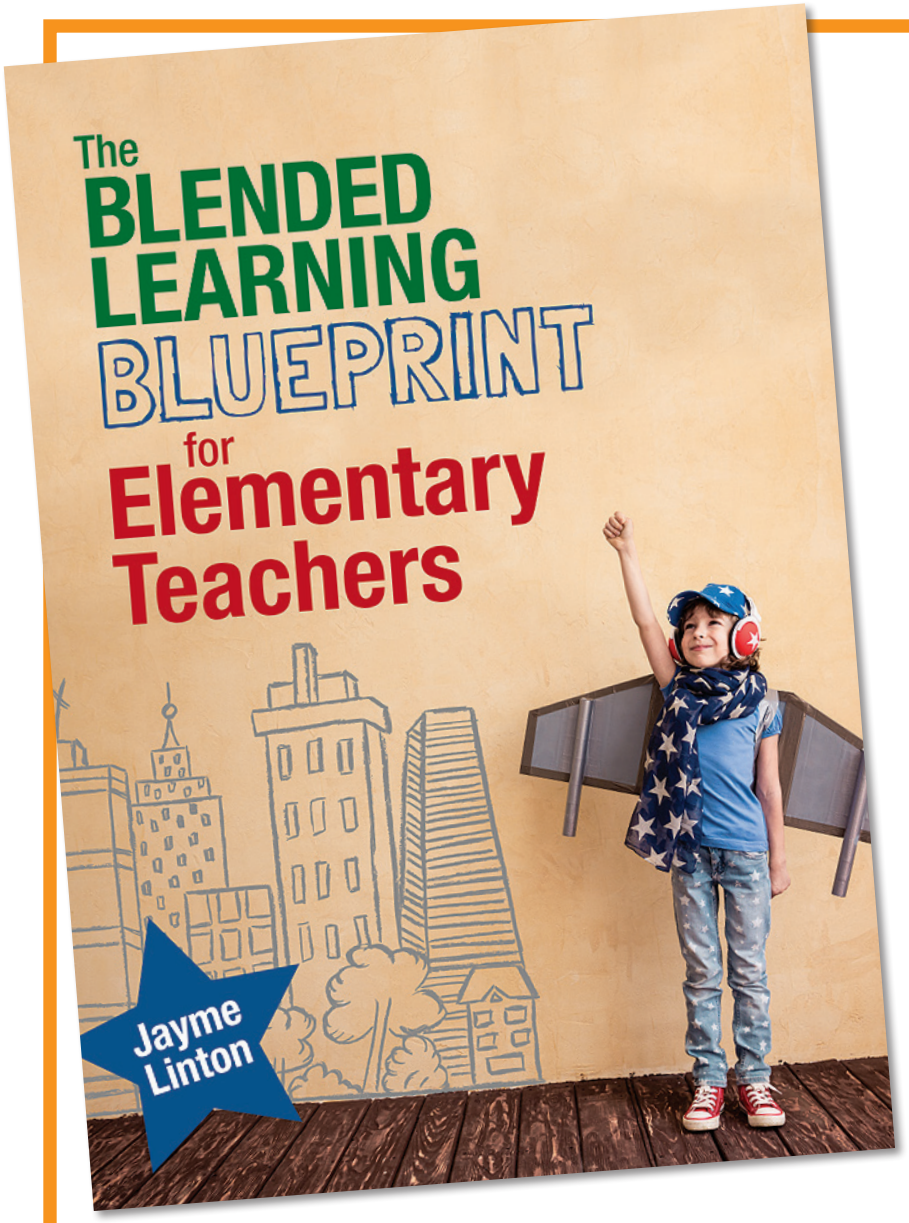

Thank you

FOR YOUR INTEREST IN CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Blended Learning Blueprint for Elementary Teachers* by Jayme Linton. In this chapter, consider how you can move from differentiation to personalized learning, design personalized pathways, and make those pathways work.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents and Reviews.

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CHAPTER 4

Making It Personal

In this chapter, we will consider the following elements of personalized learning:

- Moving from differentiation to personalized learning
- Designing personalized pathways
- Making pathways work

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to complete the *Making It Personal* section of your blended learning blueprint and answer the following questions:

- How can you move from differentiated instruction toward personalized learning?
- How might you structure personalized pathways?
- How can you give students control over time, place, path, and pace?
- What routines and procedures do you need to establish, teach, and practice?

- What will be the teacher's role as students work on pathway tasks?
- What challenges do you anticipate? How might you solve them?

