AURORA INSTITUTE

SYMPOSIUM BREAKOUT SESSION
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022 | 12:00-1:00 PM ET

The Bridge From Policy to Practice: Empowering Districts to Take Advantage of State Policy Flexibilities

PRESENTERS:

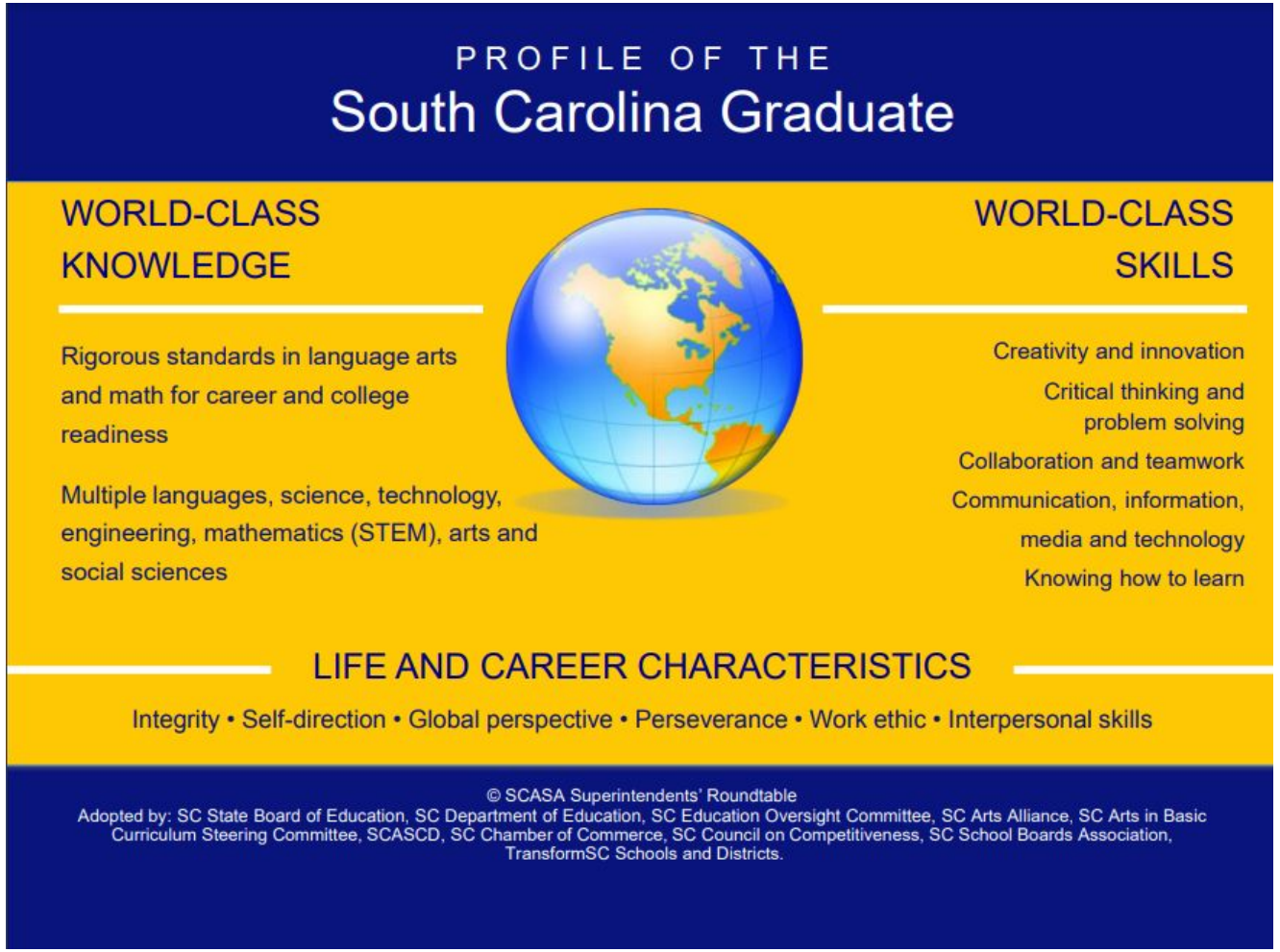
- Stephanie DiStasio, South Carolina Department of Education
- Sarah Bishop-Root, On behalf of work completed at ExcelinEd
- Jon Alfuth, KnowledgeWorks

