

CONNECT: *Making Learning Personal*

Reports from the Field by the League of Innovators

Personalized Learning in the Virgin Islands: Personalized Learning Academy

Robert Sullivan

Center on Innovations in Learning

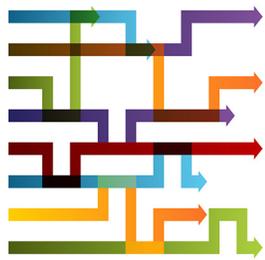
If you're looking for a superb example of National Content Centers, a Regional Comprehensive Center, and state- and district-level departments of education working together to improve learning outcomes for students, you need look no further than the year-long Personalized Learning Academy held in the St. Thomas/St. John School District (STTJ School District), Virgin Islands.

In January 2016, Sharon Ann McCollum, commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), began meeting for three days each month with selected VIDE district and school leaders to formulate a strategic direction for the future of education in the U.S. Virgin Islands. In these discussions, they sought the assistance of the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP Center), a National Content Center, and the Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center (FLICC), a Regional Comprehensive Center. VIDE's strategic direction—including a vision statement, mission, values, goals, strategies, and milestones—is the foundation for VIDE's bold move into performance management as a way to improve the quality and responsiveness of education for all children and youth throughout the territory. According to McCollum, "The BSCP staff have provided us direction in examining our practices and day-to-day operations. We have clearly defined our vision, mission and goals. Now our new performance system will optimize our personnel's effectiveness and place individuals in positions that will align with our goals and their skill sets."

On June 9–11, 2016, division leaders met to begin developing action plans aimed at the strategy-aligned milestones. VIDE's performance management system, rooted in its new strategic direction, went into full effect on July 1, 2016, with every person in VIDE working toward annual, strategy-aligned milestones. Unit leaders met in July to complete the action plans. The online planning and reporting system of the BSCP Center's Strategic Performance Management

This field report is the tenth in a series produced by the Center on Innovations in Learning's League of Innovators. The series describes, discusses, and analyzes policies and practices that enable personalization in education. Issues of the series will present either issue briefs or, like this one, field reports on lessons learned by practitioners recounting the successes and obstacles to success encountered in implementing personalized learning.

Neither the issue briefs nor the field reports attempt to present in-depth reviews of the research; for those resources readers are encouraged to access the Center on Innovations in Learning's resource database. Topics should be of particular interest to state education agencies and district and school personnel.



process was designed to track progress while encouraging collaborative teams to consider innovative ways to achieve better results more efficiently.

In the summer of 2016, VIDE published its **Blueprint for Action**, the first item being personalized learning. According to the blueprint, “The Internet, learning technologies, and advances in learning science enable us to focus on each student’s education as never before. The research literature describes strategies to truly personalize learning, adapt instruction, apply learning analytics, tap into each student’s interests and aspirations, enrich the curriculum, target supports, and design learning pathways suited to each student. The VIDE is embracing this exciting work, focusing on building a strong foundation in reading instruction first (Goal 1), and supporting educators, students, families and the community in personalizing learning for all students (Goal 2). Of course, personalization is much more than technology; it is adapting instruction for each student, building each student’s personal competencies, and engaging with each student’s aspirations.”

After Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth Mapp endorsed VIDE’s new strategic direction, which calls for more personalized learning in its schools, VIDE and FLICC contacted the National Content Center with true expertise in personalized learning, the Center on Innovations in Learning (CIL). Sam Redding, CIL’s senior learning specialist, joined in planning the personalized learning implementation with the FLICC team of Alice Lindsay, Allison Layland, April Munro-Phillips, and Sue Travilla; the VIDE team of Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Jeuné Provost, Kifani Hendricks-Carey; and a team of district math and language coordinators. The integration of personalized learning methods into every classroom is a goal of VIDE’s strategic plans, developed with the BSCP Center and FLICC.

Rolling Out the Academy

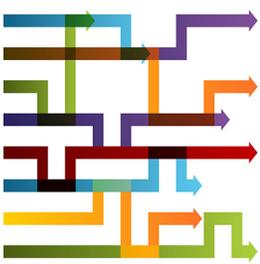
The strategic planning culminated with the Personalized Learning Academy rollout on October 3–5, 2016, as Janet Twyman, CIL’s Director of Innovation and Technology, and Mark Williams, who provides expertise to CIL in career and technical education and personal competencies—in conjunction with FLICC’s Alice Lindsay, Allison Layland, April

Munroe-Phillips, and Sue Travilla—provided three days of training for VIDE and STTJ School District personnel to implement personalized learning.



