

# NEVADA

## STATE OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

### JANUARY 2022

Nevada has made significant progress in establishing a vision of educational equity for all students. It has also taken action on a range of policies and programs to create the systems and structures needed to support that vision. Now, policy-makers and stakeholders must work together to orient existing systems and structures to encourage the adoption of personalized, competency-based learning statewide. This shared ownership will be crucial for building the capacity of districts to successfully transition from traditional education structures into mature, evidence-based, personalized teaching and learning models. The state should frame its action around four non-linear strategies.

First, Nevada should **Build Capacity** for change by clearly articulating its commitment to personalized, competency-based learning as a means to achieve educational equity for all. The transition from a traditional education system to one that meets the needs of each child requires substantial buy-in, preparation and support for all involved. The state must develop and establish diverse stakeholder ownership and the systems and structures needed to support both the short- and long-term implementation of transformative school models. This capacity building must also include aligning teacher preparation and professional development structures to clearly support the state's vision for personalized, competency-based learning.

Second, Nevada must **Empower Student Learning** by ensuring that each learner has the supports and opportunities they need to succeed. Many of the same supports present in a traditional education system – those focused on the whole child and opportunities to explore college and career opportunities – are crucial components of student-centered systems, as well. However,

student-centered systems aim to empower students to have agency over the supports and opportunities they access. The state should continue to collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that each of its student support systems aligns to equitably meet the personalized needs of each student as schools and districts make this transition. Nevada must also act to ensure that opportunities for college and career exploration are available and accessible to each student. Action in these areas also means adopting new data metrics where appropriate to capture the scope of the state’s progress towards this vision.

Third, Nevada should consider how to **Cultivate Systems Change** through financial and school improvement structures. Student-centered learning systems support schools through a constant cycle of reflection and improvement, and the state has a crucial role to play in supporting a culture of improvement. The state must work to ensure that schools and districts are aware of both the legal and financial flexibilities, as well as the existing networks, that can be leveraged to help implement personalized, competency-based practices as they work to improve student outcomes. The state should also seek to establish clear feedback loops to ensure the policy environment can adapt to strong practices emerging from the field.

Fourth, Nevada must continue to **Ensure Quality** as it seeks to support equitable implementation of personalized, competency-based learning practices. Standards outline learning expectations for all students and assessment and accountability systems help evaluate program quality. Student-centered learning systems require states to think differently about accountability and assessment to help each school reach its full potential. The state should develop statewide learning frameworks aligned to the shared vision for student success. It must also engage with stakeholders to reimagine how assessment and accountability supports the implementation of personalized, competency-based learning models. Finally, Nevada must ensure that systems and structures exist to allow for schools and districts to engage in a continuous cycle of improvement as they implement new and transformative school models.

Nevada has a tremendous opportunity to build on current momentum in pursuit of a more student-centered education system. Encouraging the statewide adoption of equitable and transformative school models requires a thorough reexamination of the values and assumptions underpinning existing systems and structures, and a reimagining of how these systems and structures are aligned to each other. It is also crucial to develop a shared sense of ownership over this work between the state and stakeholders. Though this work will not be easy, it is essential to building the education experiences that empower each and every child in Nevada to fully pursue their interests and passions while meeting their individual needs.



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# INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the state of Nevada partnered with KnowledgeWorks to chart a path for the future of learning in the state. Though the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was immensely challenging, it also spurred educators and policymakers in the state to reimagine what might be possible for the future of learning.

Sensing this momentum, State Superintendent Jhone Ebert convened a [Blue Ribbon Commission for a Globally Prepared Nevada](#) (the Commission) that would “make recommendations to adjust our current policy framework to meet today’s learning conditions, while also leaving room for policies that will support innovation for the next 10 or 20 years.”

*We have learned so many things about humanity, about learning and about ourselves during this time that we must put it into practice moving forward. This is one of the times in history that a transformation can and will occur if system leaders work with their communities, their peers, their business and industry and their governments to carry forward the good that has occurred during these trying times.*

– Superintendent Summer Stephens, Blue Ribbon Commission Participant

The Commission made a series of legislative recommendations to enshrine some of the key flexibilities afforded by the pandemic into law. The recommendations were largely passed into law by [Senate Bill 215](#). In addition to the short-term legislative recommendations, the Commission further emphasized that long-term support for personalized, competency-based learning should be at the heart of state strategy going forward. Building on key learnings from the work of the [Competency-Based Education Network](#) (CBEN), the state is now moving toward an intentional, collaborative and well-supported model to grow personalized, competency-based learning throughout the state.



*In the fall of 2021, the state and KnowledgeWorks partnered to host a conversation with a diverse set of stakeholders from across the state to envision what it would look like for students to experience the Commission’s vision for learning in the future. This word cloud provides a summary of the key characteristics that participants identified in their vision for the future of learning in Nevada.*

This analysis is intended to support state leaders in making that vision a reality by providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of Nevada’s education systems and structures within the scope of the KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*.

## About the State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning

KnowledgeWorks [State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning](#) was designed to help states answer the question, “What would it take to ensure every student has the opportunity to learn in a student-centered education system?” Many states have begun to pilot next generation learning models that place students at the center, but very few have begun to consider what it would take to expand these innovations statewide. After extensive research into high-functioning education systems and conversations with innovative practitioners and policymakers, KnowledgeWorks released a framework with 12 policy conditions organized into four strategy areas critical to statewide transformation. This framework offers a set of policy actions within each condition, guiding states through the design of a unique pathway to statewide transformation of student-centered learning.

## How to Use This Report

In reviewing this report, readers will find an analysis and set of recommendations for each of the 12 policy conditions. An accompanying resource details the supporting evidence that informed the conclusions and recommendations. This analysis represents KnowledgeWorks’ understanding of the state’s current policy context while offering concrete steps to help the state begin to evolve toward a system that supports high-quality learning environments for all students. The evidence in this report was collected through two phases of research. The first phase included extensive analysis of Nevada’s laws, regulations, programs and initiatives. The second phase included interviews with key stakeholders across the state.

The information in this report is intended to help Nevada become a national leader as it begins the hard work of designing an education system that prepares students for the future of learning. The rankings and opportunities in this report are meant to be catalytic, calling attention to the early momentum building across the state for a new approach to teaching and learning.

## Methods

The analysis for each policy condition is based on a set of 3-5 indicators that describe elements of the policy condition essential for systems transformation. The accompanying evidence document is organized to show which data were used to support the analysis of each indicator. To reach a conclusion for each indicator, each assessor reviewed the sum of evidence and considered the degree to which the following four commitments were realized:

- **Alignment:** The state partners with a coalition of diverse stakeholders to create a shared vision for student success and increasingly aligns all levels of governance, functions and resources to that vision. Alignment should occur at the local and state levels, within the state education agency and across all relevant state agencies.
- **Equity:** The state leverages data to illuminate opportunity gaps and disparities in outcomes while engaging historically underserved communities to design solutions that improve equity across all levels of the system. Personalized learning ensures that every student has what they need to succeed, emphasizing student agency and targeted supports for student learning.

- **Shared Ownership:** The state proactively engaged diverse stakeholders in the design and implementation of personalized learning systems, progressing toward shared ownership of the system design and decision-making around implementation. Local communities are empowered to work alongside the state and share accountability for education practices and outcomes.
- **Transformative School Models:** The state builds the capacity of districts to move from transitional pilot programs to mature, evidence-based personalized teaching and learning models. The state implements ongoing quality assurance measures to drive student success, leveraging transparency, stakeholder engagement and evidence-based decision-making.

## Call to Meet the Future

Nevada has one of the fastest growing populations in the nation. The current racial, ethnic and economic [demographics in Nevada mirror the 2060 projections for the nation](#) as a whole. In addition, the state's unique positioning in the Southwest puts it at the nexus of increasingly alarming climate crises (e.g., wildfires and water shortages). These realities center Nevada's students at the crux of many dynamics shaping the nation's education system in an increasingly uncertain future.

