SREE Classroom Instruction Section Invited Symposium

The Growing Trend Toward Personalized Learning: Insights on What it is, its Implementation, and Early Effects

Participants

Moderator: Nonie K. Lesaux, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Panelists: John Pane, RAND
Betheny Gross, Center on Reinventing Public Education
Susan Fine, New Classrooms

Description

The concept and field of personalized learning is still evolving yet doing so at a rapid pace. Policymakers and practitioners committed to designing more effective and developmentally-appropriate learning environments are turning to personalized learning as a high-impact lever, and aiming for increased student engagement and achievement. New models, approaches, and supporting technologies are emerging, and funding sources are regularly being deployed to implement personalized learning models, especially in settings serving high-risk children and youth.

As the field develops, personalized learning remains a somewhat nebulous concept, though often organized around some key principles: learner profiles that enable educators to stay up-to-date on each student’s progress and needs; personalized learning plans that are refreshed frequently and followed by each student; progress that is based on demonstrated knowledge and skills rather than pacing guides or seat time; and learning environments that are flexible.

Given the attention and momentum around this new approach, this session will feature a panel discussion about the concept of personalized learning—what is it, exactly, and how is it a departure and/or distinct from other concepts and approaches (e.g., differentiation). Pane and Gross will discuss early evidence of its effects and the research and design challenges to overcome to get to a robust knowledge base, while Fine will describe her own organization’s model of personalized learning and lead a discussion of the key successes and challenges of implementing and spreading the model. From panelists’ commentary and discussion with the audience, we expect a vibrant discussion of the potential implications of personalized learning for advancing educational policy and practice.
Panelist Bios

**John F. Pane, PhD**, is Distinguished Chair in Education Innovation and senior scientist in RAND Education. Pane researches the implementation and effectiveness of innovations in education, with a focus on personalized learning, education technology, math, and science. His expertise includes the application of experimental and rigorous quasi-experimental methods. He has led or co-led numerous experiments using individual-level or school-level random assignment, including a large-scale effectiveness trial of mathematics tutoring software in 147 schools in 51 school districts in seven states; and several efficacy experiments, including one examining the effects of summer learning programs in five urban school districts. He also leads quasi-experimental evaluations of schools implementing personalized learning. He holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Carnegie Mellon University.

**Betheny Gross, PhD**, is a senior research analyst and research director at the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) and Affiliate Faculty, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, at the University of Washington Bothell. She coordinates CRPE’s quantitative research initiatives, including analysis of portfolio districts, charter schools, and emerging teacher evaluation policies. Dr. Gross has examined evidence and outcomes of district reform across the country, including Chicago, New York, New Orleans, Denver, and Broward County, and she has advised and consulted with districts leaders to formulate strategy and implementation. She is an expert at translating complex performance and accountability data for diverse users, from district leaders to parents, in cities including New York and Seattle. She is an authority on teacher quality and labor market issues, and she led the four-year, federally funded “Inside Charter Schools” initiative, which examined human resource and leadership practices in charter schools. Dr. Gross is co-author of an upcoming book on portfolio districts and the author of numerous research reports and articles. Dr. Gross holds a BA in Economics and Urban Studies from the University of Pittsburgh, an MA in Economics from the University of Iowa, and a PhD in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Susan Fine, PhD** is Chief Academic Officer of New Classrooms. She has more than 20 years of diverse experience as an educator, having served as an elementary and middle school teacher; curriculum director; and adjunct professor of education at Pace University, Queens College, and Teachers College, Columbia University. She was also the Director of Alternative Certification at Pace University for several years before spending one year as Deputy Network Leader for Instruction within NYCDOE. She then was the Executive Director of The Urban Assembly for four years. Susan has served as Senior Academic Advisor for School of One since early 2011. She has a B.S. in Elementary Education from the University of Illinois as well as an M.A. in Remedial Reading and a Ph.D. in Politics and Education, both from Teachers College.