In Chapter 2, we analyzed components of a new vision for the blended elementary classroom. In Chapter 3, we examined ways to maximize instructional time and use technology to our advantage. In this chapter, we will explore strategies and processes for using blended methods to shift to personalized learning.

Shifting from a classroom that is largely teacher-directed toward one that is flexible and personalized can be a difficult transition for any teacher. This shift, however, is at the crux of blended learning. As I mentioned previously, blended learning enables teachers to be more responsive to student needs. Successful blended teachers leverage technology to use real-time data, observation, and interaction with students to design personalized learning experiences. Let's explore what personalized learning can look like in the blended elementary classroom.

Moving From Differentiation to Personalized Learning

I hope, as you read this book, you are continuously designing and redesigning your vision for teaching and learning in your classroom as you consider ways to help students take control of their learning. Blended learning simply provides the structure and tools that enable us to rethink the role of the teacher and student and to enact this new vision. As I mentioned in the Introduction, implementing blended learning is not the goal. We are looking for ways to help our students reach important academic, social, and personal goals. Blended learning is a method that helps us do that. It's a means to a very important end.

A teacher can use a blended learning model to enact nearly any philosophy or vision of teaching and learning. In an elementary classroom, blended learning could be used to perpetuate a traditional teacher-centered approach, with technology serving only as a tool for students to complete one-size-fits-all assignments. Or, blended learning can provide a means by which all students are given the time and support they need and are empowered to take ownership of their learning. My goal in this book is to help you leverage blended methods to increase equity and meet your learners' needs through personalized learning.

Think back to the core values you identified in Chapter 2, and consider how blended learning can help you carry out those values in your classroom. Figure 4.1 illustrates how blended learning can be used to enact

Figure 4.1 Differentiation, Individualized Learning, or Personalized Learning in a Blended Classroom

Philosophy	Teacher Role	Student Role	Illustrative Examples
Differentiation	The teacher owns and controls the learning experience based on assessment data. Teacher uses whole-group instruction but tailors practice based on different levels of student needs and preferences.	The student meets the requirements given to them based on their needs.	• Literature circles around different texts but same theme • Grouping students based on levels but delivering same content • Tic-Tac-Toe Board
Individualized Learning	The teacher drives instruction through teacher-created lessons, tasks, and projects.	Student and teacher own the learning experience. The student has choice in tasks and/or products.	• Teacher paces out the curriculum • Choice Boards or Playlists • Dreambox or Compass Learning (adaptive programs)
Personalized Learning	The teacher facilitates learning through student questioning, conferencing, and providing feedback. No whole-group instruction but small-group direct instruction based on needs. They are organizers of learning opportunities.	The student owns the learning experience through pace, complex problems, and choice. They actively pursue new knowledge and consistently self-evaluate, self-regulate, and self-motivate.	• Students work at their own pace using pathways • Student-led conferences • Student achieves mastery based on demonstrated ability and performance
Blended Learning	Student owns the learning experience, by control over the time, place, playlists, and/or pace. Teacher and/or student generates task design based on identified software platform or series or learning experiences. ***Blended Learning is a delivery system connected to one of the philosophies.***		

Source: Allison Zmuda and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, under a Creative Commons Attribution—No Derivatives 4.0 International License. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/

various philosophies of teaching. In this chapter, we'll look closely at how we can use blended learning as a conduit for personalized learning in our classrooms.

To examine how we might transition from a differentiated to a personalized environment, let's use a common instructional approach used in many elementary classrooms: work stations (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3).

Elementary teachers have been using a station approach for years, including literacy stations, math centers, and more recently science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEM) stations. Some teachers may assume that simply using a station model implies alignment with a

Figure 4.2 An "I can" statement provides direction for students working at an engineering station

