



# About FSG

**FSG is a mission-driven consulting firm supporting leaders in creating large-scale, lasting social change. Through strategy, evaluation, and research we help many types of actors—individually and collectively—make progress against the world’s toughest problems.**

Our teams work across all sectors by partnering with leading foundations, businesses, nonprofits, and governments in every region of the globe. We seek to reimagine social change by identifying ways to maximize the impact of existing resources, amplifying the work of others to help advance knowledge and practice, and inspiring change agents around the world to achieve greater impact. As part of our nonprofit mission, FSG also directly supports learning communities, such as the Collective Impact Forum, the Shared Value Initiative, and the Impact Hiring Initiative, to provide the tools and relationships that change agents need to be successful.

FSG has worked extensively on issues related to personalized learning, including work with schools, nonprofits, foundations, and government entities. We are particularly focused on accelerating the pace of learning and improvement within the personalized learning sector, on connecting the experiences of practitioners with those who hold power, and on understanding the conditions and supports needed for personalized learning to succeed and spread.

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FSG wishes to thank the teachers, students, and administrators of CICS West Belden for their transparency, willingness to be the subject of this case study, and good humor throughout the writing process. Specifically, FSG thanks Scott Frauenheim and Colleen Collins, who graciously told their stories, responded to requests, checked facts, and welcomed the FSG team to multiple site visits. FSG also wishes to thank the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, whose generous support and thought partnership made this series of case studies possible.

*All statements and conclusions, unless specifically attributed to another source, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the other organizations or references noted in this report.*

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## ABOUT THE SERIES: *JOURNEYS TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING*

In late 2016, FSG, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, began to explore how a series of case studies could support the adoption of quality personalized learning in schools and districts nationwide.

After an extensive scan of existing resources and dozens of interviews about what new research would help strengthen the sector, one theme came through with particular clarity—in talking about personalized learning, we as a field tend to focus on the visible structures and practices that define a school model. On one hand this focus is practical and useful. But, like an iceberg, what happens beneath the surface often matters more to school success. The challenge is that things like leadership, culture, processes, norms, and values—and most importantly, how these fit together—are hard to observe and hard to write about for an outside audience. That’s why these case studies are intentionally detailed: they trace how multiple factors came together, over time, to support transformational change in three school systems through personalized learning.

By emphasizing the journey, we hope these case studies can complement other, existing resources that spotlight practices and models. We’ve linked to many of these excellent resources when possible. Ultimately, our desire in writing these case studies is that readers will learn from subjects’ successes, avoid obstacles, gain the belief that change is possible, and think critically about how to approach transformation through personalized learning in their own schools or districts.

*Jeff Cohen*

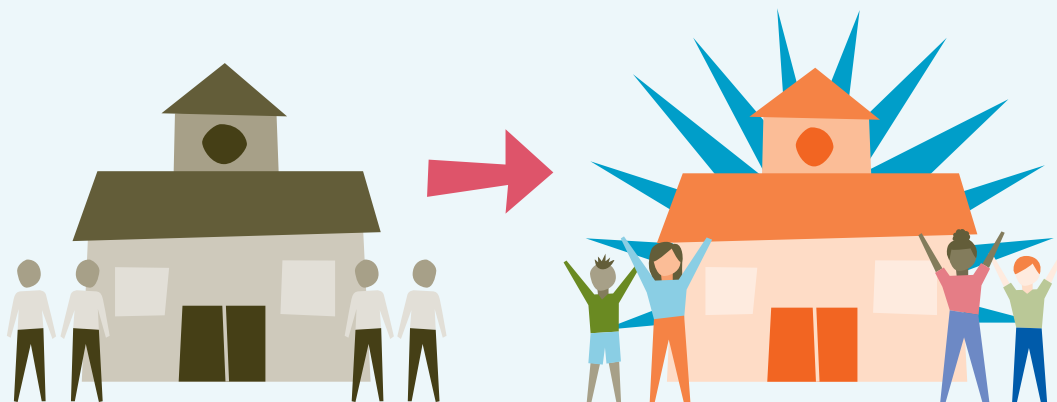
*David Phillips*

*Florian Schalliot*

*Matt Wilka*

The series highlights the journeys of two public school districts and one public charter school.

SUBJECT	PROFILE	KEY ELEMENTS OF THE JOURNEY
<b>HENRY COUNTY SCHOOLS (HENRY COUNTY, GA)</b>	<p>Large metro school district with urban/suburban/rural schools</p> <p>42,000 students</p> <p>54% Free/reduced lunch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision and plan for district-wide personalized learning</li> <li>• Phased rollout over many years, in support of core vision</li> <li>• Focused effort to win hearts and minds</li> <li>• Culture of continuous improvement and comfort making mistakes</li> <li>• Encouraging schools to adapt to their contexts (being “loose”) while adhering to key tenets (being “tight”)</li> </ul>
<b>MESA COUNTY VALLEY DISTRICT 51 (MESA COUNTY, CO)</b>	<p>Suburban public school district</p> <p>22,105 students</p> <p>51% Free/reduced lunch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted national expertise to local context</li> <li>• Buy-in across typically partisan divides</li> <li>• Multi-year foundation of culture and mindset change</li> <li>• Creating advocates and support across the district</li> <li>• Made progress despite limited funds</li> </ul>
<b>CICS WEST BELDEN (CHICAGO, IL)</b>	<p>Urban public charter school</p> <p>530 students</p> <p>90% Free/reduced lunch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust and culture as a precondition for transformation</li> <li>• Distributed leadership and buy-in</li> <li>• Importance of collaborative planning time</li> <li>• Staging implementation of personalized learning</li> <li>• Partnering for expertise at key moments</li> </ul>



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**TYPE OF SCHOOL:** Public charter school  
**LOCATION:** Belmont Cragin neighborhood, Chicago, Illinois  
**NUMBER OF STUDENTS:** 530  
**NUMBER OF TEACHERS:** ~25  
**STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:** 41% ELL, 90% FRL, 13% IEP

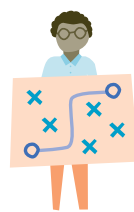
This case study provides a detailed account of how Chicago International Charter School (CICS) West Belden, a charter school in Chicago managed by Distinctive Schools, implemented personalized learning. The case study primarily describes the journey to personalized learning; more detail about CICS West Belden’s specific model can be found in the Learning Accelerator’s in-depth **CICS West Belden profile**.

By focusing closely on the journey, this case study shows how a single charter school transformed from a traditional, “no excuses” model to a more personalized approach. The details provided here can help other school, district, and school and charter management organization (SMO/CMO) leaders understand how to adopt personalized learning approaches at their schools.

## CICS West Belden’s personalized learning journey



**BUILDING THE FOUNDATION**



**PLANNING**



**PILOT**



**REFINEMENT & FULL IMPLEMENTATION**

TIMELINE	Summer — Fall 2013	Spring — Summer 2014	Fall 2014 — Spring 2015	Summer 2015 — Present
MAIN ACTIVITIES	CICS West Belden created a culture of respect, innovation, and self-direction to lay the groundwork for personalized learning.	CICS West Belden spent nearly a full year planning the many details (e.g., scheduling, class structure, technology) that would be used in a few pilot classrooms. During this time, teachers were encouraged to test small changes (e.g., blended learning, Edmodo).	CICS West Belden launched personalized learning in two classrooms, using them as an opportunity to apply theory to practice, learn from successes and failures, and generate excitement for the rest of the school.	CICS West Belden expands and refines its approach to personalized learning, drawing from its experience in previous years.



## Lessons from CICS West Belden's Journey

- 1 Culture as a precondition:** CICS West Belden invested up front in building a culture that valued teachers and instilled trust among staff members. This work was hard, slow, and absolutely essential to the transformation that followed.
- 2 Build it with them, not for them:** Network and school leaders, teachers, and students all played substantive roles in designing CICS West Belden's personalized learning approach. Teachers in particular were "co-pilots" for every step of the school's journey.
- 3 It's all about time:** Extra planning time for teachers helped them shift to personalized learning while reducing their stress and workload.
- 4 Just do it, but not all at once:** CICS West Belden's leadership planned carefully but was willing to take risks and try new things in the best interests of students. At the same time, CICS West Belden broke the personalized learning implementation process into stages, ensuring that each piece of the model was well-established before proceeding.
- 5 Partner for expertise:** CICS West Belden drew from the experience and expertise of other personalized learning schools and partner organizations, adapting lessons to its own context.

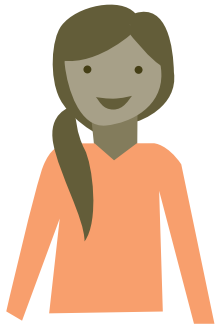


## INTRODUCTION

Nine miles from Chicago's downtown Loop, in the working class neighborhood of Belmont Cragin, CICS West Belden sits in an old brick building that was formerly a Catholic school.

At first glance, the school looks fairly traditional: an unassuming exterior, aging hallways, and regular classrooms. A closer look, however, reveals that it is no traditional school. Rather than focusing on the adult in the room, the classrooms have no clear center of attention. Some students sit at tables and work collaboratively, others receive small group instruction from a teacher, and others sprawl out on the carpet, focusing intently on a book, worksheet, or tablet. The doors between classrooms have been removed, and students move frequently across rooms, varying their activities and working with classmates of different grade levels. Conversations across the classrooms, among groups of students and between students and teachers, create a constant hum, resembling a college campus center.

One classroom features a discussion of an upcoming lesson.



"Tests are coming up, and we want to teach our kids to have different coping methods for stress. We will tell them that it's okay to be stressed, but that they have to understand how to handle it. It's important to be able to say, 'I can walk away from this. I can calm myself down. I don't need to stress about it or do something that's going to make it worse.'"

The conversation then turns to how to plan a lesson for a mixed-grade classroom.

"It's a big gap, not just from middle school to second grade or even kindergarteners, but even within middle school. So you really have to break it down, and that just teaches you to really analyze whom you're teaching. I know for the little kids, I might have to pull them aside to explain or ask questions to make sure they comprehend what we're talking about."





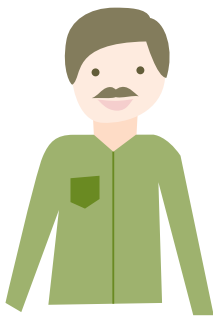
These are wise words about differentiation coming from any teacher. But this conversation actually took place between two 8th grade students in CICS West Belden’s “Bulldogs Belong” program. As these students prepared a lesson on building social and emotional skills like stress management for small groups of K–7 grade students, they themselves learned skills related to leadership, instruction, and self-direction.

CICS West Belden is proud of its current learning model and the progress it has made. Only a few years ago, each minute of the day was tightly scheduled, and teachers focused on complying with strict standards. While standardized test scores were high, morale was low, student engagement was lacking, and achievement was stagnating. The transformation from traditional instruction to personalization was a complex, lengthy, and at times messy journey. Yet it holds lessons for anyone interested in exploring school transformation through personalized learning.

## THE “OLD” CICS WEST BELDEN

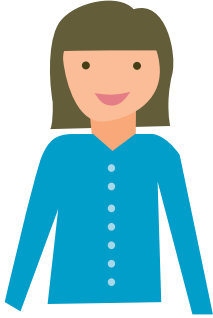
Before 2011, CICS West Belden was a high-performing, no-excuses charter school. But teachers questioned whether students were acquiring deeper knowledge and skills, and staff morale was low.