In the face of a rapidly changing future, Nevada educators have much work to be proud of. Though the state serves students and communities who have traditionally been held furthest from opportunity by systemic inequity, Nevada recently [scored 18th in the nation on K-12 Achievement including 5th in the nation on both academic growth and equity measures](#). The work underpinning this recognition is commendable, yet Nevada stakeholders know that more work is needed to meet the needs of each student. The state must build on this momentum and leverage the historic opportunity to design an education system that empowers educators and communities to create personalized, competency-based learning environments that provide meaningful pathways to future success for each learner.

## Additional Resources

See also KnowledgeWorks [State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning](#)

For additional details on Nevada's policies, please see our [evidence document](#)





## STRATEGY AREA ONE: BUILDING CAPACITY

Evolving from a traditional system to one designed to support every child is a substantial undertaking. All stakeholders, including state-level policymakers, district leaders, school leaders and teachers, will need to be prepared. The success of state system transformation depends on leaders at every level of the statewide learning community sharing a clarity of purpose, engaging in critical roles and receiving supports for their own personalized development.

According to the KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, three policy conditions support states in building capacity:

- Vision for Student Success
- Collaborative Leadership
- Comprehensive Supports for Educators and Leaders

### Key Takeaways

**Deepen the Vision:** Nevada has taken great strides in creating a vision for the future of learning in Nevada by leveraging a rich stakeholder engagement process. The state has begun the process of aligning that vision to personalized, competency-based learning through their partnership with KnowledgeWorks and should consider the development of a statewide portrait of a graduate as a next step.

**Support the Development of Meaningful Networks and Working Groups:** Nevada faces challenges to facilitating effective networks and working groups due to quorum requirements for legislatively-mandated public meetings. The legislature should revisit these requirements to ensure the state may convene stakeholders more nimbly. The state should also focus on developing more flexible statewide networks to support implementation of personalized, competency-based learning as well as provide feedback on the development of new statewide systems.

**Establish State-level Team:** The Nevada Department of Education has made a critical investment in state-level support through their partnership with KnowledgeWorks. The state should consider creating a dedicated cross-state team responsible for supporting personalized, competency-based learning to ensure the long-term sustainability of this work. This work may begin within NDE but should broaden membership to include student and family advisory groups, other state agencies, non-profits, policymakers, the business community, etc.

**Expand Professional Learning Opportunities:** The state currently supports educator professional development through the regional professional development programs (RPDPs) which share a common online system and learning materials. The state should prioritize coordinating with RPDPs to launch professional learning opportunities for personalized, competency-based learning.

# VISION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state has a clearly articulated vision for student success that emphasizes personalized learning to ensure every student graduates with the academic knowledge, skills and social-emotional competencies to succeed in postsecondary education and a rapidly changing workforce. A transparent vision statement is essential for aligning programs, resources, roles and initiatives to support high-quality implementation of personalized learning.

To build capacity for personalized learning, states advance a vision for student success by:

- Articulating a clear vision for student success
- Empowering districts to create aligned local visions and policies
- Modeling shared commitment with state and local partners
- Strengthening evidence of advancing the vision

## Key Takeaways

The state articulated a clear vision for student success in its 2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP), which also outlines the goals, strategies and values that the state will use to achieve its vision. Nevada has begun to connect this vision to some aspects of personalized learning through aligned programs, resources and initiatives. The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) works with stakeholders to communicate the shared vision and align policies and resources to achieve gap closure and improve postsecondary and workforce success. Nevada created the Blue Ribbon Commission to prepare recommendations regarding innovation and flexibility needed to meet the needs of every student. Some of these recommendations have been actualized into law and further emphasized through the state's partnership with KnowledgeWorks. A strong commitment to creating a shared vision for student success is evident in the field as well. Every district has created their own vision to drive district actions toward student success, although, in some cases, these visions are not clearly aligned to the state's vision.

Looking forward, the state needs to more intentionally align its vision to personalized learning practices and deepen knowledge of high-quality personalized learning approaches and practices across the field. Nevada should ground this work in the creation of a portrait of a graduate that outlines the essential attributes that each student needs to ensure success after graduation.



## Recommendations

- Engage stakeholders to refine the state’s vision to ensure learning is personalized, students can advance upon mastery and students are even more empowered to take ownership of their learning. Through this process, establish a state profile of a graduate that defines the essential attributes for success upon graduation. (Aligned local visions and policies; Shared commitment with state and local partners)
- Create opportunities to engage stakeholders – including educators, school leadership teams and district leaders – on personalized teaching and learning models that align to the state’s vision, perhaps with an early focus on the strategies and practices that have been put in place by the state’s Competency-Based Education (CBE) pilot schools. (Aligned local visions and policies)
- Work with leaders in districts across the state to ensure alignment between state and local visions, including providing support to districts to align policies and resources with personalized learning practices. (Aligned local visions and policies)
- Create a resource to draw essential connections between the state’s vision statement and other K-12 initiatives and programs in the state with differing visions, seeking to elevate personalized learning as a priority across state initiatives. (Aligned local visions and policies)

# COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, state leaders demonstrate support for personalized learning and partner with diverse stakeholders across all levels of the system to mobilize broad support for the creation and sustainability of personalized learning. Meaningful, transparent and ongoing engagement between state, district and community partners improves the quality of policy development, adoption, implementation and continuous improvement while cultivating champions across the system to advance personalized learning approaches that meet the needs of all students.

To build capacity for personalized learning, states support collaborative leadership by:

- Ensuring student-centered mindsets
- Valuing a culture of diversity and inclusive decision-making
- Aligning resources to enable community co-creation and accountability
- Aligning state supports to advance personalized learning

## Key Takeaways

Nevada has taken some steps to ensure that a student-centered mindset is present across policies, agendas, offices and initiatives. Beginning with the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, NDE has supported implementation of a variety of strategies focused on great school leaders, career pathways and leveraging data to support schools farthest from opportunity. NDE encourages diversity among educators throughout the state and focuses on stakeholder participation, including engaging with stakeholders from historically underserved groups. Specifically through the Blue Ribbon Commission, the state has engaged stakeholders to explore ways schools and districts can take advantage of flexibilities in order to be responsive to the current education climate. And, through the Competency-Based Education Network (CBEN), the state is taking some steps to work with stakeholder groups to advance personalized learning policies.

As Nevada works towards achievement of the goals identified in the 2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP), the state should establish a clear and explicit focus on personalized learning through its programs and initiatives. Challenges with the state's mandated groups and task forces resulted in the introduction of a bill to eliminate some of these groups. Nevada needs to amend the responsibilities and procedural requirements of these groups to ensure they are sufficiently impactful. NDE should also expand work with local districts that have created initiatives focused on personalized learning to help inform expansion of these opportunities to other districts across the state.

## Recommendations

- Convene stakeholders to make personalized, competency-based practices more central to the Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP) plan, possibly through a commission, the creation of a new addendum similar to the 2021 STIP addendum or through additional guidance. Develop materials and training to help districts understand and communicate the importance of personalized learning to local stakeholders. (Ensuring student-centered mindsets; Culture of diversity and inclusive decision-making; State supports to advance personalized learning)
- Create a statewide learning community to inform state and local efforts to expand personalized, competency-based learning, such as through expansion of the Competency-Based Education Network (CBEN). (State supports to advance personalized learning)
- Establish a clear link between the Multicultural Education State Advisory Task Force and the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force to increase recruitment and retainment of state and local leaders whose diversity is representative of the state's demographics and whose experience prepares them for work in support of the state's vision. (Culture of diversity and inclusive decision-making)
- Continue partnerships and collaborations with historically underserved communities to learn first-hand from their experiences and to build their capacity to be advocates for thoughtful personalized learning opportunities in their communities. (Culture of diversity and inclusive decision-making)
- Expand on the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendation to create a "unified method" – a clear and unified way for schools to implement various flexibilities and programs – to center community voices in the creation of rich pathways for learning that are responsive to each student's needs, such as by amending or expanding the School Performance Planning (SPP) process to leverage personalized learning. (Community co-creation and accountability)

# COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS FOR EDUCATORS AND LEADERS

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state invests in systemic efforts to build professional capacity for the implementation of high-quality personalized learning systems. These systemic efforts align educator and school leader preparation, credentialing, professional development and evaluation systems into a seamless continuum that personalizes supports for educators and school leaders so they can deepen their professional expertise and raise the quality of leadership and instruction.

