

Education Elements  
Personalized Learning Summit  
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Our district has embarked on a journey to make personalized learning a cornerstone of the educational experience for students in the KPBSD. My school, Skyview Middle School, is a “Wave 1” school, meaning, we began our education and experience with Education Elements at the get-go. Last year, I was not a part of the initial training and exposure to personalized learning. I was a part of the local and on-site workshops and much of what I was learning about PL was gleaned from those activities and discussions with Ed Elements facilitators. However, I felt that I needed more information and experience so that I could help my staff maximize their learning and skills, which would translate to enhanced student learning.

My experiences at the conference did give me some insight and tools to help assist in the personalized learning initiative. I participated in the tech tour, where I learned about a small start-up business and the journey the founders have made. I participated in a round-table discussion about PL classroom design presented by two assistant superintendents from Norwich, Connecticut. I experienced a secondary school PL simulation where a play-list of information was introduced for us to explore. I listened to a Q&A session by Anthony Kim about his new book, New School Rules, and a couple of other presentations, as well. However, the very best thing that I experienced was the Keynote speech by George Couros.

One of Skyview Middle School’s action steps toward implementing PL was to participate in a book study last fall. The book I chose to read was The Innovator’s Mindset by George Couros. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and it sparked a lot of thought and discussion among the book study participants. When I heard Couros was the Keynote speaker at the conference, I was thrilled. In my opinion, it was the highlight of the event. As I listened to Couros speak in his “mile-a-minute,” high-energy manner, I took notes on my smartphone, because I wanted to be sure to remember key ideas and

points. I learned a lot from his book, and some of that information was in his presentation, as well. However, his delivery of the keynote was something that really spoke to me. The following are the take-a-ways from his speech that resonated most strongly with me:

- Relationships are the most important thing.
- Think different!
- To teach is to learn twice.
- Nostalgia holds us back.
- In today's world, isolation is a choice teachers make.
- If you are standing still, you will fall behind.
- Be learner driven, student driven, and evidence driven--not data driven.
- Always error on the side of positive.
- Ask yourself: Would you want to be a student in your class six hours a day?
- Make the positives so loud that the negatives are impossible to hear.
- Change is the opportunity to do something amazing.
- When you have a compelling reason, you can learn anything.

His message was that schools must change with our students and our changing world. We cannot keep doing things the same as in the past, because the needs of our learners have changed and the skills and aptitudes students must possess to navigate and be successful in the world of work has changed. We must be learner-focused and keep positive relationships with our students the priority. We cannot keep doing things as we did in the past or we are cheating our students of their futures. Schools cannot keep operating on an outdated, outmoded factory model that has been the model for schools over the past hundred years. We must do better for our students, and embracing personalized learning is definitely a step in the right direction.

Our work with Education Elements has been informative and instructional and has put us on the right path to creating better learning opportunities for students. I know many people are skeptical, and some are even angry about these changes. Change is uncomfortable. Change is even scary, but change is necessary. If we change our mindset from all the negatives and the "whys this won't work," we can then view change as the opportunity to do something amazing! I know Skyview Middle School is ready and I am glad to be a part of it.

Thank you for the opportunity to be included in such a wonderful and positive professional learning experience!



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