Before 2011, CICS West Belden was managed by a different school management organization. Standardized test scores were historically strong—for example, in 2011–2012, students placed in the 73rd and 76th national percentiles in math and reading on the NWEA MAP assessment. But a focus on tests came with a rigid school culture. Schedules were highly detailed and prescribed students’ place and activities during each minute of the day. A strict code of conduct discouraged conversation outside the classroom. Teachers were evaluated according to a meticulous list of criteria (e.g., the number of wall posters displaying a positive message). Neither teachers nor students had much freedom—or incentive—to deviate from the norm.



“It was more traditional,” recalled one teacher. “There were desks in rows, and there was a big focus on behavior management. If a student whispered, he or she got in trouble. It was all very compliance-driven.”

As a result, many teachers questioned whether the school was setting students up for long-term success. Teacher Colleen Collins recalled that:



"Students were well-behaved and on-task, but their engagement was low. They had a lot of trouble articulating learning goals. They came here every day and did what they were told to do."

Teachers worried about students' learning and development, but felt disconnected from the leaders of the network and had little recourse to raise concerns. "I couldn't even tell you who was in the leadership," said one teacher. As a result, teacher morale dropped and turnover increased. "It felt like people were leaving every week," one teacher recalled.

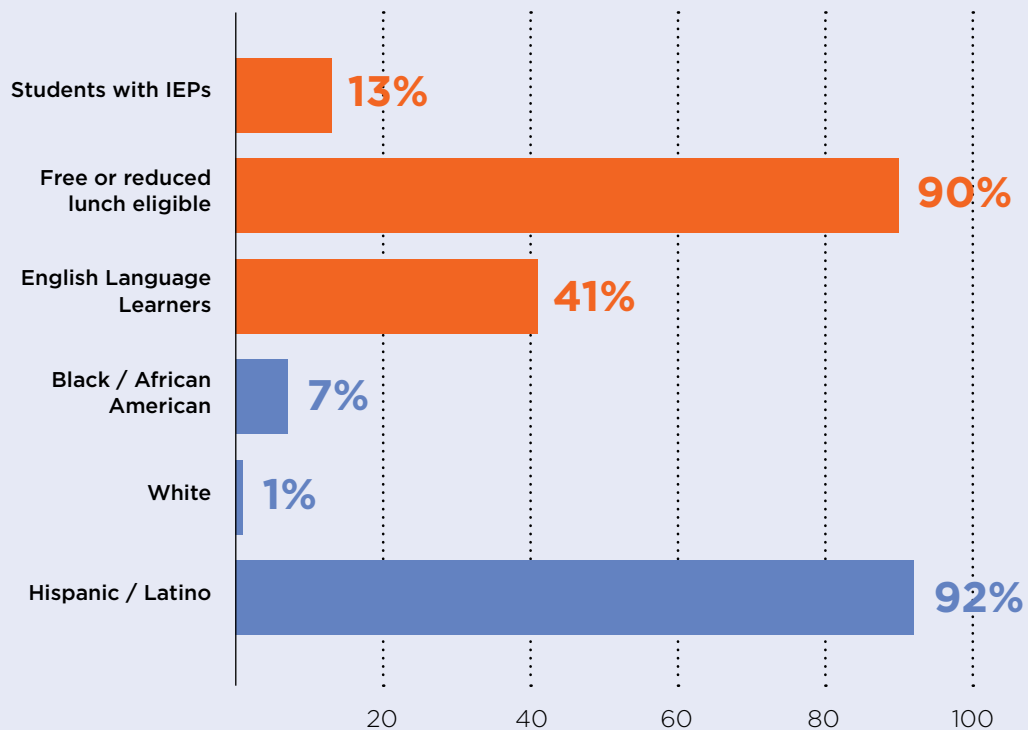


## About CICS West Belden

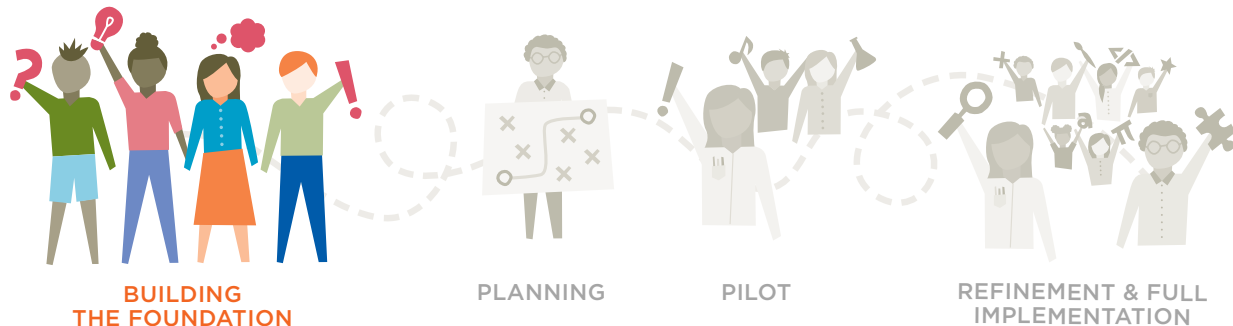
Founded in 2002, CICS West Belden is a public charter school now operated by Distinctive Schools, a school management organization (SMO) with three other schools in the Chicago area. Distinctive Schools was founded in partnership with Chicago International Charter School (CICS), which holds a charter from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and currently manages 14 public charter schools.

### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

CICS is located in Belmont Cragin, a historically working-class neighborhood halfway between downtown Chicago and O'Hare airport. Many of CICS West Belden's 530 students live near the school, and the school's demographics largely mirror those of the community.



## BUILDING THE FOUNDATION



CICS West Belden created a culture of respect, innovation, and self-direction to lay the groundwork for personalized learning.

## A NEW SMO AND A CO-CREATED VISION

When the contract with the old SMO expired, an enterprising education expert took a substantial—but calculated—risk by taking over operations. He began by fostering a culture of inclusiveness and co-creation, which became a key enabler of CICS West Belden’s transformation.

CICS West Belden’s transformation began with an opportunity. In 2011, the contract between Chicago International Charter School (CICS) and the previous management organization expired. To launch innovative new SMOs, CICS leaders recruited entrepreneurial educators like Dr. Joseph Wise, founder of Distinctive Schools. Wise brought significant experience as a former teacher, business leader, superintendent of Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Florida, and board member of Northwest Evaluation Association. Despite ideas that Wise and the other Distinctive Schools co-founders offered for transforming learning, including technology and neuroscience-backed instruction, CICS leaders knew that Distinctive Schools was still a new organization with no schools under management and a small, two-person staff. They persisted nonetheless, eventually recruiting Wise and the other co-founders to manage CICS West Belden and two other Chicago charter schools. That decision represented a substantial risk for both sides: CICS hired an untested SMO, and Distinctive Schools accepted schools despite not having a fully defined instructional model. Doubts remained, but both sides had confidence in their shared commitment to serving students in a deeper, more meaningful way.

In the summer of 2011, with three schools now under the Distinctive Schools umbrella, Wise and his team interviewed each staff member to build relationships and make hiring decisions for the coming year. Conversations at CICS West Belden, however, surfaced a common theme: time and again, Wise listened as teachers voiced frustration with the previous SMO's management style and shared ideas for transforming their school. He soon realized that the faculty held tremendous strengths and a desire for change, but he knew that change would only succeed if teachers were participants in the process.

This principle of co-creation and collaboration informed the new vision for Distinctive Schools:

**“Commit, Create, Collaborate.”**

- A group of adults must **commit** to a mission of achieving better results for students.
- This shared commitment forms the bedrock upon which adults can **create** new ideas, models, and practices to teach students in the best way possible.
- Adults must continue to **collaborate** as they test, tweak, and improve these creations in service of student learning.

In its first two years under Distinctive Schools, CICS West Belden enacted changes gradually. Students and teachers were still accustomed to the old methods of teaching and learning, and Wise knew that too much change could backfire. He emphasized that additional changes would come only from a clear desire from teachers, and would aim to give greater flexibility and autonomy to teachers and school leaders. These shifts included extra planning time and the ability to experiment with technology. Although the school only moved part way toward Wise's emerging vision for personalization during those first two years, the culture had stabilized, teachers felt empowered and supported CICS West Belden's direction, and the school seemed ready to take its next leap.

## INTRODUCTION TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Distinctive Schools gathered ideas from inside the organization and from experts in education to launch CICS West Belden's journey to personalized learning.

In the spring of 2013, Wise asked Scott Frauenheim, the director of student services at Distinctive Schools and a former teacher and dean, to be the new director of CICS West Belden. Described by staff members as the “Energizer bunny of education,” Frauenheim brought big ideas about school along with an affable and engaging demeanor. He was a good match.

Soon after taking the job, Frauenheim attended Chicago Public Education Fund's **Summer Design Program**, which offers schools the “space, time, and expertise to design innovative solutions to some of their most pressing challenges.” The program helped Frauenheim take two important steps: define the core problem he hoped to solve, and understand the solution he would spend years pursuing.

Numerous ideas came together. Wise, Frauenheim, and other leaders debated issues such as student agency and tech integration. “We needed to get the kids to emote,” Wise remembered, but he was unsure how to do so. At the end of the program, participants were challenged to pitch their core problem in less than two minutes to a packed audience. The minor terror of a public pitch pushed the team to focus their many disconnected ideas.

“It was the most frustrating process ever,” Frauenheim recalled, “but it pushed us so hard to think about what our true problem was and what we were trying to solve for.”



By the end, they boiled their schools’ problems down to three components: low student engagement, insufficient teacher readiness, and stagnant growth.

The next step was to develop a structure for reshaping teaching and learning. Distinctive Schools’ leaders studied the Personalized Learning Working Definition (PLWD), recently developed by the Gates Foundation. This concrete framework struck a chord. “We had so many different avenues we could go down, and it just felt like something we could ground ourselves in,” Frauenheim explained. For the first time, the team had an organizing framework for their model.

## CULTURE AS A FIRST STEP

**To implement personalized learning, Frauenheim first focused on building a strong culture that valued teachers’ contributions and ideas.**

After the Summer Design Program, Frauenheim’s enthusiasm for personalized learning led Distinctive Schools to choose CICS West Belden to be the first school in the network to pilot the new learning model. CICS West Belden also became part of LEAP Innovations’ inaugural Breakthrough Schools program, which provided grant funding, workshops, and expertise throughout the early stages of the journey. As Frauenheim prepared for the 2013–14 year, he recalled that he wanted nothing more than to say: “Here’s what we’re going to do. This is what it looks like. Here are the ‘look-fors’ and the expectations for professional development.” Wise and others, however, advised that they move more slowly and carefully. They decided that importing a personalized learning model wholesale from another school would not work for CICS West Belden and in fact threatened the ethos of personalization.



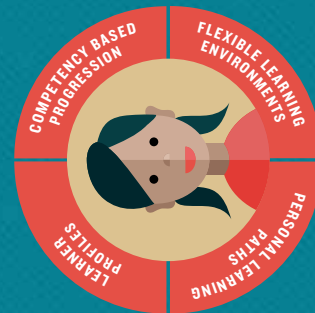
# The Personalized Learning Working Definition

## A WORKING DEFINITION OF PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Personalized learning seeks to accelerate student learning by tailoring the instructional environment—what, when, how and where students learn — to address the individual needs, skills and interests of each student. Students can take ownership of their own learning, while also developing deep, personal connections with each other, their teachers and other adults.

### GETTING STARTED

This is a working definition of personalized learning that is intended as a tool to help educators design student-centered instructional models. These attributes and tactics were developed from the practices of a number of leading schools. They are grouped together to offer a comprehensive view of the possible. No one school fully employs each of these today. Start where you want and progress from there.





### LEARNER PROFILES

*Each student has an up-to-date record of his/her individual strengths, needs, motivations and goals.*

### STRENGTHS & NEEDS

How might we capture each student's current level of mastery within each of the dimensions that we believe are essential for his/her success (e.g. academic standards, skills)? In what ways might we highlight a student's gaps to draw attention to their individual needs?

