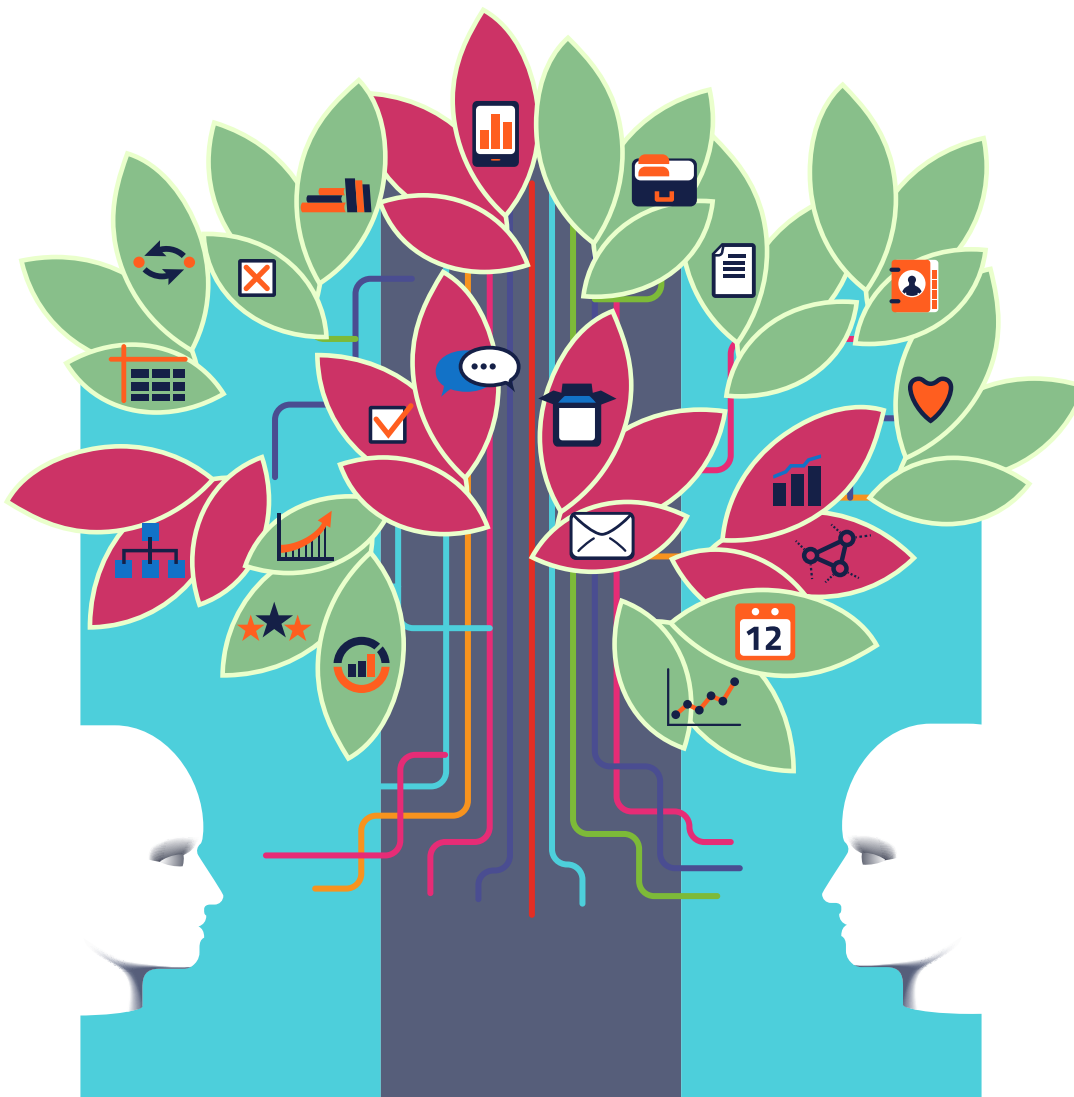# Personal Competencies / Personalized Learning

Reflection on Instruction

A Peer-to-Peer Learning and Observation Tool

Janet Twyman, Academic Development Institute   **Sam Redding**, Academic Development Institute
Authors are affiliated with the Center on Innovations in Learning at Temple University