To build capacity for personalized learning, states create comprehensive supports for educators and leaders by:

- Developing culturally responsive, personalized educator and leadership competencies
- Centering competency-based education practices in pre-service programs
- Encouraging co-designed, authentic and personalized professional learning
- Creating and supporting innovative staffing structures

## Key Takeaways

While Nevada has not created educator and leadership competencies that align to personalized learning, the state has intentionally strengthened its educator workforce system to build capacity for leading culturally responsive learning environments. Nevada's Blue Ribbon Commission recently explored improvements to the state's policy framework to create the environment for educators to meet the learning conditions of the 21st century. The state has established a leadership network to support educators and provide professional development opportunities, focused specifically on leaders in the schools farthest from opportunity. The state is also partnering with stakeholders to collect data and ensure students have access to effective educators. Through the state's Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) and the related Teachers and Leaders Council, the state engages stakeholders in continuous improvement and monitoring of the state's educators. It is clear the state has established strategies to support educators and facilitate educator learning through Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDP).

Moving forward, Nevada should make a conscious effort to build capacity for statewide implementation of personalized learning by identifying the professional competencies that educators need to successfully lead next generation learning environments, while also ensuring they receive the customized professional development necessary to master those competencies. The state should look for ways to align the NEPF system and to explore ways to support schools eager to embrace new teaching and leadership roles aligned to personalized and competency-based approaches.

## Recommendations

- Employ a transparent process to create educator competencies aligned to a statewide portrait of a graduate for K-12 educators and school leaders. Competencies should ensure educator capacity to lead culturally responsive, personalized and competency-based learning environments. (Educator and leadership competencies)
- Partner with institutions of higher education and the Teacher Pipeline Taskforce to ensure that educator preparation programs emphasize preparation for personalized and competency-based instruction. (Competency-based education practices)
- Align educator credentials to reflect teaching roles in personalized learning and create an educator mini-credential in personalized learning best practices, similar to credentials created in the Social, Emotional and Academic Development (SEAD) Center. (Authentic and personalized professional learning)
- Collaborate with educators to create a vision, develop a plan and implement new personalized learning professional development opportunities through a state-level professional learning network. (Authentic and personalized professional learning)
- Use state and federal resources to strengthen alignment of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) and the state's Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs), to address gaps in student access to educators with a focus on expertise in personalized learning instruction. (Innovative staffing structures)
- Consider ways to work with district and school leaders and educators through the educator credentialing system. State board waivers could empower districts and schools to advance personalized and competency-based learning models that operate with innovative staffing structures, such as extended days, flexible scheduling and non-traditional credentialing. (Innovative staffing structures)

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## STRATEGY AREA TWO: EMPOWERING STUDENT LEARNING

Student-centered systems elevate the voices of students and their communities. To support this shift, states must remove barriers and create conditions for students and their families to be the true drivers of their learning. Targeted and meaningful supports are necessary to ensure equity for groups that have been marginalized in traditional learning systems.

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, three policy conditions support states in empowering student learning:

- Supports for Historically Underserved Students
- Equitable Conditions for Learning
- Student Learning Pathways

### Key Takeaways

**Meet All Student Needs:** Nevada provides an extensive range of supports to ensure that students' holistic needs are met. The state should actively explore how these programs can be implemented to develop student agency in accessing supports and opportunities. The state should analyze how existing programs align with the state's goals and explore additional statewide partnerships that may be needed.

**Strengthen Data Systems and Use:** Nevada's existing data systems provide a broad picture of education quality in the state. The state should build on this strength to help stakeholders better analyze data and work together to better target resources to students most in need and to strengthen programs that provide student supports. The state should also consider how to incorporate additional non-academic and opportunity-to-learn data into its accountability and/or reporting systems to expand the scope of publicly available data related to college and career readiness opportunities.

**Ensure Access to College and Career Opportunities:** Nevada has established a robust range of college and career ready offerings. The state should continue to grow these opportunities statewide and work to ensure that they remain both accessible and affordable for all students, including strategies to leverage existing technology systems to increase student access. Nevada should explore how personalized, competency-based learning approaches may increase access to these opportunities by providing a framework for recognizing the work that students do outside the traditional classroom.

# SUPPORTS FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENTS

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state supports historically underserved students by establishing equitable policies and practices aligned to culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices to intentionally address gaps in outcomes. Along with setting goals, monitoring progress, increasing transparency and mobilizing stakeholders to achieve greater equity, the state collaborates with local communities to examine state- and local-level systemic issues, including long-held beliefs and values, that result in the education system failing to acknowledge and support student identities.

To empower student learning, states prioritize supports for historically underserved students by:

- Leveraging a dashboard to ensure success for historically underserved students
- Using intentional engagement strategies to empower community-based identification of inequities and solutions
- Ensuring equitable access to effective educators and leaders
- Aligning all funding streams, policies and programs to achieve a more equitable, personalized education system

## Key Takeaways

Nevada's commitment to equity is rooted in the Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP), which calls for students to be “valued, respected and see themselves in their curriculum and instructional materials while experiencing academic success” across different ages, genders, socio-economic statuses, religions, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, abilities, native languages, national origins or citizenship statuses. The state also has a goal to be the fastest growth state in the nation according to its performance framework. The state's dashboard includes disaggregated data, but there are no opportunities for communities to pilot new indicators in the performance framework. The state has a commitment to community engagement and shared power in the education system. Additionally, educators are required to take a course in multicultural education, and a number of resources exist to ensure educators are equipped for equitable instruction. Finally, the state has many programs that demonstrate a commitment to equity, including an alignment of federal and state funding streams to its equity vision.

As Nevada continues to advance supports for historically underserved students, NDE should consider how personalized learning can be leveraged across existing supports. This would enable schools and districts to individualize the many supports and programs at the state level to ensure that students' individual educational needs and goals are met.



## Recommendations

- Ensure that all approaches to support historically underserved students are based in personalized, competency-based approaches to account for unique student needs and interests and ensure maximum impact. (Success for historically underserved students; Community-based identification of inequities and solutions; Equitable access to effective educators and leaders; Equitable, personalized education system)
- Include results of school climate surveys or pilots of other locally-identified indicators identified in collaboration with diverse stakeholders in the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). This would enable the NSPF to reflect the state's values around cultural responsiveness and ensure that the state, districts and schools consider a variety of indicators of success in addition to the traditional measures laid out in the NSPF. (Success for historically underserved students)
- As part of data analysis technical assistance, support school districts to implement the Family Engagement Framework and convene diverse stakeholders who are representative of their local communities to identify inequities and solutions to improve outcomes for historically underserved students. (Community-based identification of inequities and solutions)
- Identify opportunities for culturally responsive and trauma-informed instruction programs for educators to be expanded and integrated into licensure requirements to ensure that all school districts have access to technical assistance and trainings – and that all students have access to high-quality educators with competency in these areas. (Equitable access to effective educators and leaders)
- Offer school districts guidance to align programs and funding streams that offer coordinated and personalized supports for historically underserved students to maximize the impact of various programs. (Equitable, personalized education system)

# EQUITABLE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

According to KnowledgeWorks [\*State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning\*](#), the state ensures that all students have access to whole child supports, including social-emotional supports; access to safe and healthy learning environments; and engaging, supportive and appropriately challenging instruction so they can develop the skills to drive their own learning and engage deeply as members of their communities. Comprehensive and transparent data on whole child development enables partnerships between the state and its communities to advance strategies that meet the needs of all students.

To empower student learning, states emphasize equitable conditions for learning by:

- Targeting equitable and holistic student supports
- Co-constructing strategies with local communities through thoughtful data analysis
- Deepening high-quality partnerships across state agencies
- Building educator capacity to meet students' holistic needs

## Key Takeaways

Nevada has undertaken a considerable amount of work to ensure equitable conditions for learning. The state has many supports available to local education agencies (LEAs) to ensure that students' holistic needs are met. The federal School Climate Transformation Grants (SCTGs) enabled the state to establish aligned systems of supports around academic, social and behavioral student needs. The results of this work have demonstrated success and are being used to scale pilot programs to increase access across the state. The Social, Emotional, and Academic (SEAD) Center provides resources to teachers and LEAs to integrate social-emotional learning and cultural responsiveness into classroom instruction. Many supports are also available to educators and to community members outside the public school system through the Nevada Positive Behavior Interventions Support Technical Assistance Center (PBISTA). The state also supports robust data analysis aligned to federal programs through SCTGs and the PBISTA efforts. Finally, the state is dedicating a significant amount of its stimulus funds to advancing existing work to increase access to the supports and resources that address child well-being.

