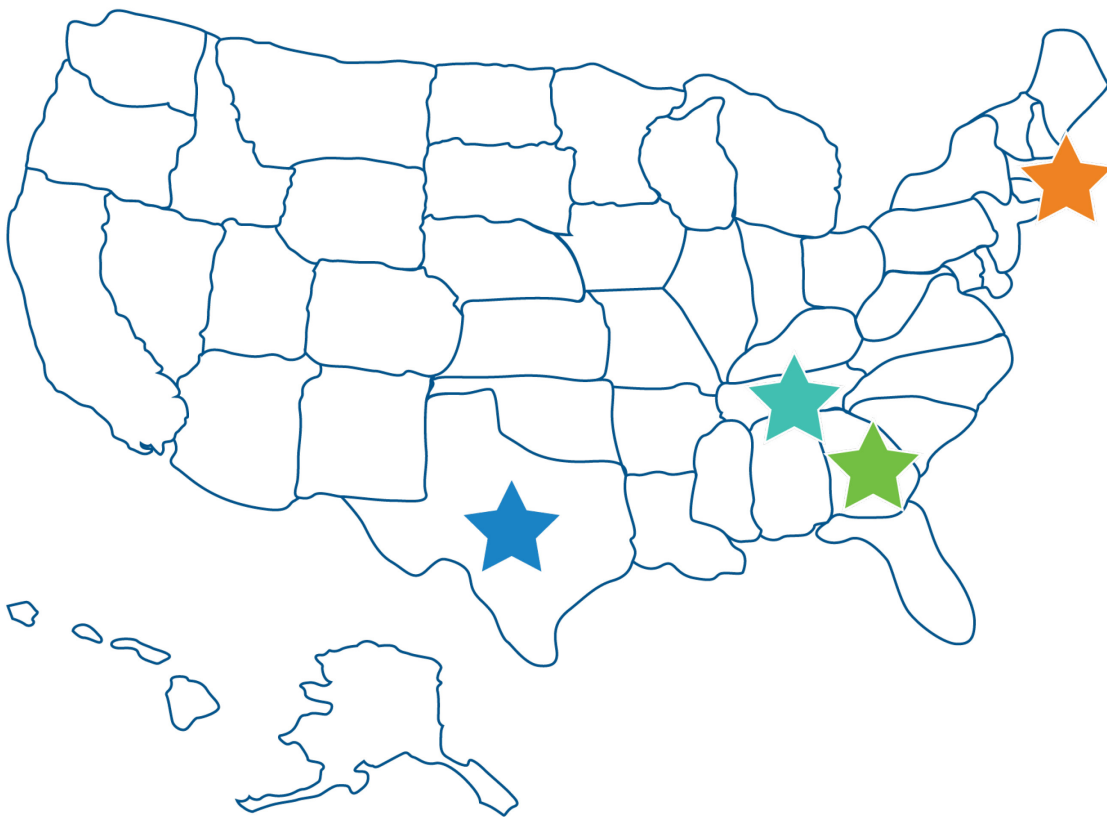

State Profiles in Innovation

How Four States Are Advancing
Blended and Personalized Learning Statewide



Who We Are

Innovation Partners America

Innovation Partners America is a national education consultancy that enables states and organizations to create new outcomes through collaboration and the incubation of new ideas. Follow us [@innovatED_](#) & [@lisaduty1](#)

The Learning Accelerator

The Learning Accelerator is the catalyst to transform American K-12 education through blended learning at scale. TLA accelerates system-wide learning around the practices, conditions, human capital supports, and measurement needed to create highly personalized, data-rich, mastery-based schooling. Follow us [@LearningAccel](#)

Highlights of This Report

Texas nonprofit *Raise Your Hand Texas* launches a twenty-site community of practice to advance blended learning. [Page 5](#)

Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement creates the *Innovation Fund Foundation* (IFF) with aims to attract, coordinate, and leverage resources across public entities, philanthropists, the business sector and more. [Page 8](#)

Tennessee Department of Education launches its first personalized learning initiative to test, adapt, and evolve blended learning's potential to increase student achievement. [Page 11](#)

Rhode Island's education innovation cluster *EduvateRI* lays the groundwork to become the perfect place to pilot and expand new innovation. [Page 13](#)