Education specialist Maureen Richel demonstrates teaching strategies that incorporate personalized learning approaches and prepares the personalized learning trainers to provide teachers with responsive feedback.

At the October “Train the Trainers” event, district reading specialists and department heads from St. Thomas and St. John were trained to be personalized learning trainers and to work with teachers. These personalized learning trainers, in turn, would be training and coaching 606 teachers. The trainers learned about what personalization means: a teacher’s relationships



with students and their families, and the use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student’s learning and enhance the student’s personal competencies (cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, social/emotional). Personalized learning varies the time, place, and pace of learning for each student; enlists the student in

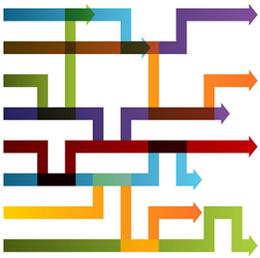
the creation of learning pathways; and utilizes technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information. Ultimately, because learning is personalized for every student, teachers reach each student in different ways, fitting the students’ needs and aspirations.

The personalized learning trainers learned how to integrate three critical personalized learning components: personal competencies, competency-based education, and learning technologies. They learned that the four personal competencies—which often seem below the surface but are in fact “propellants of learning”—are cognitive (what I know), metacognitive (how I learn), motivational (why I learn), and social/emotional (how I relate). They were instructed that competency-based education involves transitioning away from seat time to a flexible structure that allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery; and that students can and should have an active voice in knowing when they are ready to move on, and knowing when they have mastered content or a skill. And they learned that personalized learning is made practical by learning technologies that: support individualized instruction, increase the range and possibilities of instructional content; organize and help individualize curricular content; facilitate differentiation; open vast and diverse avenues of learning; provide ongoing measures, and ultimately confirm mastery; and assist with communication and shared awareness. The session also included orientation on CIL’s *Lesson Design Studio*, an online platform for creating daily lesson plans and for enhancing them with a variety of personalized learning strategies through its *Enhanced Lesson Design* feature. ADI program consultant Bob Goodrich programmed the Lesson Design Studio.

Throughout the training session, the personalized learning trainers were given various exercises to perform. In one exercise, they were given 5 minutes to read a fictitious story about Jeffrey, a high school junior in Ms. Johnson’s American history class whose mind tends to wander and who seems unmotivated. The teacher finds a way to connect a lesson on the Civil War to things that have happened in Jeffrey’s own family. After reading the story, the personalized learning trainers were given the opportunity to discuss three questions: What did Ms. Johnson see in Jeffrey? What did she do to develop Jeffrey as a learner? In what ways did she personalize learning for Jeffrey?

Other discussions involved such questions as: If what teachers do has such a large impact on student learning, what should teachers reliably be doing? Are there any instructional strategies that you know of or use that typically work across all learners, regardless of age, level, or subject matter? Do you believe there are strategies and tactics that research has shown to be pretty reliable when done well (implemented with fidelity)?

Near the end of the session, the personalized learning trainers were told that, during future sessions, they would be studying three specific instructional strategies known to improve student learning and to personalize learning—active student responding (choral



responding, response cards, guided notes), learning pictures (student graphs), and technology to personalize learning, increase engagement, and view learning (e.g., Kahoot)—as well as go deeper into understanding the four personal competencies and how any lesson could be enhanced by including a personal competency indicator.



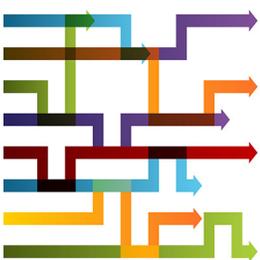
Mark Williams leads the participants through a discussion of ways to integrate personal competencies into teachers' lesson designs, focusing on motivational and social/emotional competencies.

Interim Webinar Training

In October and November 2016, teams from CIL and FLICC continued to support implementation of the Personalized Learning Academy in the Virgin Islands by presenting two webinar training sessions to the VIDE personalized learning trainers, to help them build their expertise in personalized learning, classroom strategies, and the launch of the Lesson Design Studio. The Lesson Design Studio allows teachers to create lessons that incorporate personalized learning strategies and personal competency indicators, and share them online with other teachers and administrators. On October 21, 2016, all STTJ School District personnel were made aware of what personalized learning is and how it would be implemented in the district through overview training by the personalized learning trainers. On that same day, the first webinar, entitled **Intro to Lesson Design Studio**, was led by Mark Williams and Sam Redding.

