

# Personalized Learning at Scale

## Case Studies of Leading Cities

Leaders of urban school systems are faced with a daunting fact: some individual schools are achieving incredible results for students from low-income communities, but no urban school systems are achieving those results for all—or even most—children in an entire city. For generations, students in urban America have been underserved, with few achieving basic proficiency in reading and math, and even fewer completing college. At the same time, technology has been transforming industry after industry, changing the way we consume media, go shopping, and do business. With 21st century tools available, why should our students be stuck in a 19th century designed school system? We tell the story of ten cities in the case studies below, with a focus on how technology and great teaching, with the right system-level conditions, can personalize learning for all students and drive sustained achievement growth.

In our context, personalized learning means that students’ experiences—what they learn, and how, when, and where they learn it—are tailored to their individual needs, skills, and interests, and enable them to take ownership of their education. Early personalized learning work has generated significant interest and promising proof points in district, charter, and private schools alike. However, there has yet to be high-quality implementation at scale—across an entire system of schools or an entire city.

Why is scale important? The benefits of personalized learning are amplified when a system—a school district or a broader city ecosystem—creates the conditions for personalized learning to thrive system-wide, instead of in one-off pilots or individual schools. However, to take high-quality personalized learning to scale, systems will need to address thorny issues in public policy, educator practice, staffing structures, accountability, technology infrastructure, and funding.

To accelerate the pace of innovation at scale, ten medium to large public school systems received funding to develop a system-wide personalized learning strategy. To reach this ambitious goal, systems were challenged to design, launch, and replicate schools that implement personalized learning in a holistic manner, and to overhaul supporting district and city functions (e.g., human capital and facilities) so that they fully support the redesigned schools. Ongoing support for some of these sites is being provided by CEE-Trust and Next Generation Learning Challenges ([www.nextgenlearning.org](http://www.nextgenlearning.org)).

We have drafted profiles of these leading cities, telling the stories of how they have dealt with their thorny issues, and where they are having successes and setbacks. We hope that these profiles help urban school system leaders around the country better understand how they, too, could approach system-wide innovation of personalized learning.

### COMPONENTS OF PERSONALIZED LEARNING

#### High Expectations for College Readiness

Adults believe in the enormous potential of all students and support them in achieving at the highest levels, with a focus on:

- **Learning Growth:** Meeting students where they are at and supporting their growth from that point. As a result, students master academic content and skills at accelerated rates. This includes at least 1.5 years of growth in Math and ELA each year
- **College Readiness:** At least 80% of students will meet or exceed college readiness benchmarks by age 18

#### Personalized Learning for All Students

Learning experiences for all students are tailored to their individual developmental needs, skills and interest. Personalized learning includes the following elements:

- **Learner profiles,** capturing multi-faceted inputs (skills, interests, aspirations) about each student
- **Personal learning paths,** enabling students to tailor experiences to their own needs and goals
- Individual mastery, assessing progress against standards and goals and advancing students at their own pace
- **Flexible learning environments,** offering multiple instructional delivery approaches

#### Optimized for Scale

The model is replicable and financially viable on public funding, which requires:

- **Financial Sustainability:** The school can fund 100% of operating expenses on public per-pupil revenue within four years of launch
- **Scalable:** The school model can be replicated at scale if it demonstrates impact

We are eager to share the work of these trailblazing districts with you. We invite you to learn more, to celebrate the successful efforts already underway, and to support the challenging work still ahead.