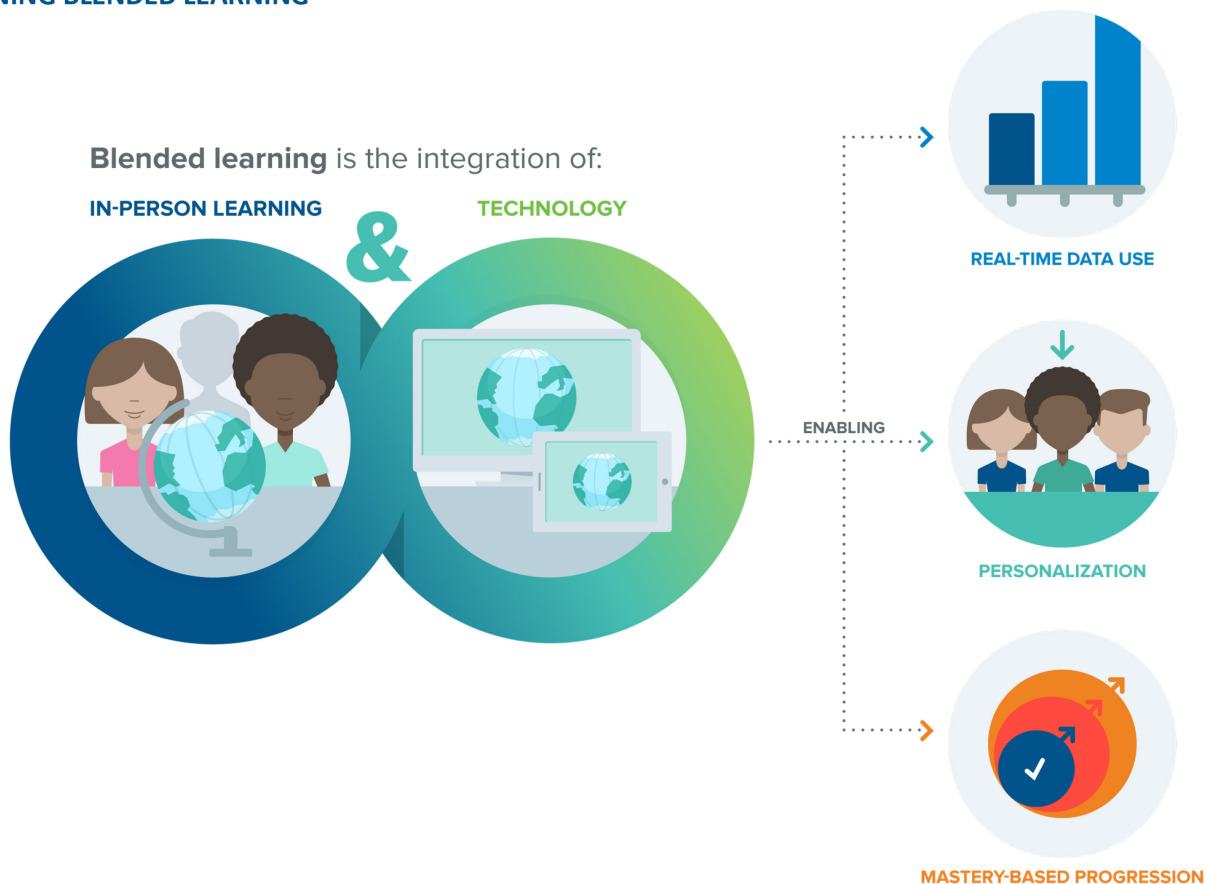
State Profiles in Innovation

How Four States are Advancing Blended and Personalized Learning Statewide

Across the country, thousands of schools are radically redefining their approaches to teaching and learning, reshaping instructional delivery, and rethinking the use of critical resources like staff, time, and technology to deliver highly personalized learning experiences. Blended learning, in particular, is increasingly recognized as a key mechanism for changing the way adults and systems work for kids, and accelerating progress toward their achievement. The Learning Accelerator (TLA) recently illustrated this movement with the release of [Blended and Personalized Practices at Work](#), which demonstrates how six of our nation's schools are using technology integrally with in-person learning strategies to create data-rich, personalized schooling where students move with mastery.

State profiles in innovation includes four brief profiles of initiatives that advance blended learning at the state level. Each narrative reflects a state initiative at a moment in time, and represents an emerging approach worthy of our attention.

