Teacher perception of the implementation of personalized learning

by

Maureen Margaret Mulligan

B.A., University of Wyoming, 2012
M.A., Fort Hays State University, 2015

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Abstract

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the implementation of personalized learning. By understanding this specific case, suggestions on successfully implementing personalized learning in an elementary school in the Midwest became clear. The elementary school studied is one of the first schools in Kansas to join the KansasCan School Redesign project. This project is a reform effort initiated by the Kansas state Commissioner of Education, Randy Watson.

Teachers from an elementary school facing a unique language barrier, poverty, and trauma were interviewed about their experiences pertaining to KansasCan Redesign. The study used a survey, as well as semi-structured interviews, to examine this particular case of Redesign. The school faced a number of challenges while attempting to Redesign, but ultimately found success in the use of teacher leadership and relationship building. The students at this elementary school began to see success in their academic learning. They ultimately felt more successful attending school than in a more traditional classroom setting, according to the teachers interviewed for this study. Not only did teachers think that students felt more successful through this process, but teachers also believed that parents became more involved due to Redesign. With so many variables affecting a school's Redesign, it is essential to find actionable steps that schools can follow to be successful with such a reform. As more schools begin to Redesign it will be critical to continue research to understand what makes a school successful with this reform method.

Key Words: Educational reform, KansasCan Redesign, personalized learning, teacher perception, elementary school

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Approved by:

Major Professor
J. Spencer Clark

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Tim and Carol Mulligan. I could not have asked for anyone better to guide and support me through this life. Thank you will never be enough.

I would also like to dedicate this to the little scholars I have had the pleasure of teaching and spending my days with. My hope is that you all become life-long learners who never stop pursing your dreams. Never forget to be kind to one another.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

In 2017, the Kansas Commissioner of Education, Randy Watson, challenged school districts to embark on the journey of school redesign. The official title of this school reform is KansasCan School Redesign. Schools across the state applied to be part of the first phase of this process known as the Mercury 7 Project. The schools that were accepted to be Mercury schools were to pioneer school redesign across the state. KansasCan Redesign had specific criteria that each school must have in their plan for reform; however there were no specific ways to meet these criteria. The criteria consisted of (a) student success skills, which will assist in the social-emotional education for Kansas students; (b) family engagement; (c) business and community partnerships; (d) real-world application of skills; and (e) personalized learning. As schools embarked on this particular type of school redesign or school reform, it was imperative that educators understood the impact of moving from a traditional American schooling environment to a personalized learning environment. Understanding how this shift affects teachers, students, administration, and parents is key to ensuring that the redesign is successful.

Rationale for this Study

Personalized learning has become an ever more popular method of school reform, especially in Kansas with the adoption of the KansasCan Redesign initiative. Schools across the nation are attempting to implement personalized learning in a variety of ways, with some methods being more successful than others. It is important to understand how personalized learning can be implemented into all levels of education such as elementary, middle, high school,

and higher education in order for it to be a successful school reform model that increases a student's academic achievement and overall attitude towards education.

To understand what personalized learning is, one must look at how it has been defined throughout the research and literature to this point. Although many researchers have overlapping ideas about defining personalized learning, there are a number of variations and there is not one definition used in research or schools today (Bingham, 2017). Pane et al. (2015) defined personalized learning as:

> "Systems and approaches that accelerate and deepen student learning by tailoring instruction to each student's individual needs, skills, and interests. A variety of rich learning experiences that collectively prepare students for success in college and a career of their choice. Teachers' integral role in student learning: designing and managing the learning environment, leading instruction, and providing students with expert guidance and support to help them take increasing ownership of their learning." (p. 2)

Bingham (2018) similarly defined personalized learning as a "technology-based instructional model designed to tailor instruction to student needs, strengths, and interests to promote mastery of skills and content" (p. 455).

When comparing these two definitions, one can see the similarity that students are at the forefront of learning and that the teacher's role shifts from a giver of knowledge to a facilitator of knowledge, which is an important distinction to note. Within these definitions, teachers are expected to understand exactly what students need and how their interests, strengths, and needs impact their overall learning, which is a major role in a thriving personalized learning environment (Bingham, 2017). Jenkins and Keefe (2001) also found that a teacher's role shifts

significantly over the course of the implementation of personalized learning. Understanding how to support teachers is just as important as any other aspect of the implementation process. However, one of the key differences between these definitions concerns the use of technology. This difference is common throughout the literature and can impact the overall research of personalized learning and how it is implemented. Not only does including technology in the definition change the process of implementing personalized learning, but it could also change the teacher's perception of personalized learning and its impact within the classroom (Bingham, 2017). Further discussion of the impact that technology has will follow. For the interest of this research, the definition provided by Bingham will be how personalized learning is defined. This definition was chosen because the elementary school being studied heavily implemented technology into their redesign and school reform model, to assist in meeting the goals of the KansasCan Redesign Project. However, it is important to note that the definition of personalized learning throughout education is continuing to evolve and change depending on factors such as school environment and culture, age of students, and community being impacted by personalized learning. With an ever-changing definition of what personalized learning actually is, it is difficult to understand how some schools are successful with personalized learning while others are not.

With limited research on personalized learning success, and what implementation strategies work best, it is important to identify clear steps for schools to take throughout the redesign process. The state has challenged schools to change how they educate the students in front of them, but without a plan of actionable and concrete steps for the schools to take, the implementation of personalized learning could lead to challenges for schools attempting to increase student achievement.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify what specific components teachers perceive to make personalized learning successful in a Midwestern elementary school setting. This study will look, specifically, at an elementary school in Southwestern Kansas that has been implementing personalized learning for three years and has supported other schools in the process of personalized learning. This particular school is also a part of the first round of schools being redesigned in Kansas as a part of the Mercury 7 project.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do teachers describe the overall implementation process?
2. How do teachers describe components, if any, that contribute to the overall success of the implementation of personalized learning?
3. How do teachers describe the impact of personalized learning?

Operational Constructs

This study was bound by the following operational constructs:

- *Personalized learning*: tailoring instruction to student strengths, needs, and interests (Bingham, 2018).
- *Elementary school:* kindergarten through fifth-grade learning facility.
- *Technology*: one-to-one devices that students use to access online learning systems.
- *Teacher Perception:* the attitude that teachers have towards personalized learning and what it means to them.

Theory

As previously discussed, personalized learning can be challenging to implement, as the process can look different from community to community and school to school. Each school who participated in the KansasCan Redesign and attempted to put personalized learning into place, was a unique phenomenon that needs to be understood. Along with the idea that each school is in a unique position and circumstance, each teacher made their own meaning of what personalized learning was within their building, and developed a plan to carry this out and create a personalized learning environment within their classroom. The elementary school being examined in this study, and its specific demographics including its unique community characteristics, will be discussed later in order to better contextualize the Redesign taking place at that specific school. To take it one step further, making meaning of a personalized learning environment and adapting that reality will take place each year, as each group of students will be different from year to year and a new reality and perception will be created through the adaptation to the students attending the school at any particular time.

Interpretivism and Case Study

This research was conducted through the use of interviews looking at a particular case of school Redesign. According to deMarrais (2004), qualitative interviews are used when attempting to understand a phenomenon in a deeper sense. As the KansasCan Redesign is a complex model for school improvement, it is necessary to delve deeper into specific experiences and situations to understand how this model fully works. Not only does an interpretivist point of view allow a researcher to survey in such a way that a phenomenon will be explained, but it also allowed for the researcher to understand the uniqueness of the case and helped to draw

commonalities to other cases in order to better understand the phenomena being studied (Stake, 1995).

Understanding interpretivism and, more specifically, case study, can help to explain why the process of implementing personalized learning could be difficult, and could account for successes schools have encountered. Interpretivism is used to explain certain realities in the social world of humans, as well as in nature (Crotty, 1998). Crotty discussed some of the key scholars in relation to interpretivism, including Max Weber. Weber was concerned with understanding and explaining human sciences (Crotty, 1998). Through understanding human sciences and social experiences, it is believed that our reality is formed and that our perceptions can be formed and altered (Gemma, 2018). When perceptions are formed and understood, researchers are able to further understand a phenomena that is occurring within human sciences.

William Dilethey took Weber's idea a step further and concluded that understanding social experiences is important, but researchers also need to understand how the same social experience could vary from person to person, and understanding that specific individuals experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017). Dilethey's idea connects directly to KansasCan Redesign. The goal is to redesign schools and provide personalized learning to all students in Kansas. However, how each school implements personalized learning will look different. Along with that, each teacher involved in the implementation will have a unique experience that needs to be understood. With there being so many variations to Redesign and this particular style of school reform, one specific case was studied in order to understand the meaning and knowledge of educators participating in KansasCan Redesign from the point of view of teachers in an elementary school in Southwestern Kansas.

Stake (1995) defined qualitative case studies as, “holistic, empirical interpretive, and emphatic.” Stake also qualified cases as “bounded systems” that are “specific, complex and functioning” (Yazan, 2015). KansasCan Redesign is a complex system that is functioning in many different ways across the state of Kansas. More specifically, the elementary school being studied in this research is its own complex system that is bound to the guidelines of KansasCan Redesign, therefore making itself a unique case in which to be studied. Stake also notes the need to understand the uniqueness of a case and the commonalities shared with other cases to understand the system being shared by the different cases (Stake, 1995). Similarly, Merriam (1998) suggested that case study research will allow for a deeper understanding of a particular case’s unique and distinctive attributes, while contributing to the overall understanding of a phenomena. Ultimately, case study research is used to help people make sense of an experience in the world (Yazan, 2015). Oftentimes when approaching research through the lens of interpretivism and case study one will use a descriptive methodology to describe specific experiences and phenomena.

Data Collection

To gather data, a survey was distributed to elementary school teachers who were teaching in personalized learning environments at an elementary school in Southwestern Kansas. The distribution and collection of surveys was used to identify potential interview participants for the next data collection phase. The survey also offered an initial view of how teachers feel about the overall implementation process of personalized learning. One question on the survey asked if participants were willing to be interviewed about their perceptions of personalized learning, allowing me to choose interview participants. After surveys were distributed and collected,

interviews were conducted with three teachers, all in various grade levels, including second grade, third grade, and fifth grade.

The interviews were semi-structured to gauge what has been successful throughout the implementation process of personalized learning. This allowed me to have a better understanding of the individuals and their experiences. It also gave the participants a chance to reflect and create new knowledge on how the implementation process proceeded and how they will move forward in their personalized learning teaching model (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Interview questions were structured so that the researcher was leading and the participant was able to give detailed accounts of their experiences, which then allowed me, the interviewer, to continue with probing questions (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Through this process, participants were able to describe their 'everyday living' in personalized learning and I was able to understand the essence of that life through their personal explanations of the situations they found themselves in through teaching in a personalized learning environment.

Analysis

After the initial interview, which lasted around one hour, there were two follow-up interviews to clarify any information and to give the participants a chance to add any additional information. The follow-up interviews were, roughly, an hour each. Once the interviews had been conducted, I began to analyze the data through the process of inductive analysis. Inductive analysis is the process of coding the data into common themes and categories (Bhattacharya, 2017). I began with an initial round of coding, which allowed me to focus on broad, preliminary themes and categories. From there, I continued to code and analyze the data into more relevant and refined ideas. After multiple rounds of coding, I was able to establish my findings (Saldana, 2015).

Reading through the interview transcripts and finding commonalities amongst participants was key to this process. Reading through the transcripts also allowed me to see what I was missing in the initial interviews, and I was then able to prepare to ask deeper, more meaningful questions in the follow-up interviews. Along with processing the data through small chunks, I kept a journal of how each interview went, specifically noting how I felt during the interview and after. Bhattacharya (2017) suggested that keeping a journal would allow the researcher to reflect on their own understanding of the topic and how they felt throughout the process. Being so close to the implementation process of personalized learning, a journal helped me to understand my own subjectivity and investment in personalized learning at this particular elementary school.

Limitations and Possibilities

As with all studies and research, there are limitations to this study. One limitation concerning this study is that the research is being conducted in a very specific setting. The research was conducted in an elementary school setting in a small town in Southwestern Kansas. The particular population studied is a majority-minority community of mostly Guatemalan and Mexican immigrant students, which could impact the usefulness of the research on a larger scale. The specifics of this community will be discussed later on. However, as other small towns look to redesign their schools, as encouraged by the Commissioner of Education in Kansas, it is helpful to have information on how to best implement and conduct personalized learning in the small communities around the state, specifically in elementary schools.

Another potential limitation of this study is that personalized learning is different in every setting and can change rapidly to adjust to students' needs in a particular classroom. With so much freedom within personalized learning, it is difficult to clearly define or name each

component impacting the success one school might have over another. In addition to these limitations, interviewing teachers about a new initiative could lead to teachers not being as honest about their true opinions in terms of personalized learning. Teachers may have been more likely to discuss the successful parts but were perhaps less honest about the challenges faced in personalized learning. However, the teachers involved in the study created this redesign plan and they were involved in how they would implement personalized learning in their building and what course of action would be taken to best implement the Redesign components. The teachers that were interviewed are very knowledgeable about the implementation process and should provide insight that will assist other schools attempting to implement personalized learning.

Finally, the use of qualitative research could be seen as a limitation. However, to tell the unique story of a Mercury 7 Redesign school in Southwest Kansas it is imperative to use qualitative research. The use of teacher experience and reality of this phenomenon was critical to understand the implementation process of personalized learning.

Chapter Summary

As personalized learning continues to grow in popularity across Kansas it is important to begin to understand what components teachers believe make it most successful. Defining and implementing personalized learning is a challenge, yet surveying and interviewing teachers who are working in, creating, and teaching in a personalized learning environment, may begin to shed light on personalized learning and successful ways to implement such a reform. Through personal experiences and detailed accounts of how personalized learning is being implemented, schools might begin to understand what is working and what is not. This information could then impact schools around the country attempting to redesign their schools and teaching style.

Subjectivity Statement

Bhattacharya (2017) stated, “in qualitative research, it is important to discuss these assumptions, beliefs, and values that inform the way you make meaning of your research topic” (p. 36). Identifying my own subjectivities in accordance with my research, is important in order to be transparent about my own experiences with personalized learning and what, ultimately, brought me to this research. One must ‘bracket’ their understanding of a circumstance and compartmentalize their reality to form new thoughts around that reality (Bhattacharya, 2017).

I have worked closely on the KansasCan Redesign project as a member of the leadership team creating and implementing the plan in this particular elementary school. I was asked to be on the team by my building principal in 2017, the first year Kansas began redesigning. I then worked with 11 other staff members to represent our entire staff and student body in creating a plan of implementing personalized learning, and the other components of the KansasCan Redesign plan. I am personally invested in the success of implementing personalized learning in an elementary school because of the amount of time and energy that has been spent creating this plan, as well as understanding the importance of meeting each student where they are academically and socially for them to be successful in school. Finally, I am personally invested because of my emotional connection to the community in which I teach. The students and families of the studied elementary face extreme challenges and changing the way school looks and feels is one way the staff could help families and students be more successful in a public school system.

Moving forward in my research, I want to be clear about my subjectivities around this topic and I want to reflect on how my own subjectivities will impact the lens in which I draw conclusions from my data. My hope is that my understanding of what personalized learning is

will only assist me in creating a deeper understanding of what contributes to a successful implementation of personalized learning through the voice of other teachers who have also seen the entire process from the beginning.

Chapter 2 - Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter will address the history of school reform and how Kansas came to, once again, begin to reform public education. More specifically, this chapter focused on how the Commissioner of Education, Randy Watson, began to organize the KansasCan School Redesign project. There will also be a discussion of what personalized learning consists of and how it can impact a title-one school serving students in a lower socio-economic status, many of whom have a language barrier when entering school, as well as students who face poverty and other types of trauma.

American School Reform

Since the inception of American schooling, there has always been reform occurring. There is a never-ending need to improve upon the constructs of school and what schools are responsible for in America's society. Understanding why schools started, and how they have transformed over the years, is critical in understanding the role that school reform still plays in the history of American schools today. This shifting role has allowed schools to change from religious institutions to key players in America's society and social structures.

Puritans began schools as a way to indoctrinate children into a larger world of religion. To be a successful member of the church, one needed to have access to the word of God. However, many commoners did not have the ability to read the word of God, which is why schools were founded. There was a need for people to be literate in order to have access to their religion and their churches, which is why schools had an emphasis on reading (Reese, 2007). As time went on and societies evolved, so did the educational system in America.

