Create Personalized Learning Plans for Every Student
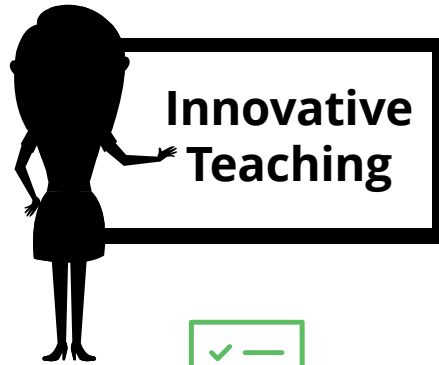
A How-to Guide from Edmentum

A LOOK AT PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Innovative Teaching

1:1
One-on-one teacher and student interactions

Rich, self-paced curriculum

Around-the-clock, anywhere, anytime access

Parent partnership

Needs • Preferences • Goals

Technology that enriches the learning experience

Frequent skill checks that guide progress

Learning environments that adapt to student needs

What are the goals of personalized learning?

☑ Ensure equity   ☑ Raise achievement   ☑ Inspire student agency

Create personalized learning plans for every student

To truly personalize learning, we have to talk about the students: their specific academic journey, goals, and motivations. Then, pair each of these elements with performance data, and wrap it in a framework that records, monitors, and offers feedback as change occurs. Just like that, you've described the elements of a personalized learning plan (PLP). In their purest form, PLPs aim to facilitate greater student agency by providing a framework to help learners set, plan, and persist toward their academic goals.

Here, in 10 actionable steps, we will define essential components, offer guiding questions, and provide examples to help you build effective PLPs in your school or district.

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1. Define your starting point.

How do you know where you're going if you're not sure where you started? That's the basic premise behind assessments that aim to benchmark or diagnose learning. After administering your baseline assessment of choice, make use of students' results to review, discuss, and use the information as a springboard toward growth and academic achievement.

What can you learn from baseline assessments?

- Assessment results become the blueprint of your curriculum design. Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all education. Determining where your learners stand from the beginning allows you to fast forward, slow down, or go deeper to focus learning where it's needed most.

- True benchmarks or diagnostic assessments yield valid, reliable, and fair results you can trust. Any assessment you choose should be supported by research that confirms its ability to accurately measure student performance.

- Assessing students at the beginning of the year helps establish a baseline of learning, allowing you to determine the degree to which students have mastered selected standards and where individual performance levels stack up against the rest of the class.

- Great assessments provide smart data. The best benchmark assessments will yield metrics that are meaningful and actionable. They lead you on a journey that celebrates progress, while isolating areas that need additional focus.

START
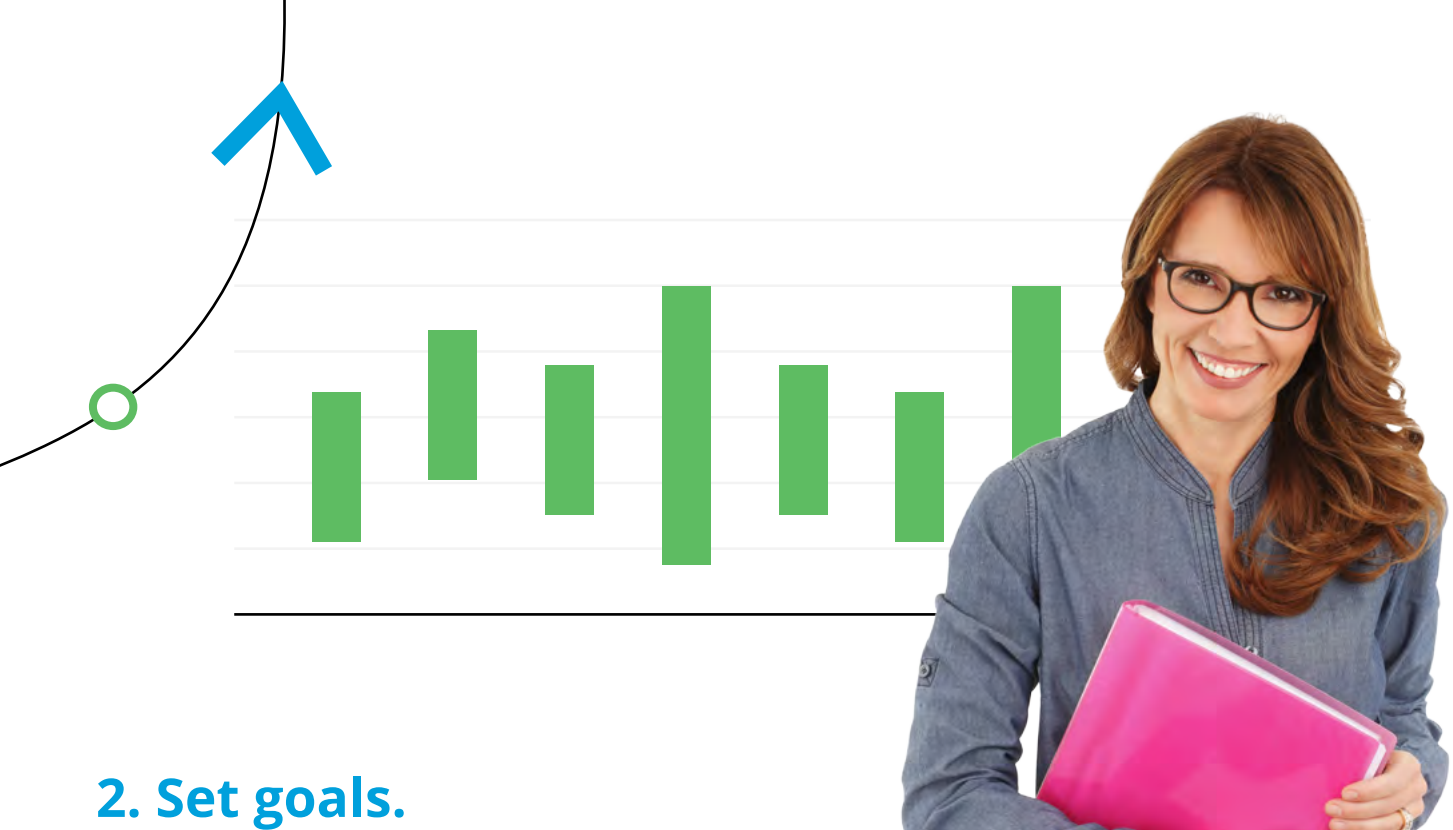
2. Set goals.

Goal setting may seem inherent, but creating achievable goals and defining a pathway toward reaching them doesn't come naturally—it's a learned skill. You can help your students see the power of goal setting from the beginning, by educating them on how to set and work toward specific goals, arming them with strategies to overcome challenges along the way.

> " Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success. "
>
> **– Pablo Picasso**

Questions you should be asking your students:

- What are your strengths and abilities?
- What are areas you would like to improve in?
- What are your personal goals and aspirations, particularly collegiate and career goals?
- What are your short-term vs. long-term goals?
- How can we measure your growth and success?
- How will you know that you're making progress toward your goals?

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3. Map learning modalities.

It's commonly understood that developing and implementing differentiated instruction is one of the most effective means to reach every student. Finding and taking the time necessary to get a pulse of every student and to determine optimal learning modalities may seem like a luxury, but it's well worth the effort. As you get to know your students, record their respective preferences and help them internalize their own needs. Not only will this help you become a more focused educator, but also armed with this knowledge, students can learn to help themselves focus more attentively.

Visual learners:

- Want the teacher to provide demonstrations
- Often use lists to keep up and organize thoughts
- Have well-developed imaginations

Tip: Use videos, illustrations, written instructions, and graphic organizers

Auditory learners:

- Want verbal instructions
- Enjoy dialogues, discussions, and plays to explore concepts
- Listen and repeat to recall information

Tip: Use verbal instructions, music, discussion, and audiobooks

Tactile learners:

- Prefer to take notes while reading or during lectures
- Often like to draw or doodle to remember
- Do well with hands-on activities

Tip: Use manipulatives and encourage notetaking, drawing, and painting

Kinesthetic learners:

- Think and learn best while moving
- Prefer to do rather than watch or listen
- Do best when they can manipulate actual objects during learning

Tip: Use games, role-playing, hands-on activities, and experiments

4. Appeal to student interests.

Every student wants to feel like his or her voice is being heard. Weaving students' interests, passions, pursuits, and hobbies into your instruction helps connect classroom learning back to real-world applications that matter to them. But, before you start making assumptions about what your students think is "cool" based on the latest fad you saw splash across your Facebook feed or on last night's news, start asking questions to find out just what makes them tick.

School	Home	Individual

School
- What did you like best about your last [science/math/English] class?
- Were there things I did that made that class more appealing/ interesting?
- What do you expect of me as your teacher?

Home
- What do you like to do when you're not at school?
- What are you interested in?
- What do you like to do with friends?
- What do you like to do by yourself?

Individual
- Is there something you want to learn more about?
- How do you like to learn best?
- What is your favorite subject? Why?
- What else should I know about you?