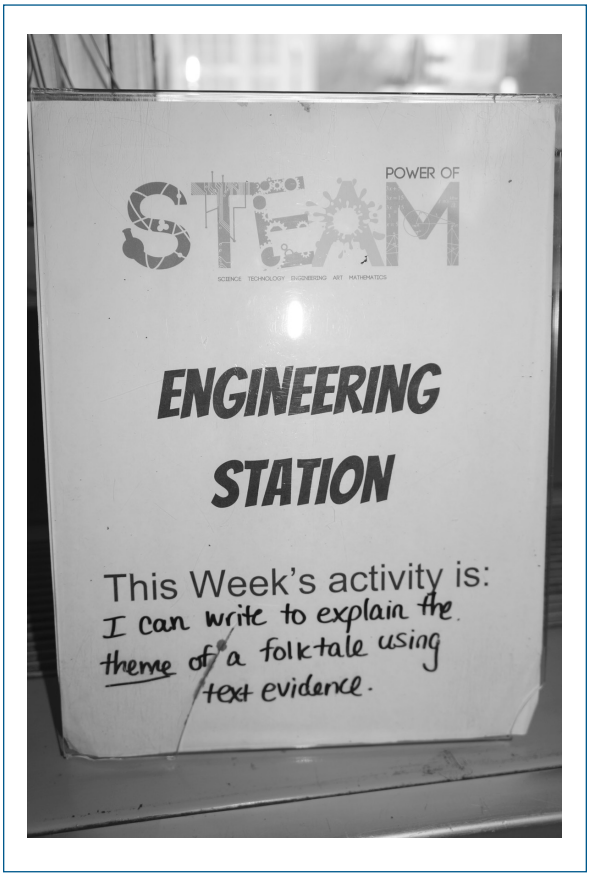


Figure 4.3 Science and literacy are integrated through STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) stations in Caitlan Reese's fifth-grade classroom

blended learning approach. This isn't necessarily the case, however. Let's look at how teachers could use a station approach to perpetuate either a teacher-centered, differentiated, or personalized learning environment (Table 4.1). Later in this chapter and the next, we will explore ways to support students in transitioning toward taking more ownership of the learning experience.

Consider which of these types of practices is more common in your classroom. If most of your instructional practices tend to be more teacher-centered, you may need to identify areas where you can give up some control of the learning experience and help students take ownership of their learning. In my experience, teacher control is often the thing that gets in the way of a new vision for teaching and learning. Examine the

Table 4.1 Using Stations for Teacher-Centered, Differentiated, and Personalized Learning

Teacher-Centered	Differentiated	Personalized
• The teacher designs learning tasks for each station. • All students move through the same stations at the same pace. • All students complete the same task(s) at each station. • Student groupings for stations are rigid and inflexible.	• The teacher designs learning tasks for each station. • All students move through the same stations at the same pace. • Students may choose which tasks to complete or work on tasks that have been differentiated by the teacher according to student need. • The teacher meets with small groups for targeted instruction. • Student groups for stations are flexible and fluid.	• The teacher designs stations that include a variety of ways for students to engage with content. • Students self-select stations and tasks based on their own learning needs. • Students spend different amounts of time at stations depending on need and interest. • Students reflect on their progress and set goals. • The teacher meets with small groups for targeted instruction. • The teacher coaches students one-on-one and provides individualized feedback.

shifts that should take place as teachers move from differentiated to personalized (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Instructional Shifts in a Personalized Classroom

Shift away from . . .	Toward . . .
The teacher as sole provider of content	Students interact with and create digital content
One-size-fits-all instruction	Personalized pathways for students
Teacher-paced instruction	Student control over time and pace
Teacher ownership of student assessment data	Student ownership of data for driving their own learning
Whole-group instruction	Targeted instruction through small groups and individual conferences
Grades to communicate student progress	Immediate feedback aligned with learning outcomes

To move toward personalized learning, there must be time for the teacher and students to learn more about how students learn best. Many blended elementary classrooms utilize learner profiles to help students think about their interests and strengths, reflect on how they learn best, and choose tasks that are a good fit for them. These profiles also help the teacher design tasks that will be interesting and engaging for students. A learner profile can be as simple as a piece of paper or as complex as a digital

program that adjusts as students update their preferences. Google Forms is a great tool for designing a learner profile. With Google Forms, you can easily make changes to the learner profile and quickly access student responses. See an example in Figure 4.4. A learner profile for younger students might include pictures instead of or along with text. Have students update their learner profiles at various points throughout the school year as their interests and strengths change.

A learner profile is a great starting place for a shift toward personalized learning in a blended classroom. Making students and teachers aware of the optimal conditions for learning for each child can help teachers and students make better choices in designing and selecting learning tasks. Keep in mind that the learner profile is constantly changing as the learner continues to grow and develop new interests along with new areas of strength and opportunities for growth. Revisit students' learning profiles as a regular part of your work with students in stations or individual conferences. For example, before sending students to work at stations, ask them to look over their learning profiles and talk to a partner about the choices they plan to make that day. Have one-on-one conversations with students to address specific content needs and to revisit their profiles, reminding students of the importance of making appropriate choices as learners.