As the Puritan settlers continued to live in America and younger generations were growing up the elders started to notice a lack of social control over children and the children's ability to prosper in society (Reese, 2007). Because of this, society started putting more pressure on schools to change, or reform, from religious institutions into avenues for children to learn the rules of society (Reese, 2007). Horace Mann believed that schools could ensure proper training and development of students (Brick, 2005). In understanding that parents and churches alone were not able to produce productive members of society, they looked towards the schools to tackle this challenge, which eventually led to tax-supported elementary schools (Reese, 2007). Mann also supported having a public schooling system and believed that schools would help assimilate immigrants by teaching American and Christian ideals. (Reese, 2007). These early Puritan schools in New England contributed to where education is now and the responsibility that schools have in our current American society, which extends far beyond the reach of teaching students to learn to access religious information (Reese, 2007).

Once schools became tax-supported, they were institutions used to educate middle-class, affluent Americans. There was a need for equal access to knowledge through schools, which were structured based on the age of the student (Cuban, 2012). School was becoming more and more secular in the early twentieth century, which led to state and federal courts beginning to create the separation of church and state within the parameters of schooling (Cuban, 2012). As schools began to move away from the religious curriculum and more towards creating an educational pathway to prepare students to be productive members of society and for future jobs it was crucial for more than just middle-class, affluent families to have access to education (Cuban, 2012).

Thomas Jefferson, a critical reformer in American history, had the idea that elementary schools should be free to students and funded by the state to provide quality education to white children (Reese, 2007). In providing free education to white children, there would be a way to popularize learning and nurture intelligence for the next generation of political leaders and voters (Reese, 2007). Jefferson believed in educating the next generation to sustain a government and republic that would allow for social mobility and political freedom (Reese, 2007). This belief was in contrast to other schooling ideals, which supported the idea of education confirming someone's status in society (Reese, 2007). While schools and educational institutions have evolved, and the modern view of schools aligns with Jefferson's idea that education leads to social mobility and political freedom, that is still not accessible to all students in America. Perhaps this is one reason why schools continue to attempt reform or redesign, to reach all students no matter their social status, race, or gender. While Jefferson only granted access to white children, the idea that education was freedom and power began to resonate within American schools (Brick, 2005).

The One Best System of education that began to form around the early twentieth century was created on the idea that education should allow for all students, no matter their race or background, to have access to quality education (Raver, 1989). A more in-depth look at a quality education for all will be discussed later, as America eventually adopted legislation to ensure that all students would be proficient in math and reading, through the No Child Left Behind Act. Reformists supporting the One Best System wanted to create an educational society that would provide equal opportunities to all (Raver, 1989). However, the idea of reforming education in such a way did not account for the fact that schools in themselves taught people where they belonged in society (Raver, 1989). This can be connected to the early Puritan ideas of teaching

children how to belong in a society and what their place was amongst elders already working and living in that same society (Reese, 2007). This challenge is still present in American schools and is still considered to be an central focus of school reform today.

With the ever-present demand on the educational system, classroom teachers specifically, have the unique job of teaching students more than just academic knowledge. As previously discussed, schools evolved from educating students in literacy for the purpose of participating in religious affiliations, to educating the masses on how to be a citizen to maintain social order, and now teachers are responsible for so much more. Reese (2007) described the current topics and ideals teachers are expected to educate students on. Those topics and ideals included, "strengthening children's character, morals, manners, work ethic, civic consciousness, racial and multicultural sensitivities and anything else needing improvement" (p.218). Those are all things that are expected from teachers, as well as expecting schools to provide food for children that are hungry, mental and emotional support for students, creating safe environments for students living in trauma, all while trying to guarantee that those same students are excelling academically and meeting state and federal mandated standards. Not only are schools responsible for all of that, but they are expected to treat each student as an individual and support their strengths and needs. All of this led to the reason why schools are constantly being reformed and redesigned (Reese, 2007). With so much on the proverbial plate of school, there is always room for criticism by the general public and educators themselves (Reese, 2007).

Over the last century or so, there has been ever-growing pressure from all stakeholders to reform schools to ensure that all students are successful. It is no longer just educators and politicians that are stepping up to comment on how schools are run and what is expected of them, but parents, community members, and the students themselves are asking for more for all

students. In the 1990's, there was a call to reinstate President Lyndon B Johnsons' Elementary and

Secondary Act with requirements for standards to be developed and testing of underprivileged students. Not only was there to be testing, but it was to be reported and made available to the public. The Elementary and Secondary Act was put into place to directly confront the growing educational gaps between affluent white students and marginalized students (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). As a result of the Elementary and Secondary Act, one of the most influential pieces of legislation to help fund underserved schools with students living in poverty and unable to sustain their learning without interventions was created, known as Title 1 (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). Title 1, still to this day, provides schools with funds to support minority and marginalized groups within schools.

When President Clinton's administration re-enacted the Elementary and Secondary Act to include standards, it brought about a new reform within schools. This reform had two objectives, the first being to create some equity and commonality between schools and to increase the overall quality of education in America (McClure, 2005). The idea for using content standards was that all students in America would have a set academic knowledge that they would know by the end of a certain grade-level or degree level (McClure, 2005). This was also the beginning of creating the standards for what teachers would then have to know to be considered 'highly qualified' and have the ability to teach the students what they needed to learn (McClure, 2005). This idea that all students should be learning the same material goes back to the Puritanical idea that students are being given the same information to join the larger society (Reese, 2007). However, it goes against Jefferson's reforms to allow for natural talent and intelligence to guide a learners experience and growth in school (Raver, 1989). This dichotomy is still being seen in

education today through the struggle of students meeting state standards, but also developing personalized learning in order to capitalize on students' strengths and needs.

No Child Left Behind

As states and schools began to implement standards into their curriculum, politicians continued to add to the Elementary and Secondary Act legislation. President George W. Bush and his administration created the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act. NCLB was, initially, a very popular bill. It promised that all students, no matter their demographics, would be proficient in math and reading by 2014 (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). NCLB was one of the most significant educational reforms enacted in the United States and had the intent of holding schools accountable while creating specific outcomes for student achievement each year (Husband & Hunt, 2015). While this did not happen, it did lead to reform in some areas of education. There was an increase in state testing and reporting, and it gave reformers a voice encouraging them to speak up against larger, federal policies, and focus more on locally run reforms (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). It has also emphasized that each individual student should have progress and success throughout their educational career, as well as an accountability system to manage teachers and schools (Hess & Petrilli, 2009).

There are many facets to explore within school reform and improvement in America. As discussed, with educational systems being responsible for more than just academic knowledge it is clear that there is always room for improvement. Reese (2007) argued, “the multiple purposes of modern public schools ensure that they are forever from someone’s point of view, doing a poor job, and in need of reform” (p. 227).

Kansas School Reform

Understanding where American reform has been and noting successes and failures of reform efforts, it is clear why Commissioner Watson wanted to attempt to reform public education within Kansas. It was clear that NCLB was not working for America, or its students and that something needed to change (Husband & Hunt, 2015). In 2015, Commissioner Watson began to implement a plan for school reform across Kansas that would begin to define where Kansas schools would end up in the coming years. The goal of this school reform effort, KansasCan Redesign, was to understand how Kansas schools could produce productive members of society that would contribute in a positive way to not only the job force, but the communities in which they live.

Coming from the heavily government legislated era of NCLB, Commissioner Watson wanted to involve teachers in decisions being made and reform taking place. Watson not only saw a vision for educators to have a voice in such a reform, but he wanted to involve all stakeholders surrounding public education in Kansas. Along with the support of KSDE employees Watson began to tour the state of Kansas to interview and understand what stakeholders in Kansas wanted out of their educational system (KSDE, 2019). KSDE outlines the purpose of KansasCan Redesign as follows: “Lead the world in the success of each student” (2019). Through these community talks KSDE and the commissioner found out that Kansas residents wanted students to graduate from high school with not only academic skills, but also skills to be productive members of society. Through the community visits it was realized that Kansas as a whole needed to move away from a one-size-fits-all mentality and more towards the education of individual students to focus on their individual futures as Kansas citizens (KSDE, 2019).

From there, the commissioner and staff accepted applications from school districts that were willing to attempt Redesign (KSDE, 2019). In the fall of 2017, seven districts around the state were accepted as participants of the first phase of the KansasCan Redesign initiative; those schools were known as Mercury 7 schools. Within each district, one elementary school and one high school were chosen to participate in the redesign process. The state then provided an elementary specialist and a secondary specialist that worked with KSDE to successfully implement the critical parts of redesign. While there were requirements for redesigning schools in Kansas, how each school decided to serve their particular demographic was entirely up to the administration and teachers at each building.

As previously discussed, and as the literature points out, the voice of teachers, students, and other stakeholders are crucial in school reform (Laguardia & Pearl, 2009). Laguardia and Pearl (2009) suggested that creating a bottom-up school reform effort would assist in ensuring that reform efforts are not only directed at the students of a particular community, but also move American education back towards creating responsible citizens and members of society. One of the goals of Redesign, consistently echoed across the state of Kansas from stakeholders in the original community talks, was to do just that; graduate students who will be productive and responsible members of society. Knowing that Redesign focused on personalized learning in order to create an environment that assisted in graduating students with knowledge that would benefit the citizens of Kansas.

The KansasCan Redesign project launched a state-wide challenge to implement personalized learning, with teachers and their students at the forefront. Teachers have been challenged to take the funding they currently have, the resources offered by their school district, and completely recreate what school "looks like." In this scenario, teachers have control to

personalize learning for students based on the student's strengths and needs. Teachers were to use what they knew about their community to design and implement a plan to help students succeed.

The main requirement of being a Mercury 7 school was to focus on the following four pillars within their Redesign plan that would eventually be presented and approved by the state board of education (a) student success skills, (b) community partnerships, (c) personalized learning, and (d) real-world application (KSDE, 2019). Within each pillar of Redesign, there are more specific requirements that will not be discussed here. I will focus on the personalized learning pillar in more detail later on. Each of these pillars is crucial in the implementation of KansasCan and all of them were created directly from the community interviews (KSDE, 2019). KSDE believes each of these pillars will lead to the reform of Kansas schools and the success of all students.

Over the past three years, the Mercury 7 schools have developed their plans, moved into the launch phase, and have begun to stabilize the plans through the use of accountability measurement and data. Over the last three years, there have been four more rounds of districts implementing and launching their redesign plans. The state's goal is for every district and school in the state to Redesign the way in which Kansas students are educated (KSDE, 2019).

Personalized Learning

The United States has gone through numerous school reform processes that have transformed the American educational system over time, and has no signs of stopping now. As school reform continues to be a popular trend one should look at the rising popularity of personalized learning. With personalized learning being in the beginning implementation stages, it is important to document the successes and challenges that schools, of all demographics, are

facing. Looking at these successes and challenges, one could conclude how schools might replicate this work that enhances student learning and achievement, through the process of identifying student strengths and needs. Personalized learning is gaining more and more popularity within the United States and it is imperative that educators and policy makers begin to understand the inner workings of this model to be implemented successfully.

Throughout educational history, school reform has been attempted in a number of different ways. School districts have tried to supply schools with more supplies, increased funding, teacher training, and a number of other strategies (Albright et al., 2012). School reform has often been a process in which more mandates for schools and teachers are provided, but a lack of real change has occurred (Goodwin, 2015). Schools are continually trying to increase test scores or show academic success with some sort of assessment or data piece, while leaving out the main motivator for students and teachers, which is a sense of purpose for both of those key components in a school environment (Goodwin, 2015). Blumberg (2015) agrees that a major factor in the success of school reform models is teacher and student buy-in. Not only do teachers and students need to have buy-in, but they also need to realize that through this process, students and teachers will be attempting to resolve a contradiction (Barowy & Jouper, 2004). Schools are attempting to ensure school is productive for each individual student, in a system that was meant to educate the masses at once (Barowy & Jouper, 2004). One of the rising trends in education, today, is personalized learning, which in certain cases, gives teachers and students a voice in how they are going to reform their school.

Defining Personalized Learning

Personalized learning is a reform method that within its own design has no specific definition. The reason being is that each school, teacher, and student can have an impact on how

personalized learning is viewed and implemented. However, that has not stopped researchers and educators from attempting to define personalized learning and its amoeba-like nature. Without a clear, concise, understandable definition it could be difficult for teachers to implement personalized learning in a classroom. Teachers need to be able to understand what the challenge is and what the reform method will be before they are able to successfully use that method to assist in student success.

As stated in chapter one, there are several definitions of personalized learning that are becoming more and more popular. The Kansas State Department of Education defines personalized learning as, "personalized learning places the whole child at the center of instruction. It is informed by strong educator/student/family/community relationships to provide equity and choice in time, place, path, pace and demonstration of learning" (KSDE, 2019). While this is the definition directly impacting KansasCan Redesign, it is important to note that other definitions, such as Bingham's, include the use of technology in the understanding of how to personalize learning (Bingham, 2017).

Successes and Challenges of Personalized Learning

There is limited research on the actual practices of how to implement personalized learning and make it effective, which is a challenge for a school attempting to create a personalized learning model within a specific building. With that being noted, even without research to show a step-by-step implementation plan, there have been schools that have successfully found a way to implement personalized learning. Bill and Melinda Gates have worked to implement personalized learning, with the use of technology, in a number of charter schools (Pane et al., 2015). Through this process, some concrete steps and actions have been researched and found to be successful to implement personalized learning, as a school reform

method. Those components consist of learner profiles, personal learning paths, competency-based progression, flexible learning environments, and emphasis on college and career readiness (Pane et al., 2015). Through the implementation of these components at schools, academic achievement and success has improved (Pane, et al., 2015).

Pane is not the only researcher to identify these components as a successful way to implement a personalized learning model in a school. One of the main common successes found in research today is ensuring that teachers have enough training to make such a large shift in their thinking and teaching practices (Karmeshu et al., 2012). Without proper teacher training there is a large chance that the implementation process will fail (Karmeshu et al., 2012). With that being noted, the training that teachers need is not overly explicit. There is a discrepancy in what teachers need to know before attempting to personalize learning for their students. The idea that it is unclear what teachers need training on, is one of the biggest challenges schools will face in implementing personalized learning. This challenge will need to be addressed at each individual building attempting this model of reform, as each building will have different strengths and needs.

While it is unknown what each teacher will need, in terms of training, to be successful with the implementation of personalized learning, there are some starting points for schools to begin to understand what training is needed. As previously discussed, technology can be a major component of a school's personalized learning plan and if the technology piece of the plan is not handled properly the whole implementation could fail (Yoon et al., 2005). Not only do teachers need to be trained on how to use the actual technology devices that students will be using, but teachers also need to understand how to engage students through that type of technology, and understand the data component of learning systems being used as a part of the curricula (Yoon et

al., 2005). Technology is a complex component of personalized learning and it has been shown to directly impact teacher perception of how the entire implementation process of personalized learning has been conducted at their specific schools (Yoon et al., 2005).

Teachers need to understand how to use the Learning Management Systems that are being implemented within their building. Learning Management Systems are digital technologies that allow teachers to place students on individual learning paths, while monitoring their learning and providing feedback in a timely manner (Edmunds & Hartnett, 2014). If teachers are able to use these technologies to engage students in meaningful activities and lessons, while providing feedback in a timely manner, it has been shown that students' academic achievement will improve (Edmunds & Hartnett, 2014). The process of implementing a learning management system into a building can be a daunting process that if done without intentional training for teachers, can be overwhelming and leave teachers feeling lost, which in turn makes the learning management system unable to engage students in meaningful learning (Yoon et al., 2005). If teachers are unable to design learning activities for students effectively, then it leaves students, simply, working with a piece of technology and not meeting learning outcomes (Yoon et al., 2005). However, if teachers have the proper training, in all aspects of technology, then using a learning management system would meet the definition Bingham (2017) has set for personalized learning. Again, one of the concrete successes found in multiple studies is the use of designing learning around a student's strengths and needs, if incorporated correctly, learning management systems can assist teachers in that task. Learning management systems and technology that is used effectively can assist students in understanding their own learning, thus making the schooling process more meaningful for each student (Béres et al., 2012).

Along with that, learning management systems provide a tool for teachers to give individualized feedback to each student on their specific work, which again has been proven to be a key component of a successful implementation of personalized learning. When teachers are able to equip students with the skills to understand their own learning, along with their strengths and needs, teachers are able to assist them on what comes after their experiences in a personalized learning environment, whether that be a career or continued education in college (Olofson et al., 2018).

