

Personalised Learning

Discussion Paper



Freja Butler receives the school's Premier's Reading Challenge certificate at the Premier's Reading Challenge Reception December 2007. (One of the reasons for our success in reading is that we purchase books to meet the individual needs and interests of our students)

Glen Park Primary School

School Council report

Prepared by T. Shaw November 2007 (Updated 2008, 2012, 2016, 2018)

Page | 1

Introduction

In its report 'Schooling for Tomorrow: Personalised Education' (OECD 2006) the rationale for Personalised learning is made clear: 'It is to raise standards by focusing teaching and learning on the aptitudes and interests of pupils. Personalised learning is the way in which schools tailor education to ensure that every pupil achieves the highest standard possible'.

The Office for Education Policy and Innovation released a paper 'Personalising Education: from research to policy and practice' in October 2007. In this document, personalised education was depicted as having the following common themes:

- Learners are central
- Information and communications technology (ICT) is a key enabler
- Lifelong learning
- Communities of collaboration

It is my contention that small schools are already providing personalised learning for their students and have done so for years.

History of Personalised learning

Personal learning has been embraced in the United Kingdom and United States, although with a different emphasis and has lately become a focus of educational research for our state education systems. In 'The Future of Schooling in Australia 2007' the Council for the Australian Federation recommended that government and schooling authorities should have 'the capacity to tailor an education for the individual child' and acknowledges the potential of personalisation to contribute to improved retention and attainment rates.

Personalised learning is not a new initiative. Many schools and teachers have tailored curriculum and teaching methods to meet the needs of children with great success for many years. What is different is that education systems have recognized the desirability of implementing this approach across the whole system.

To build a successful personalised learning approach across all schools, we must begin by acknowledging that giving every single child the chance to achieve their full potential, whatever their talent or background, is not the betrayal of excellence and competition but an opportunity to enable everyone to attain their full potential. (Some politicians and education commentators might find this a challenging approach)

Personalised learning means high quality teaching that is responsive to the different ways in which students achieve their best. Each school needs to consider how best to customize their resources, staffing and learning priorities within the VELS to create a personalised learning environment which suits their location, learning community and infrastructure.

In the UK the Department for Children, Schools and Families has identified the following features as essential to creating a personalised learning approach in schools:

For pupils:

- They will be treated as partners in their learning, with joint responsibility for participating in the design of their learning
- They will have their individual needs addressed, both in school and extending beyond the classroom and into the family and community
- If they start to fall behind in their learning, they will be able to identify their weaknesses and how to improve, and will be given additional support to help them get back on track quickly
- They will receive coordinated support to enable them to succeed to the full, whatever their talent or background
- They will develop respect for others, self-esteem and skills for collaboration through learning in a mutually supportive environment

For parents and carers:

- They will receive regular updates that give clear understanding of what their child can currently do, how they can progress and what help can be given at home
- They will be involved in engaging with their child's learning and in planning their future education
- They will be confident that their child is receiving a high quality education that is designed to meet their learning needs and which will equip them with the skills they need to thrive throughout their lives
- They will have the opportunity to play a more active role in school life and know that their contribution is valued

For teachers and support staff:

- They will have high expectations of every learner, giving them confidence and skills to succeed
- They will have access to and be able to interpret data on each pupil to inform teaching and learning, incorporating more fine-tuned assessment and lesson planning;
- They will be in a stronger position to share and exchange information about best practice among their colleagues in different schools and through external networks, resulting in opportunities to develop a wide repertoire of teaching strategies
- They will participate in high quality professional development, working with other teachers to develop their skills in understanding the learning needs of their pupils and how best to address those needs and engage them

- They will be able to depend more routinely on the support of non-teaching staff and other adults from outside the school to provide a holistic, tailored educational provision for all their pupils

For schools:

- They will seek to configure their design, resources, curriculum and organisation around the needs of their learners, to reflect a professional ethos that accepts and assumes every child comes to the classroom with a different knowledge base and skill set, as well as varying aptitudes and aspirations
- They will demonstrate a determination for every young person's needs to be assessed and their talents developed through a variety of teaching strategies
- They will have the confidence to innovate and develop approaches to personalising learning that meet the diverse needs of their pupils
- They will put personalising learning at the heart of their vision for transforming teaching and learning

"Personalised learning is about learner-managed and co-constructed learning - the shift from dependency to independence and interdependency - and invitational learning and assessment."