Williams began the webinar, "I'm eager for this opportunity to demonstrate to you the rollout of our Lesson Design Studio." The online session included a brief review of the instructional modes covered during the face-to-face session earlier that month, and then covered the basics of creating a lesson design within the system. By the end of the online session, participants were able to define and describe instructional modes; knew the elements of a basic lesson design; were able to write a learning objective for a lesson that included learning/behavior, condition, and criteria for mastery; and understood how to use the Lesson Design Studio online.

The second webinar, held on November 2, 2016, and entitled **Lesson Design Studio**, was led by Mark Williams, Sam Redding, Allison Layland, and April Munro-Phillips, plus Marilyn Murphy, CIL's director, and Pam Sheley, CIL's project manager for the Virgin Islands Personalized Learning Academy. The presentation included Mark Williams offering a brief overview of the slides from the October session that introduced basic lesson design, then giving a brief run-through of the lesson design system. Layland explained how to take information from the lesson design system to put into the teacher peer feedback forms. And finally the personalized learning trainers were given the opportunity to log into the system and manipulate the pages. In November, selected personalized learning teacher teams in each school were trained in personalized learning instructional strategies



and lesson design by the personalized learning trainers.

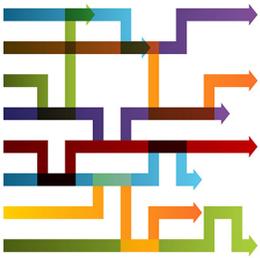
On December 29, 2016, Allison Layland and Sam Redding recorded a discussion on *Using the Lesson Plan Feedback Form*.

Layland began, “I was just reviewing a teacher’s lesson using our new Lesson Design Studio Feedback Form, and I had a couple of questions about the lesson and how I’m reviewing it. So I was wondering if I could just run by you a couple of things as we walk through the form, and I can tell you what my thinking was behind the scoring that I gave.” Redding replied, “That’d be great. I’ve been working on some of these, too, so it would be a great opportunity for me to learn a little bit and to see how we compare in looking at these lesson designs and making comments on them. That’d be great; let’s go.”

The Second On-Site Training Session

Prior to the February 2017 training session, Marilyn Murphy, Janet Twyman, and Maureen Richel travelled to Lincoln, Illinois, to join Pam Sheley, Mark Williams, and Sam Redding, in order to plan the remaining face-to-face training sessions as well as evaluate the current state of the project. On February 1 and 2, at the second on-site training session, the CIL team returned to the Virgin Islands, joined by Allison Layland and Sue Travilla from FLICC, and provided advanced training for the personalized learning trainers. This time the schools’ principals also participated in the training. Maureen Richel, a CIL consultant, joined the CIL team of Mark Williams and Janet Twyman to conduct the training. Racquel Berry-Benjamin, the district’s deputy superintendent, explained to the principals and trainers where the district was headed in full implementation of personalized learning and lesson design by fall 2017. Materials from this training session are available on the website, at <<http://www.centeril.org/placademy/>>.

After the February training session, St. Thomas/St. John superintendent, Dionne Wells-Hedrington, posted a video setting the expectations for the remainder of the school year. The video can be seen by visiting the Personalized Learning Academy page at <<http://www.centeril.org/placademy/>> and, in the **Virgin Islands 2016–2017 MATERIALS** box, clicking on “Message from Superintendent.” In the video, the superintendent begins, “The St. Thomas/St. John District has a great opportunity to build a custom lesson plan library, where teachers can create personalized learning lessons. In an effort to give teachers the necessary time to learn the program, we have given you the time to use the system before full implementation in the fall of 2017. As such, it is mandatory that all teachers by June 1, 2017 submit three basic design plans in the Lesson Design Studio and a reflection for each lesson, provide feedback to one teacher in the system, and enhance one lesson with personalized learning strategies.” All 606 teachers in the district would create three lessons in Lesson Design Studio and enhance one of them. The teachers would request a review of one of their designs from a colleague, using the Peer Feedback Form. This work will result in all teachers being familiar with the online system and the personalized learning lesson design, so that in the fall of 2017 the system will be fully adopted by the district. On February 23, 2017, the personalized learning trainers provided a full day of training for all the teachers in all of the district’s 15 schools.