Personalized learning is the epitome of student-centered learning. Through student-centered learning, teachers are shifting the focus off of themselves and onto the needs of the students. As previously discussed, when students are in charge of their learning and their achievement it not only holds them accountable but also allows them an opportunity to grow into successful adults (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Traditional schooling used to demand compliance from students; this also translated into skills employers were looking for from students entering into the workforce after high school (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). However, in the world of today, employees are expected to be adaptable, creative, and flexible within their skills. Personalized learning offers the opportunity for students to hone those skills before they even think about entering the workforce (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Students are able to learn about time management, organization, flexibility, perseverance, and a number of other social skills before they are out of elementary school (Pane et al., 2015). All of these skills are associated with personalized learning no matter the demographics of the students being taught.

Leadership

It seems as though as soon as the educational system has persisted and found a solution for one challenge, another arises. Teachers are being asked to change their practices and thinking

of teaching, learners are being asked to be vulnerable with their strengths, weaknesses, and understanding of learning, and still, there are more components impacting the implementation of a successful personalized learning model. All of these components are large and cumbersome, but, perhaps, one of the largest challenges schools face, in terms of implementing personalized learning, is how they are being led (Gross et al., 2018). DeArmond et al. (2018) dug deep into the leadership style of principals participating in the implementation of personalized learning. Leadership amongst schools, at the building and district level, have struggled to implement personalized learning due to the fact that it is not a program one can simply place in a school. As discussed previously, there are many overlapping factors and components out of the schools' control in this type of implementation process (DeArmond et al., 2018). DeArmond et al. (2018) found that leaders, in this unique situation, needed to create a sense of urgency within their staff to change their current practices to best suit student needs. Causing a sense of urgency and asking teachers to assist in the 'fixing' of the problems in their particular buildings, would show trust and would allow for teachers to have buy-in in the process of implementing personalized learning (DeArmond et al., 2018). Leaders who went about this systemic change began the process in one of two ways, open or closed leadership (DeArmond et al., 2018).

Open leadership allows teachers to take ownership of the work and change that is happening within their buildings. While closed leadership, is consistent with past school reform initiatives, which is a top-down model of the district and building leaders deciding what will work within their building and expecting teachers to, not only accept the change, but implement said change (Gross et al., 2018). As seen through NCLB, which was a 'top-down' reform method, many teachers felt pressure to conform to the administrative view, which was aligned

with the law, versus voicing their opinions and feelings about how to best support the community in which they serve (Husband & Hunt, 2015).

When implementing personalized learning, it is key that teachers feel as though their voice is heard and their expertise of the students in front of them matters (Bingham, 2017). As researchers are attempting to put together a comprehensive list of actionable items schools can utilize to implement personalized learning, it is imperative that leadership styles are considered. Several building principals used open leadership to identify strong teachers who were willing to adapt and challenge their teaching practices to fit the definitions of personalized learning (DeArmond et al., 2018). These teachers were then challenged to lead their peers into the process of implementation, and to support their peers as they began to understand the inner workings of personalized learning (DeArmond et al., 2018). Beyond encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles, it has been suggested by Fennell (1999) that creating a collaborative time within the school day impacts teacher buy-in to a new initiative as well. Not only does this allow for the work to be completed within the school day, it also gives teachers and administrators a chance to have open and honest discussions in an environment that is structured to support positive communication amongst all staff members.

Along with selecting strong teachers to assist in the transition process, principals also encouraged their staff to create a mission and vision statement that would drive their teaching practices. Instructional coaches were used to hold teachers accountable in following the vision statement the school had set (DeArmond et al., 2018). Not only did this give all teachers direction, but it also unified the building to work towards the same goal, which enhanced the culture of the building (DeArmond et al., 2018). Enhancing the culture of the building might seem like an added bonus for the implementation process, but as teachers felt successful and

supported, their attitudes about new practices and initiatives improved, which in turn would translate into student engagement and success (Bingham, 2017).

KansasCan Redesign and personalized learning initiatives look at what is happening in a particular community, school, and classroom. Due to the nature of these initiatives it is important that the leadership surrounding these environments encourage a common commitment amongst teachers, community members, and leadership teams (Fennell, 1999). According to Fennell, if there is a balance between teachers and administration, in terms of a commitment and understanding of the task, then trust will be created which will allow for educational change to take place. When looking at KansasCan Redesign it is imperative that all stakeholders build trust amongst each other, in order to the vision and mission to be met. Leaders who take on this task through open-leadership are more likely to succeed, due to the relationships that are cultivated along the way.

As with all components that have been discussed thus far, there can be successes and at the same time there will be challenges and failures within the same component. If leadership is executed correctly it can assist in leading to the successful implementation of personalized learning. However, if a leader decides to use a top-down approach, there is less buy-in and ultimately less teacher engagement, which can lead to failure. If teachers feel the pressure to implement these large changes, without the correct scaffolding and support, it can lead to teacher dissatisfaction and frustration (Bingham, 2017). If this were to happen, the school culture could suffer and the implementation process of personalized learning could be compromised (DeArmond et al., 2018). Also, leaders who used an open-leadership approach were, sometimes, found to be too open, which was also found to be a problem (DeArmond et al., 2018).

Blumberg (2015) began to realize this through analyzing teacher reflection within a student-centered learning environment. Through those reflections, Blumberg (2015) was able to see the emotional toll it could take on a teacher to attempt to change their teaching style to be more student-focused than teacher-led, but the emotional buy-in was also much higher because teacher's began to see the importance of this work. With that, it is important to understand how schools decide to implement school reform will, ultimately, impact, not only, their success of the reform, but also their teachers and students. When looking at personalized learning teacher perception, role, and buy-in are critical in a successful implementation. Which is important to note when considering KansasCan Redesign, as a school had to have 80% of teachers in the building agree to participate in school redesign or that school was not eligible to be a part of the initial redesign phases in Kansas (KSDE, 2019).

Knowing that many of the schools in the United States face the same challenges of providing an education to students at all levels, with a variety of demographic backgrounds, it is pertinent that schools that are attempting to personalize learning, are able to pass on their successes and, potentially, be able to replicate pieces of their plan (Karmeshu et al., 2012). On the other hand, the importance of implementing personalized learning is to look at what a specific school needs for the students in front of them. Therefore, the challenge that no two buildings are the same drives the question: can the implementation of personalized learning be replicated in different areas of the country (Karmeshu et al., 2012)? Even if the successes are identified, along with the challenges of implementation, one is unable to know if those same strategies will work in a different school in the country, state, or even district.

Impact on Low Socioeconomic Students

Personalized learning is being implemented in many different areas of the country, with a variety of demographics being impacted by this model of school reform. The RAND Corporation looked at the implementation process of personalized learning in schools with a high population of low-socioeconomic status students, as well as a diverse population in terms of ethnicity. What was found was that through, previously stated, implementation practices students not only gained academically, but they began to catch up to their peers who were achieving at or above grade-level (Pane et al., 2015). Kazakoff et al. (2018), found similar results when attempting to understand how blended learning, which is a piece of personalized learning according to some definitions, affected English Language Learners with a low socioeconomic status. Through this, one could draw the conclusion that if students are being met where they are at academically they will not only make progress, but they will catch up with their peers. Using a digital platform to implement blended learning allows students to work at their own pace while understanding their progress and allows teachers to support students exactly where they are working (Kazakoff et al., 2018). This ties directly back into what has been found to be successful components of personalized learning. It also impacts how teachers feel about personalized learning; if they are able to see their students succeed, then the enthusiasm teachers have for personalized learning and ensuring it works within their building will most likely increase (Bingham, 2017).

The importance of understanding how personalized learning impacts low socioeconomic status is an important factor in considering school reform. A study conducted by Georgetown University on the rate of success with minority and low socioeconomic status students highlighted the need for emotional and educational support within schools for students to be able to be college and career ready, which is one of the components of a successful implementation of

personalized learning, according to the RAND corporation (Carnevale et al., 2019). The Georgetown University study carefully detailed the kindergarten through high school pipeline and how socioeconomic status impacts students and their future after exiting the educational system in America (Carnevale et al., 2019). Students who are of low socioeconomic status and of the minority race have less of a chance of graduating from high school and going to college or being ready for a career (Carnevale et al., 2019). One of the reasons for this is due to the environment the students are living in. Students in those environments are not exposed to as many adults who have completed college, prepared for a career, or even graduated high school (Carnevale et al., 2019). These students are not being exposed to meaningful vocabulary or being engaged in meaningful conversations, as compared to their peers who are in a stable socioeconomic status and are not of a minority race (Carnevale et al., 2019). The idea that students are coming into school with less knowledge and fewer experiences is a driving force behind KansasCan Redesign.

Understanding that students are coming to school with less knowledge and fewer experiences is a crucial component of schools attempting to personalize learning. If a school is implementing personalized learning it is important that that building looks at, and understands, the gaps that their students are entering school with. Even as young as kindergarten, students can begin to engage in an academic learning path that will either lead them to success or failure within our current educational setting. In conjunction with that, a prediction of what will happen after high school graduation can be determined by race and socioeconomic status by the time a particular student is in eighth grade (Carnevale et al., 2019). While there are exceptions to the findings of this particular study, the majority of students will follow the trend found (Carnevale et al., 2019). On the other hand, research has shown that when teachers understand the strengths

and needs of their students, then those students become more successful (Bingham, 2015). If implementing personalized learning and understanding student's strengths and needs is a key component, then it is important to note that this strategy can equate to large success and gains for even the students who start school with disadvantages (Carnevale et al., 2019).

Personalizing learning for each student allows teachers to understand, on a deeper level, where students are disengaged and how to better utilize their strengths and needs to assist in student learning (Prain et al., 2013). Understanding how to help disadvantaged students in the United States is going to continue to be a challenge, but, perhaps, personalized learning can begin to close the gap between the privileged and the non-privileged students that enter schools on a daily basis (Carnevale et al., 2019). It has been suggested that for students to flourish within the confines of an educational setting they must be able to operate within the codes that have been established (Renth et al., 2015). However, when the students in question are minorities the challenge lies in the fact that the system in which they are attempting to succeed is not for their culture or codes, but the code of the dominant group (Renth et al., 2015). When considering KansasCan Redesign in a minority-majority environment the educational setting must be changed to concentrate on the dominant culture, which is not middle-class, white, English-speaking students. Therefore, something needs to change. The instruction and curricula need to change and be personalized for this specific set of students.

The KansasCan initiative envisioned an educational system that not only wanted students to be successful through the use of personalized learning, but there was a desire to engage the community in the education of students. If schools are not reformed to fit the needs of the community in which they serve, including the diverse populations of minority-majority communities, then the parents of said children will also not be able to engage in the schooling

process. This is due to the fact that parents would also be at a cultural disadvantage when their students begin entering the educational system (Renth et al., 2015). That disadvantage will trickle down to student performance. It has been shown that if there is a low home to school relationship then there is likely to be lower achievement levels by those students. (Renth et al., 2015). Furthermore, when the parents in a particular community have little to no educational background, the achievement level is also more likely to be lower than students who have more highly educated parents (Renth et al., 2015). Knowing this and understanding how it is related to redesign in Southwestern Kansas is imperative. Students are entering school with fewer life experiences, parents who have a limited educational background, if any at all, and students who are coming from impoverished, trauma ridden homes. While students coming to school with this type of background are at a disadvantage, it is worth mentioning that while parents are not able to support their children academically, the want and desire to be able to help is present in most cases (Renth et al., 2015). The many details of why parents in this type of situation are unable to help will not be discussed here but is noted to give context to the particular community being studied. Knowing the connection between how schools have been curated over the last centuries and how that has impacted the achievement gap, it is worth examining and re-conceptualizing the standards that have been set for school and education in the American society (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Which is exactly what KansasCan Redesign is attempting to do with personalized learning, creating a more culturally responsive and inclusive learning environment for at-risk communities that are struggling.

Chapter Summary

With so much still unknown about personalized learning, it is clear that more research is needed. Looking at the different successful components that sometimes turn into challenges,

there is a clear path for research in this field. Understanding teachers' motivations and perceptions of the implementation of personalized learning will be crucial, as teachers are a critical stakeholders in this school reform model. Through personalized learning teachers are taking on new tasks, such as identifying the strengths and needs of every student to put them on a personalized learning path. Teachers are expected to be pioneers in new teaching strategies and ideas, while leading other peers that might not be at the same level of dedication or skill. Teachers are also expected to ensure that students not only engage in meaningful tasks, with technology, that the teachers, themselves, might not have extensive training on, as well as give students a chance to own their own learning and manage themselves in a way students have never been expected to before. All of these tasks, or components, make up a small part of implementing personalized learning, and they are all intertwined with one another. Because of this, it is clear as to why implementing personalized learning can be such a challenge, but when it is successful, it has been shown to be a promising way to close the gaps within student achievement, that the United States has seen for so long.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

Through the use of a survey and interviews I attempted to understand how teachers described personalized learning and its implementation process. To conduct this research, I used case study interviews, as discussed in chapter one, as a means to understand the reality that teachers are living in throughout the Redesign process (deMarrais, 2004). Identifying the successes and challenges of personalized learning and how teachers defined the components of personalized learning added to the overall understanding of how to define personalized learning. I also considered the overall implementation process at a Mercury 7 elementary school and the impact that teachers perceived personalized learning has had on their students and community.

Setting

As personalized learning methods continue to expand across the United States, and specifically in Kansas, there is a need to research how teachers perceive this type of school reform and what is successful about this model. Most of the schools chosen for the KansasCan Redesign project that have implemented personalized learning are rural schools. The school that will be looked at for this research is an elementary school located in Southwestern Kansas. The elementary school is a kindergarten through fifth-grade building, with three classrooms in each grade level. It has a minority-majority population of mostly Guatemalan and Mexican immigrants, with mostly white, middle-class teachers. The school provides education for a population that is heavily impacted by trauma, poverty, and a challenging language barrier. Seeing that the majority of the school's students and their parents come to school only speaking Guatemalan dialects and there are very few translators available in Southwestern Kansas to

translate, it creates a challenge that can be difficult to manage at times. Not only is there a lack of ability to translate orally, but many of the parents of the students attending this school are also illiterate and have had no formal education themselves.

One of the main reasons for switching to personalized learning in this building was due to the fact that the students were coming to school with so many challenges and needs and it had become difficult to continue teaching in a mainstream way. Students were rarely considered on grade-level based on state standards. Personalized learning is defined as using the student's strengths and needs to drive instruction and this community saw the need for that exact type of education. As this community is diverse and not represented throughout the state, or even the rest of this particular town, it brought about challenges specific to this school and district in how personalized learning can be best used to educate diverse populations.

Through KansasCan Redesign, the state initiative, this particular elementary school began to personalize learning through the use of online curriculum platforms in both reading and math. The online programs consisted of Istation Reading and Istation Math, Reflex, Dream box, and Lexia. Finally, the school implemented Lucy Calkins' Writing Workshop to personalize writing instruction for students. How these programs were chosen will be discussed later on. Teachers received professional development in all programs over the last three years. The professional development not only focused on how to implement the programs, but also how to interpret data to understand what instruction students needed next.

Another interesting point about this particular elementary school, is that at the time of creating their Redesign plan, this was a brand-new building with a brand new staff. The town had just restructured all elementary buildings from kindergarten to third grade, with intermediate schools housing fourth through sixth-grade students. Additionally, new buildings were

constructed that housed kindergarten through fifth grade. The buildings were opened in 2017, the same year that Redesign began to take place. When the buildings opened, staff from around the district or new to district staff all began working together to create their Redesign plan. This added another layer of challenges, as many of the teachers were unfamiliar with the student population for which they were attempting to Redesign. With the whole staff being new to the building, there was a need to build trust amongst co-workers and administrators, creating a new norm for education within the building.

Participants

Participants in this study included teachers who have been working at the elementary school since the school was opened in 2017. These teachers have gone through the entire redesign process and have also taught in a traditional classroom which is a whole-group setting with a district-wide, boxed curriculum where students are taught grade-level standards whether they are ready for them or not. The reason for interviewing teachers who have taught in a personalized classroom setting and a traditional setting is for teachers to be able to compare the two environments and provide a clear picture of the change that has taken place in their classrooms. The teachers interviewed represent different grade levels within the building. A fifth-grade teacher, third-grade teacher, and second-grade teacher were all chosen out of the possible participants. The amount of information about each participant is limited due to the location of the elementary in a small town in Southwestern Kansas and the easy identification of participants if more information is given about them. So, due to confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used and the only identifying factor will be the grade level in which they teach so that some context can be provided. It is also important to note that while I did not answer the interview questions myself, my own perceptions are seen throughout the study since I was on the

leadership team for Redesign and I have also been implementing the plan since the school opened much like the participants.