DEFINING BLENDED LEARNING



Driving Change at Greater Scale: The Role of State-Level Actors

In the spring of 2013, TLA began an open-ended inquiry: What are the opportunities for states to catalyze and accelerate blended learning? Over the next year, TLA spoke with dozens of individual state actors at varying levels of the ecosystem - including State Education Agencies (SEAs), State Boards of Education (SBEs), Governors' chief staff, legislators, district and school leaders, teachers, nonprofits, foundations, education advocacy organizations, higher education institutions and more. In 2014, TLA released a [Framework for Cultivating and Accelerating High Quality Blended Learning](#) to help state actors re-imagine their roles and opportunities to act to advance blended learning innovation. Comprised of seven action levers—Leadership, Policy, Communications, Support for Early Adopters, Strategy for Scaling, Creating New Capacity and Resource Allocation—the framework sought to fuel thinking around the state-level activities that could have transformational and accelerating effects on blended learning implementation.



TLA State Framework for Cultivating and Accelerating High Quality Blended Learning

The key takeaway from the research was this: State policy plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of blended learning in school districts. However, policy alone is insufficient to change

attitudes, beliefs, and practices on the ground. States and state actors create numerous conditions that are critical to effective schools and innovation — ultimately impacting the achievement of student learning outcomes.

Innovation Partners and TLA believe we will move faster and farther together by sharing the ideas and practices of pioneers as openly as possible. The purpose of this paper is to share tangible ways a handful of state actors are working to support more personalized and blended learning innovation. Their stories illuminate different pathways and approaches, as well as different, respective capabilities, capacities, and autonomies used to create change.

This brief report does not include all states making similar progress, nor does it define all the ways states can advance blended learning. We provide these brief narratives as a source of inspiration; our primary goal is to build more awareness, understanding, and support for implementation activities at the state level. While these initiatives (and thus their narratives) are incomplete—as they should be—they are noteworthy and emergent harbingers of what is possible.

Texas: Raising Blended Learners

Competitive Funding Process Combined with Deep Technical Assistance and Measurement



[Raising Blended Learners](#) is a \$5 million grant initiative of Raise Your Hand Texas, a nonprofit working to strengthen and improve public education across the state through leadership development, innovation, and advocacy efforts. It is a demonstration initiative to showcase strategies for using blended learning to improve student achievement across diverse student demographics and geographic regions in the state, particularly among schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps.

The competitive process began with a statewide open call for applications to the fund and included workshops to support districts' learning, planning, and design; the ten-month process culminated in the selection of five school district winners as demonstration sites that will receive up to \$500,000 in grant funding over three years with comprehensive implementation support as they actualize their pilots.

While many states have hosted similar innovation funding opportunities, what Raise Your Hand has created is so much more than a grant competition. Here's what makes it a standout in its [support for early adoption](#) of blended learning:

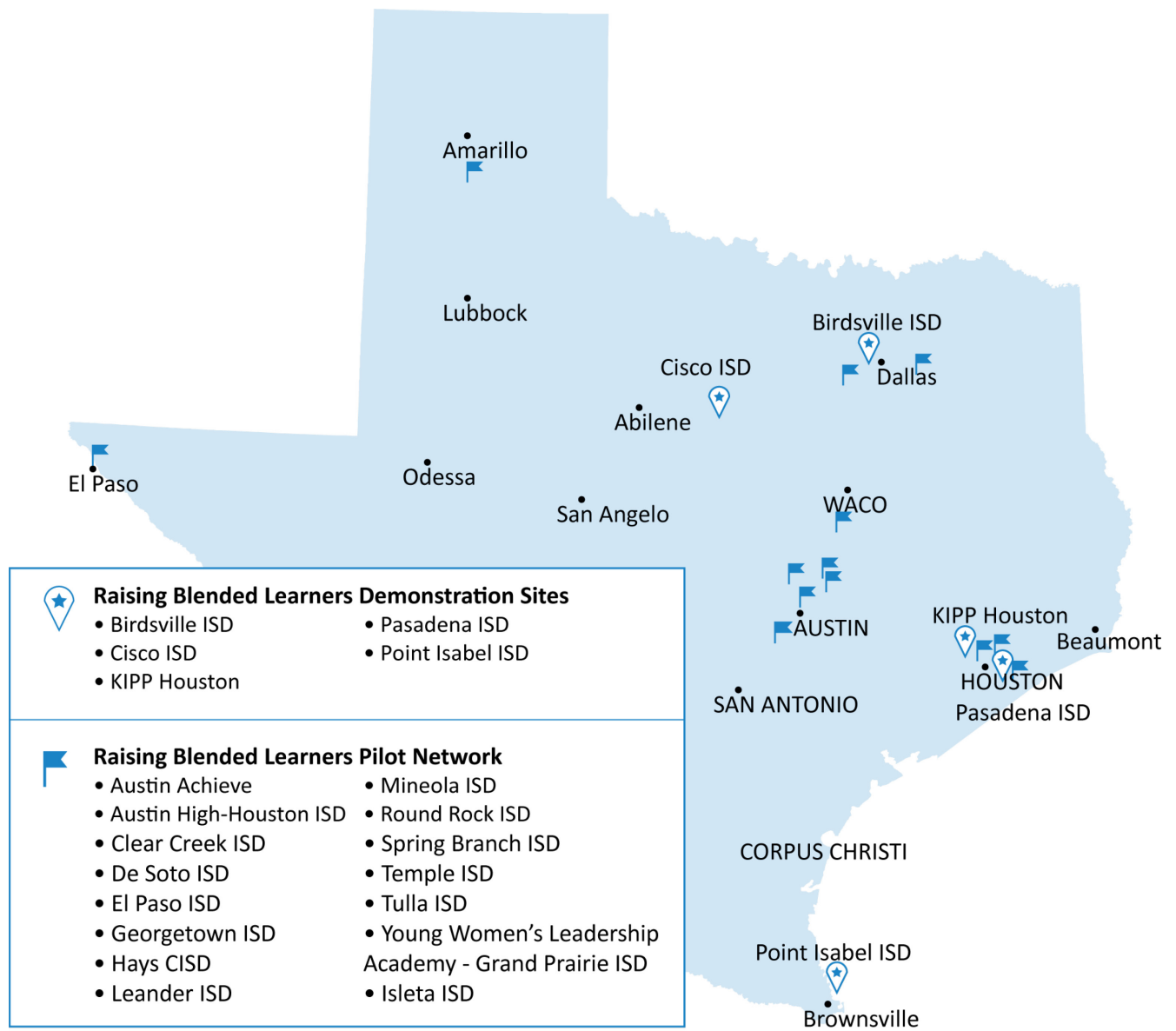
What most don't realize is that in addition to the grant funds, Raise Your Hand has funded numerous, top-talent service providers to help districts make the transition from day one in workshops to the present day launch. Additionally, they have an in-house communications team continuously curating and sharing high-quality [blended learning resources](#) open to all.

Assistance goes deep. Seventy-four applicant-teams were ultimately selected to participate in an immersive workshop whose goal was twofold:

1. for participants to experience blended learning in action, and,
2. for teams to develop prototypes of their own blended learning plans they would submit for possible grant funding.

Sixty-seven of the 74 teams completed and submitted business plans (for how they would implement blended learning). These plans were reviewed by a panel of national experts and in January 2016, Raise Your Hand announced 10 finalist teams. These finalists were invited to a second workshop to refine their business plans and receive personalized, one-on-one support in areas such as instructional design, professional development, content selection, finance, and project management. Following these workshops, the 10 finalists revised their business plans for final consideration.

In April 2016, Raise Your Hand selected and announced five winning demonstration sites and an additional 15 pilot network sites. Both demonstration and pilot network sites have access to technical assistance in budgeting and financial analysis, education technology selection, implementation management, and teacher and school leader professional development. Sites also receive implementation support on an ongoing basis from a designated Implementation Manager who provides coaching in the specific areas of project management, professional development, and change management.



Raising Blended Learners is clearly not the kind of grant competition where winners win and go off to work in isolation. The initiative represents a strong networked approach to learning for all participants. Raise Your Hand continually learns and shares about the state of the market to help solve gaps in the provision of services to districts, and informs the development of education resources.

Finally, Raise Your Hand has committed to a rigorous measurement plan; one that is aligned with the development of innovation. Raise Your Hand is [evaluating the Raising Blended Learners initiative](#) from the organizational planning phase, through the grant competition, to implementation by demonstration and pilot sites over the course of three years. The [importance of measurement](#) of blended learning cannot be overstated—yet too few initiatives afford and/or plan for measurement

beyond district self-reports. Through their developmental approach to evaluation, Raise Your Hand is intent upon learning from their work, similar to how schools must iteratively improve their own approach to improving student achievement using blended learning.

RESOURCES

[Grant Summary](#) An overview of the project and grant competition.

[Blended Learning Resource Portal](#) A portal featuring technical assistance resources curated to support the development of blended learning plans.