Stephanie DiStasio

Director
Office of Personalized Learning

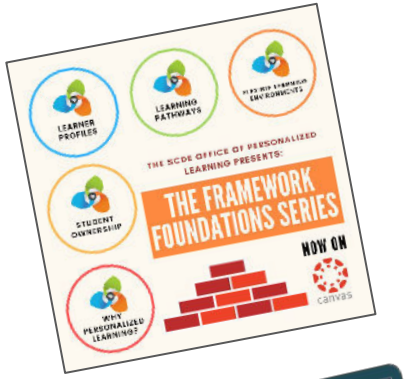
South Carolina Department of Education

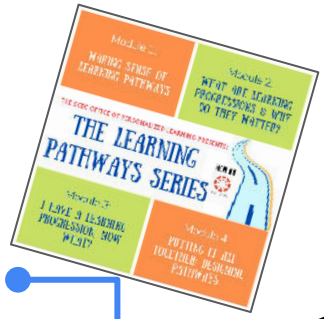
How It Started…

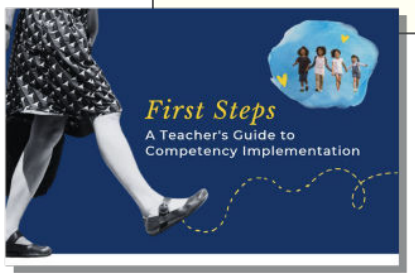


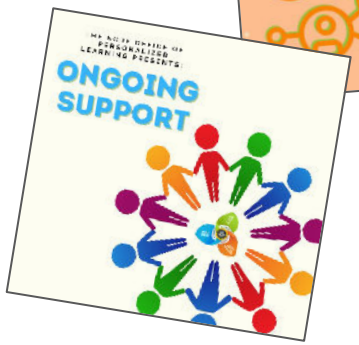
What We Built

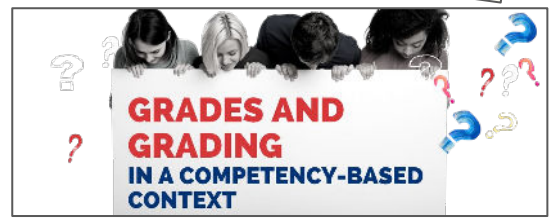
- Free, online self-paced individual and team supports
- In-Person Design Workshop Opportunities
- One-on-one and team based support provided by regional SCDE Office of Personalized Learning Coaches







