simple active learning strategy that administrators at **District C** incorporated district-wide is the pause procedure. This tactic requires an instructor to pause for a few minutes throughout a lesson to allow students to take notes or discuss the content in pairs or small groups. Researchers in the 1987 study "Using the Pause Procedure to Enhance Lecture Recall" collected data on 72 students in two courses over a year.[9] Students in the pause procedure course performed better on short-term recall tests and the final exam than students in the traditional lecture-style classroom.

8) Roman Taraban et. Al, "Effects of active-learning experiences on achievement, attitudes, and behaviors in high school biology." Jo*urnal of Research in Science Teaching: The Official Journal of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching* 44, no. 7 (2007): 960-979. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/tea.20183.
9) Kathy Ruhl Et Al. "Using the Pause Procedure to Enhance Lecture Recall," Teacher Education and Special Education, Vol. 10, Winter 1987, pp. 14–18.

Selected Results from Ruhl's Pause Procedure Study[10]

Assessment	Traditional Classroom	Pause Procedure Classroom
Short-term Recall Exercise	Students recalled an average of **80** correct facts.	Students recalled an average of **108** correct facts.
Final Exam Scores	Students scored an average of **80.9** out of 100.	Students scored an average of **89.4** out of 100.

Personalized Learning

Personalized Learning Prioritizes Each Individual Learner's Needs

The term personalized learning generally refers to programs, experiences, and instructional approaches differentiated for and tailored to the individual needs of students. The *Institute for Personalized Learning* defines the approach as "instruction that is designed around individual learner readiness… Learners are active participants in setting goals, planning learning paths, tracking progress, and determining how learning will be demonstrated. At any given time, learning objectives, content, methods and pacing are likely to vary from learner to learner as they pursue proficiency relative to established standards."[11] Administrators at **District D** and **District E** prioritize personalized learning as an instructional strategy to increase student engagement.

At District E, administrators decided to focus on personalized learning as a strategy to provide an individualized and challenging education for every student. Leaders recognized that within every grade level, students' comprehension of different topics and individual performance varies dramatically. Personalized learning strategies maximize the effectiveness of instruction and ensure that every student grows in the classroom.

Leaders at District D describe personalized learning as education focused on the learner's voice. Administrators observed students disengaged in decisions around their education, and they determined personalized learning techniques would allow each student to feel empowered in their learning process.

Pathways classrooms at District D are one example of extremely personalized learning. In this model, students enroll in a subject rather than a specific course (e.g., math pathway instead of algebra 1 or geometry). As soon as students demonstrate competency, they move to the next topic. District D is in its third year of pathways courses and administrators offer six pathways courses: math, English, art, music, human performance, and business.

Research Studies and Anecdotes Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Personalized Learning

At **District E**, leadership relies on data to demonstrate the effectiveness of personalized learning in the district. Since implementing personalized learning, 72 percent of teachers report that they feel more effective and 68 percent of teachers

10) Michael Prince, "Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research." Journal of Engineering Education 93:223-231.
http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Papers/Prince_AL.pdf
11) "Definition of Personalized Learning," The Institute for Personalized Learning, accessed July 16, 2018,
http://institute4pl.org/index.php/our-model/.

report that students appear more engaged.[12] At **District D**, administrators rely on anecdotal evidence to maintain support for personalized learning. Administrators observe that students feel enthusiastic about their education and more often graduate with a plan than before administrators implemented personalized learning.

Research further illustrates the impact of personalized learning on student outcomes. The RAND Corporation has published several reports tracking its impact. The first report, published in 2015, examined math and reading scores for about 11,000 students across 62 schools, including public school districts and charter schools, during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.[13] The study found that students receiving personalized learning made gains in math and reading performance compared with students in other schools. Additionally, the study found that the lowest-performing students made greater gains compared with their peers. The study also found that:

- Positive effects of personalized learning tended to be larger in elementary grades.
- The longer students experience personalized learning practices, the greater their growth in achievement.

The RAND Corporation's second study, published in 2017, analyzed math and reading scores for about 5,500 students across 32 public and charter schools.[14] This study similarly found that students receiving personalized learning instruction demonstrated greater gains in math and reading compared with students in other schools. The study also found that:

- Students in personalized learning schools started the year below national norms in math and reading, but moved closer over a year. In math, students gained about 2 percentile points, but remained significantly below national norms. In reading, students also gained about 2 percentile points and performed approximately at national norms by spring.
- However, students in personalized schools surpassed national norms for math and reading after two years.

