

Nevada Innovation Guide

Introduction

Nevada is experiencing a period of transformation in education. Across the state, learners, families, educators, and communities are calling for learning experiences that are more personalized, more relevant, and more aligned to the knowledge, skills and mindsets students need to thrive.

Statewide efforts demonstrate a shared vision for deeper, more engaging learning opportunities. The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) has invested in several initiatives that signal a commitment to this vision, including the development of the [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) and the work of the [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#). The legislature has convened the [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#), which represents key constituencies and has been charged with reimagining education in the state. Their recommendations, as captured in its 2025 Recommendations Report, shaped the action areas of this guide.

Nevada's policy landscape is moving toward a more learner-centered, future-ready approach. Portrait-aligned learning models, flexible licensure pathways, expanded work-based learning, and updated improvement planning requirements give districts more tools to design learning experiences that build student agency and connect instruction to real-world applications. New accountability provisions further emphasize transparency and coherence across local systems.

This innovation guide is designed to help leaders understand and leverage Nevada's opportunities for education transformation. Informed by state policy and drawing on the experiences of Nevada educators, learners, and community partners, this guide highlights practical examples of how districts are taking action to personalize learning. These examples demonstrate that innovation is already underway in Nevada's diverse contexts, from rural communities to Nevada's largest urban centers.

Each learning community brings its own strengths, history, and opportunities. This guide does not prescribe a single approach for innovating and deepening personalization. Rather, it offers a set of action areas and examples that leaders can adapt, sequence, and build on to meet their community's needs. Whether a district is just beginning its exploration or is several years into implementation, the guide provides a foundation for strengthening innovative education across the state.

How to Use This Guide

The Nevada Innovation Guide is created for education leaders who want to explore or deepen the student-centered learning experiences they offer to students. The guide includes practical examples of how some districts are taking steps to accomplish personalization within existing policy structures. Practitioners can consider these examples as they begin to apply strategies to their own learning communities. Learners, educators, school and district leaders, and families can use this guide to learn more about student-centered learning. Community members, including business, industry, and higher education, will see many examples of how districts are partnering with their communities to create meaningful learning experiences both inside and outside of the classroom.

The guide is organized around four action areas. Each action area includes:

- **What It Is:** A description of the action area and how it can support student-centered approaches to education
- **State Policy Flexibility:** A brief description of relevant state policy and how it enables innovative practices
- **Why It Matters:** An explanation of how to take advantage of policy flexibility to enable deeper learning
- **District Spotlight:** A real example from a Nevada district that illustrates how districts can leverage policy flexibilities to innovate

This guide was created by [KnowledgeWorks](#), a national nonprofit, with the support of the [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#). The guide draws on KnowledgeWorks' national expertise in student-centered learning and experience creating similar guides in other states. The statewide experiences and partnerships of the Nevada Future of Learning Network have helped drive the content creation of this guide.

Action Areas and Nevada Examples

The opportunities and examples throughout the guide are organized into “action areas” that represent broad approaches that schools or districts seeking to personalize learning might want to consider. These action areas are not exhaustive; there are many approaches that Nevada districts can use to personalize learning. The action areas were developed through conversations with Nevada partners and informed by the work of the [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#). Together, they highlight promising opportunities to strengthen and expand student-centered learning across the state. The areas are:

- **Activating the Portrait:** Understanding and utilizing the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and building your own local vision to help guide how you prepare students for success
- **Developing Great Teachers and Leaders:** Supporting educator recruitment, development, and retention by leveraging resources and policies that exist in Nevada
- **Next Generation Career Pathways:** Preparing students for postsecondary success through personalized career exploration, industry-recognized credentials, and higher education readiness and experiences
- **Measuring What Matters:** Staying accountable to learning goals and outcomes through state and local structures

The guide spotlights some of the districts leading the personalized learning work in Nevada. These districts are leveraging policy supports and flexibilities to provide their students with innovative approaches to learning. The content of each spotlight was reviewed and approved by the individuals interviewed. We are appreciative of the time each district took to discuss the work they are doing and review their story. In alphabetical order, spotlights include:

- Churchill County School District
- Clark County School District
- Douglas County School District
- White Pine County School District

This guide can be read cover to cover or by each action area. Readers can choose to start with any action area that feels most interesting or applicable to their learning communities. If you are unsure of where to start, we suggest beginning with the first action area that focuses on activating the Portrait. Often, establishing and implementing a shared vision is the first step to deepening student-centered learning experiences for students.