### MOTIVATIONS

How might we support each student in understanding and articulating his/her interests and aspirations?

### GOALS

How might we support each student in setting personalized goals within each dimension that we believe is essential for his/her success? In what ways and how frequently might we ask students to reflect on their progress and adjust their goals accordingly?

### INFORMATION & FEEDBACK

In what ways and how frequently might we provide timely, actionable information and feedback to each student? How might we also provide that information to their teachers and families?



### COMPETENCY BASED PROGRESSION

*Each student's progress toward clearly-defined goals is continually assessed. A student advances and earns credit as soon as he/she demonstrates mastery.*

### ONGOING ASSESSMENT

In what ways and how frequently might we assess each student's level of mastery within the dimensions that we believe are essential for his/her success?

### INDIVIDUAL ADVANCEMENT

How might we enable an individual student to pursue new learning experiences as soon as he/she has mastered the prerequisite content? How might students attain course credit based on mastery?



### PERSONAL LEARNING PATHS

*All students are held to clear, high expectations, but each student follows a customized path that responds and adapts based on his/her individual learning progress, motivations and goals.*

### PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLANS

How might we ensure that each student has a learning plan that takes into account his/her strengths, needs, motivations and goals? How might a student's plan respond and adapt to his/her changing needs?

### VARIED LEARNING EXPERIENCES (MODALITIES)

What types of experiences (e.g. complex tasks, experiential learning) might our students need to achieve their goals? What are the ideal modalities (e.g. small group instruction, one-on-one tutoring, online learning) to deliver these experiences?

### STUDENT OWNERSHIP

In what ways might we enable students to develop and manage their own learning path?



### FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

*Student needs drive the design of the learning environment. All operational elements—staffing plans, space utilization and time allocation—respond and adapt to support students in achieving their goals.*

### OPERATIONAL ALIGNMENT

How might we deliver all of the learning experiences that our students need, with the resources we have available? How might we build flexibility into our design to enable us to respond and adapt to changing student needs?

### STAFFING & ROLES

In what ways might we structure teacher and other educator roles to support our instructional vision? How might we build flexibility into these roles to enable our staff to respond and adapt to changing student needs?

### SPACE UTILIZATION

How might we design our physical space to support our instructional vision? Might we use spaces beyond our walls, and if so, how?

### TIME ALLOCATION

In what ways might we maximize the time each student spends pursuing his/her goals? How might our student and staff schedules respond and adapt to changing student needs?

### GROUPING & CONNECTIONS

How might we group students to enable the varied learning experiences we hope to offer? How might the way we group students respond and adapt to their changing needs? In what ways might we facilitate personal connections between students, and between students and adults?

Frauenheim thought about how to create a model of personalized learning that was appropriate for the school and that teachers would accept and celebrate. Mandating a switch, he reflected, would undermine teachers' involvement in the process and the model. Rather, a plan that treated teachers as co-creators and grew from CICS West Belden's culture would put staff members in a better position to adopt, refine, and retain personalized learning approaches.

Building enthusiasm for personalized learning among the teachers was no easy task and would require significant time. Many teachers at CICS West Belden were still used to the compliance-driven culture of the previous operator, and letting go was a challenge. For teachers to be creative and open-minded toward personalized learning, Frauenheim knew that they first had to want to explore new ideas and believe it was their responsibility to do so. In the fall of 2013, therefore, he devoted himself to a single step: creating a culture in which new ideas—and those who proposed them—were truly valued. The frame of personalized learning was not even raised for discussion until later in the process.

To transform the culture at CICS West Belden, Frauenheim, along with by-then assistant director Colleen Collins and other school leaders, employed a wide range of approaches. These ranged from large changes in leadership decision-making to small acts of acknowledgment.

- **Shout outs:** Praised teachers for small acts (e.g., cheering up a fellow staff member) and large acts (e.g., covering for another teacher) alike in staff meetings, team emails, and in one-on-one conversations.
- **Jeans days:** Offered teachers the option to wear more casual clothing on certain days (sometimes as a reward).
- **Parking spots:** Awarded the most coveted spot in the staff parking lot to a teacher who had made a uniquely positive contribution to the school.
- **Temperature reads:** Conducted regular check-ins (individual or group) on how teachers were feeling (e.g., positive, overwhelmed, discouraged, etc.).
- **Regular staff meetings:** Held weekly leadership meetings with staff (often including shout outs, temperature reads, etc.).
- **School visits:** Conducted occasional teacher visits to other schools that were experimenting with innovative models.
- **Personalized professional development:** Helped staff members understand, set, and achieve individualized development goals and provided flexibility to do so by tailoring standard professional development sessions (e.g., allowing veteran teachers to skip introductory sessions).
- **Inclusive decision making:** Included teachers in all school-wide decisions (e.g., curriculum changes, schedule changes, textbook adoption) and made decisions to emphasize their preferences (even against the preferences of the SMO head office on occasion).

Although none of these actions changed the culture alone, hundreds of small steps slowly led to a positive—even fun—atmosphere, and Frauenheim and Collins made clear that they valued teachers' input and contributions. One teacher remembered: "You'd get a random email from [Frauenheim] on something good he noticed. The little rewards and incentives...just developed that form of trust." That trust allowed CICS West Belden's teachers to play a more active role in school-wide decisions and achieve greater general satisfaction. Another teacher recalled:

"I feel like we CAN reach out at any time and we don't feel afraid to speak out if things don't work. I think we have more voice than we ever had before."



Ultimately, these changes allowed the teachers to discover, explore, and embrace personalized learning.



## SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

### As CICS West Belden's culture changed, the school took additional steps to prepare for personalized learning.

In the spring of 2014, more than six months into the intensive work of culture building, Frauenheim and Collins began hosting professional development “retreat days” outside of the school. These full-day events allowed staff members to discuss broader changes at the school. Frauenheim and Collins set the agenda, but they asked teachers to drive the conversation to encourage both collective brainstorming and the freedom to raise ideas to improve the school. As teacher engagement increased, Frauenheim and Collins lightly guided the conversations toward personalized learning. For example, in one session, Frauenheim asked teachers why the students themselves could not be part of Distinctive Schools’ vision to “Commit, Create, Collaborate.” In response, teachers generated ideas for a more student-centered approach to learning. When teachers brought up new ideas, Frauenheim and Collins tried to frame them in the language of personalized learning. For example, when a teacher mentioned wanting students to be more engaged in class, Frauenheim initiated a discussion about student agency.

Behind the scenes, Frauenheim and Collins made several strategic decisions to support the shift toward personalized learning. In the spring of 2014, CICS West Belden won a \$100,000 planning grant from LEAP Innovations, funded in part by Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC). CICS West Belden also joined LEAP’s **Pilot Network**. These opportunities provided funding, coaching, and peer networking during the personalized learning pilot in the 2014–15 school year. Frauenheim and Collins also led site visits to nearby LEAP partner schools that had already made classroom-level shifts toward personalization. Gradually, teachers began to see personalized learning as a tangible and achievable goal.

As CICS West Belden’s teachers became increasingly vocal and enthusiastic about changing their classroom model, Frauenheim and Collins took the leap to formally commit to personalized learning and recruited teachers for a pilot. They began by talking individually with some elementary school teachers who had been experimenting with classroom technology, explaining the new grant and gauging their interest in becoming pilot teachers for the next school year. Having worked so hard to foster enthusiasm for personalized learning, Frauenheim and Collins expected a positive reception. Yet while some teachers were excited, others declined to participate. Although teachers were largely happy with the changes in culture, many were reluctant to change the instructional model. Frauenheim and Collins tried to reassure teachers that they would take the journey with them and that participation would not bring any special accountability. However, some teachers remained unconvinced: one even told Frauenheim he was “crazy.” Eventually, Frauenheim and Collins found teachers who were willing to participate in the pilot, but the mixed response gave them pause. The reluctance they encountered reinforced the notion that whole-school transformation would be harder than they initially thought and that the work of building teachers’ enthusiasm would continue in the months and years to come.



## The Value of Partnerships

CICS West Belden’s journey benefited from a series of formal and informal partnerships. From the outset, Wise and Frauenheim understood the tremendous experimentation and innovation within the field of education. While they wanted to develop a model that fit CICS West Belden, they also wanted teachers to see and apply the best ideas from other schools across the country. Below is a partial list of the partners that CICS West Belden worked with during its multi-year transformation toward personalized learning.

**LEAP INNOVATIONS** is a Chicago-based nonprofit that helps schools refine and improve their educational models. LEAP provided considerable support to CICS West Belden by including the school in its first cohort of Breakthrough Schools, which helped design and launch CICS West Belden’s personalized model, and subsequently in LEAP’s Pilot Network program, which helped to select quality educational software programs and train teachers to use them. In addition to coaching and consultation to develop the school’s personalized learning model, LEAP also co-funded and administered a planning grant for CICS West Belden of \$100,000 (1.8% of total budget) in 2014–15 and an implementation grant of \$263,000 (4.6% of total budget) in 2015–16. Though CICS West Belden was committed to switching to personalized learning even without additional funding, these funds accelerated the transition.

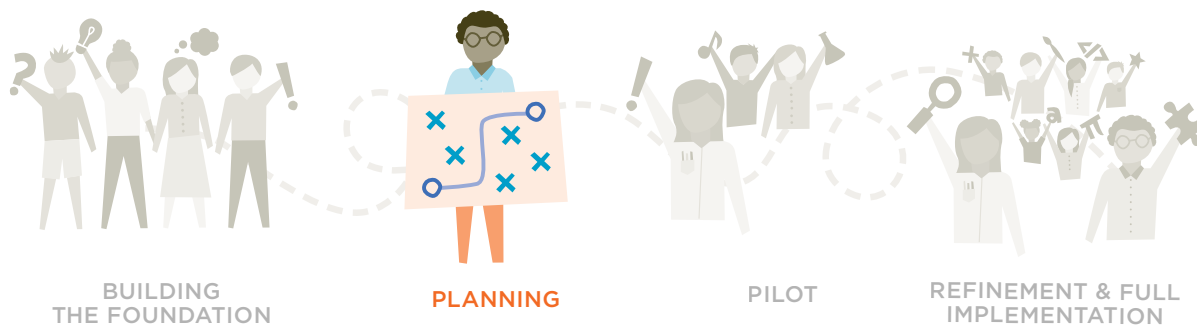
**NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHALLENGES (NGLC) AND THE CHICAGO PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND** were two prominent co-funders and partners, along with LEAP. As a national funder and network that provides resources to educators who are reimagining public education, NGLC brought a valuable mix of funding, connections, and best practices. A local venture philanthropy organization, the Chicago Public Education Fund, complemented NGLC’s national reach with local expertise and played a key role in the Summer Design Program as well as the Breakthrough Schools initiative.

**OTHER PERSONALIZED LEARNING SCHOOLS** in Wisconsin and elsewhere provided CICS West Belden staff members with the opportunity to observe and understand what personalized learning looked like in practice. Through the 2015–16 school year, CICS West Belden staff members visited more than a dozen schools, and teachers reflected that these visits were central to the transformation’s success.

**FURMAN BROWN** is the founder of Generation Schools Network and an expert on changing school master schedules to decrease student-to-teacher ratios and improve operational strategies. Thanks to an introduction from LEAP, CICS West Belden worked closely with Brown in 2014–15 to create a new schedule that gave teachers 90 minutes or more of planning time each day. In the process, Brown also became an advisor to Frauenheim, helping him work through other pivotal moments in the transformation process.