To advance this work, Nevada should explore how its programs can be aligned and integrated with the state's equity work; personalized, competency-based learning efforts; and efforts across state agencies. This will ensure that programs are coordinated to impact students with the greatest need and to ensure that supports are personalized to student, classroom, school and district needs. NDE should also consider ways to improve its data collection, sharing and analysis process to ensure transparency in the impact of programs and engage in community processes for analysis and planning next steps.

## Recommendations

- Identify steps to ensure that the variety of holistic student supports available at NDE are targeted to districts with the greatest need and not just for districts who opt in. (Equitable and holistic student supports)
- Convene a group of diverse stakeholders to explore ways to intentionally collect, communicate and use data related to the whole child and holistic student supports. These efforts should be aligned with the state's equity commitment for use in accountability and reporting systems. (Thoughtful data analysis)
- Identify programs led by other state agencies with goals aligned to Nevada's whole child work and explore partnerships to increase the impact of existing initiatives, particularly with direct-care organizations and other groups invested in child well-being. (Partnerships across state agencies)
- In the state's periodic review and approval of teacher preparation programs, explore ways to ensure these programs align with the states' efforts through the SEAD Center and the PBISTA. (Educator capacity to meet students' holistic needs)
- Conduct an audit of existing programs that provide whole-child supports to ensure alignment between programs and the state's vision and ensure that programs are able to build upon and complement each other. Also identify opportunities to integrate personalized, competency-based approaches in these programs to ensure that they meet individual student needs and goals. (Equitable and holistic student supports; Thoughtful data analysis, Partnerships across state agencies; Educator capacity to meet students' holistic needs)

# STUDENT LEARNING PATHWAYS

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state empowers all students to access and complete equally rigorous pathways that enable exploration of career interests while gaining the knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary and the workforce. Opportunities such as work-based learning, internships, Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways, college in high school programs and service-based learning experiences are paired with supports to address opportunity and achievement gaps and ensure that every student can advance to deeper levels of mastery regardless of their starting place.

To empower student learning, states establish a system of high-quality student learning pathways by:

- Enabling student exploration of pathways aligned to competencies
- Implementing policies that support student success in flexible pathways
- Prioritizing community partnerships to maximize learning pathway access
- Providing professional development to support students navigating learning pathways
- Expanding the pool of qualified educators to teach college- and career-pathways programs

## Key Takeaways

Nevada offers a wide range of student learning pathways that include CTE, work-based learning and college in high school offerings. The state also offers opportunities and supports to enable students to undertake career exploration more broadly. The state's accountability systems and data reporting, funding opportunities and student support systems all encourage districts to expand access to these pathways for students. The state's systems and structures, notably through its Perkins V plan and New Skills for Youth partnership, promote community engagement to grow awareness of and engage students in these opportunities. The state has also taken steps to expand educator knowledge of these pathways to empower students to explore and navigate them.

Nevada has several steps it can take to strengthen its student pathway alignment with the principles of personalized, competency-based learning. Nevada should deliberately work to ensure that pathway opportunities allow students to demonstrate mastery of the statewide competencies currently under development. The state should also provide stakeholders access to transparent data on student participation in all forms of pathways as a first step to ensuring equitable access for all students. Lastly, the state should continue to establish and expand partnerships to grow student pathway opportunities and explore ways to ensure greater ownership of pathways across the state among students, educators, parents and stakeholders.

## Recommendations

- Ensure that Nevada’s pathways opportunities allow and encourage students to demonstrate mastery of essential skills through the forthcoming statewide competencies. Strategies could include providing flexibilities in state law that expands access to credit through demonstration of mastery as well as incorporating mastery of competencies into the state’s college and career ready high school diploma as proof of readiness for college and careers. (Student exploration of pathways aligned to competencies)
- Ensure college in high school coursework is accessible and affordable for all students through strategies such as adopting the universal pricing amounts for college credit-bearing courses developed through the dual enrollment task force or creating a need-based funding stream to help students pay for costs associated with college in high school coursework. (Policies that support student success in flexible pathways)
- Expand publicly-available data around college and career readiness programs through strategies such as increasing visibility of dual credit participation and work-based learning opportunities on state dashboards. (Policies that support student success in flexible pathways)
- Encourage the growth and development of college and career pathway programs through strategies such as establishing a statewide system of regional intermediaries to develop work-based learning opportunities, expanding training for counselors and educators about how to empower students to navigate these opportunities through resources such as lifeworksNV or Nepris, growing the pipeline of instructors for these courses and providing consistent training to district-level work-based learning coordinators. (Community partnerships to maximize learning pathway access)
- Leverage existing technology systems to provide professional development to educators around supporting students that are navigating learning pathways and increase access to pathways opportunities in underserved areas of the state. This could include strategies such as leveraging the statewide learning management system (LMS) to provide professional development for educators and counselors, expanding the list of distance education providers that deliver CTE coursework or leveraging technology to expand access to virtual college and career coursework to areas of the state with less access to these programs. (Policies that support student success in flexible pathways; Professional development to support students navigating learning pathways)

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## STRATEGY AREA THREE: CULTIVATING SYSTEMS CHANGE

The transition to personalized learning will require state and local leaders to think differently about how to encourage, support and sustain transformation. In this new context, schools are engaged in constant iteration toward improvement, committed to giving and receiving continual feedback. The role of the state is to grow strong practices emerging from the field.

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, three policy conditions support states to cultivate systems change:

- Culture of Innovation
- Responsive Funding Systems
- Continuous School Improvement

### Key Takeaways

**Promote and Create Flexibilities:** Existing state law offers Nevada's schools and districts policy flexibilities that could be leveraged to implement personalized, competency-based learning practices. The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) should promote the strategic use of these flexibilities and seek input from the field to identify new flexibilities necessary to support effective implementation.

**Strengthen and Expand Competency-Based Education (CBE) Programs:** Nevada has already established structures to advance personalized, competency-based learning practices, most notably the Competency-Based Education Network (CBEN) and CBE pilot. The state should seek to expand and strengthen efforts to support implementation and networking as well as integrate them more closely with existing school improvement structures and policies regarding distance education.

**Improve Funding Levels and Guidance:** Nevada's new school funding formula provides schools and districts with increased financial flexibilities. The state should ensure that schools and districts understand how to effectively leverage these flexibilities to advance personalized, competency-based learning strategies. The state should also commit to ensuring that all schools and districts have adequate funding in the present and commit to achieving optimal funding in the future.

**Build State Capacity to Support District and School Innovation:** Nevada actively provides a range of technical assistance opportunities to schools and districts related to student success. The state should further develop its technical assistance opportunities to include supports for personalized, competency-based learning approaches. The state should also engage regional and statewide stakeholders to develop educator expertise in personalized, competency-based learning methods.

**Retool School Improvement Systems:** Nevada recently updated its school improvement and turnaround structures to make them more useful to schools and districts. NDE should examine how to leverage these systems to provide opportunities for schools to implement personalized, competency-based learning approaches when they choose to do so.

# CULTURE OF INNOVATION

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state advances personalized learning by empowering educators, researchers, communities and families to design, refine, evaluate and advance new learning models that better support student needs. A culture of innovation leverages policy flexibility coupled with necessary resources and supports to identify and advance practices and aligned policies that drive equity and maximize student outcomes.