[Raising Blended Learners Planning Year Summary and Reflections](#) The first evaluation of the Raising Blended Learners initiative, chronicling and evaluating the 2015-16 planning process and program launch.

Georgia: The Innovation Fund Foundation

Leveraging State Funds to Create a Long-Term Funding and Support Entity for Innovation Efforts



Georgia's Innovation Fund
invest. inform. inspire.

When it comes to [resource allocation](#) in support of blended learning innovation, Georgia is a state to watch. What began as a \$19.4 million Innovation Fund under Georgia's Race to the Top plan and became a stream of state funds dedicated to supporting school innovation, has now expanded to include a full-fledged Innovation Fund Foundation with aims to attract, coordinate, and leverage resources across public entities, philanthropists, entrepreneurs, the business sector, and more. Investments in research and development create powerful incentives for the realization of blended learning models.



THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
of STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In 2011, The Innovation Fund began as a \$19.4 million competitive grant competition created under Georgia's Race to the Top (RT3) Plan. To continue the Innovation Fund's work beyond RT3, Governor Nathan Deal, within the [Governor's Office of Student Achievement \(GOSA\)](#), appropriated state funding for Fiscal Years (FY) 2015, 2016, and 2017 and expanded its priorities to include blended learning. Since its inception, the Innovation Fund has invested just over \$32 million of state and federal funding through 84 grants to 55 LEAs, charter schools, postsecondary institutions, and nonprofit organizations to pilot innovative education programs, ranging in focus from blended learning to teacher and leader induction and development, to STEM applied learning, and birth-to-age-eight language and literacy development. Planning, implementation, and scaling grants range from \$10,000 to \$1.25 million and are reviewed by a team including GOSA and former Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) staff, priority-area experts, and education nonprofit leaders. Technical Assistance Days include sessions led by blended learning and other experts.

The Innovation in Teaching Competition (also operated by The Innovation Fund), promotes excellence in the classroom by recognizing and rewarding Georgia's most effective educators and making examples of their practices, including videos and full unit plans, available to Georgia's teachers and leaders on GeorgiaStandards.org and other online platforms. Since 2013, the Innovation in Teaching Competition has recognized 32 educators from across Georgia. Much like in the Innovation Fund, blended learning has been identified as a priority area.

The Innovation Fund Foundation (IFF) was created by GOSA, a governmental unit, following the passage of HB283 (2013), which gave GOSA the authority to establish a non-profit corporation. The Innovation Fund Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization and received tax-exempt status from the IRS in November 2015 in its quest to seek contributions from philanthropic organizations and businesses as a continuing source of start-up capital for promising innovations.

The Foundation, independent of but in support of GOSA, could be key to sustaining support for blended learning and other priority areas across election cycles. A strong Board can go beyond providing financial support to pair with state-appropriated dollars—it has the potential to take advantage of new autonomies, organize new supports and technical assistance, create new capacity, and leverage the wealth of activity occurring since the 2013 report of Governor Deal's [Digital Learning Task Force](#), including:

The Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program. GOSA noted that LEAs have consistently cited lack of devices as a primary barrier to digital learning, particularly in rural and high-need districts. In June 2016 it announced approximately \$5.5 million available to fund laptops and tablets in 72 LEAs identified as rural and high need and that are poised to implement digital learning.

Connections for Classrooms Grant Program. Partnering agencies GOSA, Georgia Department of Education, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (OneGeorgia Authority) had a goal to enable 21st century learning by providing Georgia LEAs with sufficient network infrastructure to maximize the use of state-funded 100 MB per school broadband service. Over the last two years, \$77 million in state funds to 159 LEAs have enabled them to receive \$129 million in federal E-Rate funds for school network infrastructure. In total, this is a school/district network infrastructure investment of \$206 million.

The Georgia Department of Education's [Path to Personalized Learning](#). The path, in development, provides resources and tools to schools to help them transition to personalized and competency-based learning.

Flexibility through local governance reform. In particular, the state's [Charter Systems model](#) and [Investing in Educational Excellence/Strategic Waivers School Systems model](#) provide districts with

substantial opportunities for statutory and regulatory flexibility in pursuit of innovation in exchange for increased accountability.