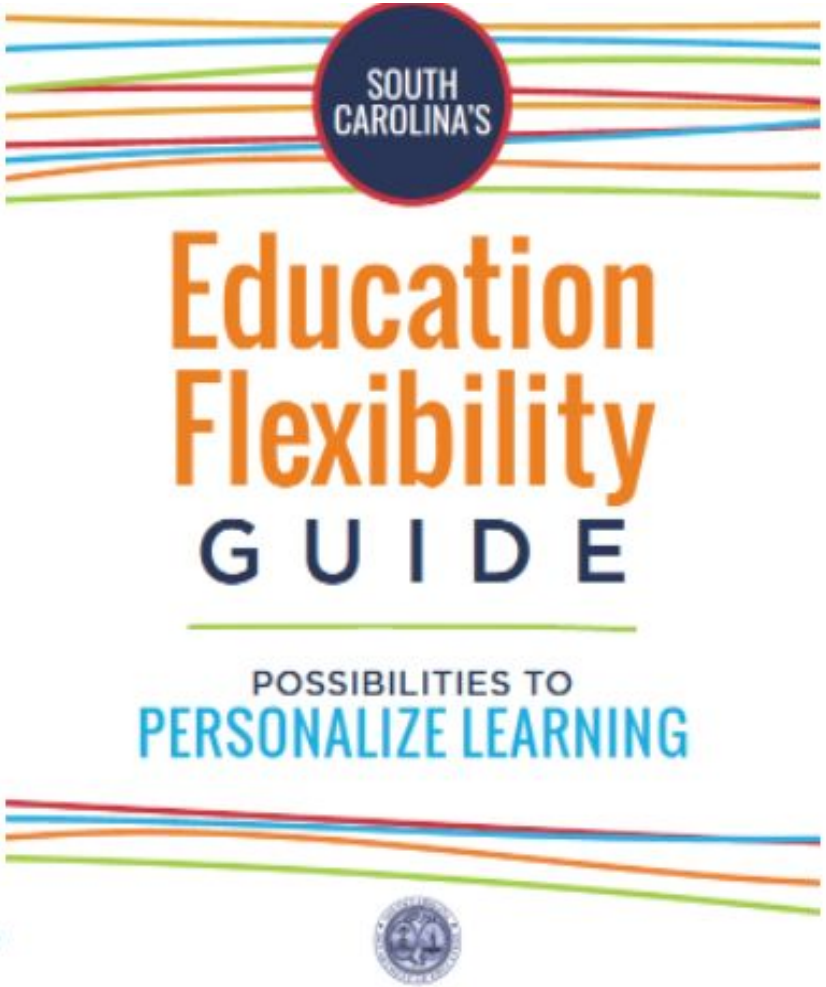




Barriers To System Change: Real or Perceived?

- Revise existing applications
- Identify specific statutes or regulations preventing implementation
- Name primary, leading, and long term indicators of success

To Better Support Districts:



- Engaged external partners
- Networked with colleagues from other states
- Created a cross-agency team to revise internal processes

Sarah Bishop-Root

On behalf of work completed as Policy Director of Next Generation Learning, ExcelinEd

The Challenge

- National research shows that far more flexibility exists to design and implement innovative student-centered approaches, but there is a lack of awareness within districts and schools.
- Available flexibilities need to be leveraged in order to create a feedback loop for policymakers.

The Solution

- Education flexibility guides create an inventory and communicates education flexibilities that can be leveraged for student-centered learning.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S

Education Flexibility GUIDE

POSSIBILITIES TO PERSONALIZE LEARNING

3

Flexibility-Focused Pathways TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

South Carolina offers many opportunities for local districts and schools to make their own decisions about what is best for their students, several of which are highlighted in Section 4. Where specific action is required or design decisions are prescribed by the state, two types of flexibility might provide space for local innovation — innovation that can be pursued through a variety of entry points or pathways.

Flexibility within State Statutes and Regulations

This type of flexibility may be exercised without the need for approval by the State Board of Education (SBE), State Superintendent, or the SCDE, subject to conditions or other requirements prescribed in statute or regulation. It is generally not time-limited, though may be subsequently changed or eliminated through state action. This flexibility includes:

- **OPTIONS –** These are often established as explicit permission or authorization for a specific local action (as opposed to, or sometimes in concert with, a mandate), in addition to local decision-making authority delegated to district and school leaders.
- **ALTERNATIVES –** Some requirements establish a general rule or default approach, while specifying one or more different approaches available in certain circumstances.
- **EXEMPTIONS –** In some circumstances, a district or school that meets certain criteria is relieved of the obligation to comply with the requirement.

Flexibility Subject to State Approval

This type of flexibility is based on a waiver of (or exemption from) state requirements and is only available by request, and subject to compliance with established criteria and/or conditions. This flexibility includes:

- **LEGISLATIVE MANDATE WAIVERS –** In certain circumstances, the SBE may waive requirements established in South Carolina laws.
- **ADMINISTRATIVE RULE WAIVERS –** In certain circumstances, the SBE may waive requirements established in a rule of the SCDE.

The recently amended statutory authority allowing for the designation of Schools of Innovation offers local boards and districts an expansive opportunity for flexibility that includes the possible waiver of many requirements of state statute and regulation. *See* Section 4 for information on Schools of Innovation. Other waiver requests are facilitated by the SCDE Office of Federal and State Accountability. Districts must submit a request using the SCDE Online Waiver Form.

District Pathways to Personalized Learning

Two schools in the state provide examples of the ways in which districts can take advantage of this flexibility that is offered by the state through waivers – North Charleston High School and Meeting Street.

