

We imagine a world where personalized learning is just the way students learn — a world where every student attends a school that meets them where they are, adapts to the unique ways they learn, and develops habits for lifelong success.

Turning the Page on the Factory Model Classroom

A great education can enable students to discover their passions, navigate the world, and prepare them for a successful career in the 21st century.

But it's challenging for schools to deliver on this promise for each and every student. The rigidity of the traditional school model – with one teacher, a set of textbooks, and 30 or so same-aged students in an 800 square foot room – makes it nearly impossible for teachers to meet each student's unique needs.

Instead of being based on research on how students best learn, it is instead a reflection of industrial era thinking, where factories provided the template for mass production.

Over the last 100+ years, our society has made quantum leaps in understanding both how the brain develops and how children learn. Technological advances achieved in the last twenty years have led to new capacities that couldn't have been imagined during the Industrial Era.

But despite these advancements, our schools continue to operate with many of the same operational structures and systems that have persisted for decades. Textbooks, bell schedules, grade-level standards, age-based learning cohorts, and so on all work together to keep all but the least disruptive of innovations from penetrating the classroom walls.

As a result, our nation remains stuck with the factory-model classroom. It's a model that prioritizes covering assigned grade-level material over meeting students where they are. It's a model that often fails those who enter behind grade level and bores those who enter near the top. And it's a model that burns out its most valuable resources -- teachers.

It will take more than new textbooks, new computers, or new apps to bring about an evolution from the factory-model classroom. Many of these products and tools, while helpful, do little to challenge the underlying systems and structures that keep the factory-model classroom in tact.

What's instead required are new, innovative *learning models* -- comprehensive instructional programs that combine both an academic design that articulates *what* students learn along with a set of operating structures that shape *where, when, and how* they learn. The academic design might include components such as instructional content, learning progressions, assessments, and classroom materials while the operational design might include features such as student regrouping, a reconfiguration of classroom space, an innovative use of technology, or new roles for educators.

These school-based learning models will be developed by organizations known as *model providers* which focus on both the R&D associated with new models as well as the implementation of those models within new and existing schools. Model providers may emerge from a number of sources -- some will incubate as newly-formed organizations, while others may emerge out of existing organizations such as school districts,

charter schools, education publishers, technology companies, or universities.

Over the coming decade, we expect schools will gradually replace textbook-based programs with school-based educational models. In doing so, they will begin to hold model providers accountable for the student outcomes reflected in partner schools. Larger districts may even choose to approve multiple model providers, allowing school leaders and model providers to mutually select which models are the right fit for each school. They will then be able to carefully analyze the impacts of different approaches to determine which appear the most promising.

Moving Towards School-Based Learning Models

Teach to One: Math is just one of what we hope to be many school-based learning models that will emerge over the next decade. Some of these models may be focused on specific subjects or grade spans, while others may apply more broadly. They will incorporate different pedagogical approaches, different educator roles, different ways to use technology, and different ways of using time and space. And they will reflect the very best thinking from those operating both inside and outside of the system today.

But accomplishing this task will take more than the simple passage of time. Many of the regulations, structures, and systems that exist in today's system of schooling are designed to reinforce or improve the existing model of instruction, not to support new ones.

That's why the development of innovative learning models will also require a long-term commitment to three key ingredients that can accelerate their growth -- research and development, local advocacy, and a supportive policy environment.

1. Research and Development

High quality research and development (R&D) is what bridges industries from the present to the future. The smartphones in our pockets, the cars that we drive, and the medicine on our shelves are all the product of years of investment in R&D from both the public and private sector.

Bringing new models to life requires teams of innovators -- educators, technologists, and other experts -- iterating together over years on different approaches and ideas.

The degree to which R&D for new models is funded (through public, private, and philanthropic sources), as well as the rate in which these organizations can source talent, are critical to determining how quickly they can develop and scale.

2. Local Advocacy

Some models may appear to be significant departures from how administrators, teachers, and parents think about instruction. Those departures can sometimes lead to a reluctance to trying something new and different.

That's why local advocacy is so critical for their adoption. Teachers, administrators, parents, board members, and local philanthropists can all play a role in encouraging their colleagues to deepen their understanding of how innovative learning models work and in honestly exploring the strengths and shortcomings of their current instructional approaches.

3. Supportive Policy Environment

Public schools all operate in a particular policy context, the product of decades of federal, state, and local laws and regulations that govern how they operate. If we ask those designing new models to do

so entirely within these existing policy constraints, we will end up with approaches that look much like the ones we currently have.

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local level all have a key role to play in ensuring a supportive environment for the development and adoption of school-based educational models. They must also continually reexamine existing policies and explore their applicability to today's world.

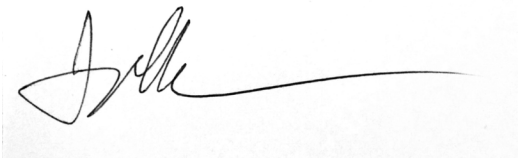
This whitepaper from Bellwether Education Partners serves as a powerful resource for those looking to better understand the policy implications of new models. [<http://bellwethereducation.org/publication/path-future-creating-accountability-personalized-learning>]

Starting down the path together

We hope this vision helps to serve as the start of a conversation among educators, policy makers, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and others about how best to improve schooling for all students.

This movement has just begun. Join us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joel Rose
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Rush
Co-founder and Chief Program Officer