FCS: Personalization

Christina Lewis, Natalie Hancock, & Michelle Jensen

9.1 The Importance of Personalization in a FCS Classroom

In each of our classrooms, there is a different and unique blend of student personalities, abilities, and learning styles. Personalized learning is an approach to teaching that tailors instruction to the individual learner. The goal is to create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences for each student. Personalization can take many forms such as personalized goals, time, place, pace, and path to mastery. This gives students voice and choice in their learning which increases student engagement.

It is helpful to approach personalization and the idea of student control in two different ways: through allowing students to personalize along the dimensions of personalization and through allowing students to personalize learning objectives, assessments, and activities we use in our teaching.

9.2 Strategies to Personalize Learning in a FCS Classroom

One way to think about personalization is to examine the ways students can receive personalized instruction. The five dimensions of personalized learning are guidelines for ways or methods we can apply to allow our students to personalize their learning. These dimensions are goals, time, place, pace, and/or path.

Reflection Question: In what ways could personalization increase learning and engagement in your classroom?

Figure 1

Five Dimensions of Personalized Learning
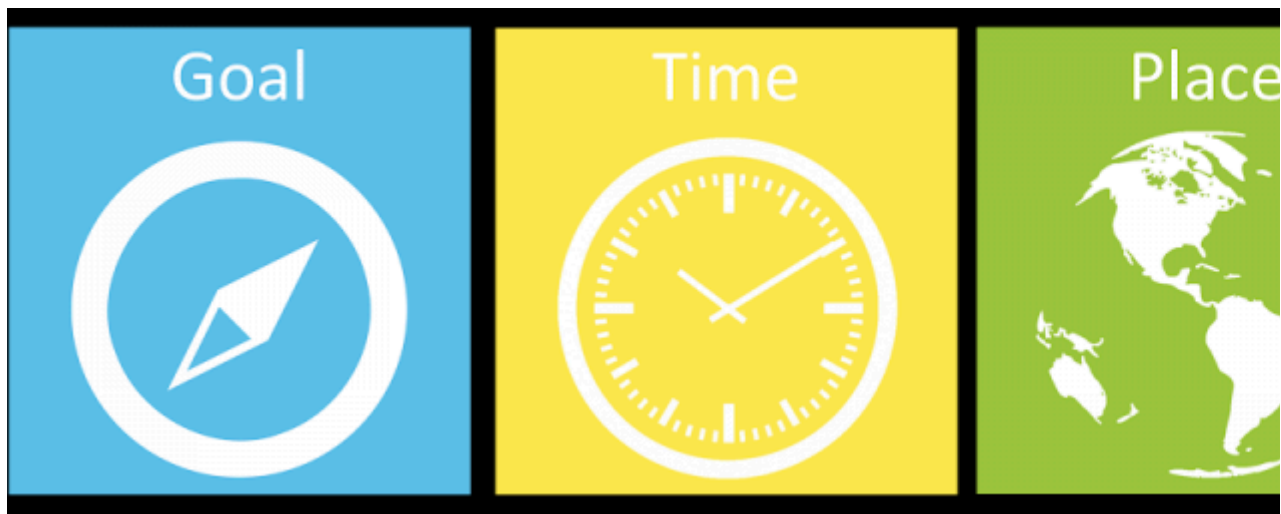
In the sections below we will explore each of these dimensions.

9.2.1 Personalizing Goals

Goals are a means of making choices specific and purposeful. Facilitating goal setting increases student ownership of their learning, encourages lifelong learning skills and attitudes, and increases motivation and self-regulation abilities.

In order for students to personalize their goals, you and they need to understand something of their needs and proficiencies as FCS learners. This is where you can use the data you have gathered from the activities mentioned in the Data Practices chapter.

> ### Personalizing Goals—Mary Alice McCarlie (3:12)

Information from such sources helps you understand where students are in their abilities, skills, and aptitudes. Learning outcomes and standards give focus for where students are expected to be. The difference between where students are and the course outcomes is the place for growth—and goals.

Goals are not goals if they are just aspirations. Writing goals down and tracking them are important processes for achieving them. Here are a few ideas about goal setting conferences and how they might be used in an FCS classroom.

In Class

- Teach and discuss the purpose for setting goals.
- Help students develop a growth mindset; create a culture of growth.
- Introduce a goal setting process such as SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound)

Conferencing (regular goal setting meetings)

- Some teachers meet with a few students a day or a week, taking several weeks to meet with every student.
- Others plan a station or lab rotation, where students are working independently, then pull students out individually for a short consultation.
- Use these conferences to review current data and areas of growth.
  - Discuss growth in content areas.
  - You may also want to allow students to practice making goals outside the scope of your learning outcomes, such as personal health; interpersonal goals; self-regulation goals.
- Invite the student to evaluate where new growth can take place in your content area and make goals for that growth.
- Record progress toward previous goals and new goals. Include a chart to help students visualize progress.

Monitoring (tracking progress between conferences)

- Pair and share—place students in pairs (which either you or the students choose). The students share their goals with each other weekly and help their partner revise the goals if necessary. They also report their progress.
- Students can keep an online daily or weekly journal in which they reflect on and record their progress toward their goals or struggles they are having. Teachers check in weekly and address individual student needs.
- Students turn in an online exit ticket daily, reporting that day's progress, struggles, or need for help.
- Create charts to record student progress during the year.

9.2.2 Personalizing Path

When you allow students to personalize their learning path in your classroom, your students are not all doing the same assessments and activities. You may find that you have become a curator of resources and activities that will best help your students. These resources/activities can be compiled in playlists or choiceboards, which give the students choice about the order in which they complete the activities or about which activities they choose to do.

> Honoring Student Choice—Megan Wakefield (3:19)

9.2.3 Personalizing Pace

Personalizing pace means allowing students to take more or less time based on their own ways and pace of learning as well as their personal and family life circumstances. It often includes giving students a window of time on due dates for completing activities, assignments, and assessments. Personalizing pace encourages students to manage their time. They know what they need to do and when it needs to be completed, but they also know the other demands on their time (sports, school, play, family and work obligations) and learn to plan for these situations.

9.2.4 Personalizing Time

In a traditional classroom, students may have a class period to finish an assignment. In a blended classroom this time can be expanded to include time outside the class. Because activities can be accessible outside of the classroom, students can choose times that work well for them. For example, a student may have a difficult time learning in the morning, when he has class. But because he can access his assignment later in the day, he is able to complete it and do a good job. Time is closely related to pace. Because students are not bound to a specific time to do an assignment, they can increase or decrease their pace according to their own preferences, needs, and abilities.

9.2.5 Personalizing Place

Personalizing place revisits traditional practices about place. Because blended courses often include online instruction, students can choose to do activities at home or at school. In addition, they can access instruction when they have to

miss activities because of illness, travel, or extra-curricular activities. However, another aspect of place is the configuration of the classroom. Classrooms are often viewed as rows of desks or sometimes desks grouped into tables. But classrooms don't have to look this way. They can be made more comfortable, inviting, and conducive to the kinds of activities that take place in a blended classroom.

🌱 9.3 Personalizing Activities and Assessments

Approaching personalization through the five dimensions is one way of planning to personalize. Another way is to look directly at what you do in your classroom. Typically teachers plan assessments and activities around learning objectives to make sure they cover the material they are mandated to cover. Finding ways for students to exercise choice in some or all aspects of these activities and assessments is another way to foster personalization in your classroom.

9.3.1 Personalized Assessments

What do assessments look like in your classroom: an essay exam? A final paper? Short answer questions about a text? A presentation? Do all your students do the same thing?

Personalizing assessments means giving students choices in the ways they demonstrate mastery of a learning outcome. Often this means creating a list of ideas that students can choose from, while also allowing them to suggest their own ideas.

- How were these assessments personalized?
- How are these assessments different from traditional assessments?
- What kinds of growth do these assessments encourage in the students?

> ## Personalizing Demonstrations of Learning–Heather Ostler (1:50)

Table 1

Personalized Assessments

Personalized Assessments
Students choose the media they use for the assessment: powerpoint, google docs, video, etc.
Students choose the form of the assessment: mindmap, essay, documentary, brochure, story, art, performance, exam, etc.
Students choose the topic of a piece of writing or other form of assessment.
Students choose to do the assessment in groups or on their own.

> ✎ **Blended Teaching Workbook**
>
> In your Blended Teaching Workbook, create a few ideas of personalized *assessments* that students can choose from in order to show mastery of the content area you choose earlier.
>
> If you haven't already opened and saved your workbook, you can access it here.

9.3.2 Personalized Activities

Personalized activities are based on data and goals. Students can choose activities that help them accomplish their goals from playlists and/or choice boards that give them choice in path, pace, time, and place. They may include online interaction as well as online integration of activities that are personalized or differentiated for individual students.

> ### Choice Boards and Projects–Megan Wakefield (4:41)

> ✎ **Blended Teaching Workbook**
>
> pencil icon) Blended Teaching Workbook In your Blended Teaching Notebook create a few ideas of personalized *activities* that students can choose from in order to show mastery of the content area you chose earlier.
>
> If you haven't already opened and saved your workbook, you can access it here.

Personalization is a powerful pedagogical tool. It allows students to grow where they need to grow and in a way that is meaningful to them. It combines all the other competencies of blended learning: online integration, online interaction, and data practices to create a unique learning experience for each student. Throughout these chapters you have learned how to use these competencies in a FCS context. Now it is up to you! You are ready for that first small step!

Previous Citation(s)

Graham, C. R., Borup, J., Jensen, M. A., Arnesen, K. T., & Short, C. R. (2021). *K-12 Blended Teaching (Vol 2): A Guide to Practice Within the Disciplines, 2*. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/-QNCX