Competency-based education. In 2015, Governor Deal’s Education Reform Commission recommended the state begin the transition to a competency-based education system, noting the state should develop a pilot program of competency-based education prior to statewide implementation, incorporate the model as a priority in the Innovation Fund, and explore possibilities of integration into various school governance models. The Governor is currently reviewing the commission’s recommendations, along with his Teacher Advisory Committee, to determine the priorities for the 2017 legislative session.

Currently the Foundation is expanding its Board of Directors to strengthen its capacity and representativeness across the state. Over the next year, the Foundation will refine its mission and vision, set fundraising goals, and establish priorities for grant funding that provide support to the work of the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement and spur education innovation in Georgia.

Sam Rauschenberg, Deputy Director of Research, Policy, and Accountability at GOSA, notes that creating the IFF is an experiment. It’s possible that in the end, people and organizations may not want to contribute, or shoulder the risk necessary to innovate on the student learning experience. Not every innovation pilot turned out as planned, but they’re okay with that. The important thing, Rauschenberg notes, is to learn from each grant and move the conversation about what’s possible forward in each priority area.

It’s not just about funding. GOSA is actively contemplating what else needs to happen to engage more districts. Without more districts entering the innovation pipeline, they’ll soon be hitting a wall with only repeat customers of the Innovation Fund. These are all challenges they’re prepared to grapple with, and proof that they’re paying close attention to local capacity and readiness to implement blended learning.

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RESOURCES

[Overview of the Georgia Innovation Fund](#) The Georgia Innovation Fund is committed to dramatically advancing student academic achievement throughout Georgia.

[Grant Application Toolbox](#) A Toolbox which includes the grant guidelines, application templates, scoring rubrics, and Technical Assistance Day materials.

[§ 20-14-26.1](#) Georgia code proving authority to Incorporate Nonprofit Corporation as a Public Foundation.

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Tennessee: Testing, Adapting, and Evolving Blended Learning

Partnering with an External Provider to Build Teacher Capacity



The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), [Canvas](#), [National Repository of Online Courses](#) (NROC), and [BetterLesson](#) recently agreed to a partnership to support high school teachers across the state to develop their capacity to bring blended and personalized learning strategies to their students in the 2016-17 school year. The initiative is a great example of a state education agency (SEA) [supporting early adoption](#) by creating opportunities for third-party technical assistance - and specifically providing support for teachers based on their interest in blended learning.

Personalized Learning is a central tenet of the department's strategic plan, [Tennessee Succeeds](#), which is committed to the learning styles and instructional supports needed to drive stronger academic performance of all students. The pilot is the department's first personalized learning initiative, targeting students enrolled in eighth- or ninth-grade Algebra I or Integrated Math I. Successful completion of these courses is key to students being on track for graduation at the end of freshman year. The goals of the pilot are to assess whether or not a blended learning environment:

1. helps increase student proficiency in Algebra I and Integrated Math I,
2. supports teacher instructional practices, and
3. increases student buy-in and ownership of their learning process.

The data collected from this pilot will be used to inform the TDOE on future personalized learning policy and programmatic selections, as will recommendations originating from their [Personalized Learning Task Force](#).

BetterLesson is an independent education organization that seeks to empower teacher professional learning through personalized professional development and resource sharing. Selected as part of TLA's inaugural [Next Gen Human Capital Initiative](#) cohort, BetterLesson began developing expertise in blended learning in 2014 with the launch of its [Blended Learning Master Teacher Project](#), supported by a grant from TLA. The project identified and captured the work of 11 master teachers nationally who were early pioneers in blended and personalized learning. Through this work, BetterLesson developed [significant blended learning expertise](#) and refined its overall professional learning support approach, launching a highly personalized, team-based coaching program to support teachers.

Teachers are working with the TDOE and BetterLesson's expert blended learning coaches to [design new systems and structures](#) and will receive ongoing support throughout the 2016-17 school

year. The ultimate goal is not to implement a chosen model per se, but to test, adapt, and evolve models locally to better meet the needs of the students for whom they are designed. Sufficient capacity at the state level, including staff, funding, and expertise, is ideal in supporting the development of high-quality blended learning. TDOE recognized it did not have the capacity to provide deep technical assistance and coaching, yet it was paramount that the department provide rigorous research-based supports. SEAs like TDOE have a tremendous positive impact on blended learning development by working to understand implementation challenges and figuring out the right level or approach to support with local districts, such as in the case of this pilot.

