EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early Progress

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

Interim Research on Personalized Learning

The interim findings from an ongoing study of schools using personalized learning practices are promising; students are making significantly greater gains in math and reading over the last two years than a virtual control group made up of similar students at comparable schools. In addition, the concept of personalized learning is still evolving as new models, approaches, and supporting technologies emerge. And many of the early adopting schools appear to be implementing similar practices.

Although results varied considerably among the 23 schools in this study, **two-thirds** of them had statistically significant positive effects on students' math and reading scores on the Northwest Education Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. Moreover, students generally ended the school year with math and reading test scores above or near the national average, after having started the school year generally performing below the national average.

Increase in percentile rank between fall 2012 and spring 2014

	MATH	READING
Grades K–2	31	17
Grades 3–5	24	20
Grades 6–8	11	9
Grades 9–10	7	6

Characteristics of Schools in the Initial Study

23 public charter schools

Nearly **5,000** students

2 years implementing personalized learning practices

Predominantly **urban** locations

Student population predominantly from low-income families

Next Phase of the Study

29 additional public charter and district schools

Personalized learning is an educational approach in which teachers and schools create systems, tools, and methodologies that tailor instruction to the individual needs, skills, and interests of each student, in an effort to accelerate and deepen their learning.

Although the specific features of the personalized learning models the schools use vary, each school in this study is implementing one or more key personalized learning practices: learner profiles, personal learning paths, competency-based progression, and/or flexible learning environments. **Two-thirds** of teachers surveyed from the 23 schools said that they use learner profiles and learning plans for their students, and **86 percent** said that they pace instruction based on a student's need.

Teachers also are optimistic about the prospects of personalized learning and its impact on student achievement and the broader school community. They are seeing higher expectations at these schools translate into a change in school culture with more emphasis on college-going. One teacher said, "Things are changing. This year's seniors had more drive and academic mindset than some other classes have had."

2/3 Teachers use learner profiles and learning plans for their students.

While all 23 schools in the interim study are public charter schools, the next stage of the research includes 29 additional public charter and district schools.

This interim report from the RAND Corporation is the first in what will be a series of reports based on an ongoing long-term study of schools that are using a variety of approaches to personalized learning. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation commissioned RAND to conduct the ongoing research to identify the most promising and important features of these new school models; document the challenges schools face as they implement these models; learn which components of personalized learning are most critical in the success of these new models of teaching and learning; and provide a source of independent feedback for the foundation and its school grantees. All of the schools in the study received funding to implement personalized learning practices directly from the Gates Foundation or through two intermediaries, the Next Generation Learning Challenges and the Charter School Growth Fund.

To read the full report, *Early Progress: Interim Research on Personalized Learning,* and the accompanying *Teacher Survey Responses* report, visit http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/article/early-progress-interim-report-personalized-learning.

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