From: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/about/> The Department for Children, Schools and Families

Nutshell Statement

Personalised learning is about ensuring that every student achieves their full potential during their school years and are better prepared for lifelong learning. It is concerned with transforming education and schooling to best fit citizens in the 21st century

Offering a personalised learning experience

Schools can best achieve the personal learning needs of their students by:

- providing timely intervention for children falling behind (Programs such as Reading Recovery)
- providing small group or individual tuition for students who need to catch up
- creating new opportunities to challenge gifted and talented children

- providing extra support for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. (Providing study space and time for children who can't learn or who are not supported to learn at home)
- working in partnership with secondary schools, to ensure a smooth transition in year 7.
- providing targeted support for specific groups of children who are at risk of underperforming, including ethnic minorities, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.(Developing Individual Learning Improvement Plans – ILIP)
- providing parents with better information and reporting systems about their child's progress and helping them to engage in supporting their learning (Quick Vic Reports enable parents and students to become participants in the report writing process.)
- re-design school policies and programs to include provision for personalised learning.
- using peer mentoring or setting up 'buddy' systems that enable older pupils to buddy younger ones and support them in their learning and general well-being (a matter of course in small schools)
- Classrooms should be designed to allow all students to see and interact with each other. ICT is used extensively in support of the pedagogy. Teachers focus on using strategies for engaging all pupils.
- The school aims to embed assessment for learning in all learning opportunities. Assessment feeds back into curriculum planning. Student's progress is used to set individual targets.
- Sharing with learners the overall aims of the learning and giving learners clear criteria by which success in learning may be judged. Learners embarking on a learning journey need a clear map and some obvious signposts. This also forms part of the dialogue with the learner.('Criteria for Assessment' used to drive student improvement is promoted by Lane Clarke)
- The school places an emphasis on engaging students in their learning and in the life of the school. Students' views are sought through self-evaluation and feedback questionnaires (Student Opinion Surveys and PoLT surveys)
- The school can act as a hub for community activity, potentially providing community access to a library, conference venue, sports, ICT and performing arts facilities. Students could have access to a wide range of after-school and lunchtime activities.

Changes in education

ICT has transformed our lives: Floors full of Secretaries have disappeared, internal walls have come down, emails have replaced letters, video-conferencing has replaced many meetings, flexible working hours have replaced set hours and laptops and mobile phones allow people to work from home, on the train or in a café.

In our large primary and secondary schools students still trudge from one four-walled room to another, have their working pace and learning style dictated to them in fixed blocks of time dictated by timetables and in secondary school they are tested by being herded into a large

room and told to sit down and scribble with pen and ink on paper as fast as they can for 90 minutes or so. (There is also the threat of league tables for schools, positioning children within their class according to test results and encouraging competition between staff for performance pay)

Personalised education has the potential to change the way we teach and the way students learn. Personalised learning does not mean allowing children to do as they please. Students have to work with teachers to "co-design" both the curriculum and the goals for their learning. ('Personalised learning is not individualised learning where pupils sit alone at a computer. Personalised learning involves the teaching, curriculum and school organisation being re-designed to reach as many pupils as possible with diverse needs and experiences for as much of the learning time as possible.)

This is about finding out what is relevant to the pupils and trying to draw on the abilities and experiences they may have developed elsewhere in life. (Children are not empty vessels.) Most children can learn how to use their mobiles, ipods or video games without studying manuals. They learn by trial and error, by sharing ideas, working together, and browsing the internet. They are usually more adept at this than adults. (I still have no idea how my DVD works)

If children can learn so effectively when they are motivated and allowed to follow their own methods, then maybe this can be transferred to other areas of learning. So learning may take place outside the classroom, either at home or during after-school activities. It may be delivered by ICT with the support of teachers and peers. This does not mean unlimited choice in what and when children learn, since learners will still have targets to be met. However, it gives learners the opportunity to learn in ways that suit their individual learning styles.

This will be challenging for teachers and for schools. It will not be easy to organise. How will a school achieve the flexibility required to allow students to learn in their own way, in their own pace and in their chosen setting?