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Acknowledgements

About the Authors

Janet Twyman

Janet S. Twyman, Ph.D., BCBA, is the Director of Innovation and Technology for the Center on Innovations in Learning (CIL). Dr. Twyman is a career educator and has been a preschool and elementary school teacher, a principal and administrator, and a university professor. She has worked directly on improving the personalization of learning and engineering self-paced learning with typically developing students, preschoolers with intellectual disabilities, adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems, and learners with autism spectrum disorders. For over a decade, she has worked at the forefront of merging evidence-based educational methods with new and emerging technologies, including selecting technologies that support personalized learning and adaptive instructional systems. As a vice president at Headsprout, she led the design, development, and dissemination of the company's Internet-based reading programs and oversaw their implementation in over 1,500 public and private schools. These programs featured built-in, data-based decision-making and real-time, individualized use of data to inform instruction. In 2007–2008, she served as president of the Association for Behavior Analysis International. Currently an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Dr. Twyman's research interests involve understanding basic learning processes to build meaningful instructional technology programs for use with all learners.

Sam Redding

Sam Redding, executive director of Academic Development Institute, served as the first advisor to CCSSO's Supports and Interventions SCASS. Dr. Redding currently serves as the associate director of the Center on School Turnaround, senior learning specialist for the Center on Innovations in Learning, and a consultant to the Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center. A former high school teacher and college dean, Dr. Redding has published in the areas of statewide systems of support, school improvement, change leadership, innovations in education, and family and community engagement.

Introduction

In 2014, state teams in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) on Supports & Interventions were asked to identify topics they would like to see further developed. High on the list of priority topics selected by the Supports & Interventions SCASS was the practical application of personalized learning concepts by teachers. This publication and its companion, "Personal Competencies/Personalized Learning: Lesson Plan Reflection Guide," were created in response to that request.

According to the Center on Innovations in Learning at Temple University, "Personalization refers to a teacher's relationships with students and their families and the use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student's learning and enhance the student's personal competencies. Personalized learning varies the time, place, and pace of learning for each student, enlists the student in the creation of learning pathways, and utilizes technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information."[1]

Personal competencies underlie all learning and, as described by Redding (2014),[2] are "an ever-evolving accumulation of related capabilities that facilitate learning and other forms of goal attainment." Redding identifies four main competency areas:

- Cognitive Competency—prior learning that organizes the mind and provides associations and understanding to facilitate new learning
- Metacognitive Competency—self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies
- Motivational Competency—engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals
- Social/Emotional Competency—sense of self-worth, regard for others, and emotional understanding and management to set positive goals and make responsible decisions

Personal competencies appear integral to learning, as they are both acquired through learning and applied in the learning process. Personalized learning often amplifies the importance of personal competencies. As Redding (2014) states, "[u]nderlying the optimism about personalized learning is the belief that a student's desire to learn and effectiveness in learning are enhanced when the learning is personalized" (p.4). As students are given greater choice and control over learning, their more prominent role in the entire learning process only magnifies the importance of personal competencies, and how educators may enhance and support them.

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1 Introduction to CIL's *Connect* e-newsletter. See www.centeril.org
2 Redding, S. (2014). *Personal competency: A framework for builidng students' capacity to learn.* Retrieved from http://www.centeril.org/publications/Personal_Compentency_Framework.pdf

Reflection on Instruction

Reflection on Instruction is a peer-to-peer observation tool designed to help teachers support and learn from one another in the course of personalized learning, including enhancing personal competencies for each and all students and using technology to support instruction. Using the tool enhances the ability to review and reflect on the lesson with accuracy and specificity, with a focus on student benefits across both instructional goals and personal competencies. Sustained use should strengthen educators' ability to engage in honest, supportive, and deep reflection, with the goal of continued improvements in teaching and learning.

It is important to stress that teachers are not expected to support all four personal competencies (as defined by Redding, 2014) within a single observation session. It may take several observations, spread across days or topics, to observe teacher enhancement of the four competencies. In addition, a single observation may not provide sufficient opportunity to observe all instances of the teacher's personalization of instruction. It may require several observations in combination to touch upon the many facets of personalized learning or each competency. Teachers and all educators are encouraged to consider the cumulative effect of the breadth and depth of a series of observations and reviews. This tool is intended to enhance the understanding and skills of both the observer and the observed through sharing and discussing the recorded observations.