Overall, the studies suggest personalized learning benefits students of all levels of prior achievement.

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12) "Personalized Learning Empowers Students to Go Farther than Before," Education Elements, accessed July 30, 2018.
https://www.edelements.com/personalized-learning-at-loudoun-county-public-schools-va.
13) John F. Pane et al., "Continued Progress: Promising Evidence on Personalized Learning," RAND Corporation, November 2015,
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1300/RR1365/RAND_RR1365.pdf.
14) Ibid.

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3) Adoption of New Engagement Strategies

Central Leadership Initiatives

Prioritize Student Engagement Strategies as District-Wide Initiatives

Administrators at **District A, District B,** and **District D** incorporate student engagement into district-wide priorities and processes.

Senior leadership at **District B** engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process to review the district's overall performance and to prioritize improvement initiatives. Administrators reviewed district-wide and school-specific test scores and solicited feedback from all members of the community, including parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders. The final strategic planning and vision document contains five goals, the first of which is active learning. District leaders selected active learning as a top priority because they believed the strategies aligned with the vision to "inspire and support engaging learning experiences in every classroom every day" and would improve student performance.

At **District A**, administrators incorporated student engagement as a core teacher competency in 2011. Administrators evaluate each teacher on multiple elements of engagement. District A teachers must effectively provide multiple methods of engagement, use technology in classrooms, and individualize content for their students.

At **District D**, administrators created instructional materials for district teachers to help increase learner-centric instructional practices. The personalized learning document helps instructors make incremental progress towards personalized learning for all students. The resource reads like a rubric, demonstrating a progression from curriculum-centered to learner-driven lessons. Teachers and instructional coaches use the document to evaluate current teaching practices and to set goals for improvement.

District D Personalized Learning Progression

Curriculum-Centered	Teacher-Driven	Learner-Centered	Learner-Driven
Curriculum dictates lessons and classroom environment	Teacher creates lessons and classroom environment	Learner & teacher co-create lessons and classroom environment	Learner creates lessons and classroom environment
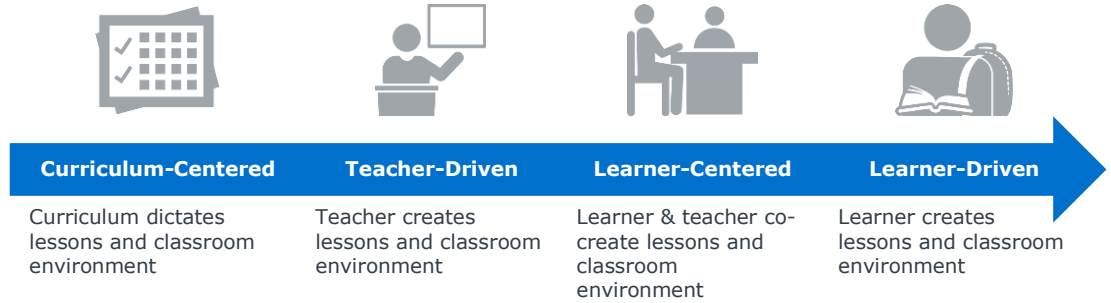
Categories Considered to Measure Personalization

Pace: The speed of learning and product is learner-driven based on need.
Place: The physical environment for learners is flexible and meets learners' individual needs.
Choice: The options learners have in way they receive instruction.
Voice: The options learners have for their success criteria and their classroom culture.

Temporary Teaching Contracts Allow Administrators to Evaluate New Teachers for Cultural Fit

To ensure that new teachers adopt student engagement strategies and demonstrate strong instructional practices overall, all new staff at **District C** first receive a temporary contract for one and a half years. Over the course of teachers' initial tenure, administrators evaluate teachers' performance. Teachers must then reapply for a permanent position. This district-wide practice ensures that new teachers engage in their school and commit to district-wide engagement strategies. The admittedly tough policy allows administrators to maintain excellent staff.

Hiring Timelines at *District C*

New teachers hired on a 1.5 year temporary contract.

Teachers re-interview for a permanent position over the summer.

All teachers receive notification of contract expiration in April.