This guide can also be read in tandem with the [Nevada Policy Primer](#). Together, these two resources provide a range of implementation considerations to help educator leaders undertaking this work. We encourage you to consider what practices or concepts may be most applicable to your learning community.

Action Area 1:

Activating the Portrait

What It Is

A portrait of a learner is a [visioning](#) document that articulates the knowledge, skills, and mindsets learners should master before graduation. This visioning document can be called different things, including a profile of a learner or profile (or portrait) of a graduate. While the names may vary depending on the state and district, the purpose is the same: Portraits provide learners, educators, and school and district leaders with shared language and goals for learning.

Portraits are most useful when they are created with a variety of stakeholders including learners, educators and education leaders, families, and community members such as business leaders. The skills and knowledge outlined in a portrait are most impactful when they reflect the values and aspirations of the local community. When stakeholders come together to discuss the purpose of elementary and secondary education, it empowers the community to begin working together toward shared learning objectives and provide more holistic and powerful support for learners.

In Nevada, the Portrait of a Nevada Learner is readily available for schools and districts that want to start working toward or deepening their shared vision for learning.

State Policy Flexibility

Nevada's [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) provides a “collective vision for the mindset and skills that bring academic knowledge to life.” The Portrait articulates key values of student learning that make the learning experience deeper and more meaningful: empowering, connecting, impacting, and thriving. The Portrait was developed by the Nevada Department of Education with support from ed.Xtraordinary (now the [Nevada Center for the Future of Learning](#)) and KnowledgeWorks. The values outlined came from a series of engagements with educators, learners, and broader community members. Educators and leaders can use the Portrait of a Nevada Learner as a North Star when designing learning experiences for students. The Portrait can also be a useful starting point for districts that want to design their own portrait.

To bring the Portrait to life in classrooms, the Nevada Future of Learning Network created a companion set of [competencies](#) that span the entire pre-K through grade 12 continuum. These competencies describe what each Portrait skill looks like as learners grow and mature across grade bands. Educators can use the accompanying rubrics that outline the progression from emerging to developing, proficient, and extending competence to identify where a learner is in their development and what comes next. Together, these tools support coherent instruction, equitable assessment, and clear pathways for learners to monitor and demonstrate their growth over time.

While Nevada state policy does not require districts to adopt a local portrait of a graduate and corresponding competencies, many districts find that having a localized vision is valuable. By creating a local portrait of a graduate, school districts can move toward a shared vision of learning that is personalized to the needs and values of their communities. Nevada school districts may find

it helpful to hold focus groups or survey members of their communities when designing local portraits. Community members often include educators, learners, families, higher education representatives, local businesses, and other local partners.

Why It Matters

Building conversations and goals around the state Portrait or a locally developed portrait is often a starting point for developing new student-centered learning strategies. Regardless of where your school or district is in its student-centered learning journey, using a learner portrait can provide a useful structure for discussions and help guide decisions about how to strengthen learning communities.

A common tool for activating the portrait is the development or implementation of [competencies](#). Competency progressions can be used to articulate age-appropriate learning expectations across content areas and grade bands to help support the implementation of the portrait. In addition to utilizing the corresponding competencies of the Nevada Portrait of a Learner, schools and districts may find it helpful to amend the state Portrait competencies to ensure they are locally applicable and reflect the educational opportunities offered. Districts that develop local portraits can use the state Portrait competencies as guidance for developing competencies tied to their local portrait.

Implementing a portrait and corresponding competencies requires sustained effort. Portraits and competencies are most effective when they are embedded deeply into the culture and practices of a learning community. To learn more about how to activate the Portrait of a Nevada Learner or your local portrait, check out the [Activating the Portrait: Local Pathways to a Statewide Vision Policy Primer](#).

District Spotlight: Churchill County School District

[Churchill County School District](#) serves about 3,200 students from pre-K through high school in Fallon, Nevada. The district is organized by grade level: Lahontan Elementary serves kindergarten and first grade, E.C. Best Elementary serves second and third grade, Numa Elementary serves fourth and fifth grade, followed by a middle school and a high school. This structure creates both opportunities and challenges for personalized learning. For example, providing third-grade instruction to a first-grade student in another building can be difficult, but the grade-level model also supports stronger collaboration within teaching teams. To promote alignment and advance their learning goals, the district uses both its local [Profile of a Learner](#) and the [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) to guide instructional priorities and provide cohesion across grade bands.