Usage: Teachers are encouraged to use the tool to reflect upon their own teaching during planning of instruction, as well as consider how they are supporting personal competencies during instruction. When used as an observational tool, observers are encouraged to note specific teaching strengths as well as provide supportive suggestions as to how personal competencies and personalized learning may be further enhanced, including how technology tools may augment that effort. Discussions of the session should occur soon after an observation is completed and should center on strengths and tactics that were employed well (and could serve as a model for other teachers) as well as consideration of ways to improve instruction specifically and overall. This tool may also be used in conjunction with the *Lesson Plan Reflection Guide* to view the carryover of personalized learning and personal competencies between the lesson plan, teacher interview, lesson delivery (instruction), and review/reflection.

Steps in Observation and Reflection

1. Observer interviews teacher
2. Observer observes instruction and records observations
3. Observer and teacher discuss the observed lesson
4. Observer and teacher record next steps to (a) share strengths with other teachers; and (b) improve upon lesson design and delivery

1. Teacher Interview

It is often helpful to interview the teacher before a classroom observation to obtain information about the class and lesson goals, expectations (of students and of the teacher), and the general classroom structure (as well as develop an initial relationship with the teacher, if one does not already exist). For the *Reflection on Instruction,* it is key to get an understanding of how the teacher will support personal competencies during the lesson. During the pre-lesson interview, the observer might ask how the teacher intends to use multiple instructional modes to scaffold learning and enhance each student's personal competencies, or how the students are enlisted in creating or supporting their own learning pathways. Potential interview questions may include:

- Briefly, what will be happening in the class during the observation?
- What is your goal for this lesson? What do you hope students will gain?
- What are your personalized learning strategies for the lesson? How might I see them in action?
- Which personal competencies might be enhanced, and how might they be supported?
- How might you use your rapport and relational suasion with students during the lesson?
- What indicators might signify success in supporting personalized learning and personal competencies?
- Is the plan for this lesson/observation typical of your teaching? What might be different?

The purpose of the *Reflection on Instruction* is to aid educators in supporting and learning from one another, not to be unduly critical or focus on unsuccessful tactics. The pre-observation interview should set the tone of mutual respect,

support, and growth, using the session as an opportunity to highlight strengths as well as structure later conversations around potential areas of improvement. It should be clear to all involved that notes from the observation not only will be available to the teacher and will help structure the refection conversation.

2. Observation

The observation of instruction is an opportunity to see first hand how the teacher structures learning and the enhancement of personal competencies. As with any observation of instruction, some general guidelines apply:

- The observer is encouraged to arrive slightly ahead of time, if possible, to not rush the observation process.
- Determine with the teacher an observation location that will be minimally intrusive but still allow for as much observation (visual and audio) of the activities in the room.
- If appropriate, the observer (and his or her purpose) may be introduced to the students.

The Observation portion of the *Reflection on Instruction* form has four sections, focusing on (1) how learning is personalized; (2) how personal competencies are supported; (3) how technology assisted instruction (including support for personal competencies), and (4) additional comments from the observer. The checklist in the first section should be used to indicate how the teacher personalized learning during the observation across several known personalization tactics. This checklist also aligns to the *Lesson Plan Reflection Guide* to highlight crossover between the lesson plan or what was planned for instruction and what actually occurred. The next section addresses how personal competencies were supported or enhanced, including the use of specific known strategies and other tactics. Observers are encouraged to note how personal competencies may be further enhanced in and out of the observed lesson.

Following is an opportunity to note how technology was used as a tool to support instruction, personalization, and personal competencies. Observers are encouraged to include names of tools used and provide additional comments regarding technology use. The form ends with and Observation section to record any additional comments that will be helpful during Discussion and Reflection.

3. Discussion and Reflection

It is essential to have an opportunity for collegial discussion of the observation, creating the opportunity for "reflection" of the lesson and how personalized learning may or may not have occurred. Reflecting on teaching involves a consideration of the entire instructional event, from planning through delivery of the lesson to a review of effects or outcomes. Within the framework of the effects on student learning and student personal competencies, the teacher and observer (and others as appropriate) can identify strengths to be incorporated in future lessons or shared across educators, as well as areas of focus for revision. As the teacher and observer reflect on the lesson, potential questions may include:

- What learning or student growth occurred as a result of this lesson? How do you know?
- Which instructional strategies were most effective in helping students learn? What evidence supports your conclusions?
- How/to what extent were students engaged in learning? This was shown by…
- What are some examples of how learning was personalized and how students' individual needs were met?
- What, if anything, did you note about the performance or motivation of the students for whom instruction was personalized?
- What are some examples of how personal competencies were supported or enhanced?
- How were students encouraged or supported in taking responsibility for their own learning?
- What information does this reveal about these students' (or all students') learning and growth?
- If this lesson were taught again (to the same group or a different group of students), is there anything you recommend to be done differently?
- How might this experience impact future teaching, for yourself or others?