"We can each define ambition and progress for ourselves. The goal is to work toward a world not set by the stereotypes that hold us back, but by our personal passion, talents, and interests.

– Sheryl Sandberg,
Chief Operating Officer of Facebook

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98%

5. Teach students how to track.

Research has found that students who track their own progress toward goals are more likely to make greater gains in reaching them. By incorporating tracking tools and progress monitoring into classroom activities, students can begin to take ownership over their own performance and internalize their next steps toward success.

What should be tracked? As learning becomes more personalized, each student's journey may look different.

What should tracking tools look like? The appearance a tracker takes should align to how your students are developmentally able to consume information.

Consider these examples:

- Objective mastery percentages
- Unit test scores
- Project-based learning assignments
- STEM/STEAM experiments
- Reading-level growth

A meaningful student tracker is:

- Easily updated, online or by hand
- Visually consumable
- Reflective of progress over time
- Capable of highlighting learner goals

6. Refine areas of focus.

When students are balancing a variety of subjects, projects, and assignments, it helps to refine areas of focus that align with learning goals. Telling your students which concepts require the most effort and concentration is simply not enough; they should also be able to distinguish their own next steps toward success. By utilizing their own tracker information, students can identify specific learning gaps they have and begin to actively address them.

Help students verbalize their focus areas.

☑ **1. Identify the starting point.**

☑ **3. Determine next steps.**

☑ **2. Know where you're going.**

☑ **4. Understand the outcome.**

What can that story look like at each stage of school?

Elementary School
"I am a level G reader right now, and I want to be a level H reader. I will practice reading level G books by myself and harder books with my parents at home to help me reach my goal."
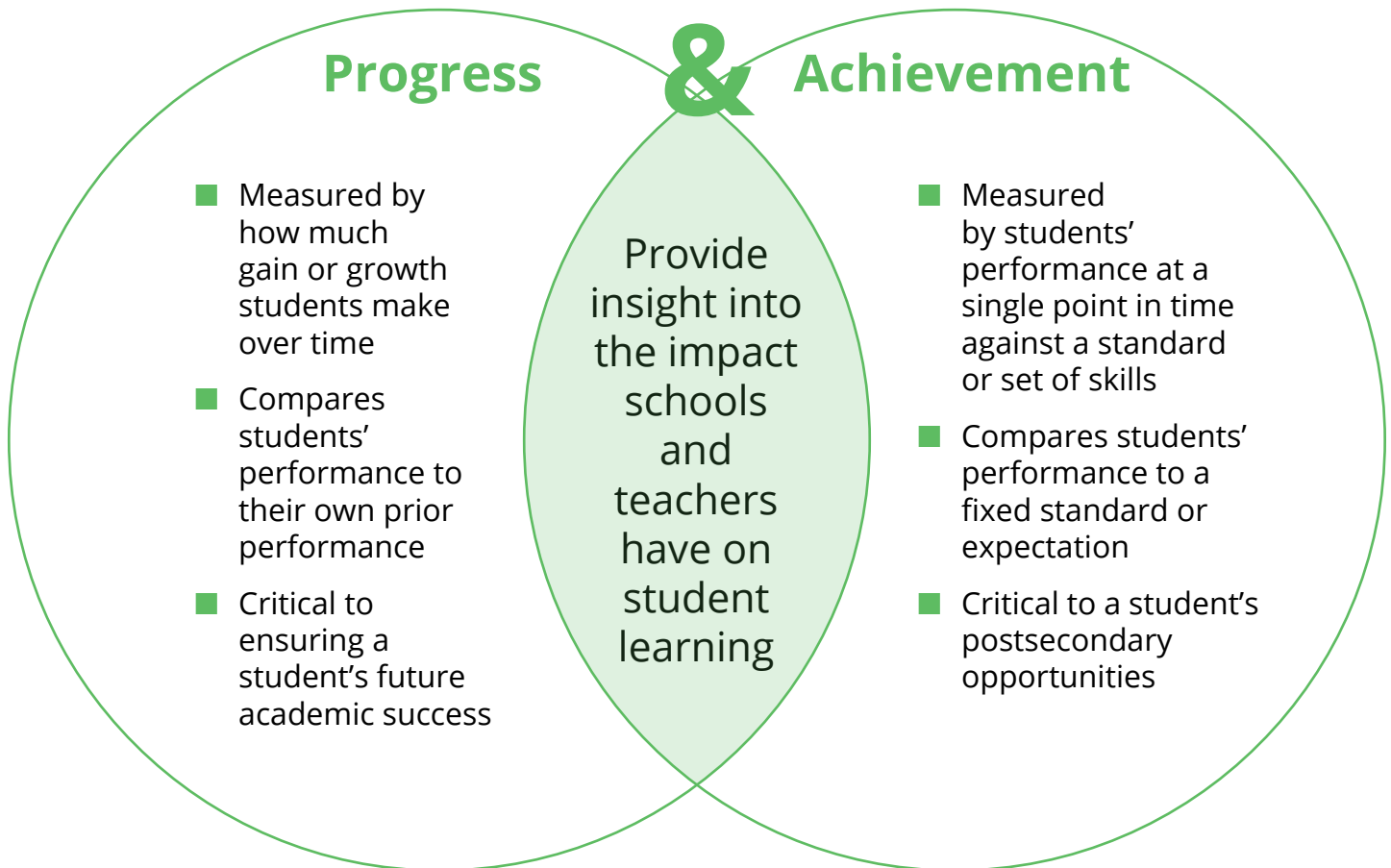
Middle School
"I am not very good at finding the area of difficult shapes like the rhombus, trapezoid, or parallelogram. I will practice finding the area of triangles, rectangles, and squares to help me remember the basics before going back to harder shapes."

