

# Stride Learning Hub

## Charting a New Path for K–12 with Personalized Learning

This school year has marked a new era for K–12 education in which digital learning is now a mainstay, whether students are learning in person, remote, or in hybrid settings. Digital technology has enabled in-person schools to provide for continuity of learning in the event that schools must close or students must quarantine; and it has opened doors to new possibilities for teaching and learning.

We expect to see an expanded approach to personalized learning post-pandemic. First, we must move beyond technology platforms that automatically serve up targeted lessons for the student and put the tools in teachers' hands to differentiate learning based on students' needs, interests, and how they learn best. Next, to be successful, we need to provide the resources for teachers to easily create personalized learning that goes beyond addressing skills gaps to enrich learning with themed collections, timely topics, project-based learning, and support for social-emotional learning.

While digital learning was well-established prior to the pandemic, the shuttering of schools in March 2020 catalyzed widespread growth in the quantity of digital educational tools and resources on the market. In fact, educational technology has exploded since the onset of the pandemic. U.S. educational technology startups raised a record \$2.2 billion in venture and private equity capital across 130 deals in 2020, representing a 30% increase from 2019 and marking the highest investment total to date in U.S. educational technology.<sup>1</sup>

Digital tools have opened doors to educating in new and better ways; yet, there is wide variation in their potential to facilitate student engagement and effective learning. The vast array of educational technology products available can be extremely overwhelming for educators trying to sift through and determine which products best meet their needs.



## Teachers are under pressure.

Quantity does not equate to quality. Teachers, nationwide, have expressed concerns with the quality of digital tools and curricular resources available to them. In December 2020, more than half of teachers reported that student learning (61%), completion rates of assignments (60%), engagement (57%), and attendance (56%) were worse than before the pandemic across all demographics, grades, and school types. Nearly half of teachers (44%) indicated that screen-based learning presented a “very serious” obstacle for younger students, students with special needs, and those with language barriers.<sup>2</sup> Only half of surveyed teachers reported their curricula to be high-quality and well-aligned to standards. Just over a third viewed their formative assessments as high-quality measures of student learning; and only a third of teachers reported their curricula were easy to adapt to remote settings.<sup>3</sup>

Adding to the stressors on teachers is the awesome task of mitigating learning loss. The pandemic has negatively impacted academic growth and widened disparities in core subjects such as math and reading. These disparities are exacerbated among minorities, students living in poverty, English language learners, and students with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> It is estimated that 3 million students nationwide did not attend school at all in the first year of the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> In an attempt to quantify the extent of learning loss due to the pandemic, McKinsey and Associates analyzed

spring 2021 in-school assessment results of more than 1.6 million elementary school students across more than 40 states. The analysis revealed that students tested about ten points behind in math and nine points behind in reading compared to matched students in previous years.<sup>6</sup>

The pressure on teachers is real. In March 2021, more than half of surveyed teachers indicated they were considering leaving the profession.<sup>7</sup> A RAND survey of teachers who left the profession early indicated that stress was the most common reason.<sup>8</sup> A subsequent survey in fall of 2021 revealed extreme staffing shortages, with 40% of administrators describing shortages as ‘severe’ or ‘very severe’. These shortages are impacting teachers, who are sacrificing their planning periods, lunch and days off to fill gaps.<sup>9</sup>

## An opportunity for change.

Personalized learning supported by high-quality digital resources has gained traction as a promising solution to address both the continuity of learning regardless of setting and the dire need to rapidly mitigate learning loss. To support schools and educators in recovery, Congress has passed three stimulus bills that provide \$190.5 billion to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, much of which is allocated to bolster the continuity of learning in remote settings and mitigate learning loss due to the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> This funding can help schools

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nationwide invest in the resources and professional development needed to alleviate some of the pressure on teachers and engender a true culture shift in teaching and learning.

## Personalized learning brings promise.

Personalized learning has the potential to increase student engagement and learning because, by design, it is sensitive to student interests, academic strengths and areas for growth.<sup>11</sup> As digital technology has advanced in the decade leading up to the pandemic, so too has the promise of and focus on personalizing learning. As noted by RAND researchers, “Technology can play a role in supporting the complexity of the personalization process. When properly supported by teachers, it can help students learn independently and work at their own pace. Technology can also enable educators to take a more personalized approach in their teaching efforts and other activities they undertake to support student



learning and development.”<sup>12</sup> Early evidence on the promise of personalizing learning indicates that it has great potential to improve academic outcomes for a wide range of students.<sup>13</sup>

The Institute of Personalized Learning defines personalized learning as “...an approach to learning and instruction that is designed around individual learner readiness, strengths, needs and interests. Learners are active participants in setting goals, planning learning paths, tracking progress and determining how learning will be demonstrated. At any given time, learning objectives, content, methods and pacing are likely to vary from learner to learner as they pursue proficiency relative to established standards.”<sup>14</sup>

**Personalized instructional practices include:**

- » Tailoring the pace, content or instructional strategies to individual students’ needs.
- » Allowing students to choose instructional materials
- » Providing a variety of materials or instructional approaches to accommodate individual students’ needs and interests.
- » Allowing different students to work on different topics or skills at the same time.
- » Giving students multiple opportunities, throughout a unit or throughout the year, to demonstrate mastery of certain content and skills<sup>15</sup>

The move toward personalized learning gained momentum with the 2015 passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provided states funding to explore new options for teaching and learning, including personalized learning.<sup>16</sup> Across the state plans, 39 states referenced personalized learning, 17 states incorporated personalized learning into their visions for ESSA implementation, 10 states set out to develop micro-credentials for educators to personalize learning, and 35 states incorporated a high school indicator that emphasized multiple pathways to demonstrate college and career readiness.<sup>17</sup>



To better identify promising practices for personalizing learning, in 2016, the Council on Chief State School Officers, New Profit and America Forward Driven co-convoked a personalized learning equity workgroup. The research team recommended that districts develop personalized learning plans beginning with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and English language learners at the center of their strategy, focusing personalized learning on the explicit needs of historically underserved students, with the support of technology tools that facilitate personalization.<sup>18</sup> In 2018, the CCSSO’s Innovation Lab Network set out to better understand personalized learning’s potential to drive equity through in-depth interviews.