RESOURCES

[Tennessee Succeeds](#) The Tennessee Department of Education's Strategic Plan

[BetterLesson Blended Master Teacher Project](#) Digital Case Studies of Master Blended Teachers

TDOE PILOT AT A GLANCE

- TDOE did outreach through various channels, looking for a mix of applicant schools, including a range from those that were 1:1, to those with only laptop carts.
- Teachers volunteered to become a part of the pilot, signaling interest with a letter of intent.
- TDOE capped the number of students served by the pilot to 5,000; 66 teachers applied, 51 participated in the training, and 50 moved forward and are currently piloting blended learning.
- Sixty-five percent of these pioneering teachers are new to blended learning.
- TDOE plans to extend the pilot to an additional 50 Algebra I/Integrated Math I teachers and a total of 10,000 students in 2017.

TDOE feels strongly about the importance of creating proof points and accelerating capacity building, with the support of measurement (taking a mixed method approach). Adriana Gobbo Harrington, Office of Student Readiness, notes the value-add of their partnership is already evident with teachers coming out of the comfort zone and thinking more dynamically about personalized learning for students. The department will assess the numbers - whether or to what degree proficiency levels on the end of course exams are influenced by this pilot - and they're fearless in the face of the question: What if we don't see results?

"That's a million dollar question," says Harrington. "The data probably won't show a large change this year, and we expect growing pains when something is new. But we're not just looking at numbers, we're listening and learning from teachers, to think strategically about how to support them moving forward."

Rhode Island: The Nation's First Personalized Learning Lab State

Creating a “cluster” of partners to drive and support innovation for personalized learning



Good state strategy in support of personalized and blended learning promotes alignment among diverse groups, clarifies objectives and priorities, enacts trade-offs, and helps focus as well as catalyze new energies and capabilities. [EduvateRI](#), born of precisely this kind of thinking, launched September 2016 with the intention to set the bar for education innovation nationally, acting

as a model for other [education clusters](#) as a research and design hub, and drawing attention to Rhode Island's work as the nation's first personalized learning lab state. Rhode Island presents a fertile example of a state creating [new capacity](#) to advance blended and personalized learning - from their work in analyzing the core competencies, advantages, and autonomies the state can leverage, to efforts to attract more and more transformational actors to the state - to deliver results in an education system made for the future.

The story in Rhode Island is familiar to many. An early launch of blended learning through the [Innovation Powered by Technology](#) Model School Grant was followed by Rhode Island becoming one of the first states in the country to empower its citizens to develop a [strategic plan for public education](#) through a [design-based process](#). Highlander Institute's [Fuse RI](#) initiative - an [Open Source Model of K-12 Blended Learning Implementation](#) - is a well-known example of a successful blended learning initiative at the state level. Lesser known is the official opening of Rhode Island's latest chapter spearheaded by Governor Gina Raimondo, and Chief Innovation Officer Richard Culatta, who served for the past four years as the director of the U.S. Office of Educational Technology.

Raimondo and Culatta see [EduvateRI](#) bringing together education, research, philanthropic, government, and commercial partners to collectively surface and solve persistent problems in education, develop and test effective education tools and technologies, and nurture breakthrough, authentic learning practices. Through organized, integrated, and coordinated efforts, the EduvateRI [cluster](#) seeks to close opportunity gaps for students, improve the national competitiveness of Rhode Island, and drive economic growth through new and existing education-related business.

Seeding, inspiring and scaling education innovation.

Rhode Island is an ideal place to develop and pilot approaches for supporting personalized learning at scale. The small size of the state easily enables in-person collaboration. More importantly, however, the state has supportive leadership at every level and across every sector, including government, nonprofit, and industry. Years of active conversation about personalized learning have created optimum conditions to establish a statewide model for supporting personalized learning at scale:

- In 2015, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) released a five year [strategic plan](#) informed by over 11,000 families, educators, students, and community members. Statewide personalized learning is one of six priority focus areas of the plan.
- RIDE's proposed secondary regulations, currently out for public comment, articulate guidelines for student-centered learning in middle and high schools, including a requirement for every student to have an individual learning plan that reflects the student's academic, career and personal goals. The regulations also give students the ability to personalize their diplomas by earning optional [Pathway Endorsements](#).
- Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, a child-welfare policy and advocacy organization, has convened a Leadership Table of key stakeholders to share expertise and identify strategies for scaling up student-centered learning practices statewide. The Leadership Table is examining best practices in Rhode Island and across the nation and making recommendations for clarifying, strengthening, and amending state regulations to support broader implementation of effective student-centered learning practices in Rhode Island.
- The Enhanced Leadership Development Network, a group of district leaders convened by the Rhode Island School Superintendent Association and facilitated by the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity, have focused their discussions this year on advancing personalized learning, including drafting a vision for personalized learning and discussing district policies and partnerships to support educators.
- Rhode Island Mayoral Academies, a RI-based education nonprofit, is supporting district and charter school implementation and collaboration by using California-based Summit Public Schools' approach to personalized and project-based curricula.
- Highlander Institute, a Rhode Island-based education nonprofit, focuses on researching, developing, and disseminating innovative personalized and blended learning methods to improve outcomes for all learners. The Highlander Institute also hosts the annual [Blended and Personalized Learning Conference](#) which brings together experts from across the country to share best practices.