While the district's Profile was in place prior to the creation of the state Portrait, it wasn't until the district got involved in the creation and implementation of the state Portrait that the work really started to thrive. Jennifer Gehant, Learning Facilitator, says that engagement in the Nevada Portrait work helped them to activate their local profile. Conversations about theory, goals, and objectives around the Nevada Portrait were critical for building culture and understanding around the benefits and use of portraits and profiles. As part of their professional development with the [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#), their district team strategized around how to implement learning strategies to

build students' skills and dispositions outlined in the Portrait. Teams then began to think about when and how to have these same conversations around their local Profile.

One of the first steps was adapting the district's local Profile to contain age-appropriate content. While the knowledge, skills, and dispositions outlined in their local Profile were well-suited for older students, they needed translation to meet the needs of younger students. The Lahontan Elementary team worked together to create a version of their local Profile that could be applied to students in kindergarten and first grade. As the educators and educator leaders began to engage more deeply with their local Profile, they realized there were changes they wanted to make. They worked together to update their local Profile and create grade-level competency bands to help educators and learners engage with the profile more intentionally. Their focus now is on creating vertical alignment across the different areas of their Profile, just like they did with the Portrait of the Nevada Learner.

Learners engage with the Profile in different ways depending on their grade-level. At the elementary level, students learn about each of the skills using age-appropriate descriptions. During activities and projects, students may be asked to describe what it would look like to demonstrate one of the profile skills and identify any of their peers who displayed competence in the skill. The middle school students have leaned into the work through project-based learning. The high school is activating the Profile through proficiency scales that align with student voice, lifelong learning, and critical thinking—all attributes of their local profile, as well as through innovative CTE programs.

Gehant's advice to schools and districts working to activate their profile/portrait is to crosswalk it with the work that educators and schools are currently doing. The development and implementation of a profile/portrait is likely embedded in what districts are already doing and it's an opportunity to connect and recognize the great work underway in a school/district connected to the shared vision. Gehant also suggests seeing what other schools or districts are doing and selecting the skills and dispositions or activation strategies that will work best for your learning community.

To learn more about Churchill County School District and their student-centered learning story, check out their [case study](#).

Action Area 2:

Developing Great Teachers and Leaders

What It Is

Educators are essential to the success of learners. In student-centered learning spaces, educators work with students to design and deliver relevant and engaging instruction that addresses standards while emphasizing the knowledge, skills, and mindsets outlined in the state or local portrait.

While most educators have deep knowledge and expertise related to traditional models of education, many, if not all, can benefit from professional learning opportunities specifically tailored toward student-centered learning. Providing educators with additional training related to student-centered learning practices can help them grow their educator toolbox while ensuring learning is engaging and relevant to students. Incorporating student-centered learning practices into a classroom requires multiple steps of implementation and provides educators with resources, including time that is vital to success.

As with students, learning for adults happens at different rhythms and in different ways. When professional learning approaches embed student-centered learning strategies, it shifts from something teachers must do to something they own. Educators become active designers of their growth, rather than passive recipients. For example, educators should be able to select relevant professional learning experiences that most interest them and have flexibility in when and how long they engage in these opportunities. Educators may master concepts and skills at different times, and effective professional learning opportunities are flexibly designed to accommodate educator needs.

In Nevada, the state has resources outlined in state policy that educators can leverage to develop their student-centered learning teaching skills.

State Policy Flexibility

School districts are responsible for ensuring that teachers and administrators have access to “high-quality, ongoing professional development training” that aligns to the state’s [professional development standards](#) ([Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 391A.370](#)). Districts can choose to leverage resources like transportation vehicles in addition to monetary investments to support educators pursuing professional development. While the state does not require educators to complete a certain amount of professional development experiences annually, continued education is required for teachers renewing their licenses. In order to renew their teaching licenses, educators must complete [90 hours of professional development](#), six hours of coursework at a college or university, or a combination of both experiences that is equal to 90 hours ([Nev. Admin. Code 391.065](#)).