# Harbormaster-led Systems

<i>System</i>	<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Plan highlights</i>	<i>Partners</i>
<i>CityBridge Foundation (Washington, D.C.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 217 schools</li> <li>● 82,958 students</li> <li>● 76% FRL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pilot funding for district and charter schools launching innovative models that embrace technology</li> <li>● Design workshops, summer institute, and tailored support for school applicants</li> <li>● Seven design principles for breakthrough schools, including mastery-based credit and scalability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2Revolutions</li> </ul>
<i>Colorado Education Initiative (CO)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 112 schools</li> <li>● 55K students</li> <li>● 40-80% FRL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participating districts' different personalized learning approaches become proof points for other Colorado districts</li> <li>● State-level policy environment supportive of personalized learning (enabled by the Colorado DOE)</li> <li>● Cross-district learning to more rapidly achieve district- and state-wide scale of next gen models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adams County School District</li> <li>● Colorado Department of Education</li> <li>● Colorado Springs School District 11</li> <li>● Thompson School District</li> </ul>
<i>LEAP Innovations (Chicago)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 658 schools</li> <li>● 400K students</li> <li>● 85% FRL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Access to the Collaboratory—a space designed to bring educators, entrepreneurs, tech companies, researchers and students together to share ideas, co-develop solutions, and get training.</li> <li>● Summer Design Program for school teams that includes workshops, one-on-one consultations, site visits, apprenticeships, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities</li> <li>● Freely available personalized learning resources, including design roadmaps, design workshop materials, and design readings and videos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chicago Public Education Fund</li> <li>● Chicago Public Schools</li> </ul>
<i>New England Secondary Schools Consortium</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 75 schools</li> <li>● 57K students</li> <li>● 48% FRL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on policy and practice across the five-state region: competency-based learning models and graduation requirements supported by state DOEs</li> <li>● Alignment with international best practices for secondary learning as a proxy for readiness</li> <li>● Intensive personalized supports for schools through Great Schools Partnership' on-site coaching model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Great Schools Partnership</li> <li>● Connecticut Department of Education</li> <li>● Maine Department of Education</li> <li>● New Hampshire Department of Education</li> <li>● Rhode Island Department of Education</li> <li>● Vermont Agency of Education</li> <li>● Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents</li> <li>● Nellie Mae Education Foundation</li> </ul>
<i>New Schools for New Orleans</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 90 schools</li> <li>● 43K students</li> <li>● 77% FRL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration of school districts and school support organizations, led by reform leader NSNO</li> <li>● Focus on the local ecosystem: communities of practice, human capital systems, data systems</li> <li>● Transition local CMOs to personalized learning and launch new schools by supporting entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4.0 Schools</li> <li>● Educate Now!</li> <li>● Orleans Parish School Board</li> <li>● Recovery School District</li> </ul>
<i>Rogers Family Foundation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 124 schools</li> <li>● 49K students</li> <li>● 71% FRL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic partnership with Oakland USD, local CMOs, nonprofits, and other funders committed to education reform in Oakland</li> <li>● Access to talent, experience, and lessons learned from local blended pilots</li> <li>● Deep discovery phase open to all schools, personalizing their own learning about NextGen schooling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Oakland USD and the Oakland Public Education Fund</li> </ul>



*“Personalized learning will play an important role in New Orleans effort to become the highest-performing urban district in the country. We’ve seen an unprecedented academic turnaround over the last ten years and yet, too few students are finishing high school prepared for college or career. Increasing the personalization of the learning experience in New Orleans’ schools will serve as a significant lever in providing every child in the city with an excellent education.”*

**COALITION SNAPSHOT (2013-14)**

- Type..... Urban
- Size (109<sup>th</sup> largest in U.S.)
  - K-12 schools..... 90
  - Students..... 44,900
  - Teachers.....2,500
- Demographics
  - White..... 7%
  - African-American..... 86%
  - Latino/Hispanic..... 3%
  - Asian/Pacific Islander..... 3%
  - Multiracial/other..... 1%
- Free/reduced lunch eligibility....83%
- Graduation rate..... 78%
- Per-pupil spend..... \$13,203

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NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS

RECOVERY School District



# New Orleans

## Vision

New Schools for New Orleans and its coalition partners envision New Orleans transforming from a “C” school system to an “A” system—one that prepares all students for college and career—with effective personalized learning as a key driver. Local educators, with support from local partners, will implement classroom-, grade-, and school-level pilots that prove personalized learning can accelerate academic achievement. Over time, successful pilots will scale across the city as educators, schools, and charter management organizations adopt effective practices. New Orleans will become a national proof point for what is possible when innovative school models operate within a system built on autonomy, accountability, and choice.

**COALITION STRUCTURE:** The New Orleans system of schools is defined by three core principles. First, government serves as primarily as a regulator by implementing a strong, performance-based school accountability system and rarely running schools. Second, educators should be responsible for operating schools: school leaders should have the autonomy to choose their own staff, curriculum, and school model. Third, families should have choice among schools and be able to select a school—regardless of location—that best suits their children’s needs, interests, and goals.

The structure of the New Orleans coalition seeking to scale personalized learning reflects these principles and decentralized environment. The coalition includes three non-profits: New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO), Educate Now!, and 4.0 Schools (4.0), with the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and the Louisiana Recovery School District (RSD).



NSNO: A non-profit organization which makes strategic investments of time, expertise, and funding to support the growth of New Orleans’ high-performing system of schools, NSNO has long history of funding new school models, guiding system-level innovation, and supporting school leaders. NSNO’s leadership and collaboration with the RSD and local educators has led to the launch of a common enrollment process, the revision of the tiered funding formula for students with disabilities, and the readjustment of school accountability systems to better align with standards for post-secondary success.

RSD & OPSB: In 2003, the Louisiana legislature created RSD to take over failing public schools across the state and transform them into successful schools. After Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was declared a “district in crisis”,

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[WWW.NEWSCHOOLSFORNEWORLEANS.ORG](http://WWW.NEWSCHOOLSFORNEWORLEANS.ORG)

and the RSD took over 107 of the 128 schools in New Orleans. The remaining public schools fall under the oversight of the Orleans Parish School Board. The districts provide important oversight and policy support to the coalition which will enable the scaling of personalized learning across the city.