The participants were chosen through a few different inclusion and exclusion factors. The first factor was whether they have worked in the building since it opened. This was an important factor because if they had worked in the building since its inception they had not only seen the whole transformation from a traditional school to a building providing personalized learning, but they also assisted in the creation of that personalized learning vision, as the teachers in the building created the redesign plan. The second factor of inclusion was whether or not that teacher was a classroom teacher. While the views of interventionists, instructional coaches, and leadership is important, this study intended to show the perception of classroom teachers and the impact of personalized learning in a grade-level classroom. Finally, teachers were included by their own willingness to participate in the study. The initial survey about personalized learning was sent to all classroom teachers in the building and included a question on whether or not the teacher would be willing to participate in follow-up interviews concerning their survey answers.

Table 3-1

Participants

Participant's Grade Level	Pseudonym
5th Grade Teacher	Jeri
3rd Grade Teacher	Katherine
2nd Grade Teacher	Amy

Data Collection Schedule

In the Fall of 2020, a survey discussing personalized learning was sent to all classroom teachers at the elementary school. If a teacher had never taught in a personalized learning

environment because they were new to the building, or a brand-new teacher, they were excluded from the initial survey. The survey consisted of asking teachers to rate their experiences with personalized learning, student success through personalized learning, their own performance through personalized learning, and their interest in being interviewed further. This initial data allowed me to see who was willing to be interviewed and it also gave me a starting point for deeper interview questions and an overall data set for how the teachers in this building perceive personalized learning and its success or failure.

After the survey was completed, and teachers had been selected for follow-up interviews, the interviews began. There were three one-hour interviews for each participant over the course of the fall semester. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on the survey results. However, as the interviews continued, there was a chance for the participants to expand on their perceptions and realities of personalized learning in their elementary school setting. The participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers, as well as their experiences, to create a complete narrative of their experiences.

Data Collection Instruments

As previously stated, an initial survey was collected and analyzed to see which survey participants were then able to move on to the interview stage. The survey was provided to participants through an email with a link that would take them to a Google Form and participants had two weeks to complete the survey. If the survey was not completed within the time period, those surveys were considered to have no return and the interview schedule continued as planned.

Interviewing participants about their experiences gave participants the opportunity to detail their successes and challenges within personalized learning. They were also able to explain

the answers they gave on the survey and why they answered that way. Transitioning to a personalized learning environment can be an overwhelming task, and to fully understand how it was done, one must look at the whole process and the experiences of those participating in the implementation. The interviews were scheduled after school hours based on when participants were able to meet. Participants also had the option of staying at the building for the interviews or meeting at a different location if they were uncomfortable discussing their perceptions and experiences at school. Due to Covid-19 procedures, all interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Table 3-2

Data Collection Schedule

Survey	Initial Interview	Follow-up Interview
Email survey September 2020	First interview: October 2020	Second and Third Interview: October 2020

Data Analysis

Once all of the interviews had been conducted and transcribed, I was able to begin coding the data into specific themes. I was looking for successes and challenges that are aligned throughout the implementation process, as described by the elementary school teachers, and similarities in how the participants perceived personalized learning. Although the participants were all working in the same building, the environment could differ from grade level to grade level, and it was important to note those differences within the findings.

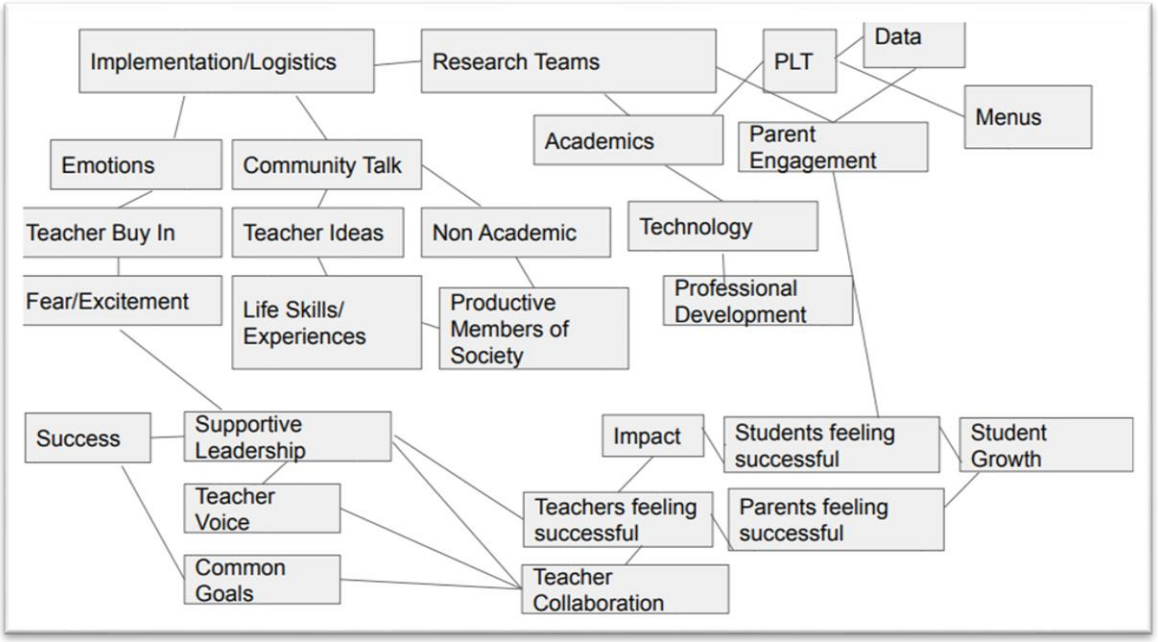
In addition to how teachers perceive personalized learning, I wanted to understand how teachers' definitions of personalized learning compared to those discussed in the literature. Analyzing whether there is a discrepancy in the way personalized learning is defined, could impact the successes and challenges of how personalized learning is implemented.

I was able to code the interviews based on commonalities and differences throughout the interviews. I looked for commonalities and differences in the initial interview, in order to form follow-up questions for the second interview. During the third interview, I was able to address any inconsistencies and give participants a chance to clarify any of their answers or opinions from the previous interviews.

I began to code the data by reading through the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the material, as well as to process and take notes of ideas that I had not considered before. I then began to read through the transcripts using a priori coding. A priori coding is the process of coding data with specific ideas in mind. I used my three research questions to read through the data and I looked to answer each question specifically with the data. For example, I read through all the transcripts looking for anything the participants said that related to the processes put in place to begin the Redesign at the researched elementary school. I then looked for what the participants saw as successes, and finally I looked for what the participants said the overall impact was on their building. As I read through the transcripts, I was able to organize the participant's thoughts and perceptions into different categories, which then allowed me to begin to build the complete story of the studied elementary school. By using a priori coding, I was able to answer each research question directly and I was able to see where the participants agreed or disagreed on specific topics. In Appendix E I have provided an example of how I organized the data as I coded the different interviews. I have also included the following figure to demonstrate how I began to organize themes and ideas from the data that was collected.

Figure 3-1

Coding of Data



Positionality

As previously stated in my subjectivity statement in Chapter One, I have been extremely invested in the implementation of KansasCan Redesign at this particular elementary school. Being on the leadership team for this redesign plan has increased my investment in the success of the implementation of personalized learning at this elementary school. Due to my personal involvement throughout the planning and implementation process, as well as my investment in the community in which I teach, I want to be very honest with my readers that my own feelings and subjectivities can be read in this research. Many of the sentiments and ideas that the participants shared with me, I have also seen and acknowledged over the years at this school. It is important as the researcher to note that my knowledge of this school's Redesign is not only through the interview process, but through living through the redesign process along with my

participants. Throughout the following chapters I have noted various instances where my experiences are similar to participants or where my experiences on the leadership team have impacted my perception of the overall redesign process.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Introduction

Schools that accepted the challenge of KansasCan Redesign have been implementing personalized learning for the last three years in their buildings. The intent of this study was to understand how one of those schools chose to implement the different components of personalized learning and, more specifically, how teachers perceived that implementation process and the success, if any, within their building. This reform was conducted through a bottom-up approach and allowed for teachers to be the driving force behind the changes occurring in their building and for their students. Knowing that this was one of the main components of KansasCan Redesign, it was important to hear from teachers who went through this process on how they feel about it now that it has been implemented and practiced over the last couple of years.

Through the use of surveys, interviews, and notes collected through the schools Redesign process, I set out to understand three topics. The first being how teachers perceived the implementation process of personalized learning. Second, what successes, if any, they felt occurred throughout their implementation process, and, finally, what impact this process has had on their building. After the data had been collected I was then able to piece together a complete picture of just how much change and reform took place, and more importantly how the current teachers felt about that change and reform. The data will be presented chronologically to begin with and then move to answer the research questions posed in this study.

Who They Are

To understand the process of KansasCan Redesign from the planning, implementation, and impact on the elementary school being studied, it is necessary to first understand the community in which the school is being reformed. I will begin by describing the demographics of the school with data provided to me from the district and staff members from the studied elementary school. The overall student population of this school is composed of four main ethnicities. The school is roughly 91% Hispanic, 1% Caucasian, .05% African American, and .05% Asian. The school has a minority-majority population of mostly Guatemalan and Mexican immigrants or first-generation students, and most of those students' parents are illiterate. Not only does the school face the challenge of illiterate parents, but there was an even bigger challenge facing the school and that was verbal communication. Many of the parents and students interacting with the school speak one of many Guatemalan dialects. The problem is that the community currently lacks a way to translate for these parents and students. One teacher interviewed summarized this language barrier by saying:

> "Parents and kids are navigating three languages: their dialect, English and Spanish. They speak their dialect as their first language, they are learning Spanish to fit in with the community in which they live, and they are learning English in order to attend a 'traditional school.'"

Teachers in the building have encountered students who come to school with no language at all. Parents have accounted on a number of occasions that they do not speak to their children because they do not want to confuse them with different languages. This greatly impacts how students enter their academic careers, and it is something the staff of this elementary school attempted to rectify by providing services for parents to have a better understanding of language and school.

Not only was there a language barrier that impacted many aspects of students attending their school, but the community also faced a high poverty rate, as well as other types of trauma. According to the districts' food service department, this elementary currently provides free or reduced lunch to 88% of its student population. As the literature pointed out, students who come from low-socioeconomic households are lower-achieving in an educational setting; this also applies to other types of trauma that these students are facing. Students at this elementary school face trauma such as parents or family members being deported, hunger, and physical abuse. Within the last school year, the social worker and counselor at this school have gone on over 130 home visits. They have also had to make 45 reports with the Department of Family Services in the last three years. The trauma of the students in this building was vast and can be shocking, but it is important to note as this will help to explain the motivation by teachers to change their practices.

Knowing this, and knowing that the Redesign initiative was created to target what each specific community and school needed, the staff at this elementary school had to understand the lives that their students were living at home to know how to assist them in their academic journey at school. Amy, a second grade teacher, pointedly said, "To truly understand where our kids are at, you have to know who they are." Who they are and what they have experienced in their lives leading up to school was possibly the most important part in creating a Redesign plan that would be successful in this community.

After understanding the community in which the studied school was located, one needs to understand the uniqueness of the staff working at the school. As previously discussed, the school district that this elementary school is a part of had recently gone under a large restructuring plan. The district had seven kindergarten through third-grade elementary schools, two intermediate

schools, two middle schools and one high school. The district then transitioned to five kindergarten through fifth-grade buildings, two middle schools, and one high school. The restructuring meant that not only were new buildings constructed in town, but the staff was also reallocated to new buildings. For this school, this meant that, while some staff had worked together previously, the majority of staff had not worked under the principal assigned to this building, and the staff had not worked with their grade level teammates or others in the building before. Knowing that the building opened in 2017 with a brand new staff that was taking on the challenge of Redesign is important to remember when discussing the successes that the school encountered along the way.

Leadership Teams

As the new staff convened from their summer break, in 2017, an email was sent out asking for their opinion on becoming one of the Mercury 7 Redesign schools. Kansas Commissioner of Education, Randy Watson, mandated that each school that wanted to participate in Redesign had at least 80% of staff members agree to the initiative. The studied school's administration sent the email asking if staff would like to participate or not; they also gave the option to select that a person needed more information before they answered. Once all responses were collected the school had over an 80% return saying that they would participate in Redesign. This allowed the school administration to move forward with the state in accepting the invitation to be a Mercury 7 Redesign school.

Accepting this role in Redesign began a reform initiative that would change the course of this elementary school. A pilot and co-pilot were quickly named, and they would be the designated leaders of the reform occurring. They would also be responsible for communicating with the state consultants, and other Mercury 7 elementary schools. The pilot and co-pilot are both instructional

coaches at the school. After the pilot and co-pilot were selected, a team of other staff members were chosen to be on what was coined the Flight Team. The Flight Team was a leadership team that consisted of teachers or staff from around the building that represented the different departments of the school. The Flight Team was a key component of the redesign plan because it represented the different areas of the school and the members acted as liaisons between their department, administration, and the state when designing the overall plan for Redesign. The Flight Team consisted of the pilot, co-pilot, the principal, the assistant principal, a kindergarten teacher, a third-grade teacher, a fifth-grade teacher, two interventionists, the music teacher, and a paraprofessional whose focus was parent and family engagement. I will note that as members of the Flight Team have left the staff of this school they have been replaced on the team by various staff members. The current team changes included the original third-grade teacher being replaced by another third-grade teacher that had worked at the building since its opening. When the interventionists left the building, they were replaced by the school counselor. This team has led the staff through this process over the course of the last few years of implementation.

Vision and Purpose

The Flight Team met every other Thursday with the state Redesign consultant and began to develop a plan for this school. One of the first things that needed to be done was to come up with a vision for the staff and students of the entire elementary school. To do that, the team thought of what they truly wanted students 'graduating' from this school to be able to do and how teachers in the building could help them do that. Teachers and staff were asked in small groups to verbalize what they wanted students to know by the time they left fifth grade. The staff at this elementary came up with an extensive list of everything they wanted their students to know by the time they went to middle school. As the topics or ideas were listed they were then sorted into categories and

to the staff's surprise most of these categories were non-academic. The list included: communication skills, problem-solving skills, good character, life skills, experiences, and passions. The full list is provided in the Appendix C. Once the staff had created this list, the Flight Team began to organize the skills and brainstorm vision statements.

Eventually, the team settled on the vision statement: Students will reach their dreams. The Flight Team knew that the community in which the students were growing up often showed kids a singular path to working shift work, as many of their parents do, and the community had not yet learned how to support low-income, trauma stricken, English Language Learners to find their passions and their dreams. The team also realized that many parents, while they wanted their children to learn and strive for their dreams, did not know where to begin in assisting them in those goals. The school is heavily relied upon to be more than just an academic source of knowledge and the Flight Team wanted that reflected in the vision for students and staff. Keeping the list of skills and the vision statement in mind teachers began to see the possibilities of Redesign and started to understand the importance of their voice within the process.

We Had to Do Something Different

While more than 80% of the staff had originally agreed for the studied elementary school to participate in KansasCan Redesign, which does not mean that it was without hesitation or uncertainty. Amy described the initial feeling or mood around the building to be "good and bad." People were uncertain about such a drastic change, from mostly whole group instruction to personalized learning, an idea many staff members did not understand. Katherine, a third-grade teacher, felt similarly and stated, "a lot of us didn't understand Redesign, or even really agree with it." She also mentioned, "it was hard to wrap your mind around this new kind of learning pathway where everyone is differentiated and everyone has different assignments." However, all three

teachers interviewed agreed that something had to change for their students. Traditional learning was not shown to be successful in this particular community. Jeri, a fifth-grade teacher, succinctly said, “we had to do something different.”