As the teacher, you also reserve the right to limit choices for a particular student at certain times during the school year as needed. If a student struggles with pacing or regularly chooses places to work that make it difficult for her to concentrate, don't leave the student to flounder on her own. Intervene and provide more guidance or fewer choices if needed. Ultimately, rather than limiting student control, our goal is to empower students to own their learning. However, to get to a place where students can successfully steer their own learning, we must first provide scaffolding, modeling, and choice within boundaries. One way to provide this much-needed support is through a weekly reflection, such as the one in Figure 4.5 (see page 56). In addition to providing time for students to reflect individually, give students time to talk with others about their goals and reflections. I assure you that this will be time well spent.

Designing Personalized Pathways

One structure that enables a flexible, personalized learning environment is the use of personalized pathways that enable students to choose how to interact with content and demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes. Pathways provide multiple opportunities for student self-assessment, empowering students to take ownership and control the pace of their learning. Essentially, a personalized pathway

- is aligned with learning outcomes,
- includes a variety of learning tasks based on interest, readiness, and learning profile,
- allows students to choose tasks and work at their own paces,
- includes a mixture of face-to-face and online tasks,
- includes embedded formative assessment opportunities,
- allows students to move on to the next pathway when they're ready, and
- allows the teacher to gather ongoing assessment data and track student progress.

Figure 4.4 Learner Profile

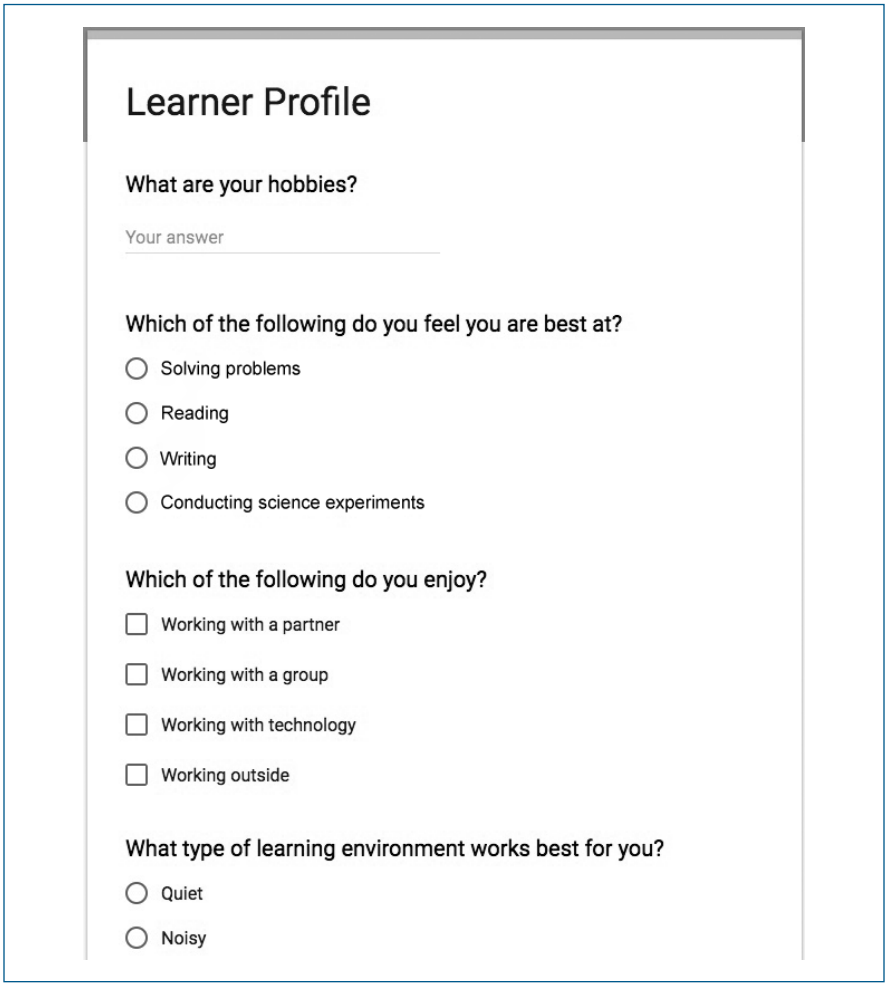


Figure 4.5 Learner Profile Weekly Reflection

Weekly Reflection

Color in your self-assessment score during Math time for each PL Profile:

PL Profile	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Collaboration I worked well with others.					
Academic Risk Taker I used class resources. I tried new ways before asking the teacher. I tackled challenges.					
Leader I get materials quickly. I clean up materials. I transition quietly.					
Self-Directed Learner I complete all activities. I stay focused on my goals.					