While state policy outlines some requirements for professional development, districts have flexibility around when, how, and how much professional development they provide to educators. For districts and educators who want to deepen their knowledge of learner-centered education, the

state has invested in several ways to support this development. Nevada invested in the [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#) to “deliver innovative, personalized learning opportunities for Nevada’s students.” The Network has developed several resources to help districts, schools and educators implement the Portrait of a Nevada Learner including an [Activators Guide](#) and [competencies](#). Education leaders who want to engage more deeply in this work can [join the Nevada Future of Learning Network](#). Members of the network continue to build out the implementation supports to help schools and districts activate the Portrait. Expertise and engagement with the Portrait can lead to additional certification. Educators can choose to demonstrate their mastery of the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and [obtain a microcredential](#).

Schools and districts may find it helpful to create a vision and goals related to professional development and building the capacity of educators. KnowledgeWorks’ [Portrait of a Leader](#) may provide a starting point for this visioning.

Why It Matters

Schools and districts can leverage the professional development opportunities and resources available in Nevada, such as the Nevada Future of Learning Network, to help educators learn, grow, and feel supported as they begin or deepen their student-centered learning teaching practices. Educators can leverage the network and accompanying resources to support their growth and development.

While it may feel challenging to find time to invest in professional development, districts that prioritize access to quality professional development are likely to see better outcomes for learners and educators. School and district leaders can think creatively about how to leverage flexibility in school structures and maximize professional development requirements to give their educators meaningful professional development experiences. How and when professional development is offered should match the needs of the learning community. For example, some learning communities may benefit from collaborative teacher learning opportunities that include time for curriculum development or discussing student-centered learning best practices.

For more ideas on how to construct authentic and powerful professional development, check out the [Developing Great Teachers and Leaders Policy Primer](#).

District Spotlight: Douglas County School District

Nestled in the Carson Valley and on the shore of Lake Tahoe, [Douglas County School District](#) (DCSD) serves about 4,900 students. The district is rural, with the county largely made up of farmlands. The district is economically diverse and serves students in PreK-12. Like many districts, DCSD is facing declining enrollment and corresponding budget challenges. Despite these challenges, the district continues to lean into student-centered learning and invest in their educators by utilizing creative structures and accessing funding and resources through multiple avenues.

When a teacher joins the district, they are enrolled in the Teacher Academy 1. Their first four days of the school year are set aside for teacher development. This intensive training provides new teachers with a broad overview of the district as well as an introduction to key district resources like their

[Portrait of a Learner](#) and their [Instructional Model](#). As a cohort, they transition to the Teacher Academy 2 in their second year. The Teacher Academy 1 includes a more structured onboarding process than Teacher Academy 2. Teacher Academy 2 offers different pathways for teachers so they can access professional development that aligns most with their needs and interests. This is powerful because it mirrors the kind of learning the district expects their teachers to offer to their learners. This year, the Teacher Academy 2 has focused on their evaluation system and helping teachers choose a strategy to meet the Teacher’s NEPF instructional standards.

Teachers joining the district receive these supports regardless of the number of years they have been teaching. This helps ensure that all teachers in the district are onboarded with intentionality. Throughout the year, new teachers work with learning facilitators from the [Educational Services Department](#) and receive mentorship during the onboarding process. Learning facilitators will visit classrooms and give teachers support for development using a nonevaluative process. The cohort model helps teachers form a bond and encourages shared learning.

Professional development across the district, not just during those offered through the academies, is heavily tied to the instructional model and the Portrait. The district leverages [EPIC Learning](#) as an instructional model and a way of intentionally teaching to the Portrait. The district shared that it’s not just what they are teaching but it’s how they teach it. The EPIC Learning model includes positive culture, as well as learner-centered and responsive instruction. The district has leveraged their professional development to deepen the use of their Portrait of a Learner. When they started their design process to determine how to activate the Portrait, they rolled it out to the stakeholders over the course of the school year and asked students in grades three through 11 to engage in the work. They followed the same process with their teachers and community members. The district has used the Portrait to leverage their Instructional Model and vice versa to show how they are connected.