**The interviews revealed the following insights:**

- 1 Personalized learning has the potential to drive educational equity.
- 2 Personalized learning offers flexibility for students, allowing them to learn complex content at their own pace and enabling them to demonstrate understanding in myriad ways.
- 3 Personalized learning enables teachers to more easily understand the unique contributions of each student and respond to their needs.<sup>19</sup>

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## Supporting personalized learning with innovative technologies.

Digital tools support personalization by empowering the individual learner, fostering student engagement, developing agency and self-directed digital learning, and optimizing assessments, as outlined in the United States Department of Education Office of Technology's Teacher Digital Learning Guide.<sup>20</sup>

Looking at functionality, effective educational technology tools support personalization through "... apps, adaptive environments and problem sets, the availability of myriad topics of interest on the internet, games and simulations, the use of tools for creativity and self-expression, and the ability of students to develop and maintain their own portfolios."<sup>21</sup> Formative assessments and data dashboards available in digital tools provide timely data on student growth to teachers who can then use that information to adjust instruction. Adaptive technology can be used to provide students learning tasks with the appropriate level of challenge and adjust in real time according to student inputs. Assistive technology can be used to increase, maintain, or improve access to learning for students with special needs. Access to large repositories of digital resources support personalization by allowing students choices in both the content and modalities use for learning.

Beyond functionality, digital technology expands the ways in which students can engage in learning. For students to be fully engaged in learning, it must occur in four domains: behavioral, emotional, relational, and cognitive. Digital tools can foster engagement in all four domains. Teachers can monitor behavioral engagement by tracking interactions with and completion of assignments and participation in activities; and by utilizing that information to modify instruction for that individual student. Emotional engagement refers to a student's feelings toward school and relational engagement refers to a student's connections with peers and teachers. Digital tools can be used in classroom settings or virtually to facilitate group activities, one-to-one check-ins with the student,

and peer interactions. Cognitive engagement refers to "... planning, self-regulation, progress monitoring, metacognition, and reflection while learning." Well-designed digital tools have features to support cognitive engagement, and teachers can provide age-appropriate scaffolded support so that students become increasingly independent.<sup>22</sup>

The Teacher Digital Learning guide emphasizes that the quality of digital tools is better than quantity to facilitate student agency and self-directed learning. Digital tools should be vetted and supported by your district and aligned to curricular objectives. Further, they should support the optimization of your time and your students' time. It should be clear to students how to use the tools, where to go for technical assistance and what is expected of them in order to be self-directed. The tool should facilitate engagement and independence rather than be a technical barrier to accessing the learning content.<sup>23</sup>

## The re-imagined learning experience.

Stride Learning Solutions, a leader in K-12 online education and personalized learning for more than 20 years, understands the potential of digital tools to meet the call of today's educators. At Stride Learning Solutions, we understand that the culture of schooling has changed rapidly since the pandemic began, with the ways in which education occurs shifting to more agile models where teachers can quickly pivot between in-person, hybrid, and remote environments to deliver both asynchronous and synchronous lessons. Well-designed education technology tools make these pivots easier because they are designed to facilitate differentiated and personalized learning experiences in agile and changing environments.

Among the ways in which we help educators deliver personalized learning experiences is the Stride Learning Hub, a new digital library of innovative educational Stride K12-published content. This tool was designed to ease the

stressors on teachers by providing a single entry point to find the resources needed to enhance the learning experience and outcomes for each individual student. The Stride Learning Hub is built upon the principles of UDL with both the functionality and the breadth of resources as the foundation to support the learning of all students and accelerate learning for our most vulnerable student populations.

With this resource, educators can easily explore and combine thousands of standards-aligned assets and customized assessments to more effectively personalize and supplement instruction for students. Stride Learning Hub is a one-stop-shop for engaging, peer-reviewed content and resources that allow educators to quickly and easily customize instructional plans to meet each individual student's needs. Stride Learning Hub gives teachers access to a curated collection of resources and learning objects including:

- [The Stride K12 core curriculum and platform](#)
- [Themed grade-level collections and resources](#)
- [Engaging, peer-reviewed content](#)
- [More than 200,000 searchable assets that easily integrate into lessons](#)
- [Innovative and engaging resources such as eBooks, games, and activities](#)
- [Timely plug-and-play content](#)
- [Customizable assessments](#)
- [Adaptive lessons](#)
- [Developmentally-appropriate content to teach current events](#)
- [Project-based learning](#)
- [Career education modules](#)
- [Translation of most assets into more than 60 languages](#)



**With Stride Learning Hub, teachers have the platform, features and resources needed to customize courses and create captivating personalized lessons in any environment.**

**To learn more visit [stridelearninghub.com](https://stridelearninghub.com) | 844.638.3533**

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