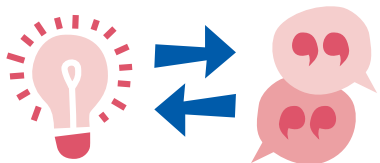
**SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS** is a public charter school network and a pioneer of personalized learning. Through its Summit Learning Program, Summit trains and equips schools to adopt a personalized model at no cost to the school. CICS West Belden, as well as the other schools in Distinctive Schools’ network in Chicago, joined the Summit Learning Program in 2016–17, adopting their model for their 6th–8th grades.

# PLANNING



CICS West Belden spent nearly a full year planning the many details of the pilot classrooms while experimenting with small changes.

With the pilot team chosen for the 2014–15 school year, Frauenheim and Collins began working quickly to prepare for implementation. During the spring and summer of 2014, their main activities included the following.



## SHARING AND DISSECTING THE PLWD

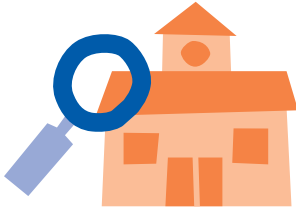
**During retreat days, Frauenheim and Collins shared with teachers the Personalized Learning Working Definition (PLWD), which formed the guiding framework for CICS West Belden’s implementation of personalized learning.**

Frauenheim and Collins used the Personalized Learning Working Definition (PLWD; see page 13) as the guiding framework for CICS West Belden’s approach to personalized learning. After a few extended planning discussions, however, they realized that changing to each aspect of the PLWD all at once would be overwhelming. To make this transition more manageable, the team decided to sequence the PLWD’s four elements: flexible learning environments, learner profiles, competency-based progression, and personalized learning paths. CICS West Belden decided to address flexible learning environments first, as it felt the most concrete.

In an early brainstorm activity, Frauenheim and Collins asked teachers to close their eyes and imagine how a flexible learning environment would equip a diverse set of students to learn in their preferred ways. Teachers reported that the activity forced them to think specifically about how their personalized learning classroom would actually feel. Frauenheim, Collins, and the teachers then took a trip to IKEA and a paint store, completing a series of classroom makeovers with funds from the LEAP-NGLC planning grant. While replacing classroom furniture and choosing vibrant paint colors was superficial on one hand, it proved tremendously important for breaking from the norm and injecting a sense of fun and ownership into the shift to personalized learning.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See more about CICS West Belden’s approach to [personalized learning environments](#).

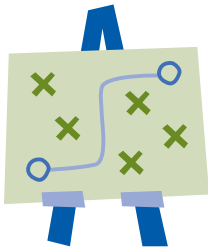




## CONDUCTING ADDITIONAL SITE VISITS

**Frauenheim and Collins took teachers to additional schools to study personalized learning models and help teachers understand how they might apply to CICS West Belden.**

Throughout the planning process, Frauenheim and Collins continued to take teachers on site visits, which took on new layers of meaning once teachers began planning for implementation themselves. But most of all, the visits showed teachers the extent of the change that was possible. Some schools they visited had fewer resources than CICS West Belden, yet had made substantial changes in the classroom. CICS West Belden's teachers learned more specific lessons, too. At one visit to West Allis, Wisconsin, CICS West Belden's pilot teachers saw a personalized learning path in action and gained valuable insights into classroom practices by learning how to gather and use NWEA data to group students by mastery. At the same time, the staff at West Allis also cautioned the visitors not to simply replicate its model wholesale, but rather to adopt components that were appropriate to their school's context.



## TECHNICAL PLANNING

**With guidance from the PLWD and lessons from other schools, Frauenheim, Collins, and the pilot teachers worked together to envision what personalized learning would look like in their context.**

To sort out the countless details involved in preparing the pilot, Frauenheim and Collins scheduled four retreat days within a two-week period where the group made the following decisions:

**Pilot structure:** Given teacher interest and early experimentation by the elementary teachers, group members decided to launch the pilot with students from one class in each grade from 1st to 5th.

To encourage more tailored student instruction, they chose to create multi-age classrooms: one contained about 90 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders, and another contained about 60 4th and 5th graders.<sup>2</sup> With more students, teachers could group them more precisely. In addition, with three general education teachers in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade class (and two in the 4th and 5th grade class), teachers would be able to work with individuals or groups of students who needed extra support while allowing others to work independently. This format also made it easier for English Language Learner (ELL) and Special Education (SpED) instructors to “push in” to existing classrooms, rather than pull students out, a method that had previously caused students to fall further behind and be singled out among their peers.

To provide additional support to the teachers in the pilot classrooms and to reinforce teacher culture, Frauenheim ensured that each of the pilot classrooms included one teacher with considerable experience and expertise to serve as an official “mentor.”<sup>3</sup> Inhabiting an old leased building, CICS West Belden had little flexibility for major renovations, but staff soon decided to **remove the doors** between adjacent rooms, facilitating mixed-age classes and creating a visual symbol of the new way of learning.

Frauenheim and Collins wanted to foster a spirit of exploration and innovation in teachers outside of the pilot classrooms as well. They challenged those teachers to come up with the next wave of ideas and gave them increased autonomy over practices such as room configurations, grouping arrangements, and instructional pacing. Frauenheim and Collins also knew that names mattered; instead of “pilot”

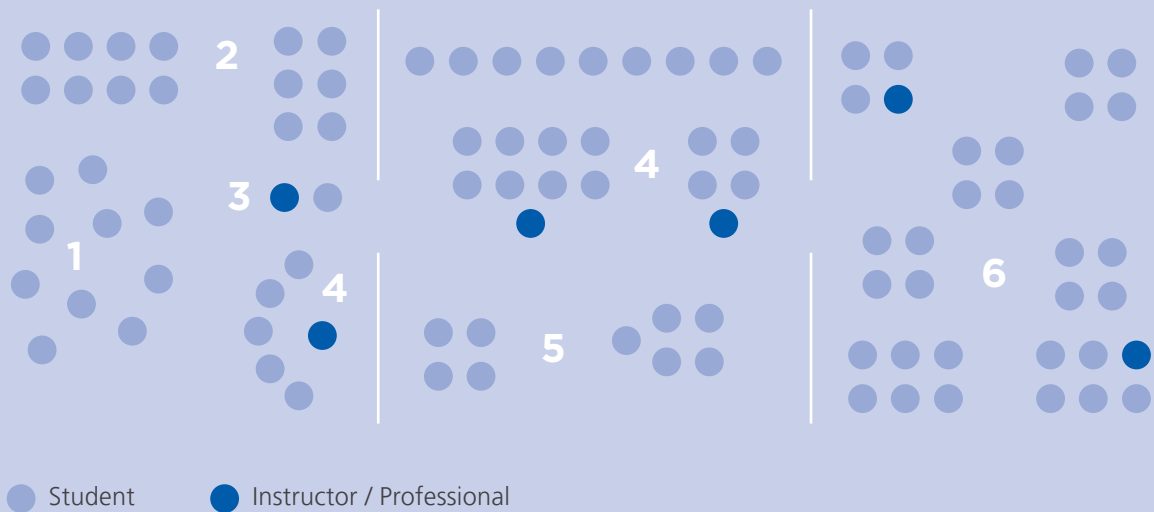
<sup>2</sup> See more about CICS West Belden's approach to **multi-age classrooms**.

<sup>3</sup> See more about CICS West Belden's approach to **collaborative teaching**.

classrooms, the personalized learning rooms became the “NGLC classrooms” (named after the grant), while the remaining classrooms were dubbed “innovation labs.”

**Technology:** Computer and information technology became an important, enabling component of the personalized learning pilot by allowing teachers to customize learning more than they could through offline instruction alone. Frauenheim and Wise had long believed in the importance of technology in the classroom, and CICS West Belden’s staff members were quite excited to introduce devices. Frauenheim was careful, however, not to overwhelm teachers and students or to distract them from the instructional components of personalized learning by pushing devices too early in the pilot. As a result, the school purchased an iPad for each student in the pilot classrooms (funded by grants), with the understanding that they would not be used until later in the school year. LEAP Innovations also supported CICS West Belden to vet ed-tech software for efficacy before purchasing it for the pilot.

## CICS West Belden Multi-age Classroom Setup (1st–3rd, Illustrative)



- 1 Students read / work independently
- 2 Students work independently on computers
- 3 SpED student receives 1-on-1 support
- 4 Teacher / paraprofessionals provide small group discussion
- 5 Students work collaboratively in small groups
- 6 Students work in small groups with rotating teacher / professional support

**Schedule:** To make personalized learning fit within the school day, the team made significant changes to the schedule. Multi-age classrooms required aligning schedules among the different grades, and those students still needed to interact with their peers in the non-pilot classrooms during enrichment and lunch. Frauenheim also wanted to ensure that teachers had plenty of time for lesson planning. To accomplish these objectives, Frauenheim and Collins worked with scheduling expert Furman Brown.

Together with Brown, they created a combined 1st–3rd and 4th–5th grade schedule that allowed for multi-grade classrooms as well as 90 minutes of uninterrupted planning time for the pilot teachers, using additional support staff to teach enrichment (e.g., physical education, music) and decreasing the load on the pilot teachers.

## Classroom schedule before pilot program

GRADE	8:00	8:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	1:30	2:30
2ND	Morning Work	Reading	Lunch	Language Arts	Math	Enrichment	Science / Social Studies

## Schedule of a pilot classroom<sup>4</sup>

GRADE	8:00	8:10	10:30	11:00	11:45	12:30	12:45	2:20	3:00
1ST, 2ND, 3RD	Community	Reading	Language Arts	Lunch	Enrichment	Community	Math	Science / Social Studies	Words Their Way

GRADE	8:00	8:15	10:45	11:10	11:45	12:30	1:15	2:45	3:15
4TH, 5TH	Community	Reading	Flex Workshop	Social Studies	Lunch	Enrichment	Science	Flex Workshop	Community

*Highlighted time denotes collaborative planning time for teachers*

**Student makeup:** Frauenheim, Collins, and the pilot teachers also discussed which students would participate in the pilot. Initially, Frauenheim proposed selecting the school’s highest achieving students, arguing that doing so would help ensure the success of the pilot and reduce challenges. Upon further reflection, however, the team decided that only providing the highest-achieving students with access to a new and innovative instructional model would be unfair. Additionally, a pilot focused only on high-achieving students would have limited applicability to students with more intensive needs. As a result, Frauenheim and Collins ultimately decided that the students in the pilot classrooms should be representative of the students at CICS West Belden as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> The schedule for each grade level is derived from the schedule of a single teacher at that grade level on a single day of the week.



YEAH,  
BUT

## From “yeah, but” to “yeah, and:” A small activity that created big changes

Many of these planning decisions were made quickly thanks to the small, collegial pilot team. But disagreements certainly emerged. Frauenheim and Collins noticed a pattern that when a new idea was proposed, another team member would soon comment on the difficulty of putting it into practice. (E.g., “Yeah, we’re giving students iPads, but this will make it easier

for them to get off task.”) The whole team grew frustrated with this trend, so Frauenheim designed an activity suggested by Furman Brown. One morning during the summer planning retreat, Frauenheim wrote every objection that teachers had mentioned on sticky notes and posted them underneath a big sign on the wall labeled “Yeah, but.” He asked his teachers to do the same. Then, on another portion of the wall, Frauenheim wrote a large sign reading “Yeah, and.”