4. Next Steps

To maximally benefit from this *Reflection on Instruction*, educators need to participate in the entire reflection process to guide changes in their teaching and instruction. It requires taking the thoughtful consideration of what did and didn't work (and why) and using it to inform future lesson planning, instructional delivery, and ways of relating and support of personal competencies. As a systems tool, this *Reflection on Instruction* can be a mechanism to share strengths and positive exemplars with other teachers, as well as serve as a format for identifying common practices in need of change.

Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their overall instructional strengths and weaknesses and how they affect student learning and to determine their own areas for professional growth to more effectively personalize student learning and support personal competencies. Schools and districts are encouraged to use this information for the same types of identification of exemplars and areas of improvement across the system. Collective information from Reflections may be used to both improve instructional design and delivery and also share teaching strengths so that others may learn and benefit from them.

Reflection on Instruction

Date: _____   Lesson: _____

Teacher: _____   Grade Level/Subject: _____

Reflector (Observer): _____   # of Students : _____   Time/Duration : _____

Instructional Goal(s): _____

_____

Pre-Observation Interview Comments:

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During the Observation: Learning was personalized by:

☐ Standards-aligned learning objectives

- ○ reduced for some students   ○ other:
- ○ expanded for some students

☐ Content objectives

- ○ reading level   ○ student self-selection
- ○ materials   ○ other:

☐ Instructional methods

- ○ whole class   ○ individual (independent) work
- ○ teacher-directed   ○ homework
- ○ peer-instructed   ○ progress monitoring w/in instruction
- ○ teacher-directed student groups   ○ other:
- ○ student-led groups

☐ Learning pace (check all that apply)

- ○ self-paced   ○ other:
- ○ mastery-based

☐ Learning context (people, time, or place):

- ○ alternative instructor   ○ home
- ○ alternative time/period-   ○ community setting
- ○ outside of school day   ○ work setting
- ○ class setting   ○ other:

During the Observation: Personal competencies were supported by:

These personal competencies areas were supported or enhanced:			
Cognitive	**Metacognitive**	**Motivational**	**Social/Emotional**
prior learning that provides organization, associations, and understanding to facilitate new learning	*self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies*	*engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals*	*sense of self-worth, regard for others; emotional ability to set positive goals and make responsible decisions*
By the use of these known strategies and tactics:			

☐ connects to prior learning
 	
☐ reinforces memorization
 	
☐ builds vocabulary
 	
☐ enhances core knowledge (e.g., common facts, ideas, phrases, or quotations)
 	
☐ includes rich reading, writing
 	
☐ amplifies curiosity—exploration/discovery
 	
☐ other:
	☐ models thinking strategies
	
	☐ requires logic
	
	☐ enhances creativity (divergent thinking)
	
	☐ includes problem-solving
	
	☐ builds self-regulatory abilities
	
	  ☐ goal setting
	
	  ☐ self-monitoring
	
	  ☐ self-appraisal
	
	  ☐ self-efficacy
	
	  ☐ self-management
	
	  ☐ seeking help
	
	☐ includes student tracking of mastery
	
	☐ other:
		☐ promotes a growth mindset
		
		☐ stimulates interest in topic
		
		☐ includes student choice
		
		☐ connects with students aspirations
		
		☐ differentiated
		
		☐ celebrates accomplishments
		
		☐ provides high levels of engagement
		
		☐ includes clear indicators of progress
		
		☐ other:
			Includes enhancement of:
			
			☐ self-awareness
			
			☐ self-management
			
			☐ social awareness
			
			☐ relationship skills
			
			☐ responsible decision-making
			
			☐ other:

As exemplified by…. (Provide concrete examples whenever possible)			
And were further enhanced in and out of the lesson by….			

Technology Assisted the Lesson

(by supporting personalization and personal competencies; include names of tools used whenever possible):

Observation Comments:

Discussion/Reflection Notes:

Next Steps: