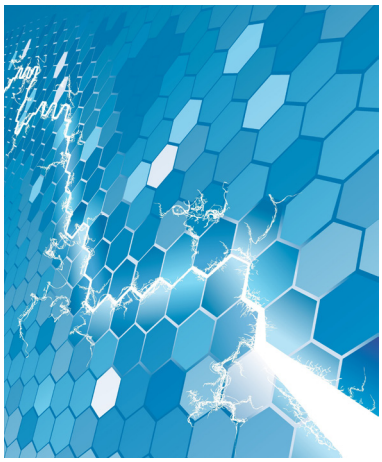
Public Education Transformation: *Powered by Regional Networks*

Executive Summary



Education is an engine that drives national prosperity and is a shared investment in our country's future. There is a broad consensus, however, that the current one-size-fits-all approach to educating children is not adequately preparing them to thrive in an increasingly complex global society. Despite numerous attempts, neither local nor national reform efforts have produced widespread, sustainable results.

This white paper explores two fundamental questions:

- How do we create a student-centered public education system that gets learning right the first time—every time?
- How do we ensure that effective education practices will be shared, replicated and scaled?

Public Education in Southeastern Wisconsin: From Deconstruction to Transformation

In early 2009 the 45 superintendents that make up the CESA #1 Professional Advisory Committee formed a regional learning community to encourage new ways of thinking about what education can and should be. They quickly concluded that the current education system, which is based on the antiquated assumption that all children should learn the same things at the same time, is no longer adequate and that a fundamental redesign of the system itself is necessary.

The CESA #1 Board of Control responded by unanimously approving a Call to Action for a Regional Public Education Transformation Initiative on behalf of its member districts. This unprecedented action signaled a commitment by the region's K-12 public school districts to work together to reinvent themselves. The Institute @ CESA #1 was formed to facilitate and support a plan to move the region toward a personalized approach to learning.

Three key elements serve as the framework for what has become the CESA #1 Personalized Learning Initiative:

1. Learner profiles that provide a deep, rich and shared understanding of the student as a learner;
2. A flexible, customized learning path based on the unique needs, interests, strengths, learning style and readiness of the student;
3. Progress toward meeting rigorous standards that is measured by demonstrated proficiency rather than seat time and traditional credits.

Although the Personalized Learning Initiative continues to evolve, significant progress has been made in a relatively short period of time. The Institute has worked to create an awareness of the need to transform public education along with a sense of urgency that now is the time to act. A coalition of 22 districts is actively engaged in the work and more than 30 projects are in various stages of development and implementation.

Regional Action Network Approach

Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #1 has responded to the need to transform public education by mobilizing a regional action network that brings diverse individuals and organizations together to share information about what works in education—and what does not—and to use that knowledge to create the future of learning. As a regional convener and facilitator, CESA #1 documents, nurtures and aligns the promising practices that emerge from the constant development cycle occurring in dozens of project sites throughout the region. This enables individual efforts to have a collective impact and ensures that effective practices will be shared and replicated.

Key components of a regional network approach include:

- Compelling vision that inspires and benefits everyone
- Flexible infrastructure that balances open participation and accountability
- Appreciative mindset that focuses on creating a new system, rather than on solving the problems of the current system
- Action plan that consists of a unifying framework and specific goals

Deliberately applying strategies to increase connectivity and leverage regional diversity creates synergy that enables people to translate ideas into action. Another benefit is increased stakeholder engagement and ownership, which in turn fosters innovation, produces results faster and increases sustainability.

To successfully transform public education, we must harness the power of regional networks to facilitate continuous action, learn from experience, share with others and build on results. This unique approach to transforming public education represents a promising practice that warrants further exploration based on its potential to effect change at a scale and speed never before realized. By documenting and sharing experiences from the early phases of its Personalized Learning Initiative in the accompanying white paper, CESA #1 hopes to encourage other regions to create similar action networks that will transcend current practice and enable student-centered learning to grow and thrive.