There will also be tension between a "co-designed curriculum" and VELs. The nature of tests and exams may also have to change. (We could see a time when children complete tests online with their own laptops.) Pressures from the Commonwealth to tie funding to results and to insist on a national curriculum and performance pay could make flexibility of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment hard to achieve.

Definition from Wikipedia

Personalised Learning is the tailoring of [pedagogy](#), curriculum and learning support to meet the needs and aspirations of individual learners.

Personalised learning at Glen Park Primary School

Small schools have catered for the individual needs of their students through a personalised approach to their learning needs for years. Glen Park Primary School provides a personalised education for its students by:

- Providing a one to one computer ratio and access to supporting ICT (scanners, printers and digital cameras)
- Providing publishing tools (laminator, binder, photocopying)
- Providing resources as required (paper, cardboard, art equipment, printing tools)
- Providing space for children to develop their own research and creative output (Giving children the opportunity to create their own art projects and scientific experiments which they can complete over time in a secure environment. example: growing crystals, creating model aircraft, knitting, jewellery making , creating worm farms)
- Providing the opportunity for children to use their ICT skills and creativity to develop their own personalised digital portfolio.
- Consulting with students over the literature texts they wish to read as part of their literature theme work
- Giving children the opportunity to choose books they wish to read, software they want for their computers and sports equipment they want to play with.
- Giving children the opportunity to explore on Digilearn at their own pace.
- Letting children organise their own work schedule given a set of specifically designed requirements incorporating rich assessment tasks
- Providing children with their own personal learning tools (calculators, desk tidy and their own stationary items)
- Co-operating with other small school leaders to create a Principal Learning Community (Moorabool Collegiate Group) to improve teaching and learning across ten small rural schools.
- Individual holistic homework program (inspire by Ian Lilico)
- Developing Individual learning Improvement Plans for children at risk.

- Encouraging project oriented, collaborative work promoting autonomy and independence. (Encouraging the unfettered use of ICT, the library and Internet.)
- Adoption of Revised Blooms Taxonomy curriculum model
- Access to a large, extensive library
- Informal peer tutoring
- Emphasising a commitment to life-long learning by valuing staff professional development and creating a 'parents library'.
- Staff have their own personal learning plans
- Maintaining small class sizes to better facilitate personalised learning.
- New school facilities making it an attractive, comfortable school with a relaxed non-threatening environment
- Children designed their own new playground.

Personalised learning according to the Centre for Learning Innovation in NSW

Personalised learning is what student-focused teachers do when they recognize and address the needs of individual learners. It builds on the principals of flexible delivery and quality teaching to support individual students as they travel along their own learning journeys.

Challenges for 2008 and beyond

- Engaging the school community and wider Glen Park community more in the personalised learning experiences of our students.
- Investigating the use of Interactive Whiteboards and maintaining our current ICT. (We currently have 12 modern PCs)
- Investigating greater potential for adult world immersion (situating the students in the world beyond school by visiting work places and community organisations)

- Developing a new format for the ILIP for all students with student input. Formalising buddy-system for new prep enrolments in 2008
- Further strengthening our 'communities of collaboration' by helping to develop more effective links between schools in the Moorabool PLC (involvement in PLC leadership , research and collegial activities) and proposed Small Schools Common (Of which Glen Park Primary has been a prime instigator.)
- Investigate flexible timetable
- Investigate a personalised school building built to meet the challenges of a one-teacher rural school.
- Linking the school with the family through Ultranet
- Exploring opportunities to involve outside experts into the school program. (willing expert volunteers)

Conclusion

Small schools by the nature of their intimate size, excellent resources and close links to family and school community are able I feel to create a viable environment which promotes personalised learning.

At Glen Park we have worked hard over the last ten years to meet the individual needs of our students. There is a lot more to do and we will use the development of a Strategic Plan in semester 2, 2008 to plan for the further development of personalised education at our school.

The challenge is also there for the DEECD to provide the support needed to Victorian schools to continue the discussion about what personalising education is, whether it is of value to our system, how it can be implemented and how we can promote it across all schools.

This is an international initiative (US, UK and New Zealand) which Victoria can take a leadership role in. A close examination of how small schools cater for the personal needs of its students could help further develop personalised learning (which is still in the embryonic stages of its development.) around the world.