Now that the building is in its third full year of implementation and when asked what the feeling in the building was, Katherine said, “it took us awhile, but eventually everyone got on board.” I asked why she thought this was and she commented on a deeper understanding of Redesign and, more specifically, personalized learning. She also commented that the staff had built trusting relationships over the years and that had contributed to the overall feeling in the building. Another reason found for the shift in perspective and overall feeling was the fact that teachers started to realize that they had a voice in what was happening. One participant discussed the importance of Redesign not being a top-down reform, but that teachers were able to use their expertise and knowledge to assist in the changes being made. In one interview Amy exclaimed, “we ACTUALLY had a say.” She felt as though her voice did not matter in the past, that she was told what to do and not an active member of making decisions for her job, or the students in her classroom. All of this shows that the culture of the building can impact the overall implementation of Redesign and personalized learning, especially how teachers feel about their own understanding of the reform they were attempting to create.

Curriculum Choices

The next steps in the Redesign process were driven with personalized learning in mind. The school decided to get rid of the curricula they had been using and sought after curricula that would allow for personalization. The staff agreed that they not only needed a program that was able to be personalized for each student in the building, but they also wanted to ensure that it was mindful of the community they were serving. This process also allowed the staff to determine what

personalized learning meant to them. The school was already using differentiation and needed to determine the differences between differentiation and personalization. When asked, the participants agreed that the main difference between the two was the teacher's role. One teacher said:

> "Differentiation is pretty much all on the teacher to adjust lessons as needed. In personalization students get some choice on what they do, when they do it, and what kind of help they need. The teacher still makes modifications, but the kids get some say also."

Similar thoughts were shared by other participants, noting that the whole student is at the forefront of instruction within personalized learning, ensuring that not only their academics are taken into consideration within a lesson, but also their needs and interests. Amy agreed that students' interests were important and should be considered, but she also felt as though the teacher still needed to be in control of the learning process.

To begin the process of finding new curricula, administrators asked teachers to sign up for different research teams. The teams consisted of a Math Team, ELA Team, Community Engagement Team, Family Engagement Team, and Alternative Grade Card Team. For the purpose of this research, I focused on the Math Team, as well as the ELA Team. The reason for this is because they were the two teams who were impacted the most by personalized learning.

As the two teams began their research on different curricula, it became apparent that it would be a challenge to find a curriculum that could be personalized and that could support the students that were performing vastly under grade level. Katherine explained that she had been on the Math Team and wanted to find a curriculum that would allow her third-grade students to be more successful than what they had previously been. She knew that most years her third-grade

students did not come ready for third-grade content. This was not due to previous experiences in schools, but due to the challenges that the community faced and how underachieving the students were overall in the building. Amy also felt this way and stated, “we started looking at what we thought would work for our community and what we knew wouldn’t work for our community.” As the two teams moved forward in their research, the students and the community were at the forefront of their minds. They kept a detailed checklist of which programs fit the different criteria that the staff wanted from a curriculum. Some of the criteria included: progress monitoring for tier two and tier three students, tiered learning resources, and a technology component. Having a Spanish component was also on the school’s ‘wish list’ for a curriculum, but it was not mandatory that curricula had this piece. The teams felt as though if there was support for tiered learning, then teachers would be able to meet students where they were academically. Similarly, teachers wanted a technology component to assist not only in collecting data but also to provide an adaptive path for students as they moved through the program. The school’s redesign notes, and documentation, showed the thinking of the teachers on the Math and Reading teams. I was also privy to this information due to the fact that I was a part of all these conversations taking place at the building at the time of the formation of the redesign plan.

After the teams researched many different curricula, they came up with a list of programs that had the components that the staff wanted. Once this list was compiled, all teachers within the building were able to pilot different programs. Administrators left it up to teachers to decide which programs they wanted to pilot. If they wanted to pilot math and reading, just one or the other, or if they did not want to pilot, then teachers did not have to. By doing this, administrators allowed teachers to continue to use their voice for the reform. Some of the programs piloted included: Zearn Math, Istation Math, Istation Reading, Reflex, Dreambox, Lucy Calkins’ Writers Workshop,

and Edmentum. Teachers had roughly six weeks to spend in the program before feedback was given and ultimately the staff voted on which program they felt would lead to their goal of personalized learning.

Istation Math and Reading were chosen as the core curriculum for math and ELA. Teachers also selected Lucy Calkins' Writers Workshop, Dreambox, Reflex, and Lexia. Istation was chosen to represent the core curriculum because it provided teachers with an incredible amount of data through the adaptive technology piece. It also had a monthly test that students would take, which would sort them into different tiers of instruction. This allowed for teachers to see where students were at with minimal instruction time lost to assessment. It should be noted that Istation is not considered a core curriculum; it is a supplemental curriculum. However the teachers at Maverick Elementary felt it provided enough content to use it as a core.

Throughout this entire process, teachers were controlling what was happening and making decisions, which increased buy-in to the process of Redesign. Teachers felt as though their expertise and voices were being heard, and it became very empowering. Katherine often commented on how this brought the new staff together, "We all had to trudge through it together; it was kind of like a big bonding experience." That sentiment carried over throughout the school as teachers faced the new challenges of remote learning and Covid-19 procedures.

Once programs were selected, the staff worked tirelessly to incorporate even more personalization throughout their day. They also worked to give students experiences that would help them reach their dreams, expose them to more opportunities, ideas, and passions. As previously discussed, the students at this particular elementary school come to school with so few experiences. Often these students have never been to a restaurant, the movies, or even the other side of town. Katherine described the students' experiences as very limited, often never leaving

their neighborhood. “They stay in their houses” is how she summed up their experiences. Over the years the staff at this elementary school realized that this is the truth for most of their students, so how could the staff provide experiences like museums, agriculture, philanthropy, gardening, and entertainment? That became the question the staff wanted to answer.

One of the research teams came up with the idea of an initiative to give students more choice and voice on what they wanted to learn about. It also gave teachers a chance to teach something they loved and were passionate about. After many discussions, revamping schedules, getting teacher buy-in, and figuring out how to logistically do this, the staff had a plan. Every Monday for two hours throughout the day (each grade level band had a different two-hour block) students would be able to choose which classes they went to. In some ways, it was a two-hour block of electives, but the personalized side was extended because not only were students choosing what they were interested in, getting new experiences, which fit the vision statement to reach their dreams, but teachers were also getting to show their passions. Some of the ‘classes’ that have been offered over the years include: cooking, silly science, card games, sewing, animation, bucket drumming, choir, and so many more. All three participants agreed that this initiative was an amazing addition to the school culture and experience.

Logistics: It Was a Hot Mess

The staff had found curricula that fit their vision, included other innovative ideas within their schedule, but how did it actually come together into a working plan, not on paper, but with students in classrooms learning in this particular way. One teacher bluntly stated, “I am not going to lie, it was kind of a hot mess.” The other participants agreed that there were some ‘growing pains’ in the first year of implementation. In the Fall of 2018, this elementary officially started its first year of Redesign implementation. The administration nor the Flight Team had told teachers

how they HAD to do something. How a grade level took the moving parts of Redesign and made them work with their students was completely up to them. However, there were a few building-wide initiatives that teachers had to use, which will be mentioned later; there was no one way that teachers were expected to personalize learning. The thinking behind this was that, each classroom had different students, each grade level had different levels of personalization happening, one system would not be effective. For example, kindergarten teachers faced the challenge of students coming in with no English, no schooling experiences, or students who were native speakers and went to pre-school. While that is a big gap, it was much smaller than what fifth grade was facing. Fifth-grade teachers had students working on every level, from kindergarten to eighth grade. So, how the fifth grade teachers set up their personalized learning looked different than kindergarten.

Personalized Learning Time

One of the school-wide initiatives was that every grade level would have a specific time for Personalized Learning Time (PLT). This time was allocated for small group instruction, as well as, independent work for students. This varied from a traditional center time because students were able to make choices on what they worked on and when. For example, a third-grade student could choose to work on the online component of the reading curriculum, then work on a hands-on math activity, and finally, transition back to an online component. All the while another student in the room could choose to do all of their hands-on activities first and then transition to the technology components. Students were given the responsibility of moving at their own pace, while still completing their work for the week.

Learning Menus

This brings us to the next school-wide initiative that was put in place which was the learning menus. Learning menus are, in essence, a choice board. Teachers created documents that

had every activity students needed to complete within a week, for both reading and math. During PLT, students would use their menu to decide what to work on, what still needed to be completed, and what had already been completed. It was a way to monitor how many minutes they had spent on their technology, as well as other hands-on activities that had been completed. Throughout the process of creating these, in every grade level, kindergarten through fifth grade, there was a lot of trial and error. By the end of the first full semester of implementation, most grade levels had a menu that worked for them and their students (See Appendix D). While the participants explained how their learning menus worked, I have also seen the process that each grade level has gone through in order to have an effective learning menu in their grade level. Over the last three years many ideas have been shared around the building pertaining to learning menus and how to ensure that they are being used purposefully and effectively during PLT.

The learning menus are personalized for each student, as well. Not every student in third grade has the same menu items, and they vary based on what the students need. For example, if a student has mastered most of their multiplication facts then their fact practice assignments for the week will be less than someone who has not mastered the majority of those facts. Katherine claims that this allows for anonymity within the classroom. Meaning that students all have what they need and can complete for a week, no one is finishing early, and no one is feeling rushed because each student is given an amount of work that they will be successful with. Jeri felt similarly to Katherine in this aspect, she even commented on the idea that the students that traditionally struggled, were feeling successful, while the students that were higher-achieving were the ones who struggled with this initiative. Jeri explained it by saying, “When we started, the high kids struggled because the low kids were like, ‘Yes, I can finally do this,’ and the high kids had never had to do something hard before.”

Amy perceived the menus to be a good idea and a struggle at the same time. She discussed that students did feel more successful, and, it also gave them a sense of entitlement. The consequences for not completing the entire menu by the end of the week were minimal. She believes that giving students a choice, all the time, has had negative effects on her classroom behavior. Students understand that they can choose what to do when they want to and it can create a conflict between teacher and student. Amy told an anecdote about a student who chose to do what she was successful with all week, but then left the more challenging tasks and they were rarely completed. This ended in Amy having to take away the students' choices and limited her to certain menu items, leading to the student not feeling successful at school any longer. This particular participant believes that there is a time for students to have choice and voice, but there also needs to be a time where students are being told exactly what to do and how to do it to learn the skills they need. Balancing these two ideas can be challenging. However, as students have been submerged in personalized learning over the years, they are beginning to better understand how to use the menus to be successful in their learning.

Data

The final school-wide initiative for PLT was to use the data given by Istation reports to group students for small group instruction. The data given by Istation is extensive and provides many different ways to look at students' improvement and level of instruction. Knowing this, each grade level used different reports or data points to group students. With the entire school using the same curriculum and having similar data, it was possible for some students to work in different grade levels. For example fourth-graders were able to move up to fifth grade during Personalized Learning Time to get instruction at their level. Similarly, if a fifth-grade student was below grade level they could work with a group of fourth-grade students if needed. Being fluid within the grade

levels during PLT allowed for the staff to personalize learning for each student and, for the most part, eliminate outliers working by themselves, as you might see in a traditional classroom.

With those being the main components and initiatives set by the Flight Team, it was up to each grade level to make it work for them. Many of their plans have been tried and adjusted multiple times. It was also mentioned that each year adjustments had been made because of new teachers being added to the grade level, what worked for one set of students and managing their learning did not work with the next group, or a number of other reasons. However, all three participants believe that they have systems that work to implement PLT or ideas on how to adjust and fix whatever problems arise in structuring PLT. One participant commented on the amount of work and organization it takes on the teacher's side for students to be successful within this model. Teachers have to have an understanding of what they are attempting to do, what their end goal is for students, and how to systematically make it work within their classrooms.

Successes

While there has been a lot of trial and error, one participant even said that they felt like they 'crashed and burned' a lot and, the participants were able to clearly explain the successes of their Redesign plan. As with the initial list of skills teachers wanted the students at this school to leave with, many of the successes they have seen throughout the three years of implementing personalized learning are non-academic. There has been academic growth, which is the goal for this particular elementary school, not necessarily students mastering all grade-level standards. Teachers are not expecting their students to start a year well below grade level and magically be on grade-level by the end of the year. However, there is a very high standard for students to make growth. That belief is not held by just teachers, but by their students as well.

Goal Setting

One participant detailed how vital goal setting is for their particular grade level. She mentioned that they set goals for each student and as a classroom. Those goals are attainable and manageable, but they also challenge students to work towards their goals and to be responsible for their learning. The Istation data has consistently shown this grade level making growth every year, and a big part of that could be because of how the teachers, within that grade level, hold their students accountable. The same participant explained how there had been a shift in student thinking. Instead of students feeling as though they are academically low or behind, they felt successful at school for the first time. Jeri also commented on this saying, "kids are happier and not so stressed, knowing that school doesn't have to be hard all the time." This felt like a very powerful success of Redesign and personalized learning. Students were able to relax and feel successful, even if it is not success on their grade level, it is success on where they were at in their learning. So many of the students at the studied school struggled with their education before Redesign, and teachers were now able to express that there is growth and hope for all stakeholders involved.

Learning Menus

Jeri also believed that one of the most successful components of implementing personalized learning was creating the learning menus for students. When asked what she felt was successful she said, "the menu…it helps them manage their time which is a life skill that many adults lack." While some of the participants agree that the menu is a great tool to use in theory, some voiced concerns that it gave the students too much freedom and too many options. However, many teachers have used that as a real-life teaching moment as well, by simply telling students, "you can't handle these choices right now. When you show me that you can you will earn back

this privilege." Again, that goes towards what Jeri was saying, that it gave students skills many adults lack, and if it has to be modified at some point it may still give students a chance to practice and learn these skills in a safe environment. From my own experience with teaching kindergarteners to use a learning menu, it can be a challenge, but it also allows for even the youngest students in the building to learn important life skills.

Data Use

Another successful component of this elementary school's Redesign is the amount of data teachers have from the programs they chose. While not every school would use these same programs, it is important to note that having data easily accessible is helpful when attempting to personalize learning for students. The data in this particular school was generated through online programs administering assessments once a month. There was little preparation for the teachers in terms of assessment, and the data provided allowed teachers to see where students are working, what standards are mastered, and what still needs to be learned. The challenge with so much data is how to extract what one needs in order to personalize instruction. It has taken the school many hours of professional development and Professional Learning Community time to understand how to effectively use the data. The initial survey sent to all classroom teachers showed that 92% of the 13 teachers who responded to the survey feel confident in understanding data given by the digital portions of the curricula. With the majority of classroom teachers feeling confident in reading data, it allowed for a more unified approach to personalized learning. All three participants agreed that communication has been more effective on their teams because they are all looking at the same data and striving towards the same goals. That communication has been a successful component throughout the years of personalized learning as well.

There have been other successful components of the entire Redesign implemented at this school, but these are the ones that pertain, specifically, to personalized learning. The components of Redesign often overlap within each other and where there are successes in one aspect there will be success in another.

Impact

When asking teachers about the successes of personalized learning it, very naturally, led to the impact that these changes or initiatives have had on the school, students, staff, and families. Overall, the impacts described by the participants were positive and uplifting. While there were some concerns or negative aspects to what the school has experienced, as a whole so far, it seems as though the good has outweighed the bad.

Relationships

All three participants agreed that one of the largest impacts that had been seen in the building is the positive relationships students now have with school and learning. Students were reported to have felt more successful and accomplished through the use of personalized learning. The participants noted that the entire atmosphere of the elementary was a lot more friendly and supportive than in other schools. 84.7% of teachers who returned the survey felt that they were supported by leadership. There were some respondents however that felt as though trust in the building could be improved upon. Amy felt like there could be more support and more compassion from the administration. Amy stated:

> "I don't think they understand the amount of work Redesign is. I want them to plan an entire day, teach it, and manage the struggles that pop up throughout the day. If they did that I think they would feel what we feel."

Katherine felt almost the exact opposite. She commented on her relationship with the administration saying, “I feel like they trust us to do this. I don’t know; I just feel a lot of trust.” It is important to remember that there is not a way to compare these relationships with years prior to Redesign, as the students and the entire staff were new to the building. However, when speaking to the relationships between families, students, and staff, some of the participants were able to recall what it was like in the elementary school that had previously served this community, as they had worked there as well.

The participants have also realized the impact that personalized learning and students feeling successful has had on relationships with parents. The parents of this school were no longer hearing how far behind their student was in school, but rather the growth they had made. Jeri explained it as, “parents might still hear that their kid is behind, but they will also hear about the progress they have made.” This was an important positive impact that has come out of Redesign, as one of the goals of Redesign is to increase family engagement. When parents come to school and interact positively with staff, it is more likely that they will attend school events that are not mandatory, and it will increase their involvement with their students’ academic life.