To cultivate systems change, states create a culture of innovation by:

- Providing policy flexibility to catalyze improvements to the education system
- Evaluating student-centered practices for informed policymaking and investment
- Establishing learning networks to support the scaling of innovative practices

## Key Takeaways

Nevada's CBE pilot was an early indicator of the state's commitment to innovative, student-centered learning approaches. However, the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic ignited a deep interest in empowering districts with policy flexibility and resources to implement personalized, competency-based learning models. The state superintendent and Blue Ribbon Commission are leading the charge to address some of the state's more traditional system requirements (i.e., 180-day calendars and credit accumulation tied to course hours) that might act as barriers to innovation. Meanwhile, there is some flexibility that can be used now to design and scale personalized, competency-based learning. For example, districts are authorized to grant credit for proficiency on examinations, portfolios of student work or performance tasks in lieu of attendance. In addition, a pupil in a full-time distance education program may demonstrate sufficient proficiency to meet course objectives and complete the course in a shorter period of time than is normally allotted.

NDE has an opportunity to create a true learning network and structure through which critical collaboration can be conducted, such as building a case for any additional policy flexibility needed to scale personalized, competency-based learning; undertaking an ongoing examination and evaluation of personalized, competency-based learning and other student-centered practices; and developing the support structure needed to advance the state's vision for student success. At the same time, the state can ensure that existing policy flexibility opportunities are fully utilized, including waiver opportunities for Empowerment Schools and Programs of School-Based Decision Making, along with credit flexibility for individual students.



## Recommendations

- Promote the strategic use of existing policy flexibility, such as Empowerment Schools, Programs of School-Based Decision Making, credit for performance in lieu of course attendance and proficiency on distance education course objectives. Also leverage the state's waiver authority to build district and school capacity for and interest in personalized, competency-based learning. (Policy flexibility)
- Solidify and expand the CBE Pilot as a learning network for districts and schools. (Support the scaling of innovative practices)
- Establish a cross-agency research and development team to support CBE schools and to evaluate the efficacy of personalized, competency-based learning practices; communicate findings among districts, schools and stakeholders; and inform future policy development and NDE strategies. (Informed policymaking and investment)
- Prioritize the use of state funding and other state resources to build capacity of districts, schools and community partners to design and expand high-quality personalized learning experiences for students, particularly in areas with the greatest need. (Support the scaling of innovative practices)

# RESPONSIVE FUNDING SYSTEMS

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state supports adequate, equitable and flexible funding and resource systems that enable educators to advance personalized learning and address educational inequities in real-time. These funding and resource systems support the launch and growth of exploratory pilots and professional learning communities that identify, scale and sustain equitable funding practices that advance high-quality personalized learning experiences for all students.

To cultivate systems change, states create responsive funding systems by:

- Ensuring equitable and sufficient funding
- Developing innovative student-centered funding sources
- Helping districts maximize personalized learning with technical financial support
- Partnering with local and regional funders to ensure funding alignment to the state's vision

## Key Takeaways

Through the newly established Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP), state leaders, with considerable stakeholder input, took steps to ensure districts have equitable and sufficient funding to meet the needs of every student. PCFP provides a base level of resources for each student, greater support to those who need it through a weighted formula and adjustments reflective of the cost of providing education in different areas of the state. However, the state lacks dedicated funding streams at present to support the development and growth of personalized, competency-based learning and other innovative approaches. There is also no policy addressing the potential funding implications for schools implementing personalized, competency-based learning and CBE pilot participants that result from the state's more traditional approach to pupil accounting. Research does not show that NDE is currently utilizing school improvement tools, including learning education agency (LEA) needs assessments and the new School Performance Plan (SPP) process, as opportunities to provide districts with technical financial support to maximize state and federal funding, including to support personalized learning. The Governor's COVID-19 Private Sector Task Force may signal the development of a comprehensive effort to marshal philanthropic and community resources to support the state's vision, such as the Connecting Kids Initiative launched in 2020 to provide personalized solutions based on local and family needs.

As PCFP implementation continues and the Commission on School Funding provides additional recommendations for achieving optimal funding, there is an opportunity for the state to develop new funding streams, including funding that can be focused on personalized, competency-based strategies – particularly for areas of greatest need – while also transitioning away from traditional attendance and hours of instruction as the basis for student funding eligibility.

## Recommendations

- Commit to achieve “optimal funding” for districts and schools, as defined by the Commission on School Funding, in response to lingering concerns regarding the adequacy of school funding and also to establish critical foundations necessary for student success. (Equitable and sufficient funding)
- Revisit and revise state strategies for leveraging federal and state funding to advance personalized, competency-based learning. Prioritize resources for schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support. (Equitable and sufficient funding)
- Take action on the Blue Ribbon Commission’s suggestion that the superintendent develop a plan for districts to explore and iterate measures to replace attendance. In doing so, ensure pupil count and attendance flexibility for personalized, competency-based learning is at least on par with the flexibility afforded to pupils enrolled full-time in a distance education program such that schools implementing personalized, competency-based learning do not experience a reduction in state revenues for a student who completes a school year or earns a high school diploma in a shorter time that is traditionally required. (Innovative student-centered funding sources)
- Create and share personalized, competency-based learning guidance, such as FAQs and technical assistance with financial resource alignment to support personalized learning strategies, particularly for districts with schools identified for comprehensive support. (Technical financial support)
- Engage districts, schools and stakeholders, including but not limited to the CBEN, in discussions about maximizing resources to scale and sustain personalized, competency-based learning and build collaborative partnerships that marshal third-party and local funding to support district efforts. Such partnerships could take the form of intermediary organizations like those utilized by other states (i.e., Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Colorado). Consider whether the SPP process and accountability portal could serve as entry points or tools for facilitating these efforts. (Technical financial support; Funding alignment to the state’s vision)

# CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state supports the continuous improvement of all schools with transparent, dynamic systems that empower local leaders and their communities to diagnose, analyze and address the needs of all students in real-time. An effective school improvement system supports the continuous growth of all schools and prioritizes resources for schools with the greatest need for improvement. High-quality personalized learning strategies are embedded in school transformation efforts, ensuring that all students have access to personalized learning.

To cultivate systems change, states encourage continuous school improvement by:

- Utilizing transparent data systems to target personalized supports
- Strengthening local capacity for continuous improvement
- Creating state and regional tools and supports to guide personalized coaching teams
- Ensuring state and local leaders have expertise in personalized and competency-based school improvement practices

## Key Takeaways

Nevada's existing school improvement processes give schools and districts the supports and feedback opportunities they need to identify existing strengths and opportunities, conduct a needs analysis, develop improvement strategies for student outcomes and monitor progress towards their implementation. State law allows for both individual schools and certain districts to receive additional school-level autonomy to implement innovative school improvement strategies such as personalized, competency-based learning. Nevada has taken steps over the past several years to reduce the punitive nature of its school improvement system. The state also continues to support efforts to empower educators to meet the holistic needs of students as well as expand the existing pipeline of teachers more broadly.

Nevada has several opportunities to align its school improvement strategies with a more personalized, competency-based approach to learning. The state's existing improvement process, which results in the creation of individual school performance plans after deep engagement with data and the community, does not deeply integrate personalized learning practices into its structures and support materials. Additional clarity could also be given to allow schools to understand how they can take advantage of existing flexibilities in state law to implement more personalized, competency-based learning practices. Despite reforms, the state's school accountability system also contains lingering punitive processes, which could be replaced with systems that support local capacity for continuous improvement. Lastly, Nevada could consider how to equip teachers with the tools they need to implement personalized, competency-based learning practices through the state's teacher preparation, professional development and evaluation structures.