NORTH CHARLESTON HIGH SCHOOL

In 2021, North Charleston High School was granted a School of Innovation waiver to transform instruction through professional development and collaboration. This waiver allows North Charleston High School to have *"greater autonomy to create more innovative, engaging, and flexible ways of educating students"* in exchange for improving student outcomes.[3] This high school's waiver application specifies how they will use the PSCG to redesign their programs and transform instruction. This school will do the following:

*"**Empower Student Influencers through Student Think Tanks and the following:***

- *Students will facilitate sessions during student and teacher conferences.*
- *Use the characteristics to identify acceleration students and influencers.*
- *Build the capacity of student leaders by identifying students who already exhibit the characteristics of the Profile of a S.C. Graduate in order to help build the capacity schoolwide.*

Empower all learners through the following strategies:

- *Infuse World-Class Skills and Life and Career Characteristics into the curriculum, so students and teachers collaborate to reflect on their strengths and areas of growth as they master state standards.*
- *Create Individual Learner Profiles that track mastery of standards as well as World-Class Skills and Life and Career Characteristics.*
- *Allow students to have more opportunities to engage with experts in the community. This will support students in building these characteristics and get feedback from mentors.*
- *Foster learning agency through goal setting, student voice, and student choice. o Ensure each student is partnered with a trusted adult to build Academic Skills, World-Class Skills, and Life and Career Characteristics."*

MEETING STREET ACADEMY

Meeting Street Academy in Spartanburg District 7 is a 2021 Blue Ribbon School. Meeting Street Academy is a public-private partnership school, operating as a public school by serving students in a particular attendance area and taking advantage of District 7 operational services. This school also follows regulations created by the SCDE and requires students to take all state-mandated assessments. This school does, however, provide for specific flexibility in several ways. For example, the school uses waivers from the SCDE for the hiring of educators and the school operates on an extended day and year calendar. The school is also given flexibility to create its own curriculum and make changes of the curriculum to best serve students. This school notes that through *"additional resources and educational flexibility... MSA and District 7 can leverage the power of partnership to serve South Carolina's students in strategic and innovative ways."* [Meeting Street. Defining a Public-Private Partnership]

Jon Alfuth

Senior Director of State policy

KnowledgeWorks

KnowledgeWorks

Our Work With South Carolina

- Several years of ongoing work
- Began in early 2022, built on flex guide
- Current Focus: Help schools and districts better understand how they can **translate policy into practice**

Proficiency-Based Systems Application

KnowledgeWorks

What Is It?

- Award **course credit** in a “proficiency-based system”
- Awarded for school-based or community education experiences
- Districts must:
  - **Submit a plan** to the State Department of Ed
  - **Establish methods** for evaluating proficiency
  - Meet **academic standards**

Challenges

- Challenge: Narrow use by districts

- Underlying issues:
  - Narrow application that focused on credit recovery
  - Lack of information on options
  - Missing concrete examples of what's possible

Solution: Design a **broader, clearer and more expansive application**

Design Process

Process for developing new application:

- 50-state survey
- Collect and test new ideas
- Create a draft
- Engage focus groups
- Incorporate feedback and finalize the application

Focus Group Process

- Focus group process
- Questions tested the following:
  - Prior knowledge around the flexibility
  - Ease of use
  - Clarity around processes
  - Areas where clarity was needed
  - Fit into strategic visioning
  - Metrics for success
- Feedback leveraged to improve the application

Reflections & Next Steps

Next steps and reflections:

- To be published in the coming months
- Value from other states, focus groups
- Integration into broader SC tool set

Questions?

Part 2: Innovation Playbook

KnowledgeWorks

The Challenges

- Problem statement: Schools and districts motivated to pursue transformation, **unclear what it looks like**
- Struggle to **identify a clear direction** or the **path to get there**
- Overwhelmed/confused by **range of flexibilities offered**
- Status quo: Pockets of innovation, but **not widespread change**

Solution: Create a “playbook” that provides **concrete, diverse examples connected to policy flexibilities** to help learning communities envision what they could do!

What's In It

What's in the playbook:

- Describing what **personalized learning** is
- How to **use the playbook**
- How to **decide where to start**
- Five **entry-points** for schools and/or districts
- Tips for **how to progress from policies to practice**, additional resources

Entry Point Topic Areas

Five entry-point topic areas:

1. **Pilot programs and initial schoolwide adoption** (e.g., how to start)

2. **Expanded learning** (e.g., work-based learning, service learning)

3. **Multiple pathways to graduation** (e.g., CTE, virtual learning)

4. **School improvement and innovation** (e.g., building this into school improvement plans, other mechanisms)

5. **Districtwide scale and adoption** (e.g., what does district-wide adoption look like?)