Teachers hired for permanent positon OR contracts expires without a permanent position offered.
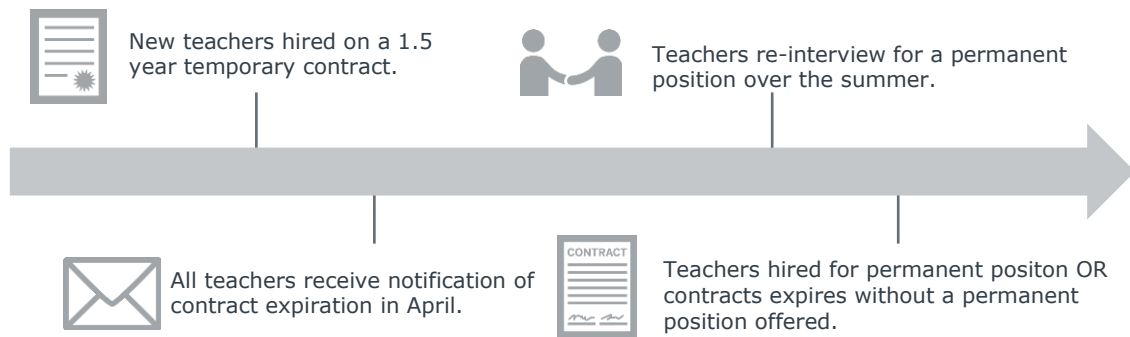
Implementation

Consider Gradual Implementation of New Student Engagement Initiatives

Administrators at **District B** and **District E** established phased timelines for personalized learning and active learning initiatives. Initiative leaders first provided dedicated resources to train central district administrators and enthusiastic school leaders in the new strategies. Then, district administrators gradually expanded these efforts to incorporate student engagement practices into more district schools.

Timeline of Active Learning Implementation at *District B*

Year 1 — Early-adopter principals **volunteered** to bring the initiative to their individual schools.

Year 2 — Administrators **selected three geographic feeder areas** (i.e., a geographic selection of elementary, middle, and high schools that students attend based on their home address) based on student test scores and school leadership enthusiasm.

Year 3 — Administrators **selected two additional geographic feeder areas** to implement active learning.

Years 4-6 — Leaders will **continue to expand implementation** until all schools incorporate active learning.

> Administrators at **District E** incorporate influential teachers in the implementation process, which helps to build support for the initiative across all district staff.

At **District E**, administrators selected 15 schools to pilot personalized learning implementation. For the first two years, school leaders submitted applications to participate in the pilot. The school principal, assistant principal, instructional leaders, and selected teachers collaborated to submit a team application. Administrators reviewed applications and school performance data to identify which school leadership teams had the capacity and enthusiasm to implement personalized learning.

Advantages of Gradual Implementation

☑ Administrators can **dedicate time and resources** to the change management process at pilot schools.

☑ Leaders can **adjust and modify** trainings and communications based on initial feedback.

☑ Staff across the district have time to learn about new strategies, observe the implementation process, and **see results in other district schools.** Administrators can gain the support of hesitant staff by sharing success stories from other schools in the district.

Administrators Use Summer Months to Host Introductory Training Days

Administrators at **District A** and **District B** host intensive trainings on district-wide initiatives over the summer. When District B began active learning implementation, leadership first organized a summer training for central office staff. With help from outside consultants, the district hosted two, two-day executive sessions on active learning. Leaders designed sessions targeted exclusively for district and school leadership, which helped those individuals gain a deeper understanding of the new model before they introduced it to district teachers.

Following the administrator training days, District B leaders host three consecutive summer training days with outside consultants to train teachers who will adopt active learning in the next year. The trainings will occur annually until all schools in the

district implement active learning. Groups of up to 150 teachers attend these sessions. The trainings take place in district high school classrooms, with teachers organized into smaller groups by grade level.

> ### Provide Training on New Initiatives throughout the Year
>
> At **District E**, school leaders implementing personalized learning (including principals, administrators, and select teachers) attend four daylong sessions at an offsite location throughout the year. The first training takes place during the summer, but the next three occur during the year, which allows participants to try new strategies and reflect on their progress. Attendees then have opportunities to share their learnings with colleagues through school-specific professional development.

