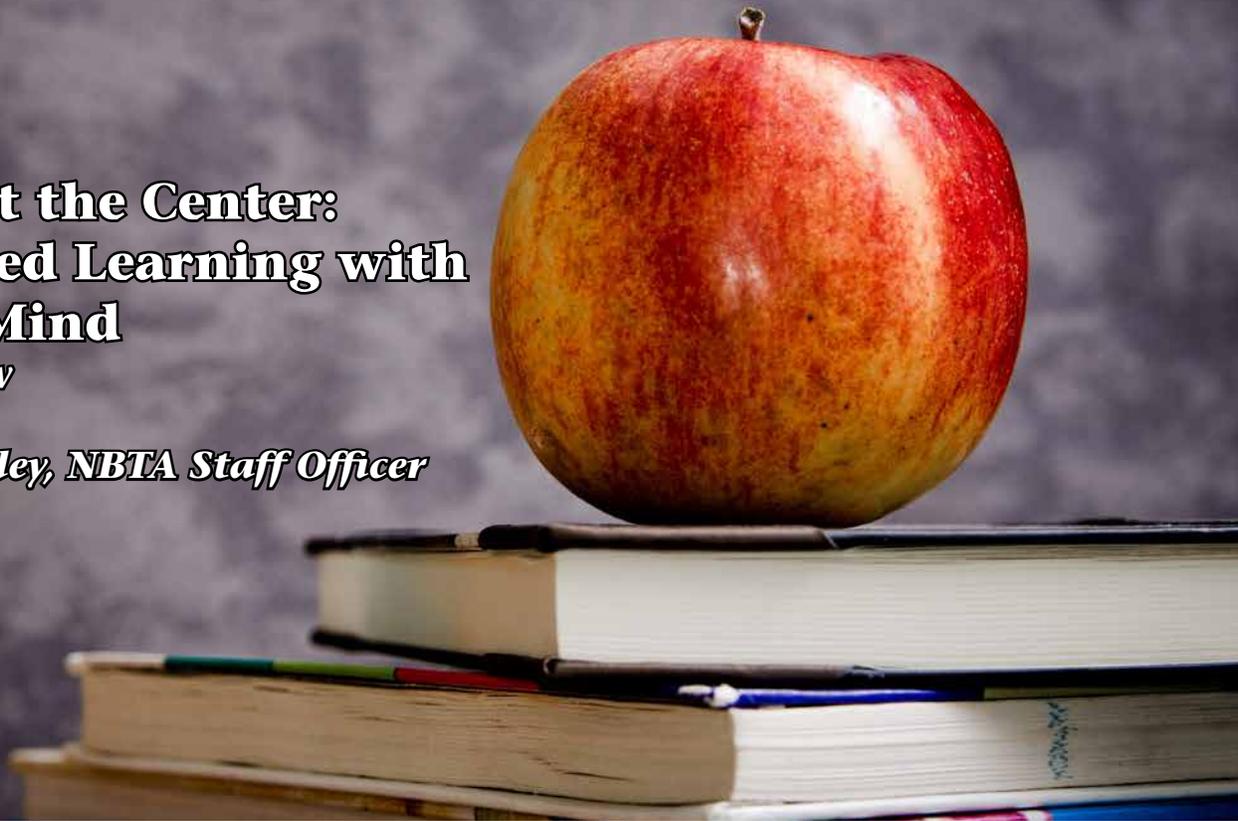


Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind

A Book Review

by Ardith Shirley, NBTA Staff Officer



I recently had the pleasure of representing NBTA at the Women's Symposium organized by the Canadian Teachers' Federation in Ottawa. While the Daughters of the Vote event was an amazing experience on its own (read more about that on page 24), my plane travel also allowed me the rare opportunity to read a book relatively uninterrupted.

To celebrate I packed *Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind* by Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda in my briefcase. It was an excellent choice!

Personalization is not a new term in education. A quick perusal of old educational journals in our NBTA archives confirms the use of 'personalized learning' over 20 years ago. I must confess to finding myself in a love/hate relationship with the term - depending on who is using it, and in what context, my reaction can range from one of hopeful optimism to critical disdain.

Perhaps that is why the authors caught my attention when in their preface they wrote: "*Personalized learning. It has become a popular, even jargonized term. If asked, most educators could offer some explanation of what it means to 'personalize learning'. In all likelihood, these explanations would differ widely.*" (p. xii)ⁱ

There it was in back and white - the root of my own personalization conundrum - when I find myself reacting with hopeful optimism, I am usually experiencing the term in the company and context of those who I believe share my vision

for public education. When I find myself reacting with critical disdain, I am usually unsure of the exact motivation, values and vision of those speaking the words. Herein lies the danger when we use jargonized educational terms. Do we take the time to really define what it is we actually mean so that we are able to have meaningful conversations based in professional trust and mutual respect that lead to true growth for all learners?