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- http://www.tale.edu.au/tale/live/global/features/he_pl/index.htm High Expectations (OECD Report)
- <http://ausweb.scu.edu.au/aw03/papers/kurzel/paper.html> Paper: 'Towards a personalized learning Environment'

Personalized learning at Glen Park in practice 2008

- Informing parents through our newsletter of teaching programs and strategies in use at all year levels and how parents can help their children at home and to help prepare them for school. (This is especially relevant to prep parents.) we will continue updating the parent library we started in 2007.
- Purchased DS Game consoles and 'Brain Training' software for the grade 5-6 students and providing them with 15 minutes of brain training every morning. (The grade 3 boys has similar PC time using mathematics programs such as 'Maths Blaster' which he can work on at his own pace.)
- Organizing Infant class visits to places of interest such as working farms, bakeries, supermarkets. Also visits by senior students to points of interest in Ballarat (exploring Sturt St., The Ballarat Fine Arts Gallery and visit to the University of Ballarat.)

- Providing a wide range of text books for students that meet their specific needs (pre-reading books for one of our preps who didn't go to kindergarten last year and the year 5 student starting off with year 4 spelling and mathematics text books and her own handwriting book)
- Consulting with senior students about literature theme work they would like to do this year (Their choice is for Heidi, Pollyanna, Secret Garden, Stuart Little, Roald Dahl.)
- Providing space and time for students to create models and constructions and complete art work. Purchasing specific craft activities for them (knitting, beading and sewing activities for the grade 5-6 children and model making for the grade 3 student.)
- Providing time and resources for guided research activities for senior students. (software, unlimited internet time, unlimited consumables, scanner, digital cameras, DVDs, access to AUSTAR)
- Grade 3-6 continue to maintain their own personal digital portfolios. (This began as a middle-years project just with grade 5-6 in 2000 and now includes grade 3-4. It is for the most part self-sustaining)
- PC ratio of one computer per student
- Purchasing books, software and craft material to meet the individual needs and interests of students.
- Use where applicable Little Bendigo P.S. personalized student achievement checklists for children to keep and maintain. As of February 2008 they consist of achievement checklists in Maths, English and ICT. (Look at incorporating into assessment schedule for 2009)
- Paper to be prepared in 2008 on options for a new Personal Learning Plan for 2009 implementation

Further challenges and updates

Over the life of the next Strategic Plan (2009-11), Glen Park will need to:

- Develop and assess student learning styles profiles.
- Determine an assessment schedule for the next 4 years (Currently we have a draft schedule and we will install 'On Demand' testing in term 4 2008)
- Develop a new PLP for years 4-6 taking into account some of the features of the one used at Fitzroy High School. (The current PLP will be used for grades P-3 from 2009)
- Begin developing assessment rubrics for identified 'rich learning tasks' which can be used as evidence of achievement in PLPs
- Introduce the concept of learning styles and learning how to learn. Develop 'Learning How to Learn' place mats and wall charts.

- Create a 'skills development' matrix to help children discover existing skills and identify skills they'll need to develop for future learning (This can help inform their PLPs)
- Review process for compiling 'Show portfolios' and the structure of children's 'digital portfolios'.
- Discuss with parents the content of student PLPs (Investigate the possibility of initiating 3 way conferences in grade 6)
- Develop checklists and 'run charts' as required to help children to demonstrate that they're achieving their goals
- Further develop self-report questionnaires
- Investigate the 'coaching' role through school visits and professional development opportunities.
- Develop 'primary school friendly' research contracts and 'group work deployment' charts.
- Place greater emphasis on the children identifying their own learning. (guidance will be required at first) Document 'learning goals or expectations' (on timetables or contracts or charts displayed in the rooms) for the day / week/ term and involve the children in developing what they are. Children need to be able to articulate what they've learnt.
- Investigate more online flexible individual work programs
- Investigate the children having outside school email links with 'study buddies'?

