



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

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Dear KPBSD Teachers and Principals,

Our district consistently has performed well in terms of student achievement. We have always held the attitude and philosophy of continuous improvement. Even before being awarded the Digital Technology Initiative Grant (DTi) in 2014, differentiated learning strategies have been an area of focus for our district's teachers. With the resources provided from the DTi Grant our professional development and instructional focus shifted to continuing to differentiate but with a "blended" approach utilizing our Canvas Learning Management System and other available forms of technology. Over the past few years, we have made good progress in moving toward differentiation, blended instruction, and personalizing learning. We believe that our teachers are doing great things and many teachers are already innovating in an effort to meet the needs of their students. Our challenge, however, is to ensure that such approaches to teaching and learning are occurring in a systematic and systemic approach, rather than in "pockets" of innovation.

At our last school board meeting, the Board unanimously approved moving forward with [Education Elements](#) over the next 3 years to support our personalization efforts. They are an organization that supports schools and districts in the complex and daunting task of systematically designing and implementing personalized learning. They have successfully partnered with more than 116 districts, 500 schools, and 25,000 teachers.

Over the past several months, we have been updating our five-year strategic plan. Within this plan, the point about utilizing technology to the fullest has generated a lot of discussion. Some are even saying that having curriculum accessible to students anywhere could lead to fewer teachers and more screen time. KPBSD is not trying to replace teachers with technology or simply have students in front of a computer all-day, every day. Ultimately, we are aiming for learning anytime, anywhere, with technology as a tool to provide more rigor and relevancy in a student's education. This is a necessary component of personalized learning.

So, what is personalized learning? It is the structuring of schools, classrooms and instruction so we can better respond to the individual needs of students, instead of expecting students to fit the current mold or adapt to structures that may not be successful for them. Many of our teachers implement elements of personalized learning in their classrooms right now. Key elements include:

- Integrated Digital Content: Digital content that allows for a differentiated path and pace
- Targeted Instruction: Instruction aligned to specific student needs and learning goals
- Data Driven Decisions: Frequent data collection that informs instructional decisions and groupings

- Student Reflection and Ownership: Ongoing student reflection that promotes ownership of learning

Unfortunately, a common misconception is that Personalized Learning efforts are simply a step toward replacing teachers with computers, which is unequivocally not true. With personalized learning, the teacher is more important than ever. The role shifts, however, from primarily delivering information to creatively facilitating and problem solving so all students can learn at high levels. Using real-time data, teachers frequently assess where each student is at, give immediate feedback, determine individual learning needs, and help them figure out the best path to success.

Personalized learning is about shifting our one-size-fits-all model of education to better prepare students for the jobs and needs of their future. We want to directly connect students to rigorous learning that is relevant and prepares them for life, college, and careers. Ultimately, we are creating a system that supports this approach. With our primary focus on positive relationships with students in KPBSD we are poised to take the next steps for true personalized learning. We have the base in place (positive, strong relationships), now we are on to deeper rigor and relevance coupled with anytime, anywhere learning to move our students forward in preparing for life.

Our work with Education Elements begins today with district level planning. Over the next three years, schools will be assigned to one of three cohort groups or “launch phases.” Phase I schools will begin working with Education Elements in the Fall of 2017 with subsequent phases occurring January in 2018 and the Fall of 2019. We are in the process of communicating with principals on phase roll out and launch details. Regardless which cohort you may be involved in, we will continue to provide high quality professional development to advance our personalization efforts in every classroom across the district. There will be more information to come soon.

Sincerely,



Sean Dusek
Superintendent of Schools