The Third On-Site Training Session

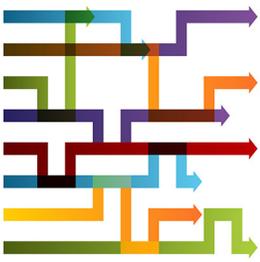
Before the March training sessions, the personalized learning trainers were given user names, passwords, and a page where they could log in: <http://www.adi.org/eld/Login.aspx>. Also from the sign-in page one can download the PowerPoint presentations “Introduction to Lesson Design Studio” and “Basics of Lesson Design: Objectives,” and the Word documents “2017 Objectives and Timeline” and “Peer Feedback Form.” And there is a link (“LDS Manual”) to the *Lesson Design Studio User Manual*.

On March 28 and 29, 2017, the CIL team joined its FLICC partners for the third on-site training session. The focus of the March training session was enhanced lesson design, which included both a review of the critical components of personalized learning lesson plans and how to provide quality reflective feedback. Participants learned about further enhancing lessons by infusing the personal competencies of motivation and social/emotional competency (building upon the personal competencies of cognition and metacognition from the second training session), and also engaged in data gathering on the lessons entered thus far. The Session 3 photos, available from the [Personalized Learning Academy page](#), show a lively session, with Janet Twyman capturing ideas from the group on how to strengthen lesson planning and support personalized learning strategies in St. Thomas/St John School District schools; Mark Williams leading the participants through a discussion of ways to integrate personal competencies into teachers’ lesson design, focusing on motivational and social/emotional competencies; and Maureen Richel demonstrating teaching strategies that incorporate personalized learning approaches, and preparing the personalized learning trainers to provide teachers with responsive feedback.

In response to the third training session, all 606 teachers—who had been provided logins for the online basic lesson design system—have been trained on the system and have implemented three lesson designs, one of which was peer-reviewed. By April 15, all teachers had enhanced one lesson with a personal competency indicator, with support from principals, assistant principals, department heads, and reading specialists. By May 15, all teachers had taught the three lessons they have entered into the Lesson Design Studio, entering their reflections after teaching the lessons.



At the third “Train the Trainers” event in March, CIL’s Janet Twyman captures ideas from the group on how to strengthen lesson planning and support personalized learning strategies in St. Thomas/St. John School District schools.



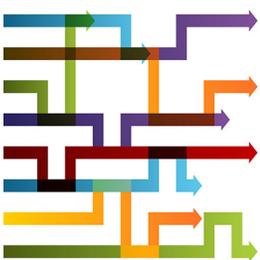
The Final On-Site Training Session

On June 5 and 6, 2017, the CIL team and its FLICC partners returned to St. Thomas for the school year's final on-site technical assistance activity, with district leadership, the district professional development program manager, district coordinators, principals, assistant principals, department heads, and reading specialists in attendance. CIL designed this activity as a practical implementation from theory to practice, with the anticipated outcome of high-level impact on practice. Great attention was paid to the outcome competencies which were the framework at the inception of the Academy. The following competency outcomes guided the scope and sequence for learning activities over the two-day training: (1) Will be able to describe personalized learning, its research, and instructional practices; (2) Will be able to describe and demonstrate quality lesson design; (3) Will be able to demonstrate the use of Lesson Design Studio; (4) Will be able to communicate expectations for use of Lesson Design Studio; (5) Will be able to describe and demonstrate three specific instructional strategies to support personalized learning; and (6) Will be able to describe and demonstrate how teachers can enhance a lesson with personal competency indicators.

To satisfy, strengthen, and solidify the learning targets, Maureen Richel began the first day with a “sweet” exploration of leadership styles via a Hershey Chocolate Miniature activity. Participants revisited a learning technology using Padlet to review and shore up common personalized learning vocabulary, followed by a self-check utilizing the glossary of a resource provided by CIL: *Personal Competency: A Framework for Building Students' Capacity to Learn*. The bulk of the day was spent using that book to take a deeper dive into the four personal competency areas. Because classroom teachers accompanied some of the reading specialists, Mark Williams and Maureen Richel made a presentation entitled “Why the Teacher Will Always Matter” — a presentation which included a viewing of Sam Redding's video on that topic, found in another CIL resource, *INNOpod 1: Personalized Learning; The Basics*. Janet Twyman concluded the first day with a session on “Lesson Design, Delivery, and Feedback.”

