

Personalized Learning in Action
Orlo Avenue Elementary School, East Providence, RI

After one year of implementing blended learning, Principal Yanaiza Gallant knew there was a greater opportunity to ignite student agency and personalization of learning. Principal Gallant wanted to do more than replace paper worksheets with online versions, and saw the potential of technology to foster more active, student-led learning. “We knew that more affluent schools a few miles away used technology to let their students create and innovate. My students deserve that too,” she recalls. With these examples in hand, she challenged her staff to use technology to promote student voice and agency in their classrooms.

With that coherent vision set at a whole school level, students began creating projects the following year, using computer code to work with robots and doing hands on experiments using technology. As they worked on these projects, students were able to choose what they wanted to work on, how they spent their time, and selected the format for demonstrating their knowledge. For the first time, Orlo Avenue held their first STEM student showcase, completely student driven. Teachers emphasized their role as facilitators of learning, and limited any time spent lecturing. Personalized learning has also greatly helped a group in her school that Gallant feels especially passionate about: English Learners (ELLs). “ELLs often have to focus on making sense of language and learning everything at the same time. It’s hard to keep up,” she said. The technology has allowed her ELLs to go at their own pace, building the foundations for their bilingualism at a pace appropriate to their unique needs. Not only are students engaging in deeper learning, allowing them a far better understanding of the skills and content, but this environment has driven increased student engagement and further student learning.

Focus elements of personalized learning:

- Teacher-facilitated
- Differentiated learning activities