The Time is Now: Personalizing Learning for Every Student

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Salt Lake City School District’s three traditional high schools were collectively losing 10% of their students every year; most of that attrition was the result of students being referred to alternative schools or dropping out. Students were leaving school because they felt disconnected, that instruction was moving too quickly or too slowly, or that the usual and traditional approach to school “just doesn’t work for me” or “boring”.

In response, Kenneth and his staff created a new blended-learning high school called Innovations Early College High School. The school, now in its fourth year, uses blended learning to personalize education and allow students to learn in their own manner and at their own pace. It has been tremendously successful in retaining and graduating students. The graduation rates are significantly higher than the average for the district, state, and nation. Even more impressive has been the high rate of students taking and successfully completing of college courses.

The school is now over capacity and due to parent and student demand, the other high schools in the district have begun replicating the personalized learning environments that have made Innovations successful to meet their student demand and parent expectations.

**KEYS TO SUCCESS:**

* The school uses the Flex model of **blended learning**, with a goal of creating a personalized education for every student by allowing students to work at their own pace and with a higher level of student agency than is customary in most schools.
* Students attend the school every day, but **control their time** at school. They work directly with teachers in small-group and individual settings. They can access online content at the school and often at home or other locations.
* Teachers establish **mentoring relationships** with students; these relationships are a key element of student success.
* Students **personalize their schedules** and may take up to eight courses at a time at Innovations Early College High School, the district’s other three high schools, the district’s career and technical center, or the local community college.
* School administrators **initiate** communications with a wide range of students, particularly minority students, to advertise the school and ensure that the school population mirrors that of the rest of the district.
* **Teachers play a critical role** because they establish a mentoring relationship with students, which is as important as their instructional role.
* The school provides computers to many students, and other students bring their own devices, which allow the school to maintain a **one-to-one** student-to-computer ratio.
* The school supports **competency-based learning**. Students can choose to complete a course with a “pass” or continue until they have achieved an “A” or other letter grade. Once a student has completed a course, she can focus on finishing her other existing courses or add a new course to her schedule.

**Personalized Learning—Next Steps**

Providing a Personalized Learning Environment within a traditional urban or rural school district is possible and increased academic achievements replicable. The following will be presented and discussed with the group.

* Learn how to provide an individualized, self-paced, personalized student-learning environment.
* Remove controls of the traditional high school that may stifle a student’s ability to thrive, grow, and develop self-awareness about his or her education and future.
* Remove the confining structure of the traditional school day and provide opportunity for students to attend school in a more flexible, open, and relaxed environment.
* Challenge students with rigorous content, and provide teachers with the opportunity to really know their students and the ability to act as facilitators of learning rather than as the “sage on the stage.”
* Provide advanced educational opportunities to ALL students through dual enrollment for high school and college credit.
* Provide a differentiated and pliable learning environment.
* Provide a model that is scalable in the traditional schools across the country.
* Learn how to effectively remove constraints of traditional classrooms and barriers to educational innovation.
* Utilize the power and scalability of technology to customize education where students through multiple measures, both cognitive and non-cognitive, will have significant increases in academic achievement.

**Biography**

Kenneth has inspired, trained, and collaborated with educators from around the country to understand and implement scalable personalized learning in their schools. He is passionate about providing a personalized pedagogical approach that transforms schools to meet the needs of our children.

The following have recognized Kenneth’s contribution to education and have invited him to share his vision with others through presentations o articles.

* The Gallup Group, Washington D.C.
* J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation
* iNaCol
* T.H.E. Journal
* District Administration magazine
* Innosight Institute
* Evergreen Education Group
* Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation
* IDEO
* TEDxSaltLakeCity Speaker
* T.I.E.
* F[riday Institute for Educational Innovation](http://fi.ncsu.edu/)
* and many others

He is currently working educational leaders throughout the country and more directly in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arkansas, Indiana, Idaho, South Dakota, and Utah to begin transforming their schools to meet the needs of the one.

Ruth and Kenneth are parents to three children along with two additional daughters from Mexico and El Salvador that proudly call him dad.