Every year, Douglas County has a professional development forum with educators. The content falls within the framing of the four domains of the Portrait and educators share teaching practices and skills they’ve mastered that can help support the goals of other teachers. The symposium is set up as a full day conference, allowing educators to learn about and experience a variety of teaching practices going on in the district. One example was a session on how teachers can leverage [Signature Practices](#), which include a variety of teaching and learning models and experiences, to help empower student learning. In another example, the Learning Forum had a session from one of the district’s custodians who taught about building connections with students.

The office uses feedback from previous years to help determine the content for the next year. Every educator is required to participate in the symposium. It includes content for certified teachers as well as classified employees like instructional aids, janitorial staff, and business office and administrative staff. As a result, the Learning Forum functions as both a professional learning opportunity and a community builder for the district.

Despite finite resources, professional development remains a high priority for the district. Executive Director of Education Services, Shannon Brown, says “Investing in educators is the best investment we can make.” The district has four specialists that help drive professional

development. In Nevada, the [Northwest Regional Professional Development Program](#) supports their professional development by funding one position, but the rest are funded with Title II, Title IA, and state general funds. As a district, they value the support for professional development even as they face budget cuts. The district believes that these professional development opportunities support teacher quality and retention.

To learn more about Douglas County School District and their student-centered learning story, check out their [case study](#).

Action Area 3:

Next Generation Career Pathways

What It Is

Providing students with access to career exploration and training pathways early can allow them to gain more from their K-12 education experience. Learning about career possibilities helps students select classes and experiences to prepare for their future. When learning is connected to career pathways, it helps students apply their learning to real-world contexts, creating more relevant and engaging learning experiences.

Career pathway options are likely to vary by learning community as well as by grade level. For example, younger students may find career exploration activities like career-centered field trips and guest speakers relevant to their learning while high school students may want to access work-based learning experiences and make progress toward Career and Technical Education certifications. Student-centered learning practices should also be applied to career pathways. Regardless of the way students access career pathways, it's important that they have the autonomy to pursue opportunities that best fit their learning style and interests. Nevada offers a variety of resources to help educators, schools, and district leaders build, expand, and deepen career pathways.

State Policy Flexibility

Work-based learning and career-technical education policies and programs in Nevada create conditions for schools and districts to build and expand career pathways for students.

Nevada offers career and technical education organized into 16 national and federally recognized [clusters](#) that schools and districts can use to build out career pathway programs. These [programs](#) include a set of standards “designed to prepare the student for the end-of-program technical assessment directly aligned to the standards.” The state’s [CTE course catalog](#) outlines the courses and course sequences for CTE classes. Schools and districts have access to state [Career and Technical Education Grants](#) to help fund pathways. Individuals teaching CTE courses must obtain [Secondary/High School Career and Technical Education Licenses](#).

[Work-based learning](#) “is an educational strategy that offers students the opportunity to connect classroom learning to authentic business/industry experiences.” The [Governor’s Office of Workforce Innovation](#) (GOWINN) ([Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 232.965](#) et seq.) is responsible for developing and implementing career pathways in partnership with the Nevada Department of Education and school districts. GOWINN, in coordination with NDE, provides programs for students to engage in work-based learning opportunities outside of the classroom while earning credit. Additionally, in collaboration with other partners, GOWINN and NDE created the [Nevada Pathways website](#). The website provides an online connection platform for teachers, students, and industry professionals. Educator leaders ready to expand the work-based learning opportunities in their schools and district may find the Nevada Pathways website and the [Guide to Work-Based Learning](#) resource helpful.

Recent legislative changes help support students as they engage with the various career pathway options available in their districts. High schools that offer career pathways [must designate](#) a Pathways Coordinator. Additionally, the department [may establish](#) a program to place career coaches in middle schools and high schools. Pending available funds, these career coaches will help students explore career pathways and develop knowledge, training, and skills for career readiness.

Nevada policy allows students to use their time in high school to get ahead. Specifically, students can access [dual credit](#) opportunities that allow them to take college courses and apply credits earned toward the credits they must acquire to graduate high school ([Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 389.160](#)). Taking courses at a higher education institution will assist students in advancement toward any postsecondary degrees needed to pursue their career interests. Nevada offers a variety of [high school diploma options](#). Learners who wish to demonstrate a higher level of preparation for their post-high school goals may choose to work toward an Advanced Diploma or a College and Career Ready (CCR) Diploma.

Why It Matters

When students have access to career pathways through experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, they can begin to construct an educational experience that better prepares them for life after high school.