The second day's highlights included engaging participants in a close reading-and-writing activity led by Richel; a technical enhancement overview by Williams; a revisit with Twyman on how to graph learning which serves to increase student engagement and ownership; and a resources-and-tools scavenger hunt led by CIL director Marilyn Murphy; and concluded with next-step planning for the expansion of personalized learning in the 2017–2018 school year. With this year's objective met—all teachers familiar with enhanced lesson design and the integration of personalized learning methods into their teaching—the district will be ready to expand the use of the lesson design studio in the fall. To access the Personalized Learning Academy's resources, tools, and strategies, and to view pictures of the team in action, please visit <www.centeril.org/placademy/>.

This year-long Personalized Learning Academy pilot project has provided a number of valuable lessons; educators at the state and district level were able to share in the personalized learning expertise of the national and regional centers while being given a platform on which they could bring their knowledge to fruition—bringing personalized learning to *all* of their students—while the national and regional centers were given a



valuable opportunity to field-test the roll-out of the Lesson Design Studio.

Be sure to check out the full catalogue of materials that are currently posted online at <<http://www.centeril.org/placademy/>>.

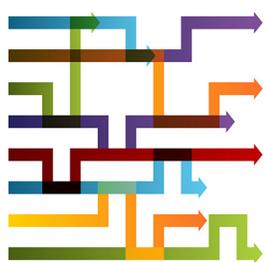
Some Team Reflections

Reflecting on VIDE's needs and experience, in a recent interview, VIDE team member Dionne Wells-Hedrington said, "We developed an interest in finding an online platform that would be easily accessible and user friendly for our teachers. The goal was to use the lesson design to upload our existing lesson plans, and provide training to our teachers on the instructional modes that should be used in their planning – but more importantly to ensure that they develop lessons that meet the needs of ALL students (tiered system). This lesson design allows us to closely track data, and the district has the ability to look at lesson planning holistically. These plans can be accessed by all, and the database allows for them to be saved. We are delighted to be a part of this initiative. Thank you to the center for partnering with us."

VIDE team member Jeuné Provost said, "Dr. Redding and the team have been working extremely hard with us here in the Virgin Islands. We are truly appreciative of their support. The St. Thomas-St. John district of the VIDE chose personalized learning because we understood the importance of changing current practices in order to move to a student-centered approach to teaching and learning in the district. We knew we could increase student achievement by providing meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers to learn best practices around developing learning experiences for students through thoughtful lesson design. Personalized learning is a holistic approach to education that we knew needed to embrace to see our students grow. It has been a powerful and challenging journey but we are excited about the changes that we know will improve the quality of education in our schools."

CIL's Mark Williams was particularly appreciative of the reception the CIL team received. "I have been grateful for the warm hospitality, the attentiveness and sincerity of the Virgin Islands leadership and reading specialists, and how together we are showing how simple and practical it is to personalize learning. Good teachers know how important they are to the learning of students, and hold themselves to the same high standards of learning that they hold for their students."

CIL's Pam Sheley summed it up particularly well when she said, "The story of the work of CIL in the Virgin Islands can be reduced to the cells on an Excel spreadsheet outlining the goals, TA assistance, and outcomes expected, as can any project. Yet these cells do not begin to tell the 'real story' or the 'personal' of what goes on in any project. Relationships in the Virgin Islands were established through the work of the FLICC staff, and later through interactions with Sam Redding and his work with the Strategic Performance Management process. Trust is built over time and experience. The work with the Personalized Learning Academy was able to take off on firm footing because those relationships and that trust were in place. As with any good TA assistance, there is planning, there is listening, and then there are adjustments. CIL, FLICC, and VIDE mastered this intricate dance so that the best of all involved is brought to the table to ensure professional practices are elevated and students in the Virgin Islands benefit."



Who's Who in the Personalized Learning Academy

Racquel Berry-Benjamin is the deputy superintendent of the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

Bob Goodrich is a computer programmer. He was hired by Sam Redding to create a web-based user-friendly application that would put into a workable concept Redding's list of indicators of best practices to become a successful educator, as outlined in the book Redding co-wrote, *Handbook on Statewide Systems of Support*. The resulting application is Indistar.

Kifani Hendricks-Carey is VIDE's District Director of the State Office of Curriculum and Instruction. The team's goal was to begin to develop the specific rollout plan for a year-long Personalized Learning Academy in the Virgin Islands.