- **Educate Now!:** Non-profit Educate Now! supports schools' early exploration and implementation of blended learning, facilitates professional development for teachers focused on personalized learning, and coordinates a community of practice among personalized learning leads in various schools. Educate Now! will play an important role in increasing personalized learning awareness and supporting innovation through pilot programs and learning communities.
- **4.0 Schools:** Non-profit 4.0 Schools is an education innovation lab that invests in and supports the launch of new schools and education ventures. 4.0 facilitates a variety of workshops and programs designed to build a community of curious people working together to design, test, and refine innovative school models and ventures.

Personalized learning—coupled with a thriving human capital market and system-wide fiscal and political alignment—will advance three shared priorities:

#### High-quality seat creation

- Invest in the expansion of schools & charter management organizations (CMOs) that demonstrate effectiveness
- Support schools in moving from medium- to high-quality
- Close or transform low-quality schools Prioritize rigorous instruction and assessment

#### High expectations for schools, and students

- Prioritize rigorous instruction and assessment
- Make academic growth a requirement for charter renewal
- Support schools as they transition to the Common Core

#### Equity in access, funding, and services

- Ensure that families have access to information about all schools
- Support programs that meet the needs of the most at-risk students

**CALL TO ACTION:** Eight years after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has seen dramatic gains in student learning. While 42% of the city's children grow up in poverty, the highest of any urban district in the state, New Orleans is on track to become the highest-performing of the four largest districts in Louisiana. New Orleans' 4-year cohort graduation rate of 78% is now higher than the state average of 72%, and has nearly caught up with the national graduation rate for white students (83%).

Despite these achievements, the "mastery" gap between the state and the RSD remains high, and college readiness among high school graduates has flat-lined. More New Orleans students are enrolling in college than are prepared for college success: only 29% of the class of 2010 met college readiness indicators, yet 73% enrolled in college. This means that more than 60% will require remediation in higher education.

New Orleans will need new strategies and innovations to become an "A" system in which all students are prepared to succeed, and personalized learning is an important lever for achieving this goal. There is energy and excitement around personalized learning in the city's schools: large charter school management organizations (CMOs) such as FirstLine Schools and ReNEW Schools are already piloting personalized learning, with promising early results. Other schools and CMOs are interested in personalized learning, and local funders are willing to support innovations. Coalition partners will build upon this energy, with each member bringing a unique focus and set of skills.

**Desired outcomes:** The New Orleans coalition ultimately wants 100% of high school students to graduate prepared for college and careers. This goal means more than simply improving high school graduation and college enrollment rates. The five-year success of scaling personalized learning will be measured through three critical outcomes:

- **School quality:** 80% of students are college-ready and persist through college, up from the 37% who currently enroll in two or four year institutions but are not prepared to succeed there. Achieving this goal by 2025 means changing the post-secondary outcomes of roughly 1,300 graduates each year.
- **Personalized learning market share:** The number of students in personalized learning environments in high-quality schools grows from 2% to 5% by 2015, and to 30% in the next five years as successful models scale.
- **Financial sustainability:** 100% of schools funded by the coalition's personalized learning work are financially sustainable within 4 years of launch

**STRATEGY:** NSNO and its coalition partners will support increased adoption of personalized learning practices that drive student achievement. While each school will implement personalized learning in a unique way, students at all schools that implement personalized learning will benefit from:

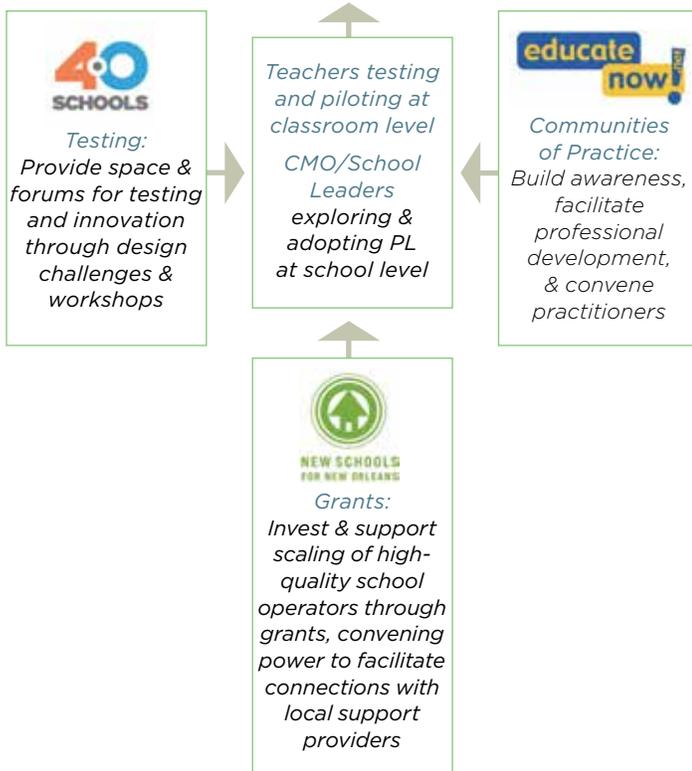
- Learning profiles that track achievements and individual goals
- Professional development that provides teachers with real-time feedback on instructional practices
- The opportunity to progress through grade levels based on their mastery of content
- Access to different types of learning environments, such as blended learning, project-based learning, small group instruction, and more