## Recommendations

- Empower schools to pursue personalized, competency-based learning practices as a component of meaningful school improvement through continuous improvement work and into existing funding opportunities. (Transparent data systems; Local capacity for continuous improvement; Personalized coaching teams)
- Empower districts with clear guidance on how to leverage existing legal flexibilities, such as Empowerment Schools, to create innovative school models that advance personalized, competency-based learning. (Local capacity for continuous improvement; Personalized coaching teams; Expertise in personalized and competency-based school improvement practices)
- Study opportunities for creating new flexibilities where needed to empower schools to pursue personalized, competency-based learning practices. Consider engaging with groups such as CBEN to identify existing roadblocks as well as needed changes in law or regulation. (Local capacity for continuous improvement; Personalized coaching teams; Expertise in personalized and competency-based school improvement practices)
- In partnership with the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), engage the Nevada Teacher Pipeline Taskforce in a comprehensive study on how to better integrate personalized learning practices throughout the state's teacher preparation, credentialing, professional development and evaluation systems. This should emphasize successful teacher training models such as the SEAD center. (Expertise in personalized and competency-based school improvement practices)
- Explore how to integrate training in both school improvement and personalized, competency-based learning practices into teacher professional development programs. To achieve this, consider how best to engage the RPDPs to deliver high-quality training in these types of instructional practices, or deliver them through the state's learning management system, CANVAS. (Expertise in personalized and competency-based school improvement practices)
- Continue to remove punitive school turnaround policies and ensure that schools and districts have the resources to engage in a continuous cycle of improvement. This should include rethinking how school rankings are used and supporting schools as they exit from school turnaround status (e.g., Comprehensive Support and Improvement /Targeted Support and Improvement ) designations. (Transparent data systems; Local capacity for continuous improvement)

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## STRATEGY AREA FOUR: ENSURING QUALITY

As systems become personalized and locally contextualized, states must rethink the education system to drive equitable implementation. By rethinking learning frameworks, new possibilities for academic assessment and accountability systems emerge. In the same way that personalized learning sees the value of and requirement to develop every child, assessment and accountability in personalized systems emphasize the development of each school to its fullest potential.

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, three policy conditions support states in ensuring quality:

- Quality Frameworks for Student Success
- Balanced Assessment
- Measuring Success

### Key Takeaways

**Launch Statewide Competencies:** The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) has supported a first round of statewide competency development by engaging teachers across the state. NDE should continue to facilitate the state's development and implementation of competencies, aligning designs with a statewide portrait of a graduate and emphasizing that competency implementation is opt-in, not mandated. The state should also consider leveraging this work to support other system leaders, including higher education, early learning and workforce development, in the articulation of standards and competencies that span the entire student learning spectrum.

**Assessment Theory of Change:** The state has undertaken two scans of the assessment landscape and has another underway. Using the data provided by these scans, the state should convene a diverse stakeholder group to explore barriers within the current assessment system to the implementation of personalized, competency-based learning. The working group should explore creating a new theory of change to improve alignment of assessments to personalized, competency-based instruction and learning.

**Student-Centered Accountability:** The state has taken steps to improve its stakeholder engagement through existing systems and structures. The state should establish systems for accountability and reporting that more deeply engage students, educators and the communities who are closest to the classroom to better identify measures of school quality that align to community values.

**Align Continuous Improvement Processes:** The state has made notable progress in the development of a comprehensive School and District Performance Plan process. The state should look for opportunities to incorporate flexibilities and indicators within this process that support the growth of personalized, competency-based learning. Nevada should also consider a process to ensure the implementation of high-quality competency frameworks and personalized instruction inside schools.

# QUALITY FRAMEWORKS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The state has a learning framework, or set of standards, that represents the full range of knowledge, skills and social-emotional competencies students need to graduate ready for postsecondary education and a rapidly changing workforce. This framework provides transparent learning expectations that help organize a personalized education system, empowering local leaders and educators to create or leverage aligned competencies and empirically-based learning progressions that map how students learn so educators can more effectively address learning needs.

To ensure quality, states leverage quality frameworks for student success by:

- Grounding learning frameworks in a set of statewide competencies
- Helping educators operationalize statewide competencies
- Ensuring consistency and customizability with appropriate depth and breadth of skills and content
- Aligning resources and policies to deepen implementation and support continuous improvement

## Key Takeaways

Nevada Academic Content Standards and CTE Quality Program Standards appear well-aligned to the state's vision, which includes that all Nevadans are ready for success in a global 21st century. While NDE officials highlighted a collaborative process for the development of competencies aligned to the academic content standards, there is little publicly available information regarding the development of competencies and learning frameworks or plans for supporting districts in the use of high-quality competencies. There is some evidence of student expectations having been articulated for the early learning and postsecondary levels. However, little evidence was found of effort to develop interconnected learning goals that span the PreK to postsecondary spectrum, to increase transparency of empirically-based learning expectations throughout and to improve postsecondary and career transitions.

As development work on the state-wide competencies continues, there is an opportunity for NDE to make the process more transparent. Before releasing statewide competencies, the state should consider a process for creating a vision-aligned portrait of a graduate and aligning competencies to the portrait or elevating skills that cross-cut disciplines. The state should continue collaborating with the field on the development of competencies and learning frameworks that create space for educators to use culturally responsive and inclusive instructional practices. The state should also continue to emphasize that competency adoption is not mandated but rather an opportunity to align to the state framework and participate in discussions around the development of networks, tools and resources for implementation.



## Recommendations

- Engage educators and other district and school leaders in developing a plan for promoting, supporting and aligning resources to advance their use of the state-developed competencies, particularly those currently designing and implementing personalized, competency-based learning in their schools. Continue to affirm for the field that adoption of statewide competencies is opt-in and that they are created to be a resource for alignment, not a mandate. (Statewide competencies; Operationalize statewide competencies)
- Deepen engagement with postsecondary system leaders, workforce leaders and policymakers regarding the need for standards and competencies that span the PreK to postsecondary spectrum, along with transparent empirically based learning expectations. (Statewide competencies)
- Develop a process for ensuring that competencies used across the state are of high quality. As necessary, seek additional resources to enable NDE to provide in-depth support for implementation and continuous improvement of these efforts. (Appropriate depth and breadth of skills and content; Continuous improvement)
- Build on the state's commitment to inclusivity and equity, including through multicultural education requirements and related strategies by undertaking the development of culturally-responsive guidelines. (Statewide competencies)
- Expand on current personalized, competency-based learning efforts through strategies such as evaluation and refinement of the CBE pilot, including exploring ways to ensure all students can progress and earn credit on demonstration of mastery and deepening understanding of existing research on learning progressions. Consider also supporting professional development opportunities focused on personalized, competency-based learning through, for example, the use of learning progressions to personalize instruction, particularly for special student populations. (Continuous improvement)

# BALANCED ASSESSMENT

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state supports the development and implementation of balanced systems of formative, benchmark, interim and summative assessments at the state and district levels that empower educators; deepen student learning; and validate student mastery of complex knowledge, skills and social-emotional competencies. These systems empower educators to focus instruction where it is needed most while providing important information to help states and districts better target resources to close achievement gaps and improve student success.

To ensure quality, states leverage balanced assessment systems by:

- Clarifying the purpose and roles for assessments
- Networking educators to refine approaches and ensure quality assurance
- Enabling classroom-level ownership of performance assessment tasks
- Aligning resources and policies to ensure equitable statewide implementation

## Key Takeaways

Nevada has taken important steps to clearly communicate the purpose and roles of state assessments and has received high marks from local assessment directors for helping educators ensure quality implementation. However, like most states in the nation, Nevada faces growing local concerns over the value of state assessments as well as the amount of time dedicated to testing. These concerns appear to stem from confusion and duplication between state and local assessments and from desire for more timely results. The high-stakes nature of assessments used for accountability rankings, as well as student end-of-course grades, also contribute stress. Nevada has conducted one audit to address testing burden and has another under way to help the state collectively address local testing duplication and achieve greater balance in its assessment system.

As Nevada's districts and schools begin to advance personalized, competency-based learning, the state will need to more deeply examine alignment of its state and local assessment systems. This should include movement toward assessments that enable students to demonstrate mastery of standards and aligned competencies using multiple points of evidence and through rich performance tasks that capture deeper learning. The state will need to network educators to build capacity for this shift and to ensure quality implementation statewide in the design and scoring of instructionally relevant tasks.