High School
"I have a tough time organizing my ideas when I'm writing and would like to improve on this. I do a pretty good job adding in the right transition words, but my introductory and support sentences don't always fall into place. I could do a better job thinking through and introducing the point I'm trying to make before offering any support. After I write, I could also go back to my writing and make sure I've explained 'the why' behind what I'm trying to say. These steps would help my reader make more sense of my writing."

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7. Assess for learning.

With the ongoing focus on formative assessment, we've all heard about the benefits of incorporating reoccurring check-ins and benchmarks to plot critical student growth points. Just as important as the assessment itself, however, is understanding the data it yields. It's essential to discern and balance progress compared to achievement when discussing assessment outcomes with students. Help your learners maintain perspective and encourage perseverance by charting growth metrics and celebrating milestones on their paths toward achievement.

Progress & Achievement

Progress

- Measured by how much gain or growth students make over time
- Compares students' performance to their own prior performance
- Critical to ensuring a student's future academic success

Provide insight into the impact schools and teachers have on student learning

Achievement

- Measured by students' performance at a single point in time against a standard or set of skills
- Compares students' performance to a fixed standard or expectation
- Critical to a student's postsecondary opportunities

Without continual growth and progress, such words as 'improvement',' achievement,' and 'success' have no meaning.

– (attributed to) **Benjamin Franklin**

8. Build a dialogue.

One measure of teaching success is in the ability to help students become lifelong, self-sufficient learners. A way to help instill this principle is by engaging in ongoing conversations and check-ins with your students. These one-on-one sessions are intended to provide feedback, reflect on student aspirations, and offer encouragement. During these meetings, help learners take ownership of their own growth by digging into assessment scores, standards mastery, and self-evaluations.

Questions you should be asking:

- How do you feel you are tracking toward your goals?

- What strengths are you currently building?

- What areas do you feel you still need more work in?

- What recent achievements have you made?

- How were you able to make those gains in learning?

- How can you apply those strategies to areas where you might still need more work?

- What can I do to help you? What do you need from me?

Tip: The conversation doesn't have to work from a fixed list of goals set at the beginning of the school year. This is a great opportunity for any recalibration that's needed to keep motivation high.

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9. Compile a student profile.

Profiles can show the cumulative efforts and learning of a particular student over time. Start by defining the purpose and audience of your students' profiles. Once you've established a goal, building the profile should become a joint effort by both teacher and student. Explain the process to students and encourage them to take an active role by selecting pieces to include.

Who is the audience for your student profiles?

- **Classroom teacher:** To determine overall mastery of skills
- **Parents:** To see the scope of learning over time
- **Teacher in the next grade level:** To present a sample of student work
- **Student:** To reflect, celebrate, and remember accomplishments
- **Administrators:** To help inform important parent/teacher discussions

## How can you make student profiles manageable?

- Leverage online solutions to supply the data or work samples
- Make them easily accessible in your classroom
- Put students in charge of contributing content
- Invest learners in the process by setting aside time to reflect
- Tuck away items you plan to revisit so they aren't forgotten

10. Share & repeat.

Don't keep progress or setbacks a secret. Connect with parents and other key stakeholders along the way so that they're armed with the know-how to be active partners in their students' education.

You know it takes a village. Who should be involved?