Outside Consultants Support Change Management Processes

At **District B**, **District C**, and **District E**, district administrators work (or previously worked) with outside consultants to help implement student engagement strategies such as active and personalized learning. Consultants provide an outside perspective to share with teachers and can spend time working directly with teachers in school. Therefore, teachers receive more support through the change management process than if district leaders implemented the initiative independently. At District B, consultants provide facilitators to train and support the large numbers of teachers and staff adopting active learning within the district.

Consultants can also help to create knowledge management infrastructure to support and sustain initiatives. At District E, consultants created personalized learning websites for each pilot school. The websites serve as platforms for teachers to share articles related to personalized learning, lesson plans, and videos of particular techniques. These websites act as a self-service resource for teachers to share both their challenges and successes in implementing the new initiative.

Emphasize Teacher Choice to Encourage Adoption of New Initiatives

Contacts at **District B**, **District C**, and **District D** emphasize that if student choice enhances engagement, administrators should similarly prioritize teacher choice to facilitate engagement. Every new initiative to further increase personalized learning at **District D** is optional for teachers. Individual teachers volunteer to try new strategies and models, and administrators serve as a support system. This ensures that teachers who participate personally invest in new initiatives.

4) Support Roles

Instructional
Staff

Instructional Coaches Support Engagement Initiatives

All profiled districts hire additional staff to support teachers in the adoption of student engagement strategies and to facilitate professional development. Each district and school uses a unique staffing model to best serve teachers given the resources available. Dedicated school-specific staff at **District A** and **District B** organize professional development for their respective schools and offer individualized coaching. Every school within District B has a dedicated active learning specialist. The active learning specialist serves as a dedicated resource for the principal, which ensures collaboration between district-level staff and individual school leadership.

District-level instructional facilitators at **District E** support multiple schools. Administrators at **District C** employ teaching and learning specialists (T&L specialists) located in single schools, and some that oversee a particular subject area and/or multiple school locations.

Teaching and Learning Specialists Structure at *District C*

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Technology
4 Specialists	*2 Specialists*	*4 Specialists*	*2 Specialists*
• One specialist at the Pre – K and 1st grade campus • One specialist at the 2nd through 4th grade campus • One dedicated specialist for each of the two smaller schools covers Pre K through 4th grade.	• One specialist is based at each school, but serves both middle schools • One specialist focuses on science and math and the other focuses on humanities, making the two a complementary pair	• Specialists support specific subject areas (math, science, language arts, social studies) • Each specialist supports grades 7 – 12 in their designated subject	• Support teachers at all schools and grade levels

Contacts at all profiled districts strive to hire veteran teachers from within the district for instructional support staff roles. These individuals have already earned respect from their colleagues, and therefore teachers are more receptive to their feedback and ideas. Administrators also report that veteran teachers tend to remain in roles longer, thereby reducing turnover.

Flexible Coaching Positions Provide Leadership Opportunities to Successful Teachers

At **District D**, administrators realized that some of the best teachers in the district could serve as excellent instructional coaches and school administrators. However, many teachers do not want to give up time with students in the classroom. In response, administrators created flexible and customized coaching positions in order to utilize teachers' leadership and instructional skills while still giving them time with students.

The district currently employs 35 instructional coaches to support personalized learning initiatives. Some instructional coaches work with teachers full-time, while others teach part-time or serve in administrative positions part-time. Contacts emphasize that district administrators seek to identify and utilize expertise within the district. A flexible coaching model maximizes and fully engages the district's top teachers. It also builds a pipeline of future administrators by exposing teachers to administrative responsibilities.

Leverage Support Staff to Collect and Share Effective Instructional Strategies with a Wider Audience

Administrators at **District B** and **District C** ask instructional support staff to collect and share effective student engagement practices with the broader school and district communities. For example, the director of active learning at District B asked active learning specialists to collect videos of successful instructional practices. When an active learning specialist hears about a potential best practice, they request the teacher's permission to record a video of the teacher using the strategy. After one year of video collection, the active learning director now maintains a database of examples to reference across the district. If a teacher expresses interest in a new strategy, they can watch a video of another teacher implementing it. Videos allow teachers to easily observe strategies without scheduling an official observation.

At District C, T&L specialists identify teachers who use innovate practices successfully through classroom observation. These specialists share this information with central administrative staff, who keep a running document of these teachers and their practices. This instructional practice library helps specialists easily identify individuals for other teachers to shadow, and helps minimize reaching out to the same teachers frequently.