## Recommendations

- Expand the assessment evaluation authorized by Senate Bill 353 beyond a review of assessment duplication to also examine the quality of local assessments. The goal would be to help state and local leaders better understand whether chosen local assessments support deeper thinking, can be embedded in the curriculum, provide results in a format that is useful for informing instruction and are accessible for all students. (Roles for assessments)
- Launch a state-level study to explore examples of balanced assessment systems in other states, countries or regions that align to personalized and competency-based learning environments, and develop a plan to support the creation and adoption of high-quality balanced assessment systems that will better equip the state to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Engage in advocacy and storytelling to communicate federal policy improvements necessary for implementation of this plan. (Roles for assessments; Equitable statewide implementation)
- Leverage state and federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title II resources to provide ongoing learning opportunities for educators, district leaders, parents and/or guardians and students to deepen assessment literacy and ensure educators can network to refine assessment practice and leverage assessment data to increase equitable learning outcomes. (Quality assurance)
- Build on the state's current policy that enables students to complete portfolios or performance assessments in lieu of traditional courses to enable districts to replace end-of-course exams with more authentic, student-led assessment experiences. Create learning communities that enable educators to design and calibrate assessment scoring across districts. (Classroom-level ownership of performance assessment tasks)
- Create and fund a state innovative assessment pilot where districts have the option to replace state assessments that are not currently demonstrating local value with a high-quality, student-centered assessment. Provide participating districts with necessary policy flexibilities, including greater flexibility to assess students when ready. (Classroom-level ownership of performance assessment tasks; Equitable statewide implementation)

# MEASURING SUCCESS

According to KnowledgeWorks *State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning*, the state has a robust performance measurement system, including accountability and reporting tools, that aligns to its vision for student success, helps prioritize schools for additional supports and empowers stakeholders to design strategies that ensure continuous and sufficient progress on student learning outcomes. This system provides useful, timely and appropriate information to support the individual success of students, measuring personalized growth in academics, social-emotional development and educational opportunity.

To ensure quality, states measure success by:

- Providing a clear picture of progress through aligned performance measures
- Creating an information-rich public-facing dashboard
- Enabling shared accountability for monitoring progress
- Ensuring secure data sharing and privacy
- Investing in research and development to improve measurement

## Key Takeaways

The strength of Nevada's School Performance Framework (NSPF) is its commitment to transparency, transcending federal accountability requirements with a public dashboard on system, school and student performance. This dashboard, called the Nevada Report Card, enables stakeholders to view data on more than 50 student and system indicators ranging from PreK through postsecondary. The state also employs an index system to rank schools using indicators in compliance with ESSA. This public ranking system was designed to give stakeholders a simplistic determination of school quality but, in doing so, likely masks important takeaways on school strengths and growth areas. When calculating rankings, the state places greater emphasis on student growth than proficiency and also takes into account student engagement measures for elementary, middle and high school.

As Nevada seeks to restart its accountability and reporting systems following disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, the state has an opportunity to explore better alignment to personalized, competency-based learning. The state should leverage this opportunity to center community voices in the design of more reciprocal accountability systems that enable stakeholders at each level to shape the system and share responsibility for student success. At the same time, the state will need to invest in strategies and tools to help stakeholders make sense of complex data, particularly data heavily impacted by the pandemic.

## Recommendations

- Explore strategies for improving alignment to personalized, competency-based learning as the state restarts its accountability system such as establishment of a new baseline and vision, greater emphasis on system inputs that measure opportunity-to-learn and replacement of public school rankings with systems of support that emphasize growth for all with targeted resources for communities most in need. (Aligned performance measures)
- Amend the college and career readiness indicator for high school students to include an option for students to demonstrate readiness through mastery of state-level competencies that align to postsecondary and career expectations. (Aligned performance measures)
- Improve data visualization and build capacity of NDE and community stakeholders to better identify strengths and growth areas. Incorporate storytelling elements to help stakeholders contextualize the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on recent data and track progress throughout the recovery. (Public-facing dashboard)
- Explore ways to partner with postsecondary and workforce entities to better understand student success after exiting the state's system, such as integration of the NSHE Institutional Research dashboard. (Public-facing dashboard)
- Launch and fund a local accountability pilot that makes it possible for communities to design school support systems centered on school quality measures that align to community values. Explore ways to integrate these efforts into the NSPF through enhancements to state and district report cards and identification of interventions and exit criteria for school support systems. (Shared accountability for monitoring progress)
- Commission a study of NSPF to better understand the barriers it poses to districts and schools implementing personalized, competency-based learning. Study examples from other states seeking to advance more personalized systems and release a set of recommendations to strengthen Nevada's accountability and reporting systems. (Research and development to improve measurement)

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KnowledgeWorks is a national nonprofit organization advancing a future of learning that ensures each student graduates ready for what's next. For more than 20 years, we've been partnering with states, communities and leaders across the country to imagine, build and sustain vibrant learning communities. Through evidence-based practices and a commitment to equitable outcomes, we're creating the future of learning, together.

## FORESIGHT LAW+POLICY

Foresight Law + Policy is a national education law and consulting firm. Our professionals support education leaders, nonprofit organizations and entities of all types that are working to strengthen public education and prepare all kids for success. Established in 2014, Foresight provides the education policy insights, expert counsel and visionary supports that public and private sector leaders need to identify and promote innovative ideas for better serving the nation's diverse learners and their families.

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## APPENDIX A: NEVADA DEMOGRAPHICS AND OUTCOMES (2020-21)

GROUP	DEMOGRAPHICS	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROFICIENCY	MATH PROFICIENCY	4 YEAR GRADUATION RATE*	5 YEAR GRADUATION RATE*
<b>Overall</b>	481,345	41.4%	26.3%	82.6%	84.8%
<b>Hispanic</b>	43.44%	31.3%	16.7%	81.3%	83.6%
<b>White</b>	29.97%	53.8%	38.2%	86.4%	88.2%
<b>Black</b>	11.76%	25.3%	10.8%	69.5%	73.4%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	7.03%	49.9%	32.8%	85.0%	86.2%
<b>Asian</b>	5.51%	65.4%	51.4%	93.4%	94.6%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	1.48%	37.8%	22.8%	85.0%	87.6%
<b>American Indian/ Alaskan Native</b>	0.82%	25.8%	12.2%	74.4%	73.8%
<b>Free or Reduced Priced Lunch (FRL) Eligible</b>	73.15%	32.5%	18.1%	79.1%	82.1%
<b>English Learner (EL)</b>	13.37%	8.3%	6.1%	75.3%	77.8%
<b>Individual Education Program (IEP)</b>	12.41%	12.9%	8.5%	66.0%	69.9%

\*Graduation data is presented for the graduating class of 2019-2020. FRL, EL, and IEP student data are recorded for any student ever enrolled in the program.

Data collected from the [Nevada Accountability Portal](#).

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## APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES

Many of the examples in this section draw on previous research and publications from the KnowledgeWorks policy team. Check out our [resources page](#) for more great examples on state personalized learning policies.

### Vision for Student Success

#### NORTH DAKOTA

Since 2018, North Dakota has been working with KnowledgeWorks to grow their personalized competency-based learning tools. As a key part of this development, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is creating a [Learning Continuum](#). Drafted in 2021, the Learning Continuum “is a statewide framework (document) identifying key qualities (attributes) within a set of learning expectations (competencies).” The framework offers a clear articulation of student success and sets goals for graduates in the state. The framework also includes performance level expectations for K-12 students in a holistic way, with the ultimate goal being that students can demonstrate mastery in subject areas that are critical for success following graduation. The document also includes competencies a student should have as a “lifelong learner.”

### Collaborative Leadership

#### KENTUCKY

Under the leadership of Commissioner of Education Jason Glass, Kentucky is undertaking a new initiative to provide communities with opportunities to explore innovations in the creation of local assessments. Through a partnership with the Center for Innovation in Education begun in early 2021, the Kentucky Department of Education is [giving districts](#) an opportunity to engage in inclusive assessment co-design. The goal of this process, titled the Kentucky Reciprocal Learning Partnerships, is the creation of a more equitable system of assessments and accountability that serves the self-identified needs of the community.

Through these partnerships, communities will engage local stakeholders in labs of learning to discuss local needs. This information will then be used to develop locally-designed assessments. Kentucky hopes to begin rolling out prototype pilot assessments in the next few years and using the momentum developed through this local process to inform new ways of thinking about state accountability. The initial cohort of participating districts also overlaps closely with the state’s [Innovative Learning Network](#), which provides local districts a space to explore new models of learning to prepare all students for success.