I began to realize that the authors just might be kindred spirits when in Chapter 2 they encouraged teachers to "clarify the degree to which your practice is already personalized - or moving in that direction" - by reflecting on the following four attributes and questions and thus further defining what 'personalized learning' actually meant to them:

Self-Reflection on the Four Attributes of Personalized Learningⁱⁱ

VOICE - Do you offer students an opportunity to voice their questions, concerns, or deeper thinking about the content of their work? Do you encourage them to interact with others as they respectfully agree or disagree with them? Do students see themselves as citizens in the learning spaces they inhabit?

CO-CREATION - Do you include students in designing the work they are engaging in? Do they actively shape their own goals, assessments, content and performance choices as co-

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designers with teachers and other experts in the field?

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION – Do students use the resourcefulness of others to give deeper meaning to their work? Do they interact with others who have more expertise in the field they are studying? Are they learning to collaborate with others to influence and improve their own thinking?

SELF-DISCOVERY – Are the students learning who they are as they actively engage as learners? Are they reflecting on what they learn and understanding how to transfer that learning to new situations? Are they becoming more aware and strategic about how they plan for, process, create and produce new ways of demonstrating their learning?

I further appreciated these questions for professional self – reflection given that they came on the heels of a reminder from Art Costa in the foreword: *‘There is no learning that is not personalized. Anything ‘learned’ must first be taken in through the senses, processed and understood in the mind and body, and emotionally charged and acted upon.’*ⁱⁱⁱ

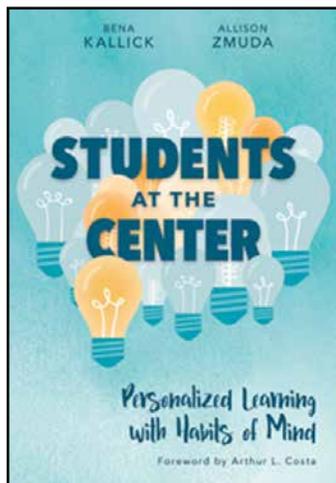
The authors challenge the idea of ‘personalized learning’ through seven very readable chapters of the book. For me, the Appendix *‘The Roles and Habits of Students and Teachers Within Personalized Learning’*, beautifully synthesized my understanding of what we, as educators, really hope to achieve in our more personalized classrooms by exploring seven identified key elements and linking them to Art Costa’s related



Book Give-Away!

Congratulations to Linda Lapointe of Bath Community School in ASD-W who was the winner of our January Book draw! This month’s draw is for a copy of the book highlighted in my article - *Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind* by Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda including a foreword by Arthur Costa.

Sound interesting? Send me an email with ‘Book Draw’ the subject line sometime before May 15th.



Habits of Mind. Here are the seven elements to provide you a teaser:

1. Goals – What are our desired results?
2. Inquiry/Idea Generation – What about the topic sparks you thinking? What is worth pursuing?
3. Task and Audience – How does audience shape creation and communication?
4. Evaluation – How is performance evaluated on a given task using criteria?
5. Cumulative Demonstration of Learning – How do we show evidence of learning over time?
6. Instructional Plan – What does designing a learning plan look like?
7. Feedback – How does feedback promote growth?

All in all, if exploring the idea of ‘personalized learning’ is a professional goal, Kallick and Zmuda’s book won’t disappoint!

May I recommend?

The online study guide for this resource can be found at: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/117015/chapters/An-ASCD-Study-Guide-for-Students-at-the-Center@-Personalized-Learning-with-Habits-of-Mind.aspx>

Let’s Celebrate Personalization: But Not Too Fast by Carol Ann Tomlinson appears in the March 2017 issue of Educational Leadership. She reminds us that asking crucial questions about implementing personalized learning will help capture its power for a unique context. Certainly worth a read! (<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar17/vol74/num06/Let’s-Celebrate-Personalization@-But-Not-Too-Fast.aspx>)



Works Cited:

ⁱKallick & Zmuda (p. xii)

ⁱⁱKallick & Zmuda (p. 29-30)

ⁱⁱⁱKallick & Zmuda (p. ix)

^{iv}Found online at <https://www.edelements.com/quotes-about-personalized-learning-and-more/personalized-learning-doesnt-invite-us-to-ask-students-to-pilot-the-plane.-instead-we-might>

Closing Quote:

(Perhaps the fact that I was on a plane when reading the book may have influenced this month’s quote choice?)

“Personalized Learning doesn’t invite us to ask students to pilot the plane. Instead we might invite students to our ‘frequent flyer program’ – giving them greater choice and rewards over where and how they travel.” Janice Vargo^{iv}

