

Insights from the Nevada Future of Learning Network

Teacher Empowerment

The [Nevada Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#) (NCIEE) believes that “Nevada’s educators are central to [their] vision of fostering voice, choice, and agency for all learners” and that educator development should be aimed at “preparing and sustaining teachers and leaders to create the conditions Nevada’s young people need to embody the Portrait of a Nevada Learner” ([NCIEE 2025](#), p 5). Educators and leaders in Nevada shared how a learner-centered, future-ready approach to education has changed their experiences in the classroom and in their schools. This brief highlights how a learner-centered, future-ready approach to education influenced educator experiences, and how district and school leaders contributed to positive work environments. It is part of a collection of briefs providing insights from activities facilitated by the Nevada Future of Learning Network.

The [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#) is a coalition of districts, leaders, educators, students, and community partners building a learner-centered, future-ready education system. It launched in 2023 as part of the Nevada Department of Education’s (NDE) effort to create the statewide [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) and advance [personalized, competency-based learning](#).

Empowering Educators

Educators described ways that the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and other shifts toward learner-centered practices have given them agency and empowered them to continually improve their practice. Based on a survey of participants at a 2025 Virtual Winter Institute: *Bringing the Portrait of a Nevada Learner to Life* facilitated by the Nevada Future of Learning Network, 92% of respondents who implemented learner-centered practices strongly agreed or agreed that implementing learner-centered practices made them want to stay in their school or district, and 92% strongly agreed or agreed that they felt empowered to organize teaching and learning so that every student could thrive.

- **Educator Autonomy:** An administrator reflected on her past experience as a teacher when she was implementing personalized learning: “I had a lot of autonomy at my previous school... I could personalize everything that I did. I had to use a curriculum, but I was able to do the things that I thought were most impactful and important [...] Getting that experience so early on in my career was a blessing.” After teaching in other schools where that same level of autonomy did not exist, she confessed, “Once that autonomy is gone, it's kind of like your passion is gone.”
- **Impact on Students:** An administrator emphasized that seeing students thrive is central to teacher engagement: “With personalized learning in particular, it is a very visible thing to see the impact on students. When personalized learning experiences are set up well, the students get to collaborate. You get to hear them have deeper discussions. And there's a real context for what the students are doing in terms of how that applies to the world outside.” He continued, “Our vision-aligned educators are so inspired and so excited and looking forward to getting to do that work with our students.”
- **Portrait of a Nevada Learner:** An elementary school teacher shared how the Portrait of a Nevada Learner influenced the whole school. “I feel like I see it across my school in general and my school district where people who have been embracing the Portrait work have really found a lot of meaning, a lot of purpose, and a great deal of satisfaction.” The teacher also thought the district’s approach to the Portrait of a Nevada Learner empowered educators with more agency. As an example, the administrator asked for feedback before an evaluation on how the teacher would like to be evaluated. “I just don't feel as stressed or upset about things that maybe I would have been before because of the way that the structures of the Portrait came out.”

Administrator Support and Structured Time

Educators described how they’ve connected with colleagues to improve their practice and school culture through implementing learner-centered, future-ready practices. In these examples, administrators played an important role in building an environment where educators collaborated, advocated for what they needed, and were provided resources to do so. According to a survey administered at the Nevada Future of Learning Convening in January 2026, 65% of educators and leaders strongly agreed or agreed that their school or district had a culture of innovation, where risk-taking and continuous improvement were valued. Further, 65% of educators and leaders strongly agreed or agreed that their school or district had the flexibility and resources to advance personalized, competency-based learning.

- **Contributing to a Local Portrait of a Learner:** One district developed a local Portrait of a Learner, ensuring that educator voice was incorporated into the process. Educators across the district came together to discuss how they integrated personalized learning into their practice and heard examples of their colleagues’ approaches. According to an instructional coach, this effort led to signature practices that district’s educators implemented into their classrooms as part of their local portrait implementation.

- **Professional Learning Community:** An elementary teacher described the importance of weekly professional learning community meetings. She shared, “It is a great time for us to vent frustrations, workshop what's working and what's not, and share ideas with one another.” She considered their success to be built on “trust and discussion.”
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“I know that turnover right now is huge. Burnout is huge. But because of the work that we're doing, teachers feel supported to take risks. They know what is expected and where we are going with the work. And I think that leads to feeling more comfortable in a job that's already hard.”

She continued, “And what's been really refreshing is, through this work that we've done, so many teachers have actually said that it has helped to make their job easier, that the goals and what we want to accomplish is clear.”

- **Educator Growth:** A high school teacher shared how he felt comfortable bringing questions or concerns to his school principal or superintendent, and that there were “opportunities for me to just become a better teacher.” He shared how the district is “constantly giving us opportunities to go to training.” These trainings felt both supportive and empowering. “I have such a nurturing district when it comes to this idea of just becoming a better educator,” he added.

Getting Started

School and district leaders who want to create learner-centered, future-ready education systems that empower educators could consider the following questions:

- How can we apply the Portrait of a Nevada Learner to guide our approach to educator professional growth?
- What shifts in our structures, communication, or supports can be made to create an environment where innovation and continuous improvement are valued?
- How can risk-taking, agency, and creativity be nurtured? How can we encourage educators to try new approaches?
- What opportunities do we have to create space for educators to collaborate, support each other, and advocate for what they need to improve their practice? How can those needs be shared with administrators?

Resources

- [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#)
- [KnowledgeWorks Portrait of a Leader](#)
- [Nevada Innovation Guide](#)
- [Nevada Future of Learning Network Case Studies](#)

The information shared in this brief is based on 26 interviews, the 2025 Virtual Winter Institute survey, and the January 2026 Nevada Future of Learning Network Convening survey. There were 192 respondents to the 2025 Virtual Winter Institute survey; 114 implemented learner-centered practices, and 110 answered the impact perception question. The Virtual Winter Institute was hosted by the Nevada Association of School Administrators. There were 52 educators, school leaders, and district leaders that responded to the January 2026 Nevada Future of Learning Network Convening survey. This research was made possible with the generous support of KnowledgeWorks and the Nevada Department of Education. For more information about KnowledgeWorks, please visit <https://knowledgeworks.org>.

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