Entry Point Details

Each entry-point includes:

- **Concrete school examples** of what they can look like
- **Options and characteristics** of these models
- How to use **policy flexibilities** to achieve similar structures
- **Guiding questions** to help communities with implementation

Development Process

Development Process:

- Held **listening sessions** with districts around the state to better understand
- Identified **states with similar flexibilities**, looked for innovative models to highlight as concrete examples
- Conducted **follow up interviews** with schools and districts to determine the appropriate format for the guide
- **Interviewed exemplars** to create examples
- Will be written up, designed and released early next calendar year

Questions?

Let’s Get You To “YES !”

What Do You Want To Do?

Where Are The Barriers?

Which Resources Already Exist?

What Do You Want To Do?

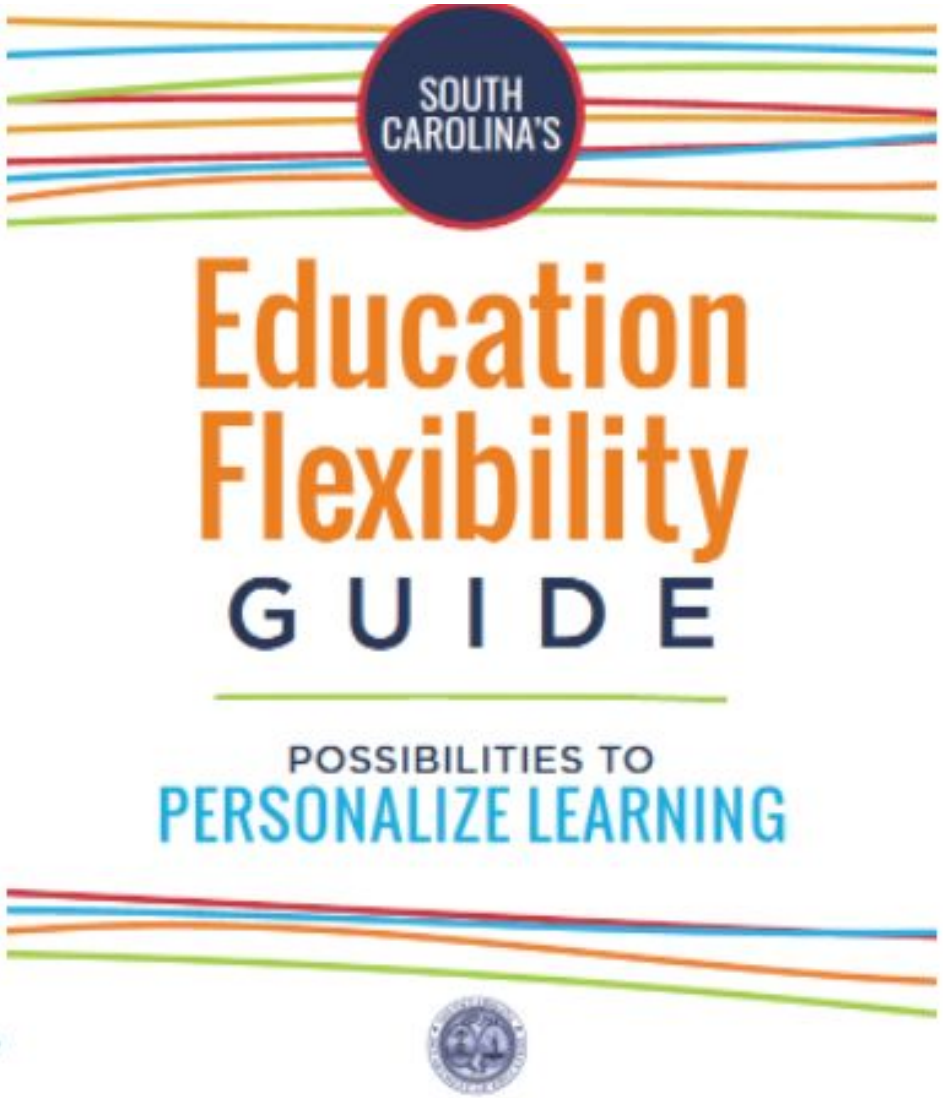
Sample Worksheet (you have to make a forced copy)

Where Are The Barriers?

BE SPECIFIC

Federal •	**State** R.43-231, R.43-232, R.43-234 II B
Local Board •	**School** •

Which Resources Already Exist?



https://personalizesc.ed.sc.gov/

AURORA INSTITUTE

Symposium

OCTOBER 24 – 26, 2022 | VIRTUAL

Thank you for joining us!

Share Your Thoughts

Participate in our one-minute poll (link in chat box)