– Super job!

– Good job!

– I'm going to keep working on it!

Source: This work by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is licensed under CC BY 4.0. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/. Based on a work at pl.cmslearns.org.

Designing and implementing pathways takes time and planning, but you will find that the investment is worth it. Personalized pathways shift how the teacher and students use their time in addition to shifting ownership of the learning experience. However, the process for using personalized pathways does not have to be any more time-consuming or taxing than traditional lesson planning processes. Consider the following process for designing and implementing personalized pathways:

1. Select content standards, and rewrite them in student-friendly language.
2. Design one pathway for each standard or for a grouping of closely related standards.

3. Include a variety of types of content and tasks from which students will choose. Use consistent language, structure, or symbols to help students easily identify and self-select tasks from the pathway.
4. Use a pre-assessment to determine what students already know and can do and identify the instructional support students will need.
5. Identify the concepts, skills, and strategies students will need to be successful on the pathway tasks, and plan small-group lessons and whole-group mini-lessons to teach these.
6. Include formative assessment checkpoints to help you and students analyze student progress and determine when additional support is needed.
7. Make sure all materials students will need (print, physical, or digital) are easily accessible and organized.
8. Teach and practice the routines and procedures that will help students manage their pathway time. (More to come later in this chapter.)
9. Make sure to have a few pathways designed to allow students to move forward at their own paces.

Notice that the teacher tasks involved in designing and implementing pathways—planning small-group lessons, designing face-to-face and online learning experiences, teaching procedures, designing formative assessments, analyzing student data—are not new or unique to personalized learning. These are planning processes elementary teachers already use on a regular basis. The key here is to shift how we think about using these experiences to give students more control over their learning and increase equity in learning outcomes. Rather than planning a whole-group lesson to teach a concept, the blended teacher uses a small-group lesson to target the specific students who need that support. Instead of giving a summative assessment to determine what students learned, the blended teacher gives a pre-assessment to design the most effective instruction and learning tasks. In the place of whole-class guided practice, the blended teacher allows students to select ways to engage with content and control the pace of their learning.

Teams of teachers—organized by grade level, subject area, or department—can collaborate to share the work of designing personalized pathways. Once the team agrees on a structure and common processes and procedures for implementing personalized pathways, the team can share the work and lighten the load for everyone. Over time, the team can build a database of pathways and tasks that can be used again and again.

Figure 4.6 Personalized Pathway for Second-Grade Math

2. NBT.8 PATHWAY **I can mentally add or subtract 10 or 100 to any given number.**

Name: _____

Select 2 choices in each row and have your teacher sign off before moving to the next step!

Teacher Checkpoint	*I learn better by listening.*	*I learn better by seeing.*	*I learn better by writing/creating.*
_____ Small Group _____ Conference _____ Checkpoint Score	Watch at least one of the videos in the top row. Write down 3 things you learned and explain them to a partner. Partner I worked with: _____	Look at a 200's chart. How does this chart help you forward or backward by 10? What patterns do you notice when counting by 10's? Create a picture that shows your thinking!	Caroline is solving 72 + 10. She is using a hundred chart. She starts on 72 and counts 73, 74, 75, etc., until she gets to 82. Paul says there is an easier way to find the answer using the hundred chart. What do you think Paul will tell Caroline? Write a note explaining what you think Paul said!
_____ Small Group _____ Conference _____ Checkpoint Score	Watch at least one of the videos in the bottom row. Create your own video to teach a partner using examples! Partner I worked with: _____	Use a hundreds chart to prove your work and play Race +10 game with a partner. Write 2 things you notice when you add 10 to any number!	Starting at 765, how many groups of ten will you need to add to get to 805? Starting at 329, how many groups of hundred will you need to add to get to 929? Create your own set of 5 cards (index cards) with your own questions similar to the one given! Use any tools needed to solve your questions!

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Personalized Learning Department.

To help you envision how pathways might work in your classroom, let's look at some pathway examples for the blended elementary classroom (Figures 4.6 and 4.7). The general structure for these pathways was adapted from a template created by the Personalized Learning Department in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in Charlotte, North Carolina. In these examples, look for the following features of a personalized pathway, and consider highlighting or circling each of these components:

- Content standard written in student-friendly language
- Opportunities for student choice
- Formative assessment opportunities
- Consistent language, structure, or notation
- Blend of digital and face-to-face learning experiences

Figure 4.7 Personalized Pathway for First-Grade Math

1.MD.1 Order 3 objects by length, compare lengths of 2 objects by using a 3rd object
1.MD.2 Use copies of the same object to measure a larger object
1.MD.3 Tell time to the hour

Name: _____

Select 2 choices in each row and have your teacher sign off before moving to the next row! Be sure to color the boxes that you have completed.