Student Peers — **Parents & Siblings** — **Coaches & Advisors** — **Other Teachers & Specialists**
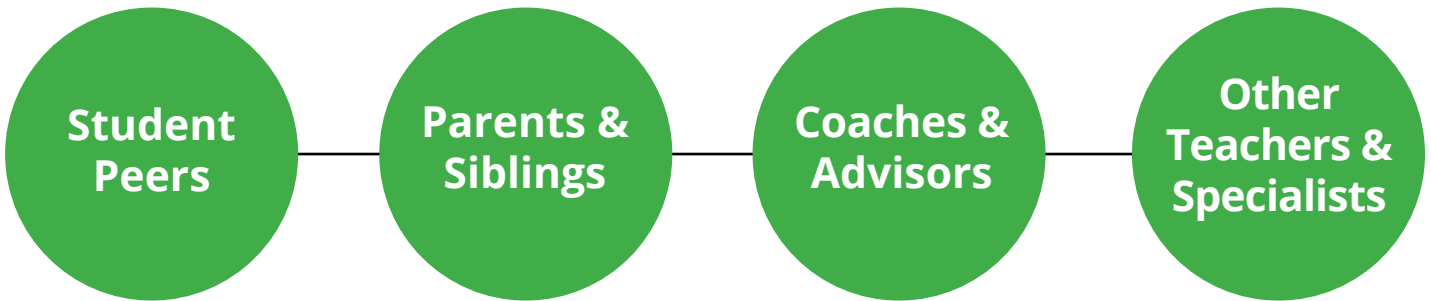
Building a classroom culture that emphasizes collaboration and encouragement creates a safe space for students to work toward their goals together. With the right foundation laid, classmates can become a support system for one another.

Your students' biggest cheerleaders are also your biggest assets. We all know the merits of keeping parents in the loop, but often a sibling (especially if he or she is on the same campus as your student) can be a powerful ally as well.

These individuals often act as role models and mentors to your students. If a coach or advisor at your school has built a special relationship with one of your students, keeping them informed of your learner's progress can be a powerful motivator for continued academic growth.

If other classroom teachers or specialists spend instructional time with your student, they can benefit from providing guidance under the same goals that are included in the student's PLP. Start things off on the right foot by setting aside time to review the complete PLP with them.

Revisit goals often.

Along the personalized learning journey, there are bound to be points where you want to reevaluate and frame new goals. Revisit each of these 10 steps as necessary when kicking off a new semester or school year or when shifts in progress and interests open up new doors for learning. From beginning to end, and back again, always keep the ultimate benefits to your learners in mind!

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Personalized learning planning worksheet

This worksheet reflects the joint efforts of both student and educator to develop a personalized learning plan. Through continued academic discussion and analysis paired with data and tracking tools, this is intended to reflect an accurate picture of student performance.

Student information

Student name:

Grade:

PLP participants:

Date of initial plan development:

Date of revised plan:

Goals

What are your strengths and abilities?

What are areas you'd like to improve in?

What are your personal goals and aspirations?

What are your short-term goals?

What are your long-term goals?

How can we measure your growth and success?

Learning modalities

Student: How do you learn best?

Teacher: What classroom resources can you use to accommodate these preferences?

🎮 Student interests _____

School   Home   Individual

◉ Areas of focus & feedback _____

Teacher reflection on progress:

Strengths & achievements: Areas for improvement:

Student reflection on progress:

👥 Stakeholders _____

Active partners in learning

➡ Instructional next steps _____

To make this PLP a success, I will engage (ex. Individuals, strategies, resources):

A personalized learning partner

Edmentum is founded in innovation and committed to being a trusted partner to create successful student outcomes everywhere learning occurs. We can give you the resources—and the expertise—to leverage the power of effective learning solutions.

Create your solution → Start working toward your goals → Receive continued support from Edmentum
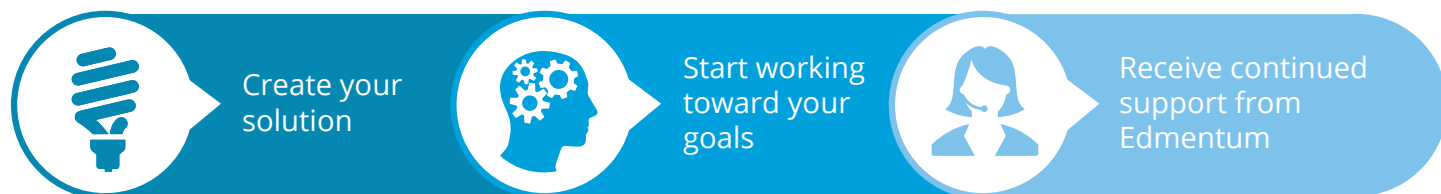
www.edmentum.com/resources

We also provide a variety of resources on our website that can help you implement your solution.

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www.edmentum.com – 800.447.5286

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