T&L Specialists Meet Monthly to Share Practices

The assistant superintendent hosts a two-hour monthly meeting for all T&L specialists as well as the director of teaching and learning. During these meetings, contacts minimize administrative updates. The first 90 minutes focus on learning and growth strategies. Specialists use the time to model different techniques, discuss legislative curriculum changes, and identify teachers demonstrating best practices.

Mentorship and Collaboration

Dedicated Mentors Provide Individual Coaching to Teachers Adopting New Engagement Strategies

In addition to active learning specialists, mentors support teachers during their first year adopting active learning practices at **District B**. School administrators, veteran teachers, active learning specialists, and outside consultants serve as mentors.

Comprehensive Mentorship Program at *District B*

Administrators **pair mentors and teacher mentees for a one year mentorship.** Administrators assign pairs in similar subject areas and with partners who will likely establish good rapport.

Mentors meet with teachers seven times over the school year. District administrators designate specific weeks for mentor coaching sessions and notify principals six months in advance so schedules can be adjusted accordingly.

Mentors discuss new practices with teachers and encourage them to implement new strategies.

Teachers bring documentation of their efforts to try new strategies to mentorship conversations. Teachers share video recordings or lesson plans and other materials with mentors to provide evidence of their improvements.

Collaboration Opportunities Empower Teachers to Strive for High Student Engagement

Teachers at **District E** participate in collaborative learning teams (CLTs). CLTs vary in size and in distribution of types of teachers. A team can focused on a specific subject area, grade level, or school. Instructional facilitators support CLTs and customize professional development to fit the needs of the specific group. However, because CLTs can be specialized and the district only has a limited number of instructional facilitators, CLTs also develop professional development opportunities. These small, independently led teams facilitate teachers sharing their own best practices on engagement specific to their segment of students and/or subject matter.

At **District A**, teachers attend a full day of self-run professional development immediately before the school year begins. Administrators organize the day as a conference and District A teachers lead all of the workshops. Principals brainstorm which teachers excel in particular strategies and invite individual teachers to lead workshops or to serve on a panel during the day. Topics include blended learning, classroom stations, active learning spaces, student engagement, and digital design. Teachers learn directly from one another in a collaborative, conference-style setting.

Teachers at **District D** collaborate though co-teaching classrooms, where teachers combine two sets of traditional classrooms. Changing the student teacher ratio from 25:1 to 50:2 allows teachers and students more flexibility and options in lesson planning, encourages constant collaboration, and allows student engagement strategies to scale more easily. All teachers at District D self-pair their classrooms. As a result, every teacher feels excited about their pairing and ready to work with their co-teacher to ensure their classroom succeeds.

5) Ongoing Teacher Support

Professional Development

Voluntary Professional Development Encourages Teachers to Engage Actively with Growth Opportunities

Administrators make all teacher professional development voluntary at **District C** and **District D**. Contacts emphasize that voluntary sessions require each teacher to make an active choice to improve their instruction. While principals or other administrators often highly recommend teachers attend, continued professional development is ultimately optional.

Personalize Professional Development to Mirror Student Engagement Strategies

Contacts at **District D** and **District E** emphasize the importance of incorporating the ideas of active and personalized learning into teacher learning. Contacts describe traditional professional development programs as generic, large-group sessions when instead sessions should leverage personalized and active learning techniques. To provide teachers with tailored resources and support (and to model districts' commitment to engagement strategies), administrators incorporate different hands-on experiences and options for teachers into training.

When teachers and administrators attend personalized learning trainings at District E, the sessions themselves are personalized. The daylong offsite professional development sessions include customized videos and training materials on a variety of topics and self-assessments. Individualized trainings help teachers to fully understand the concept and to maximize the use of scheduled professional development.

> For more information on micro-credentialing, please see EAB's report Micro-Credential Professional Development Programs for Teachers.

District D administrators do not host any large-group professional develop sessions. Instead, teachers complete district-developed, third-party developed, or individual teacher-developed micro-credential programs. Teachers can receive financial compensation when they complete a credential. During a teacher's first semester at District D, he/she must complete an online micro-credential course on personalized learning (unless a teacher already demonstrates a strong understanding of personalized learning). All other micro-credentials are optional.

Administrators at **District C** offer short, small group courses for teachers in collaboration with Columbia Teachers College. Sessions occur over the course of a semester and focus on a specific topic, such as argumentation, literacy, or discussion. The director of teaching and learning emails school principals to announce the offerings for the next year, and principals invite teachers to apply for different seminars. By asking teachers to try new instructional methods and reflect on their experiences in a small group, teachers get to engage actively with new strategies.

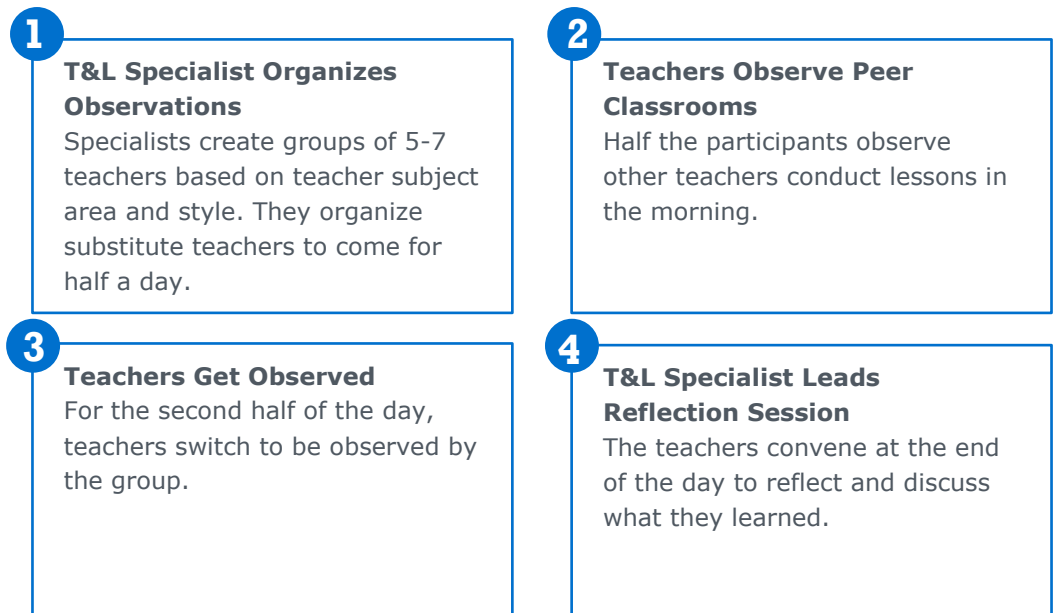### Professional Development Seminars at *District C*

- Teachers meet for 90 minutes and observe the facilitator model a new strategy.
- Teachers must implement strategy in their classrooms and report back during the next session.
- Seminars meet either before or after school, or during the school day.
- Participants receive a small stipend if the seminar takes place after hours.

Include Instructional Observation and Modeling for Professional Development

Contacts at profiled districts believe that teachers must experience and observe new strategies before they can confidently and successfully implement strategies independently. As a result, administrators prioritize shadowing and modeling opportunities over lecture-style professional development sessions. Contacts at **District B** run classroom-style, small group instruction during summer trainings. Classroom-style instruction allows teachers to engage with the facilitator, to ask questions, and to experience modeling of new strategies. As a result, teachers feel more comfortable with new strategies.

Teachers at **District A, District C,** and **District E,** participate in peer observation sessions throughout the year. T&L specialists at District C facilitate the shadowing opportunities. Principals and Assistant Principals at District A encourage and organize shadowing.

Peer Observation Sessions at *District C*

1

T&L Specialist Organizes Observations
Specialists create groups of 5-7 teachers based on teacher subject area and style. They organize substitute teachers to come for half a day.

2

Teachers Observe Peer Classrooms
Half the participants observe other teachers conduct lessons in the morning.

3

Teachers Get Observed
For the second half of the day, teachers switch to be observed by the group.

4

T&L Specialist Leads Reflection Session
The teachers convene at the end of the day to reflect and discuss what they learned.

One principal at District A required all teachers to shadow one another in order to build a culture of collaboration in their school. The principal posted a chart in the central office. Teachers listed upcoming lessons and the different engagement techniques they planned to use, and other teachers signed up to join those classes. While the principal no longer requires shadowing, the practice helped establish a culture of voluntary shadowing in the school.

Administrators at District C and District A will modify schedules and find coverage for classes to allow teachers to shadow during their regular teaching times. If a teacher expresses interest in observing a technique, an instructional coach or another administrator will cover a teacher's class. Contacts at District A explain district administrators will work to facilitate any learning opportunities that teachers request.

Teacher Buy-in

Personalize Communication to Support all Teachers through a Transition to New Teaching Styles
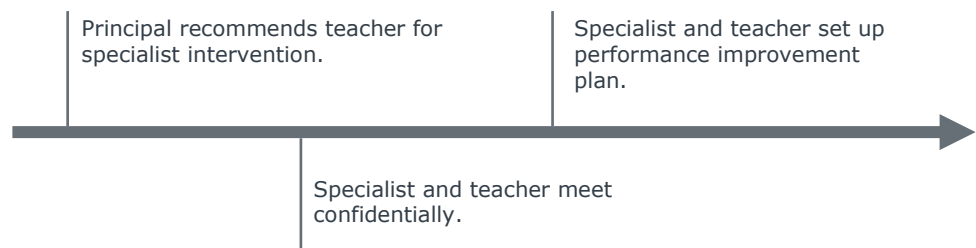
Leaders at all profiled districts personalize communication and conduct one-on-one conversations to encourage teachers to adopt new practices. Contacts at **District D** explain that teacher hesitation around personalized learning is often rooted in change, rather than in the specific engagement strategy. At **District E**, leaders share student performance data with teachers to encourage them to adopt new strategies. Administrators at **District B** frame conversations about active learning as giving teachers another lens for instruction. Teachers do not necessarily have to abandon their instructional practices, but instead can feel empowered to experiment with new strategies.

Contacts share that administrators should provide as much support as possible to help address pushback. Administrators should prepare for many conversations about new student engagement techniques or initiatives. In these conversations, leaders should listen first and always ask what they can do to further support teachers. Administrators should plan to personalize their communication as much as possible to address the individual styles and concerns of each teacher.

Maintain Constructive and Supportive, Not Punitive, Teacher Performance Conversations

At **District C**, administrators address teacher performance in a confidential and supportive manner.

Structure for Teacher Feedback and Performance Conversations at *District C*

Principal recommends teacher for specialist intervention.

Specialist and teacher set up performance improvement plan.

Specialist and teacher meet confidentially.

Only the specialist and individual teacher discuss details regarding specific professional development objectives and progress. The principal is only informed if a teacher misses multiple sessions.

Find Opportunities to Showcase Innovation and Success

Administrators at **District C** confer innovation awards to recognize and celebrate individuals and teams across the school district who improve processes and enhance the student learning experience. Administrators encourage any member of the school community to nominate a colleague who he/she observes innovating to better the school.

Recently, a teacher received the innovation award for her work to incorporate a nearby nursing home into a unit. The ninth grade English teacher brought her students to the home for a unit on memoirs. Students chose to interview a resident or to write their own memoirs for the final project. Students and administrators alike valued the experience, and now more teachers think about ways to connect their classes to the nursing home. By highlighting this teacher's work, not only did she receive positive feedback, but the entire school community learned of a new way to engage students.

6) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

1. What relationship exists between active learning, student-centered learning, and student success?

2. What common qualities, tools, and/or strategies do successful teachers at contact districts have and/or employ to engage students in their classrooms?

3. How do contact districts encourage teachers and staff to adopt effective student engagement practices such as active and student-centered learning?

4. How do administrators at contact districts work to scale the student engagement strategies of exemplar teachers?

5. How do administrators incentivize teachers to share successful student engagement strategies with other teachers?

6. Do contact districts employ different strategies to build buy-in among teachers of differing levels of experience?

7. How do contact districts leverage professional development opportunities to encourage effective student engagement practices for all district teachers?

8. How do contact districts schedule these professional development opportunities to minimize the amount of lost instructional time?

9. How do administrators at contact districts employ modeling of successful student engagement practices to encourage adoption of these practices from teachers across the district?

10. What evidence or data do contact districts collect and present to convince teachers and other stakeholders that these desired student engagement strategies are effective?

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Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed directors of teaching and learning at public school districts.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

District	Location	Approximate Enrollment
District A	Midwest	2,000
District B	Southwest	59,000
District C	Midwest	12,000
District D	Midwest	4,000
District E	Southeast	79,000