Additionally, educators, nonprofit leaders, and policymakers are coming together to share learnings from these and other initiatives at regular convenings. These include Highlander Institute's monthly EdTechRI Meetups and the annual Future Ready Summit.



What's next for Rhode Island?

- Defining what personalized learning looks like in action. Rhode Island launched the RI Personalized Learning Initiative and released a draft of a white paper created by RIDE, the Rhode Island Office of Innovation, Rhode Island Mayoral Academies, Highlander Institute, and co-signed by RISTE, RI-CAN, the School of Education at RIC, and RIASP. The paper describes what they mean (and don't mean) by personalized learning, and offers an initial blueprint for how stakeholders at every level (including students and parents, educators and administrators, and state leaders) can support a movement toward increased personalization for students. This paper will continue to evolve based on public feedback and a final paper will be released in early 2017.
- Sourcing high-quality personalized learning management tools that provide resources for schools and districts to implement personalized learning. The initial tools selected are from technology partners, PLP (by Summit Public Schools), Buzz (by Agilix), and Cortex (by InnovateEDU), and additional tools will be added over time.
- Providing a supported on-ramp for schools to leverage technology tools that support personalization. The Initiative will work with technology partners to provide Rhode Island schools and districts access to free use of tools for a minimum of one year, and training and ongoing support within a community of practice of other educators. School and district leaders can access a matrix tool to explore technology options.

Rhode Island has risen to a new level of leadership - collective leadership - creating a stimulating dynamic that enables R & D, acts as a magnet for venture capital investment, frames policy as facilitative rather than restrictive of innovation, and continues to position a growing network of teachers to lead from the front lines.

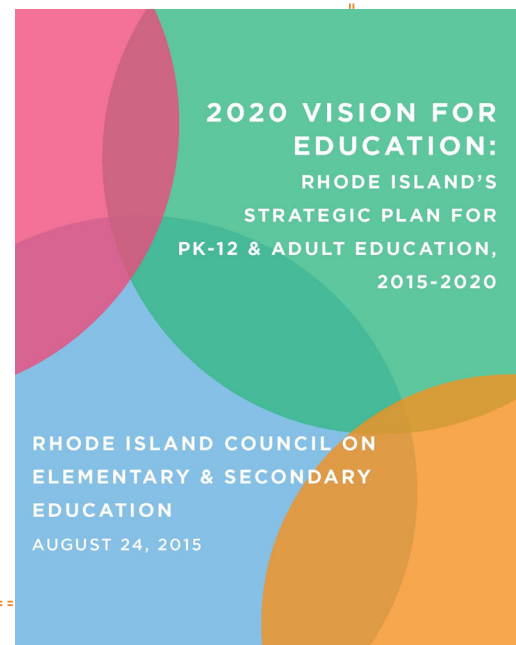
RESOURCES

2020 Vision for Education The Rhode Island Department of Education's five year strategic plan includes specific recommendations for how schools, districts, the state, and adult education programs can support the expansion of personalized learning statewide.

Eduvate RI EduvateRI brings people together around education, research, philanthropic, government, and commercial partners to collectively surface and solve persistent problems in education, develop and test effective education tools and technologies, and nurture breakthrough, authentic learning practices.

RI Personalized Learning Initiative White Paper The RI Personalized Learning Initiative draft white paper describes what Rhode Island means (and doesn't mean) by personalized learning, and offers an initial blueprint for how stakeholders at every level can support a movement toward increased personalization for students.

Personalized Learning Platforms This matrix highlights personalized learning platforms vetted by the RI Personalized Learning Initiative. School leaders can use this matrix to get an initial understanding of tools' capabilities and requirements, before diving deeper into one or more platforms by scheduling a demo.



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