Student access to career exploration and experiences can look different across schools and districts. The opportunities offered to students should meet the needs and align to the interests of the learning community. Examples of such opportunities may include experiences such as field trips, internships, on-campus guest speakers, career-technical education, etc.

The most effective and engaging career pathways are often built alongside the community and leverage the resources that already exist. Educator leaders can work with local businesses, higher education institutions and career-technical training programs to build career pathways that better prepare students for their futures. When designing and implementing career pathways, it is often useful to connect the experiences back to the state or local Portrait.

To learn more about career pathway opportunities and implementation, check out the [Next Generation Career Pathways Policy Primer](#).

District Spotlight: Clark County School District

[Clark County School District](#) is the fifth largest school district in the United States, with a diverse student population and a commitment to choice. The district has over 300 schools, a majority of which are open enrollment. With an open enrollment policy, students in the district can attend whatever school best fits their needs and interests. This policy is especially beneficial for district students who might often change residences. Importantly, the district leverages transportation hubs to help students get to where they need to be. While the district has a variety of specialty schools, magnet schools, and other schools with innovative programs and initiatives, every high school in the district has a CTE program and most have multiple.

Assistant Superintendent Gia Moore says that ensuring accessibility and access to these programs is really important to the district. She shares that getting students involved in career pathways is significant because most students have a narrow view about the jobs that are available to them. The district pathways and programs help students expand their horizons and engage in immersive career-related activities.

One example of how districts help students learn more about career options is through a career exploration month that takes place every November. Middle school students are the primary audience for career exploration month. November is an intentional timing choice by the district because students will start thinking about high school courses in the following months. Students begin to make connections between education and career options as they prepare to make decisions about their high school classes. For instance, students that are interested in medical pathways can learn about the science and math courses that can properly prepare them. The district also takes steps to ensure students learn about local and lesser-known career options. In one instance, a group of middle school students visited an artificial intelligence manufacturing company. During this visit, students discussed the potential of jobs that don't even exist yet. When students express interest early, they can also seek support to overcome potential barriers.

The district uses the state [CTE programs](#) when developing career pathways. They also work with economic development groups as well as workforce and business partners to get a sense of what the workforce pipeline needs. They recently added two new programs because of these conversations with community members. The district has a work-based learning coordinator who facilitates opportunities like internships, guest speakers, job shadowing, and more. Additionally, they organize signing days where students can enroll in CTE programs, trade unions, culinary schools, etc. Schools in the district focus on high skill, high demand and high wage programs of study to support success after graduation.

While each school offers distinct programs and opportunities, the district also works to create cohesion across CTE programs. For example, many CTE programs include capstone presentations and showcases with local partners. Regardless of the program in which students are enrolled, they can earn licenses and credentials that fit their interests. Students can also access college-level courses through dual enrollment to get a head start on any postsecondary degrees they need.

The district uses creative scheduling to help students take advantage of CTE and work-based learning opportunities in the district. The focus on mastery-based learning allows students to demonstrate their proficiency in subject matter when they're ready, providing them with more time in their schedule to do experiential learning. This flexibility allows students to build class schedules that align with the job schedule of a work-based learning experience.

The district leverages the [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) to drive their shared purpose. Working toward this purpose has helped the district work cohesively to build a strong career pathway system for their students. Assistant Superintendent Moore explains that the goal is to ensure students graduate with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to thrive in college, career, and beyond.

Action Area 4:

Measuring What Matters

What It Is

A shared vision for education and a coherent system of assessment and accountability are essential for aligning K-12 systems around student-centered learning. State policy can help establish a clear system purpose that defines what success looks like for all learners, including the knowledge, skills, and mindsets they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Assessment systems can reinforce that shared vision by measuring deeper learning, transferable skills, and student agency in addition to academic achievement. Likewise, accountability systems can promote transparency, coherence, and continuous improvement. While all districts must participate in statewide accountability, these measures reflect a floor, not a ceiling, for how districts can collect and report data to their local community.

Together, assessment and accountability systems provide the opportunity for districts to articulate a shared purpose, monitor progress meaningfully, and use evidence to improve outcomes for every learner. Nevada is engaged in a broad statewide conversation about what students need to thrive in a rapidly changing world and how schools should demonstrate progress toward those goals.