Along with parents hearing about their students feeling successful, parents have also come to realize that teachers are providing students with opportunities and experiences they have never had before. As previously mentioned, most of the parents of these students work shift work, and very few are home with their children to provide them with any kind of experience or even support for their learning. Jeri felt as though the parents were so grateful for the teachers because they were starting to understand that teachers had their students’ best interests at heart and were trying to work as a team, with the parents, to provide the students with everything they need. Knowing that these relationships have improved led to another important impact Redesign has had on the school.

Parents are wanting to communicate with teachers more now than ever before, they want to be involved, but because of the language barrier and challenge of illiterate parents, this school has had to reconfigure how they communicate with parents. Jeri, the fifth-grade teacher summarized this aspect by saying, "when we talk about personalized learning people assume academics, but we even had to personalize how we communicate with parents and support the whole family." This demonstrated how aspects of personalized learning eventually impacted other aspects of the entire Redesign plan.

As Jeri commented, this elementary school had to understand not only how they could support students through personalized learning but also the families of their students. Support of the families could be seen in a number of ways throughout the elementary school. First of all, there were two paraprofessionals known as parent coordinators, which worked exclusively on parent and family engagement. These two women were tasked with the job of supporting parents in their understanding of what is happening at school and also what is happening in the personal lives of the parents. The parent coordinators provided parents with support in paying monthly bills, scheduling, and taking students to, doctor's appointments, providing families with information about a number of different topics, including immigration and domestic violence help. Along with providing these services, the parent coordinators have also started a program at the school with provided an opportunity for students to bring their children who are not yet of school age to the school to begin creating positive interactions between the children and then school staff. During this time, the young children experimented with music, as well as read books with staff members. This unique time also provided parents with positive interactions with the school staff. Often during this program, the parent coordinators would explain to parents what other services the

school could assist with, and it provided a relaxed environment where parents felt safe to ask questions.

Other opportunities for parent and family engagement occurred in less structured formats. Katherine, a third-grade teacher, commented on the number of non-academic functions that the school held throughout the year, each of which gave parents and students a chance to spend time together as a family in a positive way. These events included ice cream socials held at parks, a school-wide Fall Festival, movie nights, and game nights hosted by the Physical Education teachers and the music teacher. According to the participants, these events helped make parents feel more comfortable coming to school and asking for help. These events also allowed the families to get to know the staff and understand, even more, that the staff at this particular school were there to help the community however they could.

Collaboration

Finally, one of the largest impacts that the implementation of personalized learning has had on this school is the amount of collaboration between teachers. Teachers are working together now more than ever to solve problems. Teachers are collaborating not only amongst their grade level team, but also as a grade level band. They are collaborating to group students, create experiences for students, and to work as a team to ensure that all students are being met where they are at academically, socially, and developmentally. This impact was summed up nicely by one participant who simply said, “you have to be able to trust your team.” She was not simply referring to her grade level team but everyone in the building. There is a level of trust and support in the building that flows through departments, from administration to teachers, teachers to administration, and perhaps most importantly, between students and the adults in the building.

Each participant commented on the relationships in the building and how important they have become, and how noticeable they are from the moment you walk into the building.

As you can see, there have been many impacts that have come out of this very unique community tackling such a large initiative as KansasCan Redesign. There have been struggles and failures, but overall, the impacts observed have been positive in nature. The impacts do not always reflect in the data on academic achievement, but the positive culture and experiences have led to students making growth in some aspect of their education.

Chapter Summary

As described by the participants involved in Redesign, it was a difficult process and at times very grueling. Teachers had learned to trust one another and their own expertise to make the best decisions for the students attending their school. Teachers were asked to think unconventionally and in new ways to meet their goal of personalizing learning for all students. The teachers at this school were able to do just that. Using the resources and visions they had, the staff at the studied elementary school were able to provide personalized instruction for each student and created a plan that was beneficial for the unique community in which the school is set.

When asked if teachers would embark on this process again one said, “yes, it was a lot of hard work, and still is, but knowing what I know now, I would definitely still attempt Redesign again.” This teacher had previously said that in the beginning, she was unsure if this was the right path for the school and, vulnerably, admitted that she was “not on board” for this in the early stages. Another teacher believed that Redesign had potential, but what was currently happening in the building was not effective. That same teacher said if given the option, she would go back to traditional learning. While it is a challenging process, the participants interviewed seemed to

acknowledge that there has been a lot of success to come out of this process, not without struggle or hard work on the part of all stakeholders.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Introduction

This study was looking at the implementation process of KansasCan Redesign in an elementary school in Southwestern Kansas that has a unique, minority-majority population. The study used an initial survey, as well as interviews with three teachers that had designed and implemented a Redesign plan from the very beginning, and notes from the school's Redesign plan to understand how teachers felt about personalized learning. The study specifically looked at teacher perceptions of the implementation process, successes within the Redesign, if any, and finally, the impact that Redesign has had on the elementary school in question. Through the lens of Interpretivism and Case Study, I set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers describe the overall implementation process?
2. How do teachers describe components, if any, that contribute to the overall success of the implementation of personalized learning?
3. How do teachers describe the impact of personalized learning?

It was important to allow participants to explain their perspective of this unique case, in order to understand what components assisted in launching this particular school reform. In this chapter I will restate the findings for each research question and provide possible reasons for these findings.

Discussion of Findings

When considering the first research question, how teachers described the overall implementation process, I found that the participants not only gave a detailed description of how

the elementary school began implementing personalized learning, but also how they felt about that process. In addition to their description of personalized learning and how they felt about the process, they also detailed the success that personalized learning has had on their school. The most notable components of the implementation process were (a) forming a leadership team, (b) creating a vision statement, (c) choosing a curriculum, (d) acquiring teacher buy-in, and (e) understanding the data to personalize learning. There may be other, minor, components that impacted the implementation process; however, these were the ones noted most often by the participants.

From the beginning of the KansasCan Redesign, Commissioner Watson wanted to ensure that this process was teacher-led and not driven by the administration. The literature also supported the idea of a bottom-up approach to reform, rather than a top-down reform. If one recalls, DeArmond & Maas (2018) found that teachers who were urged to fix the problems within their buildings or classrooms would have more buy-in to a potential reform. The participants interviewed at this elementary school echoed these thoughts. They felt as though their administration trusted them to make decisions to assist in solving the problems they saw within their school and this is why these teachers felt it was a worthwhile implementation process. As a member of the Flight Team, I was able to see first-hand how the administration at this school instilled trust into their teachers. During Flight Team meetings, there was a lot of discussion about how to ensure teacher buy-in in the redesign process. After interviewing the participants, I was able to see that those efforts from administration did not go unnoticed with classroom teachers.

After the school was accepted to be a part of the Mercury 7 program, the administrative team began to create a plan to begin this process. The decision was made to focus on the vision

statement to have a goal in mind for the overall project. The administrative team knew they wanted to involve the teachers from the beginning, just as Commissioner Watson had wanted to involve the citizens of Kansas to participate in this initiative to create buy-in from the stakeholders. By prioritizing teacher input, the administration team began working on a way to use the staff to create a vision statement. They took the model that Commissioner Watson used during his community talks and asked teachers to describe what they wanted from a graduate of the studied elementary. In doing this, the administration began modeling their open-leadership style that would continue throughout the Redesign process.

The leaders of the school also showed open-leadership and trust to the staff by allowing teachers to take the lead on choosing a new curriculum, as recounted by all three participants. Teachers were the ones researching curricula and choosing which ones would work best for the students in the classroom. The administration of this school allowed teachers to be at the forefront of the reform and that further contributed to, and created new pathways of, trust amongst the staff.

Teacher leadership contributed greatly to the participants perceptions of the implementation process. Not only were all teachers asked to be a part of the curriculum research, but the administration also formed a leadership team made up of staff members that were not already a part of leadership in the building. Allowing teachers to be on a leadership team gave those teachers a chance to support their peers in understanding personalized learning and how to adapt their teaching styles to fit within personalized learning. The teachers on the leadership team, or the Flight Team, took a more active role in the reform efforts, and according to two participants that not only gave them a better understanding of what they were trying to accomplish, but it also gave them more motivation to see Redesign succeed. These perspectives

confirm the literature on teacher leadership and the empowering nature it has on school reform. (Palmer, 2018). I would like to note here that two participants in the study were on the Flight Team, and one participant was not, although she has worked in the building throughout the entire Redesign process. This could account for discrepancies between the participants' perceptions of how the implementation process worked.

The participant who was not a part of the Flight Team had a different experience and perception of leadership, and the amount of trust she had and support she received from them, as noted in chapter four. Her perception could be the result of not being as involved in decision making or deeper conversations held on certain topics during Flight Team meetings. The two participants who are on the Flight Team both agreed that there is an advantage to being a part of the team, you receive information first, you understand why decisions were made, and you are privy to more information. Again, as a member of the Flight Team I was also able to observe this and can say that being on the Flight Team provides one with a deeper understanding of the inner-workings of a Redesign plan. All of these factors could contribute to why those participants felt more comfortable and at ease with Redesign than the third participant.

However, just because the teacher who was not on the Flight Team did not feel as supported or trusted by the administration does not mean that she was not committed to the work of Redesign. All three participants expressed, in one way or another, that what the school was doing previously was not working, and they knew they had to change something. All of the participants saw that what they were trying to accomplish through Redesign was important for their students, their students' families, and their community. Because of their realization their emotional buy-in was much higher than if they had not been able to understand the importance of school reform. Blumberg (2015) addressed the fact that personalized learning can take a toll on

teachers, but if those teachers are able to see the reason for the change in teaching style, then it could create more teacher buy-in and add to the success of the reform . The participants all illustrated Blumberg's point, and focused their attention on how they could help their students facing such immense challenges.

The final component of the implementation process that would be found to be successful was teachers' understanding of how to use the data given to them from their curriculum in order to personalize learning for their students. Yoon et al. (2005) explained the consequences of not providing adequate training for teachers using learning management systems. Teachers who did not understand how to use such programs often felt overwhelmed and lost in how to use and implement the programs as intended (Yoon et al., 2005). All three participants from this school believed that they had a deep understanding of how to access the data from Istation in order to personalize learning. This allowed for teachers to take their ideas of implementing personalized learning and actually apply them to their classrooms. All three participants mentioned that the school had provided them with plenty of professional development, whether it be whole days or during their professional learning community time. Teachers' understanding of how to use the programs and data they chose for their Redesign is a key component in being successful overall. If teachers are unable to apply the data to their students' learning, then the data is not useful for attempting to personalize learning.

My second research question looked directly at what the teachers felt had been successful within their Redesign plan. Not only did teachers find that understanding data during the initial implementation process to be critical, but they also believed it to be a large piece of their success. Again, teachers were able to take the data from the programs they had chosen, and apply it to their instruction of students on different pathways. In addition to teachers being able to

understand data, the students and parents of the building were also able to understand the data. Parents now had a realistic view of what their students were capable of and how much they had learned throughout any given amount of time.

As the participants noted, when parents were not constantly being told that their student was behind, but rather that their student had made growth it increased the parent involvement in their student's academic life. When this elementary school first opened, the Flight Team and administration, and most teachers in the building, were aware that trust had to b be built within the community of the school with parents. In the first year, parents were not as open to attending school events or conferences. As the school built their plan, they wanted to rectify this, and they wanted parents to be involved and see the school as a safe place for them and their children. As previously discussed, many parents are illegal immigrants and they did not trust that the school would help them without also attempting to involve authorities. To build that trust the school often held nonacademic events for parents to come and enjoy an evening with their family. These events allowed parents to interact with staff and their students in a way that eventually built a safe, welcoming, trusting environment. As the trust continued to be built, parents would begin attending other school provided events. These events included an initiative to get parents into the building to continue building relationships. This program was a chance for younger children to have experiences at school make them more comfortable when they arrived for kindergarten. This time also gave the parent coordinators a chance to meet with parents about their specific needs. As the parent coordinators began to learn about the families they were better able to assist with their family's needs. For example, the parent coordinators held an invitation-only class on domestic violence. They also provided parents assistance with learning how to pay their monthly bills and secure adequate transportation. They have helped families where to go if they need

financial assistance. All of these initiatives have built trust and given parents reassurance that the staff is available to support not only the students learning, but the family as a whole. Parents are no longer afraid to come to the building for conferences or academic affairs, and they want to participate in their students' education as much as they can. While all three participants detailed parent involvement, it is also observable by just being a staff member at the school over the course of the last few years. As a staff member, I have, personally seen the increased parent involvement and trust between parents and staff members being built.

One of the major successes in parents feeling more comfortable was the way in which the elementary school scaffolded how parents received data about their student. The school was able to provide it in such a way that allowed even illiterate parents to have an idea of where their student was academically. The data provided to parents was a color coded graph that showed students in a green level, yellow level, or red level. These graphs were provided by the Istation assessments given monthly. Parents were able to understand that green was ‘good’, yellow was ‘okay’, and red was ‘struggling’. By doing this the school took a lot of pressure off the parents, who already did not speak the language and had never had formal schooling themselves. This spoke to the level of personalization that one participant mentioned. Personalization did not stop at academics for this school, but rather the teachers attempted to personalize everything related to school for their students, students’ parents, and community. Renth et al. (2015) found that just because parents were unable to help their students academically, did not mean that they did not want to or did not care. This school recognized their parents were similar and attempted to support the parents in their attempt to support their students. Unexpectedly, teachers found that data was a better way to engage parents in the personalized learning implementation.

Another success that was discussed was the learning menus. While this idea may not be new, it was new to the studied elementary through this process and over the last few years the teachers have successfully implemented them into their classrooms. This idea that students can self-manage, and can be responsible for their learning has been a large success in this Redesign process. Students were held accountable for their learning and their work in a way that also prepared them for life after elementary school. They were given the opportunity to practice skills that they would need as adults in a safe way. All three participants agreed that they thought the menus were a key to the success of personalized learning. While some thought it was a more useful tool than others, they agreed that it was an initiative that worked at all levels of learning. One important idea to note with the learning menus, is that they could be used with numerous different reform methods, curricula, and even classroom management styles. The menus were adaptable to different classrooms and schools, and they could be a useful tool for anyone looking to reform, but especially for schools attempting to personalize learning.

The final success found through this study was the use of goal setting. Goal setting allowed students to see their growth and understand their progress. The students attending the school were often behind in their learning compared to peers in other schools in the same grade. This created an environment of discouragement. It has been shown that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not perform as well in school; however, if students and their teachers are able to understand the strengths and needs of students then they can be successful in school (Carnevale et al., 2019). This school attempted to do just this through goal setting. Students could track their progress and see their strengths and needs clearly in the data. This allowed for teachers, students, and even parents to have honest conversations about where the students were academically, without creating an environment that is always negative. Students

were able to begin to understand the successes at this school, which may have contributed to the overall feeling of success in the building. Teachers found that empowering students with life-skills and goal setting was an effective way to implement personalized learning and increase student growth.

Finally, I looked at what teachers thought the overall impact of personalized learning was on their building. Through the specific components of this school's Redesign implementation, as well as the perceived successful components of personalized learning, one can see that the impact has been a powerful one at this elementary school. Two out of three participants felt there was trust between administration and teachers, as well as trust amongst teammates and peers. All three participants agreed that the relationships and trust built between teachers and students and teachers and parents had grown throughout the course of Redesign. This could be due to the previously mentioned successes of Redesign including parents being more involved, teachers taking on leadership roles, and students truly understanding their success within their education.

All three participants also agreed that the amount of collaboration between teachers had been increased throughout Redesign. This could be attributed to the fact that students were learning from more than one teacher. Students were being shared between classrooms to meet their needs, and they are also being shared during additional programs. Another contributing factor to the increased collaboration amongst teachers was due to the fact that the administration of this elementary had not only trusted the staff to solve the problems of the building, but they had specifically requested that teachers work together to be innovative and creative in their attempt to solve the problems in the building. As the teachers expressed their need and want to collaborate, the district implemented a designated collaboration time each morning. This allowed for teachers to meet within their grade-level band, as well as the interventionists. This seemingly

small shift in schedule allowed for all team members to have a chance to communicate at least once a day. As Fennell (1999) noted, building in collaboration time during the school day is an important tactic of open leadership. This time was utilized for planning small group instruction, interventions, and any other aspects of the day that contributed to personalize learning. Teachers were able to work within their departments to problem solve and share ideas on what was working to successfully implement personalized instruction.

As the collaboration amongst staff increased, the relationships continued to build trust and support within the building. The entire staff was involved and working towards the same goals, which allowed for students to be at the forefront of each decision made in the building. Students became the priority and supporting them and their families was at the forefront of the school day. This had a positive impact on the environment of the building. Teachers, students, and parents all felt successful because the needs they had were being met. As the participants stated, the relationships in the building became more supportive and encouraging as the Redesign process continued.

The elementary school studied here has seen successes and challenges throughout this process. The participants told a clear story of how Redesign has been implemented, and through that story, I was able to identify major themes in the implementation process, successes, and the impact it has had on their building and the community. When comparing the results found through this study and previous studies there is some overlap in ideas and how to create a successful school reform. It is important to keep in mind when considering this study that the community in which the school is located is highly impacted by language barriers, poverty, and trauma. The teachers at this school were able to take those perceived challenges, and turn them into what motivated them to continue this work in school reform.

Limitations

This study concentrated on a unique community attempting to reform education within a particular reform strategy with specific requirements, yet no structured plan of implementation. KansasCan Redesign allows for schools to make Redesign their own, which left a lot of ambiguity within this particular type of school reform. Along with the uniqueness of this particular phenomenon and community, I had a limited source of participants. While the studied elementary is comparable in size to other elementary schools in the Southwestern Kansas region, my research was centered around teachers who had been in the building since its opening year, teachers who had been involved in the Redesign process from start to implementation, and finally teachers who were willing to be interviewed. This caused me to have a low sample size, but also allowed me to study a unique perspective. In addition to a smaller sample size, this particular elementary school is still in the beginning stages of the implementation of personalized learning. Due to this, teachers' perceptions about how the process was going is subject to change as the school moves further into personalized learning. Finally, there is no previous data to compare this school to before they began to Redesign, because the school did not exist prior to the beginning phase of Redesign, making it challenging to compare this communities' experience with traditional school and now, with Redesign.

I should also note that one limitation I encountered through this research was knowing my participants so well. As the data show, the teachers in this building have become a close-knit staff that trusts and supports one another. While the participants trust me as their peer and colleague, I had to ensure that I established a trusting relationship with them as interviewer and interviewee for them to feel comfortable sharing their true thoughts and ideas about Redesign with me.

Overall, while there were limitations to this study, most of them were overcome which allowed me to understand how the implementation process occurred, what successes and challenges were seen, and finally, what the impact of Redesign was.

Summary of Chapter

The uniqueness of the school featured within this study's minority-majority population was a driving force behind many of the changes made throughout their Redesign process. Commissioner Watson challenged schools to take the resources they had and envision new possibilities for education within the community they served. This elementary school did just that. The staff came together as a team to understand what their community needed and executed a plan that provided numerous opportunities to their students and the families of their students. The changes they made in their building and how they provide education to students will have lasting impacts not only on their students, but the community surrounding the school.

The innovative ideas and initiatives that this school provided their students and families could be recreated in other schools attempting to Redesign or reform. While this particular school focused on a minority-majority population, many of the ways in which they Redesigned would be helpful in many different communities. The school understood that parents needed more support in supporting their students with education, and the school found ways to provide that. The staff also knew that students needed experiences that would boost their engagement in school and learning, and they found ways to provide those experiences. When looking at the Redesign plan created by this school, it is clear that the community and students were the top priority, along with giving teachers the opportunity to share their ideas and knowledge. All of

these components together provided the school with a Redesign plan that impacted far more than just academic learning and led the teachers to feel as though their Redesign was successful.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Through this study, one has been able to better understand the perceptions of teachers involved in KansasCan Redesign and the implementation of personalized learning. Along with understanding teachers' perceptions of KansasCan Redesign, this study also provided practical steps for the implementation process and how those steps coulf be applied to other schools attempting to Redesign. This particular school faced a number of challenges that not every elementary school will face. However, all three teachers interviewed still presented ways in which they were successful. Elementary schools looking to reform could use a number of strategies used by this school to attempt their own school reform. While some of the successes were directly tied to curricula chosen by the teachers at this particular school, most of the perceived successful components of the studied elementary school's Redesign plan could be adapted for other schools and communities.

As the state of Kansas continues to move through the phases of Redesign, and the goal that every school in Kansas will eventually be participating in Redesign, this research will be a useful tool to understand how one school was successful with the challenge presented to them. Because this elementary was in the first group of schools to Redesign in Kansas, there was no blueprint or model for them to follow. The teachers had to be trailblazers; they had to think in creative and innovative ways to teach and support the students in their community. Now that these teachers have led the way, other buildings can look at this school as a model or a starting point in their own Redesign process. It is not to say that what this school does or has implemented will be successful in other schools or communities, but rather that they are an example of how strong leadership and collaborative teachers can accomplish the goals of KansasCan Redesign.

Through this study it was shown that one of the major factors in the implementation process of personalized learning and overall Redesign was the importance of relationships. Teachers built trusting relationships within their teams, as well as with administration. The administration fostered these relationships by allowing teachers to be at the forefront of decision making. Teachers also built relationships with their students by encouraging their successes, supporting their needs, and sharing their passions. Finally, relationships were built amongst staff and families through purposeful community outreach and support. This allowed for parents to be successful in supporting their students in school, which ultimately led to more family involvement. All of these relationships were a direct result of Redesign and all of them support a caring environment that allows students to reach their dreams.

Recommendations

As the state continues to move forward in Redesign, it will be imperative to continue researching KansasCan Redesign schools to understand what is successful or what is challenging about the process. It is crucial for policymakers and educators in Kansas to understand this reform method and other states looking to tackle a large reform initiative such as KansasCan Redesign. Further research should also be done on the impacts of implementing personalized learning in an elementary school, and the impacts that has on the students' next academic setting. For example, how does a student who attended an elementary school using personalized learning transition to a middle school that has yet to implement personalized learning? In addition, what is the impact on students who transfer from a traditional school to a school implementing personalized learning? Another recommendation for research would be how to support teachers that have not been involved in the Redesign process, but have found themselves teaching at a

Redesigned school. This is particularly important for Southwestern Kansas as the teacher turn over-rate is very high.

Other future research could also look at personalized learning during the time of Covid-19. As teachers were forced to change their teaching styles during 2020 due to remote learning, what impact does personalized learning have on remote learning, or what impact does remote learning have on personalized learning. Along with understanding that correlation, it would be beneficial to understand how teachers perceive such a phenomenon. Would schools immersed in Redesign have more strategies to handle the changes in education brought to the world because of Covid-19, or were the struggles the same as schools using a more traditional school model?

Personalized learning and KansasCan Redesign have many overlapping facets and it is a complicated system and process. Schools attempting to Redesign through the use of personalized learning need to continue to be studied for there to be a deep understanding of the implementation process, as well as how all the different components work together to make a school successful in this school reform model.

This study was successful in understanding teacher perceptions of the implementation of personalized learning, the successes that the participants saw throughout the process, and finally the impacts that this process had on the school and community. The participants shared their honest feedback and feelings toward Redesign and personalized learning, which allowed for a deeper understanding of how this type of school reform could take place in an elementary school setting. Commissioner Randy Watson challenged schools to use the resources they had to reform what was not working within their buildings. He gave the power to the teachers, not the administration, and this allowed for teachers to use their expertise and knowledge of the field to directly impact the students in front of them. While there is no way to see how Redesign will

impact education in Kansas in the future, this study found that there are ways to successfully implement personalized learning and create a Redesign plan that recognizes the challenges of a community to better serve that community.

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Appendix A - Initial Survey

Good morning!

I am beginning my research for my dissertation and the first step is to survey classroom teachers about their perception of personalized learning. Please take a few minutes to fill out this form. I would really appreciate your help with this! I will place a consent form in your mailboxes later today for you to sign.

If you have any questions please let me know! All information will be kept confidential, names and identifying factors will be removed before any information is shared.

Personalized Learning Survey

Thank you for your help!!

Initial E-mail to staff requesting their participation

Personalized Learning Survey

This survey and any files transmitted within it are confidential and intended solely for the use of Maureen Mulligan's dissertation research. Answers and identifying factors about participants will be kept confidential. The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers perceive the implementation of personalized learning.

* Required

1. Name: *

2. How many years have you been teaching? *

Mark only one oval.

- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- 7-8 years
- 9-10 years
- 10+ years

3. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I understand what personalized learning is. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

4. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: Personalized learning is effective in an elementary school. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

5. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I believe my students are successful with personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

6. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: My students were more successful before the implementation of personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

7. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: Technology is a key component of personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

8. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I like teaching using personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

9. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: Personalized learning is easy to implement. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

10. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I understand how to use technology to implement personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

11. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I feel supported by building leadership with the implementation of personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

12. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: My coworkers understand how to implement personalized learning within their classrooms. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

13. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I understand how to read data from online curriculums in order to personalize learning for students. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

14. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: My students understand what personalized learning is. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

15. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I understand my students' strengths and needs through personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

16. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: I am successful with personalized learning. *

Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

Untitled Section

17. In your opinion, what, if any, are the most successful components of personalized learning in your classroom? *

18. In your opinion, what, if any, are the most challenging components of personalized learning in your classroom? *

Personalized Learning Survey

Appendix B - Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Meadowlark Elementary Teachers

1. Please introduce yourself and tell me about your role at Meadowlark.
2. Can you tell me in your own words what school redesign is?
3. How would you describe personalized learning to a family member?
    a. Can you expand on that to explain specific components present in your classroom.
    b. Tell me about something you use in your classroom for personalized learning.
4. When your school began implementing personalized learning, what was that process like?
5. How were teachers involved in the process of implementation?
    a. How were students, parents, and other staff members involved?
    b. How did you choose what curriculum you would use?
6. Knowing the community that Meadowlark serves (Majority/Minority), how do you think that impacted the process of Redesign?
7. What did you want to ensure was in place for this specific community within a personalized learning environment?
8. In your opinion, what, if anything, is the most successful part of the personalized learning environment in your classroom?
    a. a. Are there any other successful components?
    b. b. Can you tell me more about those components?
9. In your opinion, what, if anything, is the most challenging part of personalized learning?
    a. Are there any other challenging components?
    b. Can you tell me more about those components?
10. After teaching through personalized learning what do you feel is the overall impact on your students learning, keeping in mind the majority-minority community you serve?
11. What, if any, is the impact on the school as a whole?
12. What, if any, is the impact on how you teach?
13. What, if any, is the impact on how you plan or work with other grade level teachers?
14. Do you have a favorite part of school redesign?
    a. Can you tell me more about that?
15. Do you have a favorite part of personalized learning, specifically?
    a. Can you tell me more about that?
16. What, if any, is the best part about working at meadowlark?
    a. Can you tell me more about that?
    b.

Follow up Interview Questions:

You said teachers didn't understand or agree with redesign, how do you think their minds changed? Or what do you think supported teachers in that, if anything?

In year 3 what do you think the overall consensus of redesign is? Mostly positive or mostly negative?

Do you feel that there is still confusion on what personalized learning is?

How would you support teachers who are new to the building?

You talked about parents having surveys originally, are surveys still given to parents?

Do parents have a say in their students' personalization?

Is there still that fear of the unknown in terms of personalized learning?

Do you think more new teachers are willing to tackle the challenge of personalized learning?

Has parent perception of their students abilities changed? Do you think they feel more encouraged to come to school and if yes, why?

Is personalized learning more than just academic? It seems like it is more throughout the entire day, can you talk about that more?

You mention you felt both good and bad, what made you feel that way?

Is the teacher buy in still being considered 3 years in to implementation?

What was the fear from teachers regarding redesign or personalized learning, can you talk more about that?

Appendix C - Redesign Documents from Maverick Elementary

Communication Skills

- Social Media Responsibilities/What is appropriate
- Appropriate language for the situation with/without technology
- Verbal/Oral/Written Skills
- Know when face-to-face conversation v. through technology/social media/email
- How to talk to teacher v. peers (formal/informal)
- Public speaking/oral presentations/greeting and meeting others
- Rules of conversation/ phone etiquette
- Express feelings in an appropriate way
- Ask questions/formulate questions

Social Skills:

- Adapt to different Social Settings
- Understand Social Cues
- Reliability
- Responsible for materials
- Prompt
- How to ask for help/What to ask/Who to ask
- Speaking and listening
- Leadership skills
- People Skills

Proficient using Technology

- Knowledge of Google Suite
- Able to evaluate websites for credibility
- Typing

Life Skills

- Shake Hands Appropriately
- Look others in the eye
- Be their own advocate
- Hygiene
- How money Works (Budgeting, Saving, Check writing, counting money)
- Answering a phone
- How to read maps/road signs
- Nutrition/exercise/take care of yourself
- Cleaning/Laundry
- Basic sewing/Cooking
- Economics in the community
- Make decisions for yourself
- Willing to take appropriate risks
- Know it is ok to try and get it wrong

Resourceful:

- Know where they can get access to WiFi/Computer
- Classroom, School, Community

Working together:

- Shared responsibilities
- Working cooperatively
- Teamwork-Roles and Responsibilities

Problem Solving Skills:

- Independently or as a team
- Conflict resolution
- Think for yourself
- Creative
- Open-minded
- How can I accomplish my goals when things get difficult?

Organizational Skills:

- AVID
- Note-taking
- following directions
- Materials
- being prepared

Good Character

- Contributor
- Confident/Be yourself
- Imaginative
- Overcome obstacles
- Know difference between right and wrong
- Curious
- Empathy without enabling others
- Grateful
- honest/integrity
- Trustworthy
- Open-minded
- Approachable (Body Language/Facial expression cues)
- Reliable
- Initiative
- Inquisitive
- Uses manners (Not interrupting, use please and thank you)
- Responsible for actions (physical and verbal), class work
- Respectful of peers and adults
- Tolerant of others
- Hard Worker/Good work ethic
- Creative
- Out-of-the-box thinker
- Accountable
- Gratitude
- Adaptable
- Leadership Skills
- When to lead/when to follow
- Growth Mindset
- Positive
- Goal setter
- perseverance/grit

Broad Knowledge Base

Experience career avenues/find their strengths/passions/interests

- Let LHS students share their experiences
- Job Shadow
- Hands On Experiences
- Know what they want to be or know options
- Excited and Motivated for the next step

World View

- Current events
- Awareness outside their bubble

Proficient in 5th Grade Standards

- Write, use grammar correctly, edit
- Able to apply what they know to the real world

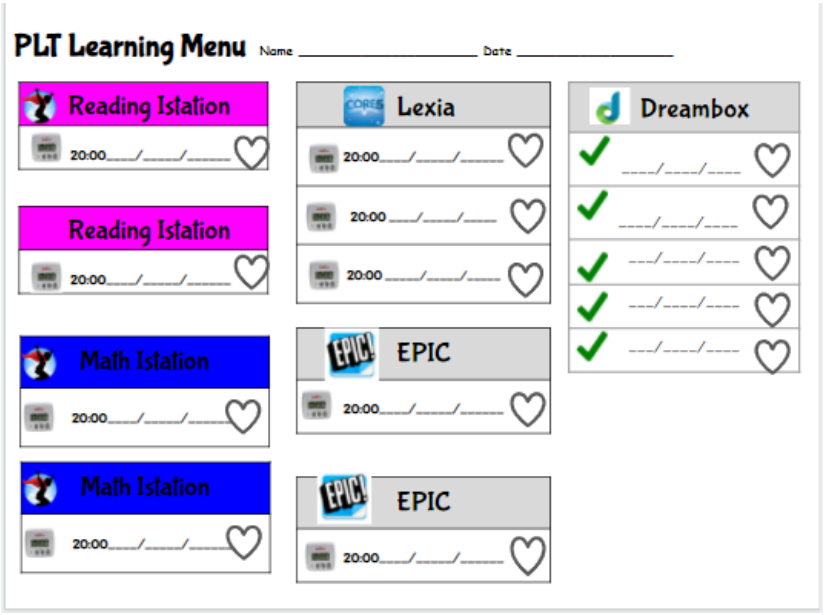
	• time management	• Ability to take/give constructive criticism without begin/taking it personally	