Teacher Checkpoint	Standard	*I learn better by using hands on.*	*I learn better by using technology.*	*I learn better by practicing the skill.*
_____ Conference _____ Checkpoint Score ❑ Passed ❑ Not passed - Go back to complete the 3rd activity. _____ Reassess Checkpoint Score ❑ Still need small group	1.MD.1 I can order 3 objects by their length.	Comparing objects Interactive Math Notebook **Go look at example. COPY.** Put items in correct pockets.	Listen to the video! Use the inigma app!	Splash Math Go to number 4.2 Measurements Order Objects by Length

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Personalized Learning Department.

As with all blended learning methods, personalized pathways can take multiple formats. Some pathways are printed on paper, with students using a notebook or folder to organize their pathway print resources. Other pathways are designed online, with students accessing resources via a learning management system (LMS), such as Canvas, Schoology, or Blackboard, or via a document management system, such as Google Drive or Google Classroom (see Figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 on the next page).

Whether students access the pathway on paper or online, as the definition of blended learning implies, some pathway materials will be physical while others will be digital. A pathway might direct students to use physical math manipulatives for one learning task and a blogging platform for another task. See Figures 4.11 and 4.12 (on pages 62 and 63) for a personalized pathway for sixth-grade English Language Arts and a digital version of this same pathway created in the Canvas LMS. A pathway such as the one in Figures 4.11 and 4.12 might take students anywhere from five to ten class periods to complete. Keep in mind that in a truly personalized learning environment, with students controlling their own pace, some learners will complete pathways more quickly than others will. Once a student completes a pathway, he or she should be able to move on to the next pathway or to a different task that is appropriate with his or her learning needs and learner profile.

Figure 4.8 Pathway tasks include a mix of digital tasks and tasks that allow students to move around the room and work collaboratively with others

Figure 4.9 Pathway tasks can include games and other collaborative opportunities

Figure 4.10 Digital pathway tasks allow students to receive immediate feedback

In a blended classroom, students should not be held back by other learners. Pathways provide a structure that makes it easy for teachers to manage a learning environment where students are working on different content standards at different paces.

FOR THE LOW-TECH CLASSROOM

Personalized learning is possible without a device for every student. Although technology tools can allow students to work at their own paces and receive immediate feedback on their progress, there are ways to provide personalized tasks that do not require devices. When students self-select their texts for independent reading, self-select topics for writer's workshops, and choose manipulatives for problem solving, they are making choices about their own learning. These sorts of tasks can be included in students' personalized pathways, alongside digital tasks that can work in a shared-device classroom or a technology lab. Be sure to include enough nondigital tasks for students to work on while they wait for a device to become available.

Making Pathways Work

As you might imagine, successful implementation of personalized pathways requires careful planning and intentional classroom management. Based on my experience working with teachers in blended settings, classroom management can make or break personalized learning. Poor management

Figure 4.11 Personalized Pathway for Sixth-Grade English Language Arts

6.RI.1 — I can reference texts and events, providing explicit evidence to support my inferences.