### Comprehensive Supports for Educators and Leaders

#### CONNECTICUT

Connecticut took steps in 2021 to continue its momentum in recruiting and retaining teachers of color. In 2016, the State Board of Education [identified the need](#) to develop strategies to increase “the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the state’s educator workforce” in its comprehensive plan by certifying “1,000 new educators of color by 2021.” The state has since taken several actions to further this plan. In 2019, the legislature passed [SB 1022](#), requiring the State Department of Education’s Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council to annually hire and employ at minimum 250 new teachers and administrators from historically marginalized and resilient groups,

30 percent of which must be men. In the fall of 2020, Governor Lamont and then-Commissioner of Education Miguel Cardona also [announced](#) that the state would expand its Educators Rising Academy Curriculum in 10 school districts throughout the state. This program encourages students from minority backgrounds to consider careers in education. This spring, the governor [announced](#) that the state had exceeded its 2016 comprehensive plan goal by over 1,000 positions and hired more than 1,900 educators of color since 2017.

## Supports for Historically Underserved Students

### RHODE ISLAND

In response to the disruption created by the pandemic, Rhode Island's Commissioner of Education [convened a taskforce](#) called Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) in February 2021. The [goals of the LEAP taskforce](#) were to assess how learning loss had impacted students by analyzing academic and non-academic data, identify areas of focus, identify research-based, high impact strategies for addressing the root cause of learning loss and provide guidance to help the state respond to its findings. The taskforce membership included educators, school board members, labor unions, parents, community stakeholders, advocacy and non-profit organizations, elected officials, postsecondary education and local and national subject matter experts.

The taskforce concluded its work in March 2021 and released a [final report](#) that analyzed each of the issues raised in its original goals. The report identified five absolute priorities to accelerate student learning. These included the launch of a back-to-school campaign, ensuring all students have access to high-quality instruction and personalized supports, universally screening all students to ensure that they have the resources they need, improving and supporting student transitions across grades and systems and closing the digital divide. The report also included considerations for serving the needs of diverse populations, specifically multilingual learners and students with disabilities. The Rhode Island Department of Education also included its next steps in response to the taskforce recommendations.

## Equitable Conditions for Learning

### OHIO

In fall 2020, Ohio took a significant step to address the needs of whole child through the [launch](#) of its new [Whole Child Framework](#). This framework connects to Ohio's broader strategic vision for education and serves as a blueprint to schools and districts for meeting students' social-emotional, physical and safety needs. The framework document includes extensive recommendations of systemic practices necessary for learning and health for students. The framework was developed by the state's [Whole Child Advisory Group](#), which included representatives from a range of state agencies, community partners, school based partners, the governor's office, nonprofits and student organizations. The Ohio Department of Education also includes a [set of resources](#) on its website that schools can use to provide whole child supports and has produced a [video series](#) that spotlights how districts in the state are working to meet the needs of the whole child.

## Student Learning Pathways

### LOUISIANA

In 2019, the Louisiana Legislature passed [SB 243](#), which created the Dual Enrollment Framework Taskforce. The bill specifies that the taskforce shall make recommendations to help ensure universal access to dual enrollment courses for eligible high school students. The taskforce's [2020 report](#) includes recommendations to help grow this student pathway and ensure its accessibility. Many

recommendations focus on supporting students and ensuring student success in this pathway opportunity. These recommendations include offering additional training to school counselors and supporting the creation of intensive cohorts-based pathway programs to further support student preparation and success. The taskforce also recommended greater coordination among governmental entities involved in dual enrollment programs to enable clearer pathway structures and supports.

## Culture of Innovation

### ARIZONA

In 2021, Arizona passed [HB 2862](#), which allows a school district or charter school to adopt its own unique instructional time model to satisfy the state's requirements for annual daily membership, attendance and student count as defined by the state. The bill lays out the requirements that districts must meet to adopt a new model, such as holding public hearings to inform districts of upcoming changes. The bill also realigns the definition of "instructional hours" and/or "instructional time" to meet those adopted by new models. Under the law, students must still receive a minimum number of instructional hours, but such time may be satisfied through direct instruction, project-based learning, independent learning or mastery-based learning through both in-person or remote instruction. Additionally, schools will be permitted to reallocate any minimum instructional time to courses that may necessitate additional time for deeper learning or remediation.

## Responsive Funding Systems

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

In 2018, New Hampshire authorized the [Learn Everywhere Program](#) through [SB 435](#). This program directed the state board of education to adopt rules for approving alternative programs for granting credit leading to graduation. [State rules](#) subsequently adopted in late 2020 established a framework for a groundbreaking program to credential student learning regardless of where it occurred. While New Hampshire still requires schools to offer a minimum number of hours and days of instructional time, the state's current [definition of instructional time](#) allows for significant flexibility. The state education agency has also clarified that the [Learn Everywhere Program doesn't impact school funding](#) as schools participating will continue to receive the same funding as they did prior to participation in the program.

## Continuous School Improvement

### VERMONT

Since 2013, the Vermont State Board of Education has had rules around [education quality standards](#). These rules are "designed to ensure continuous improvement in student performance, instruction and leadership to enable students to attain rigorous standards in high-quality programs." In 2020, the State Board of Education published an updated version of their [Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework](#) that provided specific steps that districts and schools could use to develop their methods and implementation of continuous school improvement principles. Their [website also offers various resources](#) that can be accessed to support this work. This dedication to continuous school improvement includes not only support from the state, but also empowers schools and school districts to continue producing and implementing high quality learning strategies.

## Quality Frameworks for Student Success

### UTAH

In 2019, the Utah State Board of Education approved a [state profile of a graduate](#). Developed through a taskforce with a wide range of stakeholders, the [Utah Talent MAP](#) (Mastery, Autonomy, Purpose), sets standards for graduates and includes a wide range of competencies that address more than just traditional academic success. The Utah Talent Map has 13 competencies that target the full range of knowledge, skills and social-emotional competencies students need to graduate ready for postsecondary education and a rapidly changing workforce. The [full framework](#) was published in 2021 and offers a transparent articulation of expectations for students for each competency and for various grade levels.

## Balanced Assessment

### MASSACHUSETTS

In 2020, Massachusetts [applied for and was awarded](#) a [Competitive Grant for State Assessments](#) (CGSA) from the U.S. Department of Education to develop an innovative science test using performance tasks. The grant will enable the state to provide professional development tools to educators and support participating schools in developing deeper learning, high-quality science instruction and assessment literacy. The CGSA grant is grounded in Massachusetts' desire to address persistent achievement gaps in the state despite a long history of strong performance on the National Assessment of Education Progress. This grant builds on [the state's approval](#) in that same year for the federal IADA authority under ESSA. In its [CGSA application](#), Massachusetts proposed creating a new assessment for Science and Technology/Engineering, noting the broad coalition of stakeholders that it had built to support the assessment, as well as its intention to create “culturally relevant materials and instructional practices with equitable access, so that [they] can make an impact for the students who need this change the most.”

## Measuring Success

### COLORADO

[SB 204](#) passed the Colorado State Legislature in 2019 and made great strides for the state accountability system. The [fiscal note](#) specifies that the legislation “creates the Local Accountability System Grant Program in the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to support local accountability systems that supplement the state accountability system.” [An analysis](#) from the department of education specifies that the supplemental accountability measurements will support districts in setting accountability standards specific to their student populations and help alleviate information deficits. The [Student-Centered Accountability Project](#), which was aligned with this bill, is made up of five rural districts in the state.

# APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

**CBE** = Competency-Based Education

**CBEN** = Competency-Based Education Network

**CSI** = Comprehensive Support and Improvement

**CTE** = Career and Technical Education

**EL** = English Learner

**ESEA** = Elementary and Secondary Education Act

**ESSA** = Every Student Succeeds Act

**FRL** = Free or Reduced Priced Lunch

**IEP** = Individual Education Program

**LEA** = Local Education Agency

**LMS** = Learning Management System

**NDE** = Nevada Department of Education

**NEPF** = Nevada Educator Performance Framework

**NSHE** = Nevada System of Higher Education

**NSPF** = Nevada School Performance Framework

**PBISTA** = Positive Behavior Interventions and Support Technical Assistance Center

**PCFP** = Pupil Centered Funding Plan

**RPDP** = Regional Professional Development Program

**SCTG** = School Climate Transformation Grants

**SEAD** = Social, Emotional and Academic Development

**SEL** = Social-Emotional Learning

**SPP** = School Performance Planning

**STIP** = Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils

**TSI** = Targeted Support and Improvement

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