State Policy Flexibility

The policy environment around measuring what matters in Nevada is shaped by two major developments: the effort to adopt broader measures of success and the introduction of new accountability requirements. Through investment, convening, and piloting new measurement practices, Nevada's state policy environment is sending important signals to districts that the time is right to consider the measures that matter most to their learning community.

At the state level the [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) represents the state's commitment to creating a framework for new measures with [extensive engagement](#) of educators, students, families, and community members. Districts can choose to adopt the state portrait or crosswalk their local portrait to the statewide portrait. Additionally, the [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#) has developed a [roadmap](#) for system-level reforms that promote transparency, aligned data, and more comprehensive measures of student learning.

Nevada is also developing new expectations for school and district performance. The [Acing Accountability](#) initiative and new requirements in [Senate Bill 460](#) call for schools and districts to establish data-driven improvement plans with clear metrics, publicly report performance, and engage in defined supports or interventions when targets are not met.

The [Nevada School Performance Framework](#) and the [Nevada Educator Performance Framework](#) will still serve as the state's primary systems for measuring student outcomes, educator effectiveness, and overall school performance. These frameworks will be continually updated by NDE to reflect emergent state priorities and new legislatively mandated requirements. Schools can stay informed by accessing guidance from NDE.

Together, these policies provide both the room and the impetus for districts to adopt meaningful, locally aligned measures of school quality and student success.

Why It Matters

As Nevada redefines student success, districts have an opportunity to develop local measurement systems that reflect what their communities value. While all districts must participate in statewide accountability, these measures reflect minimum requirements for how districts can collect and report data to their local community. Districts can design local reporting systems that meet state requirements and report on measures that are most valuable to their local stakeholders. The Portrait of a Nevada Learner provides a framework for articulating the measures that matter most for long-term success. When districts anchor their local systems in these expanded outcomes, measures become more meaningful and useful for instruction, planning, and continuous improvement.

At the same time, the heightened expectations introduced through recent policy change make it essential for districts to build strong data practices. Districts that invest in data literacy, engage their communities in defining local measures, and establish clear systems for reviewing multiple forms of evidence will be better positioned to meet new requirements and to shape their own narrative about student success.

This moment calls for districts to align local measures with community priorities, develop clear strategies for gathering and using evidence, and prepare educators and leaders to navigate a more rigorous accountability environment. When districts take ownership of their measurement systems and align them to a shared vision, they can leverage new policy flexibilities and meet the rising expectations of the state. For more ideas on how to develop a coherent, vision-aligned approach to measuring and improving school quality consult the [Measuring What Matters Policy Primer](#).

District Spotlight: White Pine County School District

[White Pine County School District](#) is proactively building a measurement system that reflects the skills and competencies students need for success. Located in rural eastern Nevada and serving around 1,300 students across seven schools over a four-day school week, the district benefits from a highly engaged, close-knit community and the freedom to innovate.

White Pine's work in measuring what matters began nearly 20 years ago when district leaders examined why high school students were dropping out. They found disengagement typically started early in high school and was tied to students needing help navigating credit requirements and academic challenges. In response, the district created a freshman course focused on essential skills such as problem solving and conflict resolution. The class, held during lunch, helped reduce negative behaviors and gave students the confidence and skills to advocate for themselves.

Building on this success, the district later developed a senior course on postsecondary readiness. Students practiced job interviews, completed tax forms, and engaged in reflective learning, which eventually evolved into a comprehensive graduation portfolio. Over time, this work became a K–12 portfolio system aligned to the [district's competencies](#), with curated evidence collected in fifth,

eighth and twelfth grades. Students can earn endorsements in areas such as CTE, academics, or extracurricular activities based on the evidence they choose to include.

This system addresses the disconnect the district sees between standardized assessments and what matters most for learners. Students and teachers collaboratively store artifacts in shared folders, reflect on growth, and revise previous work. Eighth-grade students engage in a nine-week career exploration experience that helps them shape their portfolios with intention. Formal learning progressions for district competencies guide reflection, discussion, and evidence selection.

The district has reported strong [results](#) as this work has evolved. [Graduation rates](#) have risen from 81% to 93%. Postsecondary and career-preparation participation has increased from about 55% to about 85%, and program completion rates have climbed from roughly 35–40% to 73%. Chronic absenteeism has improved and leaders describe recent years as a period of rapid growth.

State policy played an important role in supporting innovation. A federal school improvement grant provided resources for White Pine to convert one school into a STEAM magnet, offer interdisciplinary teacher training, hire a coach, and expand learning time. The [2023 state education budget](#) was passed with a 25% increase in [per pupil funding](#). This additional funding helped the district sustain and expand its programming including adding three new CTE pathways. District leaders worked closely with teachers, families, the school board, and the Nevada Department of Education to develop and sustain these innovations.

White Pine has also engaged with the state around the need for clearer policy flexibility. District leaders see the innovation school designation under S.B. 460 as a potential tool for aligning local measurement systems with the broader goals of the Portrait of a Nevada Learner while maintaining consistency with statewide expectations.

White Pine’s experience illustrates how districts can use community-driven vision, coherent measurement systems, and strong engagement to create deeper learning opportunities. By grounding their work in what matters most to students and building structures that support meaningful evidence of learning, the district has positioned itself for success in Nevada’s evolving accountability landscape.

To learn more about White Pine County School District and their student-centered learning story, check out their [case study](#).

Continuing the Work

As you reach the end of the Nevada Innovation Guide, the next step is to consider what this work means for your learning community and how to take your best next step. Districts across Nevada are in different places in their work. Some are developing a shared vision for the first time, while others are piloting new instructional models, redesigning assessment systems, or expanding career-connected learning. The range of opportunities for innovation provides multiple entry points at which districts can take on student-centered learning. Innovative learning grows through iterative development, reflection, and alignment to local values.

The goal is not to implement everything at once. The goal is to identify the right entry point for your district and begin taking purposeful steps that reflect your community's aspirations for learners. Depending on your context, this may include:

- **Launching or refining a local portrait of a learner.** Districts beginning this work can start with the statewide [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) and consider how it aligns with local values. For districts with an existing portrait, this may be a moment to revisit or refresh it with community input.
- **Building educator capacity.** Some communities may choose to focus on professional learning, coaching or onboarding structures that support personalized teaching practices. Nevada's resources, especially those offered through the [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#), can help districts design coherent, competency-aligned, and professional learning.
- **Expanding or strengthening career pathways.** Districts may choose to explore partnerships with local industry, add new CTE programs, provide college-level coursework, or develop work-based learning experiences that connect to regional workforce needs.
- **Clarifying what to measure and how.** In a time of evolving accountability requirements, districts should focus on building data literacy, establishing local measures, or aligning improvement planning processes to their portrait of a learner.

Regardless of where a district begins, Nevada's most important resource for continuing this work is the [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#). The Network connects educators, districts, and community partners across the state who are engaged in personalized, competency-based learning. Through convenings, professional learning opportunities, implementation tools, and communities of practice the Network offers practical supports that help districts move from vision to action. Districts can join the Network at any stage and use it to accelerate planning, implementation, and continuous improvement. Districts are encouraged to:

- Participate in statewide and regional convenings hosted by the Network
- Engage with peers to learn from districts highlighted in this guide
- Utilize the Network's tools, including [competencies](#) and the [Activators Guide](#)
- Partner with families, learners and community stakeholders to design approaches that reflect local priorities

- Integrate continuous improvement cycles to examine progress and refine strategies over time

Nevada's shift toward transforming education is an ongoing, collaborative process. By choosing an entry point that aligns with local priorities, leveraging the support of the Nevada Future of Learning Network and taking steady, intentional steps, districts can build learning environments where every student is empowered, connected, impactful, and thriving.

References and Resources

Additional Resources

- [Nevada Department of Education Future of Learning Network Webpage](#)
- [Nevada Future of Learning Network Resources](#)
- [Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)

Statutes, Regulations, Recent Legislation of Interest

- [Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 232.965](#) et seq. - Creation through Program to provide work-based learning opportunities for certain pupils: Office to establish in coordination with Department of Education; requirements for program; dual credit for participating pupils
- [Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 389.160](#) - Credit toward graduation from high school for courses taken at community college, state college or university
- [Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 391A.370](#) - Teachers and administrators to have access to professional development training; standards and minimum requirements of training; professional development training concerning computer science and computer education and technology
- [Nev. Admin. Code 391.065](#) - Renewal of license: Educational and professional requirements; exception
- [Senate Bill 460](#) - Education Omnibus Bill