New Orleans is among the most entrepreneurial and talent-dense urban education systems in the country, and the coalition's personalized learning strategy reflects these strengths. The New Orleans coalition will pursue three key strategies to implement and scale personalized learning:

1. **Nurture the Ecosystem:** Engaged and activated key stakeholders and a strong accountability system provide a solid foundation for personalized learning in New Orleans. Coalition members will build on this foundation by convening communities of practice, collaborating with human capital support organizations, and building robust data systems. Schools, community organizations, teacher recruitment and development organizations, and funders will all be involved in this city-wide effort.

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2. **Transition Existing Schools:** NSNO will award planning grants to existing schools with the greatest potential to drive results through their implementation of personalized learning. Investing in high-potential schools and CMOs to implement personalized learning will create local proof points that will be important to the scaling of personalized learning across the city.
3. **Launch New Schools:** NSNO and 4.0 Schools will launch a national competition to source talented aspiring school design teams in an effort to bring rapid innovation and a more diverse set of school options to the New Orleans system. 4.0 Schools will facilitate a wide range of training opportunities and prototyping exercises designed to help entrepreneurs refine their ideas and help 4.0 and NSNO determine who is most capable of launching a new, high-quality personalized learning school.



The New Orleans system of schools differs from most traditional districts in that it relies on entrepreneurship, innovation, accountability, and empowerment to drive continual improvement. The city has become a magnet for talented educators working toward a common goal of improving outcomes for kids. However, coalition members recognize several potential challenges that they must collectively address:

- **Professional development and teacher supports:** Teachers, especially those early in their careers, will need support to master the type of data-driven instruction associated with personalized learning, above and beyond the type of support they receive now. Educate Now! and NSNO will expose school leaders to effective

personalized learning practices from around the country. Together, the non-profits will collaborate on targeted professional development, including observations, communities of practice, and teacher boot camps.

- **Assessment schedules:** The fixed timing of state assessments may make it challenging to fully implement mastery-based learning. The RSD has demonstrated a commitment to removing obstacles for educators whenever possible, and will continue to drive policy change in partnership with legislators, state department of education officials, and the state board of education.
- **Resourcing and capital:** Schools may need additional capital in the short term to implement personalized learning. Next Generation Systems Initiative funding will help by providing planning and launch capital for CMOs and schools implementing personalized learning. Educate Now! and NSNO will convene local funders to supplement short-term launch and transition costs.

**Implementation plan:** Local educators, with support from coalition partners, will launch pilots that provide early results and create proof points of how personalized learning can accelerate academic achievement. The coalition will work closely with the educators who adopt personalized learning to understand the specific challenges they face in their implementation. They will foster a community of educators and policy makers that can learn from one another and generate solutions to challenges as they arise.

In order to increase interest in and understanding of personalized learning, the coalition will facilitate discussions with existing schools, based on their current level of exposure to personalized learning. Given that some local schools have already begun early implementation of personalized learning, the New Orleans coalition will adapt support to the needs of schools based on their level of exposure to personalized learning and readiness to implement pilots.

In parallel, NSNO will collaborate with 4.0 Schools to launch a school design challenge to identify and support educators and entrepreneurs in creating new, innovative personalized learning models. Up to three teams will be selected to participate in a 6 month-long incubation process in which they will participate in a design process that includes prototyping and training in design thinking, receive individual coaching, and solicit input from New Orleans teachers, students, parents, and school leaders. At the conclusion of the process, NSNO and 4.0 Schools will select one or more teams to support to open new charter schools as early as the fall of 2016.

OPSB and RSD will serve an important role in the implementation and scaling of personalized learning in New Orleans' decentralized system of schools. NSNO will work with the districts to understand the facilities landscape for new schools, and will also provide input on which existing schools and leaders might be ready to shift to personalized learning. In the spirit of continued accountability and open communication, NSNO will regularly collect feedback through meetings with the districts, as well as CMOs and individual school leaders.

In sum, the three-pronged approach of transitioning existing schools to full personalized learning environments, launching new, innovative personalized learning models, and providing broader ecosystem supports will enable New Orleans to achieve its ambitious goal: 30% of students benefiting from personalized learning within the next five years.