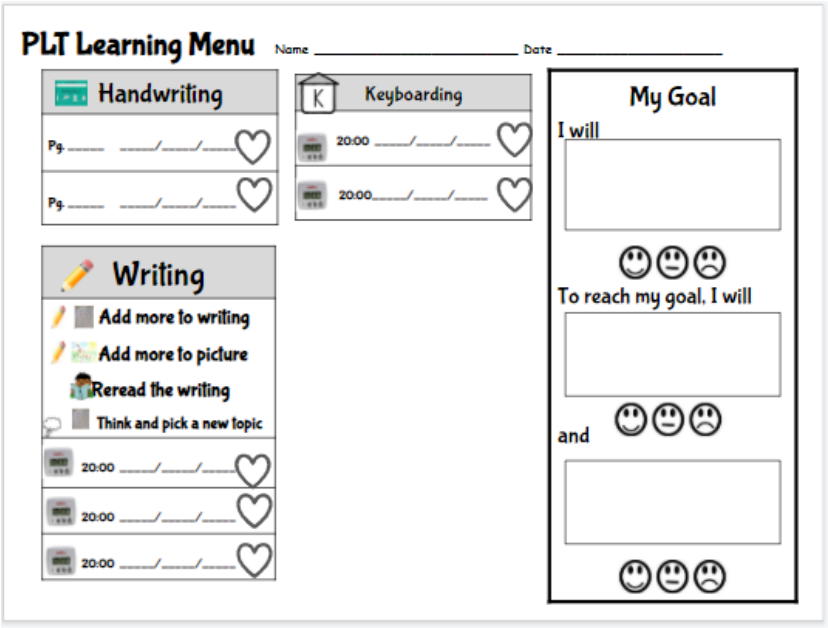
Vision Ideas for Redesign

Curriculum
Things that the program should include
progress monitoring for Tier 2&3
technology components
ELL Curriculum
Tiered learning resources
Science and Social Studies Integration
diagnostic and/or screening tools
Writing Component (ELA)
Grammar (ELA)
Foundational Skills (ELA)

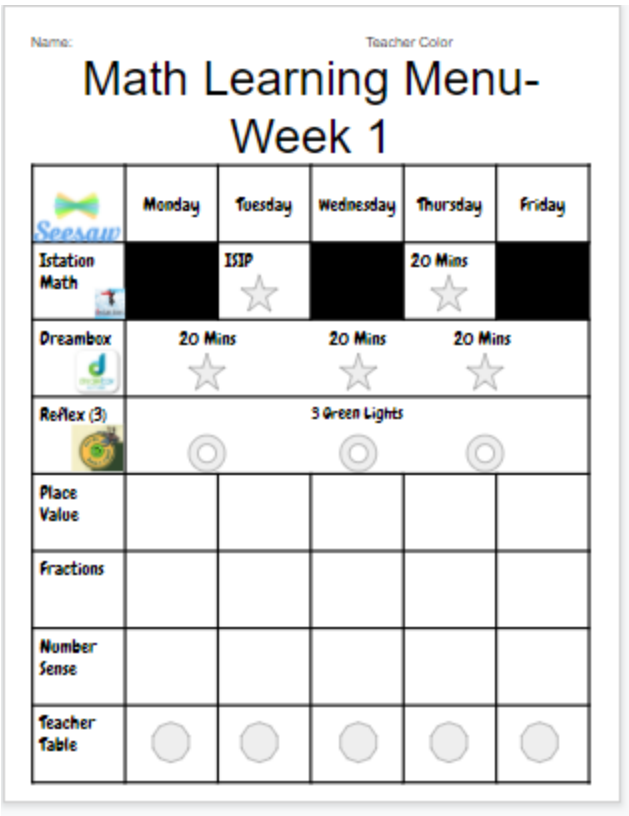
Curricula Wish List from Maverick Elementary Staff

Appendix D - Learning Menus





Second-Grade Learning Menu

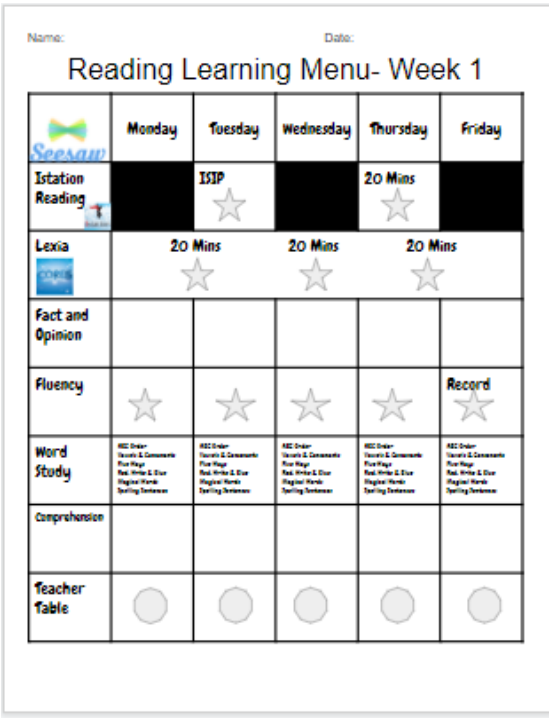


Name: Teacher Color

Math Learning Menu- Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Istation Math		ISIP		20 Mins	
Dreambox	20 Mins		20 Mins		20 Mins
Reflex (3)	3 Green Lights				
Place Value					
Fractions					
Number Sense					
Teacher Table					

Third-Grade Math Menu

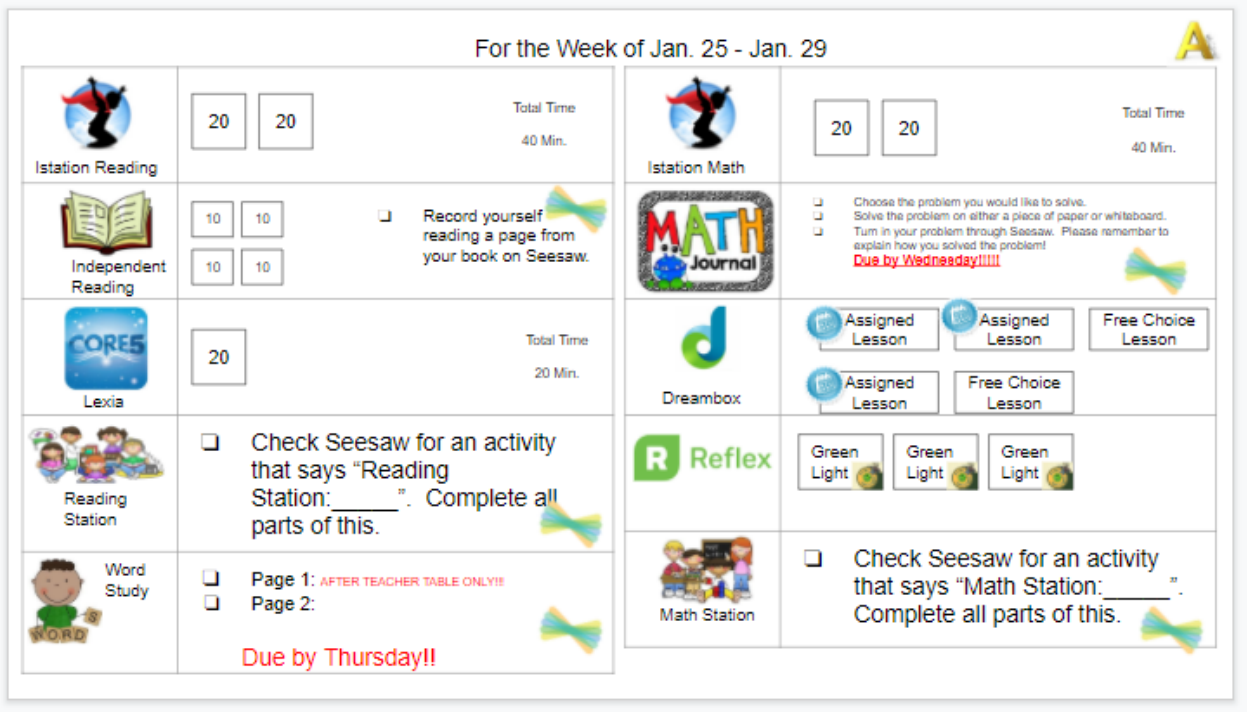


Name: Date:

Reading Learning Menu- Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Istation Reading		ISIP		20 Mins	
Lexia	20 Mins		20 Mins		20 Mins
Fact and Opinion					
Fluency					Record
Word Study					
Comprehension					
Teacher Table					

Third-Grade Reading Menu



Fifth-Grade Menu

Appendix E - Data Analysis

Systematic Process of Redesign	QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS: • Paras worked with kids so we could focus on our plan (Twisted Tuesday) – compare with schools meeting notes from this time period • Started looking at things that we thought were good or bad, we started looking at what we though would work for our community and what we knew wouldn't work for our community - compare with schools meeting notes from curriculum choices/pilot programs • We used what our coworkers already knew about certain programs to begin researching them • We got to change school to be what our kids needed instead of what generic kids need • We asked parents for their input but it was hard for them • Most of our parents have not had formal schooling, so it was hard for them to give feedback on what they wanted us to do • We have to do something different (Important idea – expand on this using notes from Flight Team meetings, community context, how teachers felt about what they had been doing previously at this school) • We wanted to personalize because of how low our kids are, we wanted our kids to be more successful than what we had previously been doing

	• Before we could do any of that we need to realize what we wanted out of personalized learning and what personalized learning even looked like. • There was a lot of trial and error at first. • It was kind of a crash and burn year because we didn't know what we were doing. • We formed committees to research different aspects of our plan • We came up with a list of skills and created our vision based on that. Maverick students will reach their dreams. • Teachers piloted programs • Some people were really into it. Some people were set in their ways and scared to try something different for fear of the unknown. • I am not going to lie, it was a hot mess. • A lot of us didn't understand redesign or agree per se. • It was hard to wrap their minds around this whole new kind of learning pathway where everyone is differentiated and everyone has a different assignment. • When someone comes at you with that, it is kind of crazy. • It just seemed like a lot of work. • It took us awhile, but eventually everyone got on board because we know this is what our kids needed. • I wasn't a big fan, not really sure about PL at first, but as the years have gone by I really enjoy how our set up is with PLT.

How it is going/Further implementation	• I feel like PL has taken over our day and I feel like it should have taken over part of our day like a supplement • I feel like we have tried to personalize our entire day (not just academics) and in doing that some of our efforts towards personalization have been lost. • They have a choice in everything. • I think PL is important, they need this. • I think the way we are implementing PL is not good. • With the way we are doing it, if they get stuck on a cycle (in Istation) then they miss out on all other content. • They might learn 8 words because they never move to another cycle. • We bit off more than we can chew by doing everything new altogether. Instead of doing what a lot of schools did and focus on this and then this and not redesigning every part of our day right away. • If we had slowed down it would have given us more of what we really wanted to do. • We spent a lot of time talking about non-academic things. How can we make the kids feel welcome and want to come to school? • We use a lot of the programs data to PL • They use a learning menu for math and reading. • We differentiate our reading and math menu based on the programs • Their time in the programs varies based on their level

	• A lot of collaboration between teachers (important idea, follow up in future interviews) • I feel like we are in this together, like sink or swim as a team.
Our community	• Language is a big thing • I would stand up in front of 20-23 kids and I have 5-6 kids that do not know my language, let alone the content being taught to them • We looked at what the kids truly need instead of things they don't understand. • They don't understand the content OR the language • I think parents were fearful of this because they didn't understand what we were trying to accomplish • Parents had never been to school with how we were trying to do it, or at all. • Giving kids experiences through the community: interview skills and the nurses coming in to show general health skills. These are things the parents can't provide because they have also never had these experiences. • Parents and kids are navigating 3 languages. Their dialect, English, and Spanish. They speak a Guatemalan dialect as their first language, they are learning Spanish to fit in with the community they live in, and they are learning English in order to attend a 'traditional school'. • I think you have to truly understand where our kids are at and who they are.

	• I would have given up anything to work with THESE kids. • Parents were so accustomed to hearing that their kids couldn't do things. • They heard that their kids were behind. • Parent cafes assisted parents in their learning as well. • Our kids are so grateful for everything you do. • They pretty much stay in their neighborhood, stay in their house, and if they do travel outside of town it isn't far. • A lot of our families don't speak English • A lot of our parents aren't educated, a lot of them don't know how to read or write. • Our parents don't understand grades, so that's why we got rid of grades and just give them data from the program.

Appendix F - IRB Documents

IRB Approval Letter

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | University Research Compliance Office

TO: Dr. J. Spencer Clark
Curriculum and Instruction
Bluemont Hall

Proposal Number: 10236

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 09/16/2020

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Teacher perception of the implementation of personalized learning."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 09/16/2020

EXPIRATION DATE: 09/15/2023

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

☒ There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
☐ There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Informed Consent Form

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

University Research

Informed Consent Template Form

comply@k-state.edu | 785-532-3224

If you are performing research involving human subjects, it is your responsibility to address the issue of informed consent. This template is intended to provide guidance for crafting an informed consent document. The Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB*) strongly* recommends that you model your consent form on this template. However, if you choose a different approach, it must contain at a minimum the same elements as this standard version. Language and terminology used in the consent form must be written at no more than the 8th grade level, so that the potential participant can clearly understand the project, how it is going to be conducted, and all issues that may affect his or her participation. In addition, please write the consent form in a manner that addresses your subjects directly instead of writing it in a manner that addresses the University Research Compliance Office directly. *Information on the important issue of informed consent can be found in 45 CRF 46 at* http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116. **Federal law mandates that all signed and dated informed consent forms be retained by the P.I. for at least three years following completion of the study.**

WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT: *There are limited instances where the requirement for a formal informed consent document may be waived or altered by the IRB.*

45 CFR 46 states that "An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects
if it

finds either: 1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or

2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for written consent is normally required outside of the research context."

If a study employs only questionnaires and surveys as the source of their data, it may generally be assumed that to answer and return the questionnaire is an appropriate and sufficient expression of free consent. However, there are circumstances that might call this assumption into question - e.g., teacher-student relationship between the investigator and the subject, etc. However, a statement should be included on the questionnaire or survey form indicating that participation of the subject is strictly voluntary, the length of time reasonably expected to complete the questionnaire or survey form, and that questions that make the participant uncomfortable may be skipped. Form Content

PROJECT TITLE: Full title of project. If possible, the title should be identical to that used in any funding/contract proposal.

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE/ EXPIRATION DATE: provided in the approval letter, must be in place before distributing to subjects.

LENGTH OF STUDY: Estimate the length of time the subject will be expected to participate.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Must be a regular member of the faculty.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Name, phone number and/or email address of the P.I.

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION*:* *For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are:* Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PROJECT SPONSOR: Funding/contract entity.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: Explain in lay terms that this is a research project, and why the research is being done.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: Explain in lay terms and in language understandable at the 8th grade level how the study is going to be conducted and what will be expected of participants. Tell participants if they will be audio or videotaped, if they will be paid, etc.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT: Explain any alternative procedures or treatments if applicable.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: Describe any foreseeable risks or discomforts from the study. If there are no known risks, make a statement to that effect.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Describe any *reasonably expected* benefits from the research to the participant or others from the research.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Explain how you plan to protect confidentiality.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: *In cases where more than minimal risk is involved.*

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: If minors or those who require the approval of a parent or guardian are participants, you should include a space for their consenting signature.

PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNAUTRE: Name of research participant and signature.

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE (PROJECT STAFF): Staff signature.

If any of the following content sections do not apply to your research, feel free to delete from the consent form.

PROJECT TITLE:

Teacher perception of the implementation of personalized learning

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:	08/12/2020	**PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:**	05/12/2021	**LENGTH OF STUDY:**	9 months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	J Spencer Clark

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):	Maureen Mulligan

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:	Maureen Mulligan

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:	

PROJECT SPONSOR:	

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this study is to understand teacher perception of personalized learning and what, if anything at all, is successful within personalized learning or challenging about personalized learning.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

Surveys and interviews of elementary school teachers will be conducted.

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES COLLECTED (Describe procedure, storage, etc.):

[Select a statement from the drop down menu

[Select a statement from the drop down menu

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

Teachers may feel uncomfortable reporting their true feelings about such a large district initiative.

BENEFITS ANTICPATED:

The benefits anticipated will be a true understanding of personalized learning and how to assist teachers in the implementation process.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

Teacher's responses will be kept confidential from administration and district leadership. Survey results will be used as a part of my dissertation, as well as interviews, but names and identifying factors will be kept confidential.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY

OCCURS? ☐Yes ☒ No **PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:**

_____ _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL SIGNATURE: | **DATE:**

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:			
PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:		**DATE:**	
WITNESS TO SIGNATURE: (PROJECT STAFF)		**DATE:**	

IRB Informed Consent