For the rest of the day, Frauenheim worked with the teachers to discuss each objection under the “Yeah, but” banner, and reframe it as an opportunity rather than as a challenge. (E.g., “*Yeah*, we’re giving students iPads, *and* that will help us personalize learning even more than we can without technology”). One by one, the teachers addressed each objection, and Frauenheim moved each sticky note from the “Yeah, but” column to the “Yeah, and” column. The team continued this activity when new challenges arose during the rest of the planning retreat, and their conversations soon became more focused on solutions. Several teachers mentioned that this activity had stayed with them since, and “Yeah, and” has become part of the CICS West Belden culture. One of the pilot teachers remembered: “Sometimes people will still say things in a meeting and someone else will call them out and say ‘that’s a yeah, but!’ as a joke, but it brings people back to a more solution-based mindset.”

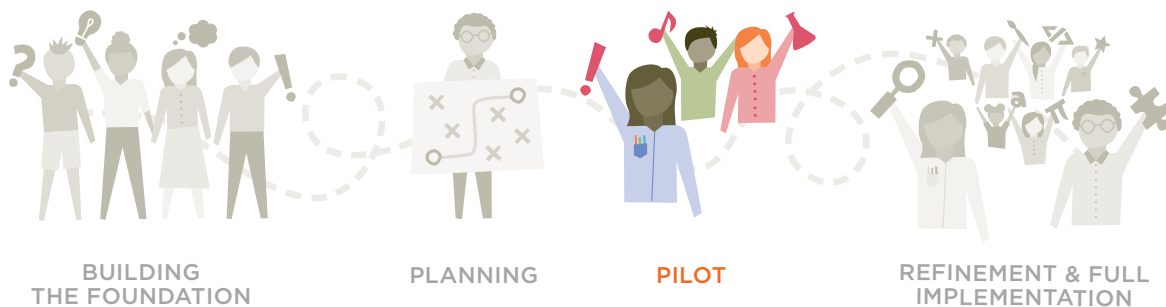


YEAH,  
AND





# PILOT



CICS West Belden launched personalized learning in two classrooms, which allowed school leaders to apply theory to practice, learn from successes and failures, and generate excitement for the rest of the school.





## THE EVOLUTION OF THE PILOT

CICS West Belden started with a narrow personalized learning pilot and slowly added components as the year progressed.

During the first year, Frauenheim, Collins, and the pilot teachers staggered the implementation. The evolution of the pilot classrooms largely followed this arc:

# 1

### ADJUST TO ENVIRONMENT

(Flexible learning environments)

- Overhaul **schedule** to create time for multi-age classrooms and common planning time (*August*)
- Support teachers in **co-teaching** settings (*August*)
- Help students adjust to new **flexible learning environments** (*August*)
- Deploy **iPads** to students (*September*)

# 2

### GROUP STUDENTS BY MASTERY IN MULTI-AGE CLASSROOMS

(Competency-based progression)

- Group classes during **team-building** time (*August*)
- Test multi-age groupings with a **single application** (*September*)
- Group students during **project** time (*November*)
- Group students for **core instruction** time (*January*)

# 3

### GATHER INFORMATION ON STUDENTS' NEEDS, PREFERENCES, AND PERFORMANCE

(Learner profiles)

- Build **teacher-student relationships** through mentoring (*October*)
- Deploy student **survey** (*October*)
- Create first version of **learner profile** (*October*)

## ADJUSTING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

At the start of the year, the pilot teachers focused primarily on helping students adjust to the flexible learning environments.

Many students, especially in the 1st–3rd grade classroom, were distracted or even bewildered by the new bean bags, carpets, and tables around them. To help students become comfortable in these settings, teachers explained how to use the new furniture and, more importantly, why it would improve their learning.



## Family Involvement

**Initially, CICS West Belden leaders overlooked families and parents during the planning process. That oversight created challenges later in the year.**

While preparing for the pilot, Frauenheim quickly addressed the changes that teachers and students would need to make. In the process, however, he overlooked the important role that families played in the transition to personalized learning. In retrospect, he too easily assumed they would share his excitement.

That miscalculation became clear on the first day of the pilot, when Frauenheim invited the families of pilot students to visit the new classrooms, now arranged into flexible learning environments. Many were confused. “Where are the desks?” one parent asked. Another wondered if the school had run out of money and needed parents to hold a fundraiser to buy the desks back. Frauenheim recalled:

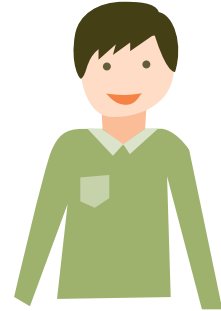
“It was so new to them and so outside of their comfort zone, that they were like, ‘Why is my kid not in that chair with his backpack and supplies at his desk that I spent all summer shopping for? And why are there five teachers instead of one?’ They could not see the benefits of it, because it was so new to them.”



Frauenheim acted quickly to rectify his mistake. A few weeks after school began, he invited families back to the classrooms for student-led “innovation workshops.” During these sessions, students explained elements of the pilot to their families, such as their iPads or a new software program. Frauenheim also re-organized the format of parent-teacher conferences. Rather than explaining a student’s performance to families, teachers only asked questions and listened. Families were gradually reassured that teachers cared deeply about their children’s success. Combined with greater student enthusiasm and lower rates of disciplinary problems, this attention to parents helped ease the initial discord. By the end of the year, families ranked among the biggest champions of CICS West Belden’s personalized model, although some remained skeptical. In hindsight, Frauenheim said he wished he could have involved all the parents from the start. “I completely forgot about the parents,” Frauenheim recalled. “I was a young new leader and thought, ‘They’re going to love this,’ but did not involve them in the design as we did with the staff to get their buy-in.”

The pilot teachers wanted technology to reinforce, but not replace, their instruction. They therefore spent several weeks slowly introducing iPads into the classroom.<sup>5</sup> Not long after the iPads were distributed, however, Frauenheim and Collins learned that their wireless infrastructure was inadequate. As Frauenheim recalled:

"We were not prepared from an infrastructure standpoint. We were losing WiFi every single day. It was insane. There were no quick fixes because we had to wait for the contract cycle....It was a learning opportunity for us."



While those difficulties slowed the adoption of information technology in the pilot classrooms, they did not halt the broader change to personalized instruction. Until the technology infrastructure was upgraded, teachers relied more heavily on offline teaching.

## GROUPING STUDENTS

Once students had grown comfortable with the flexible classrooms and new devices a few weeks into the school year, the pilot teachers turned their attention to multi-age classrooms.

By grouping students together across ages, they found that they could more easily match students at similar levels. Although teachers had planned extensively for multi-age classrooms during the previous year, they still took time to make adjustments and progressed slowly.

For several weeks, the 1st–3rd and the 4th–5th grade classrooms only met together twice a day during 15-minute “community time.” Those meetings, designed to build relationships and trust and to share announcements, helped teachers and students become comfortable in a mixed-age environment.

The first instructional foray into multi-age classrooms was a phonetics program, Words Their Way. The program placed each student along a developmental continuum—any student in grades 1 through 3 could be placed in a group based on level of mastery. Developmental spelling groups enabled the teachers to personalize instruction around a single strand of literacy. For several weeks, multi-age instruction consisted only of brief periods during the day with Words Their Way.

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5 See page 47 for CICS West Belden’s iPad rollout plan.

## GATHERING INFORMATION

### Creating accurate and actionable data was one of the major building blocks for effective personalized learning in the pilot classrooms.

Knowing students' levels of mastery helped teachers understand what the students needed to learn; knowing their learning preferences helped them understand how. To collect these data for lessons outside of Words Their Way, the pilot teachers created learner profiles—the second pillar of the PLWD.

To build learner profiles, the pilot teachers relied heavily on their planning from the year before and the deeper relationships they had begun building with students at the start of the year. They also received support from Kathryn Mongan-Rallis, a personalized learning coach hired by Distinctive Schools, who worked weekly with teachers. The teachers first created a student "interest survey" that collected basic information about student learning needs. The survey included questions such as "Do you like to work by yourself or in groups?" and "Do you like quiet or conversation?" These questions formed the basis for the school's first learner profile.<sup>6</sup>

The first learner profiles required tremendous planning and provided a good example of CICS West Belden's willingness to "take the plunge." Teachers developed the profile quickly, and the information they gathered about students' achievement and learning preferences allowed them to refine their multi-age instruction. Grouping students according to their Rasch Unit scale (RIT) scores from NWEA testing (now available on students' learner profiles), the pilot teachers could craft projects around a broad topic (e.g., cause and effect). During "creation time," students then could choose their own specific projects. Teachers guided groups to pick projects at their level, but students chose on their own what they wanted to work on and how they would best learn. On the topic of cause and effect, for example, one group created a presentation on Google Slides on their new devices, while another built a LEGO model of the Titanic.

Teachers in the pilot classrooms kept the core instruction in math and reading fairly traditional in the first year. Those classes were most closely linked to standardized test scores, and the teachers wanted to ensure that they had a functioning model before they made substantial changes to important lessons. By the early spring, teachers grew encouraged by the success they witnessed and were inspired to expand multi-age grouping for math and reading classes in Years 2 and 3. The process also benefited from CICS West Belden's participation in the LEAP Innovations Pilot Network. This partnership helped to research and vet quality ed-tech products, leading CICS West Belden to adopt products such as Lexia for reading in spring 2015, further facilitating a movement toward individualized instruction in multi-age groups.

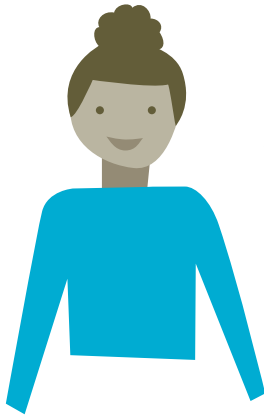
## THE SIDELINE EFFECT

Teachers not in the pilot classrooms watched their colleagues and grew excited about bringing personalized learning techniques to their own classrooms.

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<sup>6</sup> See graphic on page 45.

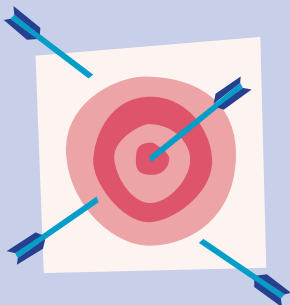
The pilot classrooms were abuzz with change, and many teachers in the innovation lab classrooms became intrigued. School leaders encouraged innovation lab teachers to visit the pilot classrooms and set the schedule to allow common planning and discussion time for the full group of teachers. As teachers from the pilot classrooms and the innovation lab classrooms spent more time together, many innovation lab teachers came to see personalized learning as both beneficial and relatable, and many adopted elements of a personalized learning approach organically. One of the innovation lab teachers recalled:



THE WORK THAT [THE PILOT TEACHERS] WERE DOING WAS RESONATING SO MUCH WITH ME. I WANTED TO BE IMPLEMENTING THAT. I THINK THAT JEALOUSY PUSHED ME AS A TEACHER IN A WAY THAT I DIDN'T EXPECT. WHILE I WASN'T IN A PILOT CLASSROOM, I REPLICATED THOSE THINGS FOR MY STUDENTS. I WAS LIKE A KID IN THE CANDY STORE: LESSON PLANS, STRUCTURES, GROUPINGS...IT WAS THE MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE."

This dynamic came to be known as the "sideline effect," and staff reflected that it played a key role in spreading personalized learning to CICS West Belden's entire campus. When plans to expand to all grade levels were announced, most teachers were already excited to do so.

Despite Frauenheim and Collins's best efforts, however, a small number of teachers remained unconvinced. While their counter-opinions appeared healthy and useful at first, over time their sense of alienation from the school's new direction became clear. Frauenheim began a series of difficult conversations with these teachers, emphasizing that their reticence to teach in a personalized environment did not reflect their abilities as a teacher. Several of these teachers took positions elsewhere.



## Challenges and Successes in the Pilot Year

While the pilot year was encouraging, CICS West Belden staff did note areas of persistent challenges, which would receive further focus over subsequent school years.