2012-13

- The biggest challenge in 2010 will be adapting what we are doing now to fit in with Ultranet which should create on the one site all the material I am currently using this year.
- Re-structure personal learning goals format and personal learning plan format for 2010 until Ultranet is installed.
- Volunteer to be an early 'adopter' of Ultranet in our region.
- Complete Ultranet training November 2010.
- Begin using Ultranet (Develop Learning Tasks)
- Investigate Interactive personalized learning plans using iPads
- Express interest in trialling aspects of the new National Curriculum (January 2011 and 2012)
- Make personal learning a focus of the 2013-16 strategic plan.

2014-18

- We were an early adopter of the P-10 Curriculum (Refer to the Glen Park P-10 Implementation Plan and our FISO Plan)
- Given the failures of Ultranet we became the first school in Balart to adopt a one-to-one iPad to student program and invested considerable resources to hardware, software (apps) and professional learning. The integration of ICT into daily student use was the

focus of our 2013-16 Strategic Plan. (Our use of iPads for developing student personal learning plans in 2013 superseded the use of our previous IPLPs (Refer Personalising Learning in Practice Glen Park P.S. 2009-10)



Personalised
Learning at Glen Par

- Individual student learning plans are updated daily on the 'Daily Book' app on student ipads.
- I Can statements have been developed as part of the 2016-20 Strategic Plan which has a focus on enhanced questioning skills and feedback and the greater use of Formative Assessment. (refer to the Glen Park Formative Assessment plan 2016-17) We will also be focusing heavily on students not only achieving a year's growth for a year's schooling but also achieving their own 'personal best' in the learning they do. The 'I Can' statements have been effectively turned into Student learning Goals checklists for English and mathematics.
- One of our challenges in 2018 has been to find suitable professional learning opportunities to support our Strategic plan.
- The Gonski 2.0 review of education (Released 30/04/18) has endorsed the personalized learning practices that we have been following at Glen Park for nearly 20 years. (Refer statements below) Glen Park has been genuinely teaching at point of need using IPLP across the school since 2007 and before that in an informal manner since 1997. Our program today has all of our students learning using their own personal learning plans (on iPads) across all curriculum areas. No emphasis is placed on 'grade structures' only on personal student need. (The 'system requires that we report on year level achievement rather than on achieving 'personal best'.) The current Commonwealth Government has endorsed the review and Gonski's recommendation of an independent institute to assess educational evidence has already been promised by Labor. Labor has said that many of these reforms would be in place now if Minister Pyne hadn't scrapped them and they are also critical of the new funding model and the loss of billions of dollars in funding for state schools. They promise to reverse that when in government.

Gonski review in relation to personalized learning in a nutshell

Extracts from the Age 30/04/18

The Gonski 2.0 plan

Under-achieving students would focus on improvement, while more advanced students would be pushed to meet "stretch targets" beyond their age or year level. End-of-year results would be scrapped in favour of "learning progressions" that can be assessed and attained at any time - and tracked, even if a student changes schools or states.

"Teaching curriculum based on year or age levels rather than levels of progress leaves some students behind and fails to extend others, limiting the opportunity to maximise learning growth for all students," the report found.

"Reporting against year-level achievement standards hides both progress and attainment for some students and does not amount to a diagnostic assessment of real learning needs."

For instance, there was emerging evidence to support what the report called the "de-privatisation of teaching", which involved moving away from a model where teachers would stand alone at the front of the classroom and took sole responsibility for their pupils, towards greater collaboration.

The review also urged freeing school principals from the shackles of administration and handing them more autonomy over teaching practices - and more professional development for teachers.

From the ABC 30/04/18

Many schools rely on gifted and talented programs to extend bright students but the report said evidence showed that mixed-ability classes were preferable.

It said streaming children by ability "has little effect in improving student outcomes and [has] profoundly negative equity effects".

It recommended overhauling the curriculum to focus on "learning progressions" that extended all students, regardless of ability.

Other key recommendations included:

- Setting up a national inquiry to review curriculum and assessment in years 11 and 12

- Establishing a national educational research institute

- Implementing greater principal autonomy

- Providing more rewards for high-performing teachers

- Overhauling the current A-E grading scale to instead measure progression gains

- Introducing a "unique student identifier" for all students that allows progress to be tracked across time, even if a student changes schools or moves interstate

It calls for the implementation across states of a new online assessment tool that teachers would use to diagnose the exact level of literacy and numeracy a child has achieved. Teachers could then create individual learning plans for students that would not be tied to what year group they are in.