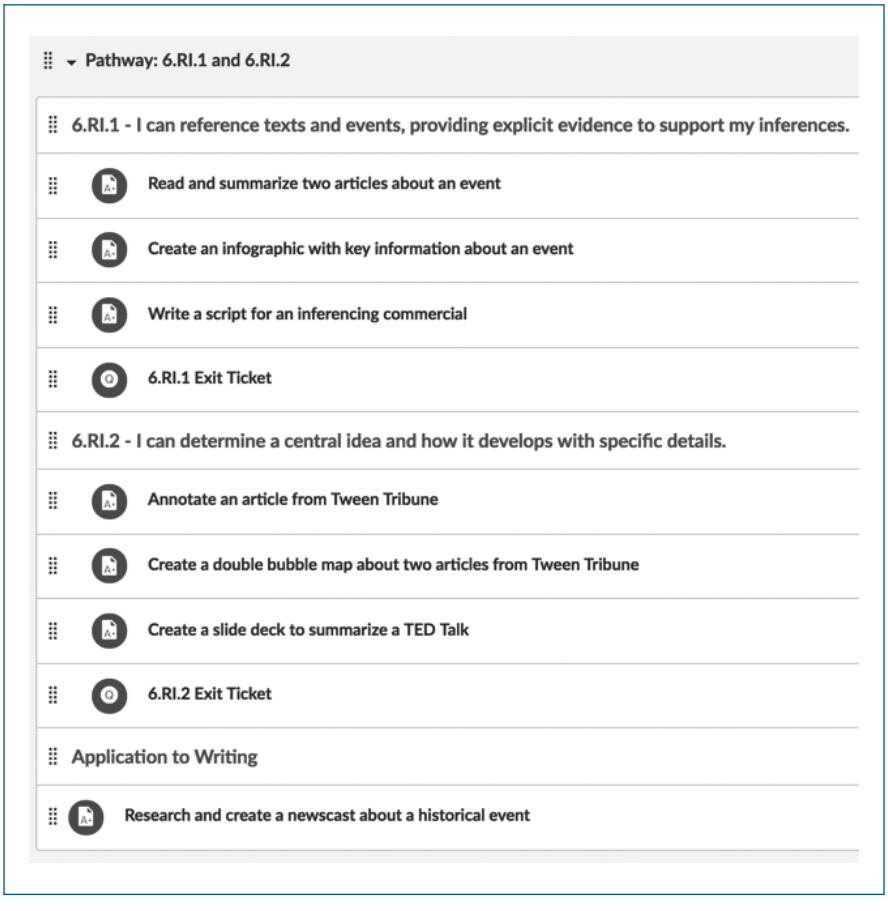
6.RI.2 — I can determine a central idea and how it develops with specific details.

Goal	Task Choice	Task Choice	Task Choice	Checkpoint
I can reference texts and events, providing explicit evidence to support my inferences.	Read two different articles about the same event. Summarize the key similarities and differences between the two authors' points of view. First, create a T-chart to list similarities and differences. Then, write a summary of key similarities and differences including at least three paragraphs. Support your summary with details from both texts.	Use Piktochart to create an infographic including key information about a current event. Read a minimum of two texts about the event. Your infographic must include at least one section containing your personal inferences about the event. *(What do you think is the backstory for the event? What are/were the motivations of the people involved? What do you think might happen next?)*	Watch two of the inferencing commercials on Canvas. Work with a partner to write a script for a commercial that you could use to teach your classmates about making inferences. Remember that your script should leave out some key details so that the viewers must infer. Once your script is approved by Mr. Mureno, record your commercial.	_____Conference _____Exit Ticket
I can determine a central idea and how it develops with specific details.	Annotate a text you selected on Tween Tribune. Your annotations must identify the central ideas as they develop through the text. In color, highlight specific details that relate to the central idea. Next to each piece of highlighted text, add a sticky note to explain how the details support development of the central idea.	Read two texts about the same topic or event on Tween Tribune. Create a double bubble mind map to identify the central ideas and key details from the two texts. The central idea from both texts should be similar. However, some key details will be similar and some will be different. Place key details from each text in the correct places on the double bubble map to represent similarities and differences.	With a partner, watch a TED Talk that has been approved by Mr. Mureno and linked to our Canvas site. Identify the central idea of the TED Talk. Work with your partner to create a presentation in Google Slides. On slide 1, identify the central idea. Create three additional slides that list specific evidence from the TED Talk to support the central idea. On your fifth slide, summarize in one brief paragraph how the central idea developed from the beginning to the end of the TED Talk.	_____Conference _____Exit Ticket
I can apply my understanding of key ideas, details, and central ideas in my writing and presentation.	Work in teams of three students to complete this project. Research a historical event that is interesting to you. Review at least five online and/or print sources. Complete a graphic organizer to identify the central idea and key details related to the event. From the graphic organizer, write a script for an imaginary news reporter who is covering the event. Create a newscast using the Touchcast app. Group members' roles: Videographer, Reporter, and Eyewitness.			_____Self-Assess _____Peer-Assess _____Reflection

Source: Personalized pathway designed by author and 6th grade teacher Diego Mureno.

can lead a teacher to think that blended learning can't work, at least not in his or her classroom. Often, trouble with classroom management is the main reason why teachers give up on personalized pathways. We have to understand that this way of thinking is new for many of us and that students

Figure 4.12 Digital Personalized Pathway for Sixth-Grade English Language Arts



Source: Canvas, through Instructure.

are not used to having this much control of their learning. It takes time and intentional planning to make this shift work. Following are a few tips for making pathways work in your classroom:

- Use pre-assessments to allow students to self-assess and choose appropriate learning tasks
- Embed formative assessment opportunities for self-assessment and feedback for teacher and students
- Use symbols, icons, and consistent notation to help students navigate pathways

- Provide instructions and examples that students can access on their own
- Teach explicit mini-lessons about procedures for using pathways

I cannot stress enough that a personalized, flexible learning environment depends heavily on the establishment of routines and procedures. This may seem counterintuitive because the goal is flexible and personalized opportunities for students. However, to create an environment where students and teachers can manage and function effectively in a flexible environment, time must be devoted to the development of routines and procedures for governing personalized learning. Consider how the following procedures could be useful in designing and facilitating a personalized, flexible learning environment:

- Using data notebooks to select the most appropriate learning tasks
- Choosing where to work in the classroom
- Accessing and using digital and physical resources
- Getting help from the teacher or classmates when needed
- Managing time and tracking progress
- Choosing a partner for collaborative tasks
- Recording and tracking exit ticket data
- Providing meaningful peer feedback

Each of these procedures should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced using a gradual release model with the goal of student ownership over each routine and procedure. Time invested in teaching and practicing these procedures will be time well spent, enabling students to work efficiently as the year progresses. Without these procedures firmly in place, you will spend all of your time on managerial tasks. Transferring ownership of these procedures to students allows you to maximize students' time on task and frees time for you to provide targeted instruction and support. Once you and your students have these procedures firmly established, you will truly experience the power of implementing personalized pathways as students spend uninterrupted time on tasks that are just right for them and you spend time providing exactly what students need at the moment they need it. The following box includes a sample schedule of pathway time to demonstrate how the teacher and students might use time and resources as they work on pathways.

Scheduling Time for Pathways

- Project a list of which students are meeting with the teacher today for small groups and individual conferences.
- 5–7 minutes: Teacher teaches a short mini-lesson on a procedure or expectation related to pathways.
- 5 minutes: Teacher reminds students of where to locate resources for pathway and how to complete tasks. Reminds students of locations in the room for different types of tasks.
- Students pull up pathway on their devices or take out their pathway folders.
- 2 minutes: Students move to their work spot and begin work on pathways. Teacher plays a song or uses a timer.
- 7–10 minutes: Teacher pulls a small group for instruction related to the pathway standard.
- 5 minutes: Teacher holds conferences with students who have signed up.
- 7–10 minutes: Teacher pulls a small group for instruction related to the pathway standard.
- 5 minutes: Teacher holds conferences with students who have signed up or walks around the room to check in with students.
- Teacher continues to work with small groups or meet with individuals.
- minutes: Wrap-up, reflect, goal-setting.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN THE BLENDED CLASSROOM

In addition to teaching, modeling, and practicing the procedures and routines listed in this chapter, consider leveraging another powerful strategy to help students take ownership of their learning: the classroom meeting. Classroom meetings are regularly scheduled whole-class conversations about issues related to the goings-on in the classroom. Typically, classroom meetings focus less on academics and more on procedures and *ways to be* in the classroom. Ideally, classroom meetings should be student-led, but early on in the school year, the teacher must begin by modeling how to facilitate a productive and kind conversation. My favorite resource for getting started with classroom meetings is *Ways We Want Our Class to Be* from the Child Development Project. A weekly classroom meeting can be a place where students tackle issues such as distractive behavior, inappropriate use of devices, respecting others online, and other issues that people encounter when they spend hours each day together.

Designing the Blueprint

Before moving on to Chapter 5, take some time to reflect on the personalized learning strategies and ideas described here. You may want to reflect about these ideas in a journal or blog. As you reflect, consider how you might shift toward a more personalized environment for students. Your shift to personalized learning might start with any of these tasks:

- Look for opportunities to use existing lessons, tasks, and assessments in a more personalized way.
- Create a plan for getting to know your students better.
- Talk with your colleagues about sharing the work in designing pathways.
- Identify procedures to establish, teach, and practice.

Complete the *Making It Personal* section of the blended learning blueprint to identify possibilities and starting points for personalized learning in your blended classroom.

3. Making It Personal

a. How can you move from differentiated instruction toward personalized learning?	b. How might you structure personalized pathways?
c. How can you give students control over time, place, path, and pace?	d. What routines and procedures do you need to establish, teach, and practice?
e. What will be the teacher's role as students work on pathway tasks?	f. What challenges do you anticipate? How might you solve them?