- **Letting Go:** For many teachers, personalized classrooms required a shift from delivering content to letting students guide their own learning. "I'm a control freak," remarked one, "so letting go of control was difficult." Rolling out the program gradually eased them into this role shift, although teachers would continue to calibrate the right degree of student supports in coming years.

## Challenges and Successes in the Pilot Year (Continued)

- Supporting Diverse Learners:** Multi-age classrooms gave ELL and SpED students, who had frequently been separated, much greater contact with their peers. SpED and ELL teachers valued the change, but soon found it exhausting to scaffold new content while ensuring that their students were grouped appropriately and seen for sufficient individual time. As the year continued, however, SpED and ELL instructors had more time to experiment, collaborate, and “settle in,” and they came to believe that the personalized model gave them a better set of tools and supports to adapt instruction.
- Counseling Co-Teachers:** The pilot teachers spent so much time with their co-teachers that one teacher light-heartedly described it as being “married.” Maintaining the metaphor, Frauenheim said that while co-teaching generally went well, it also led to a lot of “marriage counseling” over approaches to classroom management, student discipline, lesson planning, and teaching multiple subjects in a personalized classroom. While most issues were minor, others ballooned, and a few teachers questioned whether they could continue working together. Frauenheim spent considerable effort and time resolving these disagreements. Frequently, he brought the conversation back to the importance of teachers’ cooperation for the sake of students. Fortunately, all of the pilot teachers were still “married” at the end of the year.

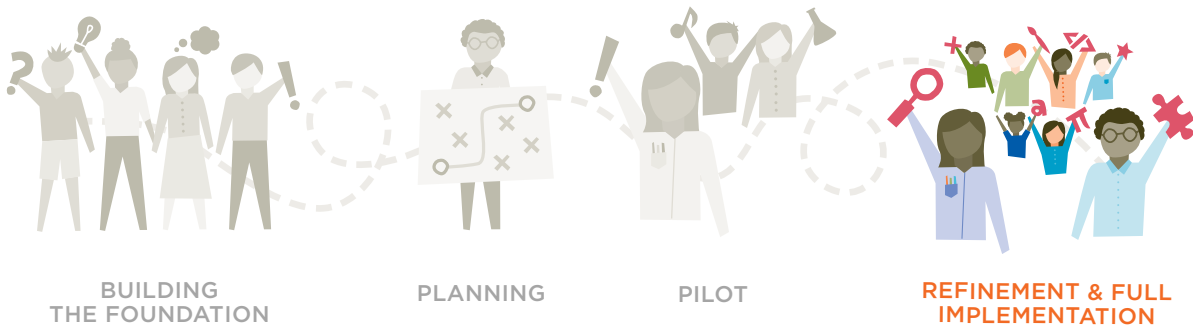
**As the pilot year came to a close, Frauenheim, Collins, and CICS West Belden teachers reflected on a number of positive changes that gave them confidence that personalized learning was on the right track.**

- Students’ attitudes and mindsets:** At the end of the pilot year, teachers reported that students were significantly more engaged in their learning than in previous years and could increasingly articulate what they needed to learn next plus how to get there. Teachers viewed this as a major success, given the low levels of student engagement before personalized learning.
- Teachers’ attitudes and mindsets:** At the start of the year, some teachers had resisted Frauenheim’s call to implement personalized learning. By the end of the year, pilot teachers were planning for the following year, and “innovation lab” teachers were excited to transition to personalized learning.
- Parents’ attitudes and mindsets:** Skeptical at first, parents of students in the pilot classrooms were now regularly thanking (and hugging) Frauenheim, Collins, and the students’ teachers.
- Positive data:** In pilot classrooms, students’ fall-to-spring MAP growth percentile was 83 in math and 76 in reading, compared to 68 in math and 61 in reading in the “innovation lab” classrooms. While teachers were quick to emphasize that standardized test scores were not their sole motivations, seeing strong scores was an important validation to keep moving, and substantiated the more qualitative changes that teachers saw in student behavior and engagement.

**As a result of their success, Frauenheim, Collins, and the pilot teachers prepared to take personalized learning to scale across the full campus the following year.**



# REFINEMENT AND FULL IMPLEMENTATION



CICS West Belden expanded and refined its approach to personalized learning, drawing from its experience in previous years.

## TRAINING ALL TEACHERS

To train the new teachers, the pilot teachers used the same techniques Frauenheim and Collins had used the year before.

In the summer of 2015, CICS West Belden prepared for its full-school rollout of personalized learning by training those teachers who had not participated in the pilot. To do so, they underwent the very same training that the pilot teachers had received the summer before, including school visits, the visioning exercise on flexible learning environments, and the “yeah, but” exercise. This year, however, the pilot teachers led the training. The strategy had several benefits: first, it gave credibility to the work of the pilot teachers from the prior year. Second, it allowed the training to be teacher-driven rather than leadership-led. Third, it allowed teachers to strengthen their relationships with one another.

In addition to having teachers train teachers, CICS West Belden infused the personalized learning ethos into its professional development. At the start of the 2015–16 school year, learning priorities varied considerably between teachers who had participated in the pilot and those who had not. The new innovation lab teachers needed to understand the fundamentals of CICS West Belden’s emerging personalized learning model, while the pilot teachers needed to deepen their practice. School leadership also used Edmodo to create quizzes and tests for teachers and push out articles before professional development sessions to ensure that teachers were met “where they are at” and that in-person time was used productively.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See more about CICS West Belden’s approach to [personalized professional development](#).

The interactions between pilot and innovation lab teachers did not end with summer training. During the next year, the school rearranged teaching assignments to pair pilot teachers with those who were new to personalized learning. On the administrative side, Frauenheim and Collins also made important preparations, including the following:

- **Securing funding:** Frauenheim and Collins applied for and received the second phase of the LEAP-NGLC grant for \$263,000. They used the money to pay teachers for summer training as well as to purchase individual devices for each student.
- **Parent outreach:** Frauenheim and Collins took care to involve parents much earlier in Year 2 to improve parent engagement, including holding parent nights to inform parents about the evolving personalized learning model.<sup>8</sup>
- **Scheduling:** In order to allow multi-age classrooms at every level in the school, CICS West Belden had to change its schedule again, further using enrichment classes to create common planning time for all teachers.

## YEAR 2: REFINING AND EXPANDING THE PERSONALIZED LEARNING MODEL

In the second year, the school again followed a staggered rollout. As the year progressed, teachers gathered better data on students' needs, allowing them to further target instruction.

In Year 2, CICS West Belden's teachers again staggered the rollout of personalized learning. The new teachers were excited to dive in, and the staggered approach helped them gain confidence and skill. Staff members implemented flexible learning environments and computer technology first, followed by early components of competency-based progression, such as community and creation time. Where possible, teachers encouraged peer mentoring: Rather than starting from scratch, a teacher could start a lesson by stating: "3rd graders used Lexia last year. Can you show the 2nd and 1st graders what this app looks like?"

Once teachers became familiar with the basic instructional shifts, they turned to focus on learner profiles and competency-based progression. Yet CICS West Belden soon hit a snag. Because the new teachers hadn't participated in creating the original learner profiles, school leaders noticed they were treating learner profiles as a box to be checked rather than a deeper tool for understanding student needs. As Collins said, "Teachers needed to see the *why* behind the changes, not just the changes themselves." The team backtracked, spending more time on the foundational purpose of learner profiles before moving forward.

This process of reflection, along with teachers' experiences from Year 1, led staff to create a new, deeper version of the learner profile.<sup>9</sup> This revised learner profile included more information about student preferences and standardized the profiles across grade levels. Teachers worked with each

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<sup>8</sup> See more about CICS West Belden's approach to **parent and family outreach**.

<sup>9</sup> See graphic on page 46.

student to populate their own profile—a process that took nearly the entire fall. Though the work was time-intensive, it helped teachers better understand the unique preferences and traits of each student—an important basis for competency-based progression.

As teachers dove more deeply into competency-based progression in the pilot's second year, the school adopted NWEA's Skills Navigator and began using entrance and exit tickets more systematically as checks for mastery.<sup>10</sup> These new streams of data, combined with the revised learner profiles, led teachers to start changing student groups on a daily basis, rather than multi-day or weekly. In turn, as teachers shifted groups more frequently and spent more co-planning time reflecting on student data, they increasingly began to tailor instruction to individual students, rather than to groups. This evolution in instruction throughout the year was critical to informing how the school overall approached personalization. Still, while teachers were pleased with their progress with multi-age classrooms, they still had difficulty allowing students to pursue instruction at other grade levels (e.g., letting a 5th grader learn at a 7th-grade level).<sup>11</sup>

CICS West Belden also made some early inroads on personalized learning paths—the last quadrant of the PLWD. For longer-term lessons, such as certain projects completed during creation time, teachers worked with students to make separate project plans that reflected students' individual needs and preferences but remained focused on a specific lesson. Developing personalized learning paths geared toward students' broader objectives, however, would take several years.

Year 2 brought similar challenges to those the school experienced in the first year. As Frauenheim explained, the full-school rollout “created a whole other set of opportunities for marriage counseling.” Though the teachers persevered, disagreements arose during the 2015–2016 school year, just as they had during the pilot.

## YEAR 3: REFINING THE MODEL WITH SUMMIT LEARNING AND SEL

**In the third year of implementation (2016–2017), CICS West Belden made further changes to its social and emotional model and adopted Summit Learning for its 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.**

After the 2015–2016 school year, CICS West Belden had a year of personalized learning under its belt at the full school level. Collins, now the director of CICS West Belden (Frauenheim had moved on to become the COO of Distinctive Schools), felt increasingly confident in CICS West Belden's personalized model. In the 2016–2017 school year, school leaders made two major changes: first, they adopted the Summit Learning Program for middle school grades; second, they further developed social and emotional learning strategies for all students.

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<sup>10</sup> See more about CICS West Belden's approach to **assessing progress**.

<sup>11</sup> See more about CICS West Belden's approach to **student grouping**.

During the first two years of its personalized learning program, CICS West Belden had focused mainly on elementary school. In Year 3, Collins wanted to give her elementary teachers a break from the constant pace of change and decided to push on the middle school. While the earlier shifts to flexible student grouping and multi-age instruction had seen some success in middle school, teachers still struggled to help all students move on individual paths through complex content. They also found themselves overwhelmed by the numerous apps and platforms used to manage student data and instruction. To address these challenges, Collins turned to an outside partner, **Summit Public Schools**.

CICS West Belden staff members had studied Summit's personalized learning model closely during the planning year. Three years later, Summit had launched a free program, **Summit Learning**, to help schools across the country adopt personalized learning approaches. The program provides not only an approach to instruction, but also a full-service technology platform (the **Summit Learning Platform**) that includes a curriculum as well as training and support from Summit, all free of charge. Summit Learning revolves around three pillars: during personalized learning time, students work at their own pace through the online platform; during project time, students work collaboratively on projects and are assessed based on cognitive skills; and during mentor time, students check in weekly with teachers to set goals and discuss individual learning needs.

While CICS West Belden chose Summit Learning to accelerate its vision for personalized learning, some teachers found the new curriculum that came with the program to be constraining. As Collins explained, "In our last two years, our teachers had tremendous autonomy. They had the flexibility to supplement, modify, or add resources. But with Summit, where so much was contained in the





platform, at first it felt like they had less ability to choose for each student.” Three changes allowed CICS West Belden to overcome these difficulties. First, Collins and the middle school team worked with Summit to gain greater technical flexibility to adapt instruction. Second, Collins and the Distinctive Schools staff created a curricular team that would look ahead to upcoming lessons, helping middle school teachers identify where their pre-existing curriculum aligned to Summit’s content, and where teachers might add or modify resources. A final turning point came in October, when Summit held a convening for all educators using Summit Learning in the Midwest. “It opened our teachers’ eyes to what other schools were doing with the platform,” Collins recalled. “And it gave our teachers a chance to come together, celebrate, and reflect on the progress our students were making. That was really when they began to fall into the platform rather than pull away from it.” By the year’s end, teachers grew more adept at supporting students to drive their own learning through the Summit platform, while customizing lessons with their own sets of resources.

With the basics of personalized learning in place in 2016–17, the CICS West Belden team took the time to reflect on one of the primary reasons they had moved to personalized learning in the first place: to help students become active participants in their own education. Teachers noted that changes in the classroom model had indeed encouraged greater student ownership over their learning. Creation time, for example, not only allowed teachers to target students with similar strengths, but also helped students make their projects more specific to their interests. At the same time, the CICS West Belden team knew that for students to truly fulfill the school’s mission—to be successful citizens in the 21st century—more work was needed to help students navigate less prescriptive environments, such as college and the workforce. This realization spurred a broader conversation about the need for students to develop social and emotional learning skills that would allow them to successfully advocate for themselves in college and careers.



At the start of the 2016–17 school year, CICS West Belden piloted a program to focus on promoting those specific skills. In *Bulldogs Belong*, small groups of 8th grade students worked hand-in-hand with a teacher each week to develop short lessons that they would deliver to groups of K–7th grade students. This arrangement not only taught students social and emotional skills through learning the lesson, but also allowed the oldest students to demonstrate those lessons. The 8th grade students showed a remarkable level of maturity (as seen in the conversation highlighted at the beginning of this case study) and self-awareness: they never interrupted one another, were careful to acknowledge each other's thoughts and perspectives (e.g., “to build on what Elisha said...”), and regularly congratulated one another on their successes. While *Bulldogs Belong* encapsulates one of the most visible facets of CICS West Belden's approach to personalized learning, Collins and Frauenheim have embedded it in the school's model throughout the transformation process. To support students directly and to support teachers in creating these environments, CICS West Belden has a dean, a social worker, and a psychologist on staff. “We have long believed that social and emotional relationships are important in personalized learning environments,” Collins explained. “Many of our students have experienced trauma, and only if they feel happy and safe and have close relationships can they be successful academically.”

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE (2017–PRESENT)

**CICS West Belden's journey is by no means complete. Looking ahead, Frauenheim, Collins, and the rest of the CICS West Belden staff see much more to accomplish.**

For instance, elementary teachers at times feel overwhelmed by the myriad applications currently used for personalized learning. In a given time block, teachers and students might use four or more apps at once (e.g., Edmodo, Google Classroom, ST Math, Lexia), loosely coordinated by a Google Sheet for each student. (This means teachers may have 20 or more Google Sheets open at a time!) Frauenheim and Collins hope that an integrated learning management system will ease this logistical burden. The school is also working to improve its learner profiles, which some teachers feel are still too prescriptive and too much like a checklist. In the 2017–2018 year, each teacher is designing their own learning profiles. Other changes range from integrating learner profiles with the idea of personalized learning paths, extending the implementation of Summit Learning down to 5th grade, and finding ways to deepen students' social and emotional learning skills.

For the CICS West Belden team, these changes reflect one of the lessons they heard during visits to schools that were early adopters of personalized learning—that success in personalized learning depends as much on a mindset of continuous improvement as it does on a school model.

This ethos has also been reflected among CICS West Belden's personnel. As previously noted, in the 2016–17 year Frauenheim became the vice president and chief operating officer of Distinctive Schools (he is now the organization's president and COO). In his place, Collins took over as director of CICS West Belden. Several pilot teachers have also transitioned and become instructional coaches and mentors to newer teachers. And the work continues. The approach to personalized learning pioneered by CICS West Belden has now spread to Distinctive Schools' other campuses. Collins and CICS West Belden's teachers, meanwhile, continue to refine the promising model they have built.



# LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

## LESSONS LEARNED

CICS West Belden’s multi-year journey highlights several lessons for schools that are considering adopting personalized learning.

CICS West Belden’s Bulldogs Belong program is just one example of how far the school has come on its personalized learning journey. In less than three years since implementation began, students have transformed from quiet and unengaged recipients of instruction to self-aware architects of their own—and in some cases, others’—learning experiences. They not only have become budding scholars, but they are also developing into young adults with many of the skills so valued in today’s society.

While the journey for CICS West Belden’s students has only lasted several years, it started much earlier for teachers and administrators. The first day of personalized learning in a pilot classroom was in August 2014; Frauenheim and Wise’s first meeting occurred during the summer of 2011. Along the way, several factors stand out as particularly important to CICS West Belden’s success.

- 1 Culture as a precondition:** CICS West Belden’s personalized learning model is rooted in the school’s culture. From the outset, Frauenheim, Collins, and Wise worked to make the teachers feel valued by involving them in key school decisions, awarding “jeans days,” and giving email shout outs. The resulting sense of camaraderie and fun permeated the school and trickled down to students, creating the trust necessary for staff to take risks and venture into the unknown during the early days. In retrospect, the time that CICS West Belden spent building culture has been their most valuable personalized learning investment.
- 2 Build it with them, not for them:** Rather than mandating a particular program, Wise carefully ensured that Frauenheim had the freedom and flexibility to experiment with personalized learning at CICS West Belden. Frauenheim was similarly inclusive, involving teachers in shaping the design of the pilot and the rollout of personalized learning. Ultimately, teachers showed similar faith in students, such as allowing 8th graders to design lessons during Bulldogs Belong. This cascading autonomy at all levels helped everyone—leaders, teachers, and students—learn together and feel invested in the new personalized learning model. Given CICS West Belden’s origins as a compliance-driven “no excuses” school, ceding ownership was only possible through the cultural change that CICS West Belden’s leaders intentionally fostered.
- 3 It’s all about time:** Switching to a personalized model can be overwhelming for teachers. Many feel as if they suddenly need to plan one lesson for each student, rather than one lesson for everyone. CICS West Belden’s leaders understood the importance of providing teachers with ample co-planning time to prepare for classes and grapple with the complex changes they were experiencing in their classrooms. Allotting that time encouraged a sustainable workload and helped teachers manage stress levels.

**4 Just do it, but not all at once:** CICS West Belden was a high-performing charter school before its transformation. As a result, there was no “perfect” time for the school to move toward personalized learning—its leaders had to create that moment. Once the process was underway, despite numerous plans for transforming teaching and learning, the pilot teachers took the changes one step at a time. Their patience ensured that each piece of the model was well-understood and adequately implemented, and it prevented the confusion, exhaustion, and other unintended consequences that could have come with a rushed implementation.

**5 Partner for expertise:** CICS West Belden did not go it alone. The team recognized early on that a number of other schools and organizations across the country (and in Chicago) held considerable expertise in personalized learning. While CICS West Belden’s leaders and staff members tried to adapt external lessons to their specific context, knowing how and when to partner helped them go faster. In designing the model and selecting software, for instance, the school benefited from its collaboration with LEAP Innovations; later in the journey, a partnership with Summit Learning helped codify and strengthen the middle school approach. As CICS West Belden grew, the team has tried to pay it forward by helping other schools and educators who were interested in personalized learning.

## CHALLENGES ON THE JOURNEY— BEING HONEST ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES

CICS West Belden faced a number of obstacles along its journey to personalized learning.

The school surmounted some of those challenges, but others persist. We hope that sharing the difficult parts of the journey, particularly in light of the school’s overall progress, will prove instructive to others who are undertaking similar school transformations.

**1 Traditional mindsets, traditional culture:** CICS West Belden started with a traditional, compliance-driven culture. “Our teachers would tell us ‘I’ve been told what to do for seven years’ and were unsure what this change fully meant,” Frauenheim explained. Gradually, school and network leaders fostered a vision for a different kind of school and built an environment where teachers felt valued, supported, and willing to take risks to advance personalized learning. Still, this process was slow, and at times difficult.

**2 Family engagement:** While planning for the personalized learning pilot, Frauenheim was so focused on changes in culture and instructional practice that he overlooked the necessity of parent/family support and involvement. As a result, some families were initially surprised and skeptical about personalized learning. Frauenheim and teachers had to backtrack, show families how personalized learning could benefit their children, and gradually rebuild trust. By the end of Year 1, families became some of the program’s strongest advocates.

**3 Technology infrastructure:** When CICS West Belden adopted 1:1 devices for its students during the pilot year, its existing IT infrastructure became overwhelmed. Wireless connectivity was inconsistent and the servers crashed frequently. Even more frustrating, existing contracts precluded any immediate changes to the school's infrastructure. As a result, students faced regular problems with devices during the first several months of the pilot year.

**4 Teacher roles:** As with any personalized learning model, CICS West Belden teachers had to shift their classroom roles from primarily delivering content to primarily facilitating learning. The shift to co-teaching exacerbated the challenges of the role change. In the pilot year, Frauenheim spent considerable time smoothing over bumps in co-teacher relationships, while also supporting teachers in their shifts away from traditional instruction. "I didn't realize how much work we were going to have to do aligning the pedagogy and practice within classroom environments. Much of it didn't emerge when the teachers were in their own classrooms, but it came to the fore quickly when they were together," Frauenheim recalled.



# APPENDIX

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## THE LEARNING ACCELERATOR'S RESOURCES ON CICS WEST BELDEN'S MODEL

The Learning Accelerator has produced an excellent overview of CICS West Belden's model and detailed a number of the school's teaching and learning practices. These resources complement FSG's focus on CICS West Belden's journey, so we've linked to a number of them below.

### 1. In-person learning practices, including CICS West Belden's approaches to:

- a. [Student grouping](#)
- b. [Teacher learning](#)
- c. [Multi-Age classrooms](#) and [co-teaching practices](#)
- d. Targeted [large group instruction](#)

### 2. The specifics of CICS West Belden's technology resources, including:

- e. A [list of software](#) used by the school
- f. How CICS West Belden [pilots new software](#)

### 3. The integration of personalized learning into the classroom, including:

- g. Use of [creative furnishings and spaces](#), including use of [open doors](#)
- h. A typical [daily agenda](#) for students and a [schedule for teachers](#)
- i. A [visual overview](#) of a station rotation model
- j. CICS West Belden's [approach](#) to engaging parents

### 4. The use of data, including [diagnostic assessments](#), [weekly 1:1 conferences](#), [goal-setting](#), [common planning](#), and [how these data sources are integrated](#), as well as [how students are involved in their own planning](#) and [how teachers support them](#).

**5. The personalization of content, including:**

- k. How students receive multiple methods of support
- l. The use of menus to provide student choice
- m. How student input is used in designing the classroom layout
- n. The use of independent learning time
- o. Student surveys and their use to make classroom-level changes

**6. CICS West Belden’s emerging model of mastery-based progression, including:**

- p. Its early approach to personalized learning plans
- q. Its switch to standards-based reporting
- r. Its use of open learning standards
- s. Additional structures built to support mastery-based progression

## LIST OF TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS USED BY CICS WEST BELDEN

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	USE	GRADE LEVELS	MONTH INTRODUCED
<b>SUMMIT LEARNING PROGRAM</b>	The Summit Learning Program enables middle school students to learn content at a personalized pace, complete meaningful learning projects, track progress toward goals, and reflect on learning through academic mentoring. Teachers utilize the learning platform to customize instruction according to student needs and interests.	The Summit Learning Cognitive Skills Rubric enables teachers to align assessment and instruction on a continuum of 36 interdisciplinary, higher-order thinking skills necessary for college and career readiness for all students. Teachers calibrate scores collaboratively for each unit of study.	5th–8th	August 2016–present  <i>(5th grade added in 2017 school year)</i>
<b>THINKING MAPS</b>	Thinking Maps are consistent visual patterns linked directly to eight specific thought processes. By visualizing our thinking, we create concrete images of abstract thoughts. These patterns help all students reach higher levels of critical and creative thinking—essential components of 21st Century education. In a school-wide implementation, Thinking Maps establish a consistent Language for Learning.	Teachers across all disciplines and grade levels use this as a fundamental tool for helping students visualize their thinking. Thinking maps serve as a tool for students to better articulate their thinking.	K–8th	August 2014–present

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	USE	GRADE LEVELS	MONTH INTRODUCED
<b>BENCHMARK ADVANCE AND BENCHMARK ADELANTE</b>	A cutting-edge, comprehensive English and Spanish Reading/Language Arts programs for Grades K–6. The standards-aligned program, which explicitly provides strategies and guidance for successful workshop model implementation, is built upon essential questions that uncover the key knowledge and skills and rich enduring understandings that are key to student success.	Using rich content texts (social studies, literature, and science), teachers use the program to combine whole group, small group, foundational skills components, and assessments to ensure deep, contextualized learning.	K–1st	January 2017–present
<b>WRITE FROM THE BEGINNING AND BEYOND</b>	A developmental, vertically aligned K–8 writing curriculum that builds on the power of Thinking Maps to establish a school- and district-wide focus on effective writing across all grade levels and content areas. Write from the Beginning...and Beyond enables teachers to build their capacity as writing teachers while teaching writing of narrative, expository/informative, argumentative, and response to text.	This writing program leverages the visually-assisted thinking provided by Thinking Maps to help students develop a basic structure to their writing and, through a series of layers of complexity, write robust narrative, expository, and persuasive pieces.	K–8th	August 2015–present
<b>LEXIA CORE5</b>	Lexia Reading Core5® supports educators in providing differentiated literacy instruction for students of all abilities in grades pre-K–5th. Lexia’s research-proven program provides explicit, systematic, personalized learning in the six areas of reading instruction, targeting skill gaps as they emerge and providing teachers with the data and student-specific resources they need for individual or small-group instruction.	In a station rotation model, students use Lexia during Core Reading instructional block in Kindergarten through 5th grade. The blended approach to literacy learning provides real-time data to steer instruction for teachers and give students agency. Then, using Lexia’s comprehensive data dashboard, teachers administer face-to-face lessons to ensure a competency-based progression in a K–5 continuum of skills.	K–5th	September 2014–present
<b>ST MATH</b>	ST Math is a visual instructional program that builds a deep conceptual understanding of math through rigorous learning and creative problem solving to engage, motivate, and challenge PreK–8th grade students.	In a station rotation model, students use ST Math during core mathematics instructional block in K–5th grade. Teachers push out non-linguistic, conceptual math games as a reinforcement of the content in their core math block.	K–5th	September 2015–present



PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	USE	GRADE LEVELS	MONTH INTRODUCED
<b>REALLY GREAT READING</b>	Really Great Reading provides a comprehensive set of tools to <b>diagnose</b> , <b>group</b> , and <b>teach</b> foundational reading skills. Really Great Reading offers multisensory, tactile tools as well as an online set of tools and lessons to support reading foundational skills, decoding, and comprehension. The tool is considered an intervention and is supplemental to core instruction.	Students are assigned specific activities based upon an initial assessment. Instruction typically occurs during an intervention block but can also occur during Station Rotation.	K–5th	March 2014–present
<b>WORDS THEIR WAY</b>	Words Their Way is a developmental spelling, phonics, and vocabulary program that aligns five research-based spelling stages. Students complete word study activities such as open and closed sorts and games in order to construct meaning and spelling patterns of the English language.	Students are assigned specific word sorts based upon an initial assessment. Instruction and activities can be done during whole group opportunities and/or during Station Rotation.	K–8th	August 2014–2016
<b>IXL</b>	IXL is an adaptive practice website offering unlimited questions on thousands of Common Core aligned topics and a comprehensive reporting system.	Utilized as an independent practice tool aligned to core content.	2nd–8th	2014–present
<b>READING ASSISTANT</b>	Reading Assistant is a research-based program that addresses fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Reading fluency is built with modeling, support, practice, review, and feedback. The computer-based program allows for repeated oral reading and comprehension exercises for on-grade level readers as well as those who are experiencing difficulty. Students receive immediate, individual feedback from Scientific Learning’s advanced speech recognition software.	Reading Assistant was a function of the classroom station rotation for students based on literacy needs in 2nd through 5th grade.	2nd–5th	September 2013–2015
<b>MYON</b>	myOn is a personalized literacy learning platform. myOn provides access to a digital reading content within a library of texts. The texts are aligned to the Lexile Framework for Reading. Teachers use the data embedded within myOn to monitor activity and growth. Students are able to select texts based on ability and preference.	myOn was included station rotation model and supplemental to core reading basal series. Students used in guided reading groups and independent practice.	K–8th	September 2015–December 2016

## LIST OF ASSESSMENTS USED BY CICS WEST BELDEN

ASSESSMENT	DESCRIPTION	USE	GRADE LEVELS	FREQUENCY
<b>NWEA MAP</b>	NWEA MAP is a computer-based, adaptive assessment used to measure a student's growth on a continuum of standards over the academic career. The NWEA MAP Growth assessment is the primary academic achievement tool for external accountability. It is utilized as an instructional and longitudinal tool.	Three times per year, teachers administer and analyze the data from the MAP assessment. The results provide detailed, skill-level data on students' instructional level on various components of math and reading.	K–8th	3 times/year— Fall, Winter, Spring
<b>SKILLS NAVIGATOR</b>	Skills Navigator formative assessments midway between the MAP assessments. These quick assessments of student learning are used to gauge progress and allow teachers a snapshot of progress toward MAP growth goals.	Teachers support students on finite skills in reading and math. Data from these formative assessments are used to modify groupings and skill instruction to accelerate learning.	2nd–8th	Ongoing—Fall to Spring
<b>DIBELS</b>	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) provides measures that function as indicators of the essential skills that every child must master to become a proficient reader. DIBELS identifies students who may be at risk for reading difficulties using the universal screener. DIBELS data helps teachers identify areas to target and examine the effectiveness of instructional supports.	The administration of the DIBELS occurs three times a year to provide indicators of risk and growth. Students at risk are progress-monitored between assessment windows to inform instruction and flexible grouping for students.	K–6th	3 times/year— Fall, Winter, Spring
<b>PARCC</b>	PARCC assessment is a mandated state standardized test. It provides results to track our students' progress toward rigorous, complex problem-solving, and to guide our curricular and pedagogical needs.	PARCC data helps us to inform teachers and to focus on increased authenticity in learning and assessment.	3rd –8th	Once per year— Spring

## EVOLUTION OF LEARNER PROFILES


2014-2015 CICS West Belden Learner Profile: developed during pilot year



About	Likes
<b>Birthday:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Community: Mrs. Rosen</b>	

Stats	Goals
<b>Fall '14 NWEA Reading RIT:</b>	<b>Winter '15 NWEA Reading Goal:</b>
<b>Fall '14 NWEA Math RIT:</b>	<b>Winter '15 NWEA Math Goal:</b>
<b>Fall '14 NWEA Science RIT:</b>	<b>Winter '15 NWEA Science Goal:</b>
<b>Fall '14 DIBELS:</b>	<b>Winter '15 DIBELS:</b>

**2015-2016 CICS West Belden Learner Profile:** revised in second year to include student preferences and standardize profiles across grade levels. Students populated their own profiles.

	STUDENT NAME		GRADE / COMMUNITY	
	DATE OF BIRTH	PARENT / GUARDIAN	PARENT CONTACT	HOME LANGUAGE

NWEA DATA	SPRING 2017	FALL 2016	HIGHEST STRAND	LOWEST STRAND	WINTER GOAL	WINTER SCORE	SPRING GOAL	SPRING SCORE
Reading								
Math								
Science								

LANGUAGE DATA	ACCESS COMPOSITE SCORE	PROFICIENCY LEVEL

LEARNING PREFERENCES		
ACCESS How my teachers present information!	ENGAGE How I stay motivated to learn more!	EXPRESS How I show what I know!
Do you like to read? Watch videos? Talk to someone? Research on your own? Do you like to hear directions read to you? Do you like to read on your own? Do visuals help you to understand material better?	What kind of activities do you enjoy in class? Do you prefer to work independently, with a partner or in a group? What helps you become interested in a topic? What helps you stay interested in a topic?	What do you like to create? What projects have been your favorite so far? Do you prefer to use technology or hands-on materials?

INTERESTS	LEARNING STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES

PARENT/FAMILY INFORMATION FROM LISTENING CONFERENCES	
--	--

21ST CENTURY LEARNING GOALS FOR THE 2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR	
LEARNING GOALS (CRITICAL THINKING, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION):	
WHAT DO I NEED TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?	
HOW CAN MY TEACHER HELP ME?	
HOW CAN MY PARENTS/FAMILY HELP ME?	
HOW WILL I KNOW THAT I HAVE REACHED MY GOALS?	

# IPAD DEPLOYMENT PLAN

TOPICS	ACTION	RESOURCES
<b>INCORPORATE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP LESSONS</b>	Students must complete X number of lessons and pass quiz before getting iPad use.	<u>Scope and Sequence</u> —by grade level and topic.
<b>PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT/ CLASSROOM SPACE</b>	With students, decide on rules and responsibilities* for use of the iPads. All students should <u>sign a pledge form.</u>  *use the posters to guide discussions; Work out logistics of carts, chargers, etc.	<u>Printable Posters from Common Sense Media</u> —print in color and in a large size so it can be seen from across the room. (Laminate if available.)  <u>iPad Tips and Tricks Poster—classroom management tips for teachers.</u>
<b>FAMILIARIZE STUDENTS WITH DEVICES</b>	A “boot camp” should introduce students to the basic skills, competencies, and resources they’ll need to use their 1-to-1 devices in enriching, responsible, and respectful ways.	<u>Boot Camp Curriculum by grade levels K-2, 3-5</u>  <u>15 iPad Skills Every Teacher and Student Should Have</u>
<b>CARING FOR AND MAINTAINING THE IPADS</b>	Stressing that using the devices is a privilege, modeling each process along the way—carrying, using at desk, sharing screens with classmates and teacher, etc.	<u>For Teachers Wired Classrooms Pose New Management Problems</u> —some very practical ideas in this article.  <u>Have students create an iMovie</u> or <u>Explain Everything slideshow</u> that demonstrates how to walk w/iPad and how to work with one at a desk or table, etc. They don’t need to know how to use iMovie or Explain Everything—they’ll figure it out! Really!
<b>1:1 WEEKLY REFLECTIONS WITH STUDENTS AS PART OF CLASSROOM MEETING TIME</b>	What’s working, what needs improvement, what isn’t working at all. Have jar/box where students can add thoughts and go through these each week during meeting time.	Create a Google form with a simple 3–4 question format that kids can submit anonymously to you.
<b>TECH CADETS</b>	Encourage students to apply to be a tech cadet. (Sometimes these are kids that don’t get to shine in other content areas.) Use your students to pre-teach (during lunch) a new app or technique so they can be helpers when you intro it to the entire class.	Use Google Form and create an application that students will need to submit to you.
<b>TEACHER CALENDAR OF ONGOING LESSONS</b>	Digital citizenship is not just a one-and-done topic—should continue throughout the year.	Educators Lesson Calendar—Drag and drop lessons onto the calendar with a hyperlink to all the materials.







**Published in July 2018**

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