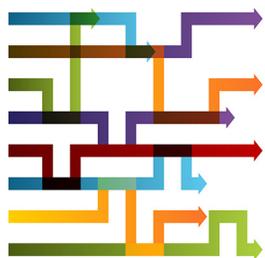
Allison Layland is a FLICC education specialist, with more than 20 years of teaching experience in both general and special education. Most recently, she provided leadership and technical assistance at district and state levels in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Colorado in the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, focusing on data-based decision making, systems reform, adolescent literacy, effective coaching, and leadership skills.

Alice Lindsay is FLICC's director, providing management oversight of projects conducted in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. She has over 30 years of experience in public education and has served as a teacher, reading specialist, program evaluator, and principal. Her skills include project planning, educator preparation, and redressing low-performing schools.

Kenneth Mapp is the 29th Governor of the United States Virgin Islands. He received a master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and completed other fellowships at Harvard University and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

Sharon Ann McCollum, commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Education, is a New Orleans native with a bachelor's degree in sociology from Southern University and A&M College, a master's in sociology from the University of California–Davis, and a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Southern Mississippi.

April Munro-Phillips – as the Virgin Islands state manager with FLICC – is eager to facilitate the work of FLICC in building VIDE's capacity to promote student success. She brings over 30 years of educational experience across the continuum of pre-K to postsecondary institutions, with a focus on early learning success working with young children, parents, community and government agencies, educators, post-secondary students, and policymakers.



Marilyn Murphy is the director of CIL at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA.

Jeuné Provost is the Program Manager for Professional Development in the STTJ School District, and one of 12 recipients of a prestigious 2016 Fellowship from the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes in Fort Scott, Kansas, an international educational nonprofit.

Sam Redding draws on his experiences as a teacher, dean, administrator, and author to bring his own combination of leadership, wisdom, and innovative thinking to the CIL team. He co-edited CIL's Handbook on Innovations in Learning and Handbook on Personalized Learning for States, Districts and Schools; and his webinar Keeping the Personal in Personalized Learning and his monograph, Through the Student's Eyes: A Perspective on Personalized Learning—a practice guide for teachers—are freely available for downloading. In addition to his role at CIL, he has served as the executive director of the Academic Development Institute (ADI) since 1984.

Maureen Richel is an Education Specialist for CIL who, prior to joining the Indistar team, had the privilege of serving K–12 students and teachers for over 36 years as a classroom teacher, reading diagnostician/interventionist.

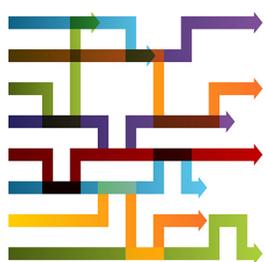
Pam Sheley is ADI's executive vice president, and has authored and co-authored several chapters in various publications and contributes to the Wise Ways® research briefs for Indistar®, an online school improvement application.

Sue Travilla is a consultant with FLICC, working on the creation and implementation of the Strategic Performance Management Plan and the Title V Consolidated Grant in the Virgin Islands.

Janet Twyman wrote the chapter “Personalizing Learning Through Precision Measurement” for the Handbook on Personalized Learning for States, Districts, and Schools. For over a decade, she has worked at the forefront of merging evidence-based educational methods with new and emerging technologies, including selecting technologies that incorporate adaptive instructional systems to support personalized learning.

Dionne Wells-Hedrington is the Insular Superintendent of Schools in the STTJ School District.

Mark Williams is the vice president for institutional advancement at CIL's partner organization, the Academic Development Institute (ADI), where he is responsible for working with state and district partners to provide research, training, and tools for leadership and supervision of rapid district and school improvement.



Connect: Making Learning Personal



The **League of Innovators**, a network of state education agency and Regional Comprehensive Center personnel with an interest in learning innovations, is organized and administered by the **Center on Innovations in Learning**.

The **Center on Innovations in Learning (CIL)** is a national content center established to work with regional comprehensive centers and state education agencies (SEA) to build SEAs' capacity to stimulate, select, implement, and scale up innovations in learning. In partnership with the Academic Development Institute (ADI), Lincoln, Illinois, the Center on Innovations in Learning is affiliated with Temple University College of Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), under the comprehensive centers program, Award # S283B120052-12A. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

©2017 Center on Innovations in Learning, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA