

Nevada Future of Learning Network Case Study

Churchill County School District

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](#).

What is learner-centered, future-ready education?

Being learner-centered means **prioritizing the needs, interests, and experiences of learners**. Instead of focusing on delivering content from the teacher to the students, learners are empowered to take an active role in their own education. Being future-ready means attending to and **anticipating the needs of society and the future labor market** when considering the goals of schooling. This approach includes considering global economic trends and environmental changes along with local history.

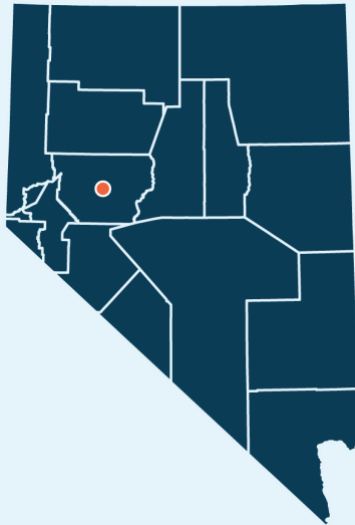
How does the Nevada Future of Learning Network advance learner-centered, future-ready education?

- Connects and supports coherence among school, district and statewide efforts to advance learner-centered, future-ready education
- Provides coaching, professional learning, and resources for educators, leaders and innovators
- Spotlights promising practices in Nevada and nationally

Resources:

- [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#)
- [Nevada Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#)
- [Nevada Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education Final Report](#)
- [Nevada Innovation Guide](#)

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT



Buildings: 1 early-childhood center, 1 school (K-1), 1 school (2-3), 1 school (4-5), 1 middle school (6-8), and 1 high school (9-12)

Enrollment: 3,221 students

Locale: Town, Remote

School Week Schedule: Modified 4-day school week for students; students typically have every other Friday off

Portrait: Local District Profile of a Learner

Student Demographics: <5% American Indian or Alaska Native, <5% Asian, <5% Black, <5% Pacific Islander, 8% two or more races, 27% Hispanic, 57% white

Getting Started with Learner-Centered Education

Churchill County School District’s journey with learner-centered education began with their own learner profile that included the following expectations for its graduates: critical thinking, inspired innovator, collaborative learner, effective communicator, global citizen, and lifelong learner. In 2022, the district attended a statewide convening in Las Vegas to envision the future of learning and identify mindsets and skills students should have before they graduate. In 2024, the district formally joined the Nevada Future of Learning Network when the state began building the Portrait of a Nevada Learner. Joining the Network allowed them, as one teacher explained, “to review what our learner profile looked like and fine-tune some things.”

Building and Maintaining Momentum

Churchill County School District is highlighted in the [Nevada Innovation Guide](#) for bringing the district’s Profile of a Learner to life. An educator agreed that the district had done a “good job of rolling out [the Profile of a Learner]” and helped them understand the shared vision of “working towards better things for kids.” As a district leader shared, “When we are working with kids, there needs to be an individualized path for every student. We need to recognize the student as a unique individual and make sure that the program of study that we have developed for them meets them where they are and what needs they have.”

Churchill County School District has grade band schools; for instance, there are three elementary schools, and each school focuses on two grade levels — Kindergarten and first grade, second grade and third grade, and fourth grade and fifth grade. The district administrator emphasized how important the district’s profile has been to support students’ transition. He shared, “Whenever you have a transition, you’re going to have periods where you spend a lot of time transitioning rather than engaged in new learning. The district profile can help minimize that impact.”

CLASSROOM SPOTLIGHTS

Fostering Social Emotional Learning Using Choice in Elementary School

“My classroom management has always been on point,” an elementary school teacher explained, but incorporating choice for social emotional learning supports her kindergarten students to make informed decisions about how they learn best. It started when their school received a grant for flexible seating, and her team invested in wobble seats, stools, stadium chairs, and big cushions. Because of that support, students now have a choice for where they sit, how they sit, and what kind of chair they sit in.

Seating options allow students to explore what environment they work best in based on what they are working on. The teacher shared, “I say things like, ‘You can sit in that seat today if it’s a good choice for your learning. If you’re sitting next to someone who might distract you, that might not be a good choice.’” The conversations turn into a creative space for students to explore what works for them when fostering their own learning process.

The first time she gave her students choice, she was nervous about it, but “it worked out so well.” She had several students who decided on that first day that they needed to swap out chairs or locations. She continued, “I thought ‘it can’t be this easy. There’s no way they can do this. That’s nuts...wow, point proven!’ They can very quickly learn how to make good decisions...I don’t think I’ll ever be able to go back to the way I used to teach because these kids are [now] learning that responsibility for themselves.”

Daily Learning Plan Name: _____

What zone are you in this morning?

1 Journal Writing

2 Cart Work

3 Task Box

4 I-Ready Lesson

5 Can do: i-Ready

The form includes a grid for tracking activities and a monster-themed SEL check-in at the top. The monster check-in asks students to identify their zone (sad/tired, happy/calm, worried/excited, overjoyed/angry) and includes a 'Can do' section with an i-Ready logo.



She shared that for social emotional learning (SEL), they check in every morning about their emotions. The school uses Zones of Regulation¹ and many other SEL lessons tied to the zones. Every morning, she does a check-in to identify which monsters the students align to, ranging from blue zone (sad / tired), green zone (happy / calm), yellow zone (worried / excited), red zone (overjoyed / angry). After they identify their monster, she checks in with them to see what their zone means for how to support the start to their day. For instance, she said, “If I’m seeing a collection of kids that are just kind of groggy in the morning, instead of having them sit and not move their bodies, we get up and we do something different to get them ready to learn.”

¹ Kuypers, L. (2011). *The Zones of Regulation*. San Jose, CA: Think Social Publishing.

Showing Mastery through Data Binders in Elementary School

With the district’s shift to standards-based grading, an elementary school teacher shared how her students are using data binders to show mastery of what they are learning. She explained, “We have deep conversations about the tasks they’re completing. They also reflect on their progress toward achieving their goals.” The students also create a roadmap² that “outlines the micro skills that they need to build up to get to the macro skills.” Her students use the data binders to track their learning targets and their progress toward mastery. She asks them questions similar to the following:

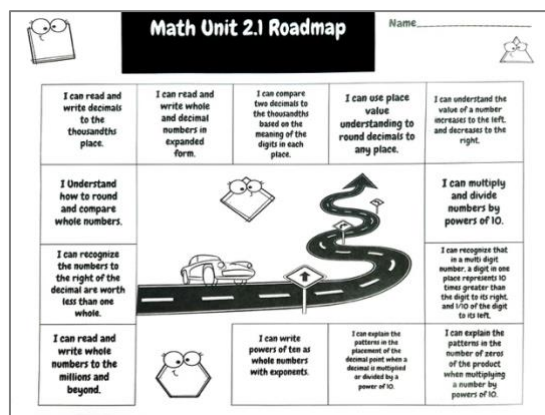
- “What did this assignment show you about your learning?”
- “How are you making steps to improve?”

The students are always looking at their progress. Goal setting and progress monitoring are widespread practices in the district as reflected in a 2025 student survey about learner-centered practices. Approximately 84% of fourth and fifth grade students who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that they set goals for their learning, and 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they work with their teachers to check progress toward their goals.

The teacher also shared that some of the elementary teachers are working toward personalized-learning plans and learning guides, but a curriculum shift has required them to shift away from that work and toward aligning to the curriculum instead. Ultimately, the goal for their team is for students to be connected community members and they plan to continue their efforts to reach that goal. The teachers aim to support students as they develop skills, such as communication and problem solving. She shared that during their professional learning community (PLC) meetings, her team asks:

- How are we helping our students learn how to set goals and achieve them?
- How are we supporting our students with opportunities to develop these skills?
- How can we design lessons that allow our students to dig into those skills even more?

The shift to standards-based grading also changes the conversations and structures with her students: “The question from students changes from ‘How can I raise my grade?’ to ‘How can I get better at this skill?’ Over the last several years we’ve been working on learner-centered strategies. It’s been very interesting to have these discussions and see the changes not only in my own instruction, but what the students are engaged in as well.”



² The image of the roadmap was created by the district based on the district’s use of LEAP Innovations’ Modern Teacher.

Exploring Choice with Elementary School Students

In another elementary school classroom, the teacher uses project-based learning to provide her students an opportunity to explore choice. The goal of the project is to design a travel guide, which gives students a chance to learn about other countries and their cultures. The teacher shared, “My kids learned new cultures within different countries they’re researching. They learn [about] currency, languages, transportation, whatever they’re most interested in.”

The first time the teacher embarked on this project was last year and she gave the students 10 countries to choose from so there was some overlap. She asked them to only include six pieces of information about the country. She expressed, “I was very worried. I thought ‘This is going to be a disaster because I felt like I was giving them too many options.’” The result: It was such a huge success that she wanted to give up the reins a bit more this year. “It makes me so proud. It really does. They’re making the project their own.”

This year, her students chose from any country in the world and included up to 16 facts about their country. She shared, “I stepped way back this year. Just let them do it. As a human, it’s scary to give up those reins. But it’s so rewarding.”

Some of her peers from other districts are hesitant to give students more agency and express concern to her: “If I give the kids that opportunity to do it all themselves, my job’s going to be gone. They won’t need me anymore.” She explained, “It’s a misconception because we’re always going to be needed. Having a student-centered approach doesn’t necessarily mean the teacher is not needed. The teacher is there to help guide student learning. Adapting and changing, that’s how we survive.”

One of her students visited the district office and had the opportunity to share her travel guide with one of the district leaders. The district leader reported back to the teacher that the student proudly exclaimed, “I’m an inspired innovator!” The district leader asked her why, and the student confidently talked about her project and how it demonstrated her creativity and problem-solving skills.

Empowering High School Students in Computer Science

“I teach kids how to make video games,” said the teacher. “I call myself the project manager of our students’ game design company,” the teacher continued, “and our principal is the CEO.” Each year, the teacher’s classroom is set up like a mock business that the students work for:

[The students are] interns or independent developers. Every class period, students come in, and they report on their Key Performance Indicators (KPI). The KPIs represent the learning standards. I ask them, “What have you done that fits this [KPI]?” They report to me, “Oh, I did that. We designed a level today, and we had to consider visual storytelling elements and level design.” Once approved by me, they document it and move onto the next standard.

The teacher reflected, “I’m able to facilitate the standards in a way that the kids are finding joy and measurable success in school and in society after being in my program.” Because learning is treated like a job, there is flexibility around deadlines as needed. The students are given “the freedom to explore and make mistakes, exploit bugs and glitches, and dig into their work. Because of that, they are understanding deeper and broader with more exploration, risk-taking, experimentation, and reflection, which definitely makes it a more lasting learning experience.” The teacher also tries to connect the work they are doing with other disciplines, such as English language arts, History, and math.

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– Teacher, elementary school

Once a year, the teacher takes students who meet at least 80% of their KPIs to a game design competition for their Career and Technical School Organization (CTSO) requirement that focuses on leadership development, skill building, and practical application of their learning. This year, the teacher is taking the students to a game design conference for the first time, which will have more than 150,000 people in attendance. The students are creating a digital portfolio throughout the year, and those traveling to the conference will use a portfolio card to network and potentially find job and internship opportunities. The teacher expressed, “I hope the conference becomes a yearly activity!”

“When they leave high school, their work is not going to be seen by one person. It will almost always be judged by society, by their peers, by their coworkers, by the public. And so this event, the intern showcase, and ultimately our public beta and release party, are great ways to get them used to that,” the teacher emphasized. The intern showcase is an event the teacher hosts for first-year students to prepare them for the larger gaming conference.

The teacher shared a story about a previous student who is now a game designer ready to release a game. “During his time in my program, he did a little of everything, level design, computer programming, voice acting, and marketing. Now, he’s doing all of that as a job, and some of our current students are contributing work to him.”

The teacher shared that another student was offered a 50% scholarship to play video games as part of an esports program in college. The same student now has a job as an esports organizer in a state college. Another student had lost interest in school, but when he entered the game design class, the teacher worked with him to find his passion. The district administrator shared that he knew the student well and was “happy to see him a short time after starting the game design class presenting at one of the district board meetings. He changed within one school year, and it was just amazing to see that because something in that class had given that student a purpose for school, for life.”

Cultivating Creativity and Engagement in High School Culinary Arts

In this kitchen, students choose what they want to learn about in culinary arts. That does not mean they are limited to “cooking, cooking, cooking,” said the teacher. She continued,

That’s what they think it is, but then they find out there’s more. There’s running a restaurant, there’s menu planning. They’re learning that there’s design and construction for restaurants. I have a couple of students who are legal-minded, one wants to be a judge and the other a lawyer, and I said to them, “Well, restaurant owners need lawyers.” They asked, “What do they need lawyers for?” And I responded, “Let’s talk about insurance. Let’s talk about the temperature of food and drinks. Let’s talk about food allergies.” I have another kid who’s all about the health department issues, and he is enthralled with sanitation and inspection. My kitchen has never been cleaner [Laughing].

Sparking their interest with the multifaceted business of culinary arts, the teacher allows students to explore what is most important to them based on their interests. While she is new to the school, she has expanded what is possible for career and technical education experiences. Last year, she found an opportunity that allowed one of her students to go to France for an internship over the summer to learn with world-renowned chefs. This year, she’s trying to do the same in Italy and take more students this time around. The biggest challenge for this opportunity is budget, but she was inspired to find a way to make sure her students had the opportunity to dive into their passions.

One way she dreamed up to fund these career experiences was a food truck — now becoming a reality. She shared her excitement: “The students named the truck. Another student who is in a digital arts class designed the wrap for the truck. We bought a slushy machine. They’ve started to write the menu. They’re so excited about it!” They are hoping to raise enough money to take five students to Italy for two weeks.



The teacher also cares deeply about student voice and family engagement. This year, she started a roundtable discussion called “Coffee with the Chefs,” where students and their parents can ideate on what they would like to see happening in her class. The students prepare for the roundtable by baking treats and serving coffee and cocoa. She shared, “This will be an activity I do for all six of my classes to get feedback and make tweaks based on that input. I took notes upon notes upon notes in our professional learning classes, and ‘Coffee with the Chefs’ came out of that learning. I’m excited!”

REFLECTING ON PROGRESS AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

The district administrator shared how their involvement in the Nevada Future of Learning Network supported educators in their teaching. While the district recently implemented a new curriculum that has slowed their progress, educators are hoping to continue moving forward on learner-centered work. The district administrator emphasized, “The district’s profile is putting language to what good teachers have been doing for a long time and allows us to have a common language that everybody can talk about and promote those pedagogical discussions about their students and their learning.” He continued that one of his goals is to “develop a roadmap for our district’s profile to make sure when we have a student go through our system that we’ve addressed all the parts of our profile with each student by the time they graduate.” For the district, the most important thing is the “belief that teachers and school staff have in our students. That drives the work that we do, including the work of our profile.”

Methodology

This case study highlights the experiences of one district that participated in the Nevada Future of Learning Network. The information shared in this case study is based on six interviews (one district leader and five teachers) and student and staff responses to the Nevada Personalized Learning Implementation Surveys at an elementary school. In 2025, there were 341 survey responses from students in grades 4 and 5.

To learn more about Nevada’s efforts in learner-centered education, visit:

<https://www.nvfutureoflearning.org/>

This case study 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>. For more information about Nevada’s efforts in learner-centered, future-ready education, please visit <https://www.nvfutureoflearning.org/>.

Kennedy, K., & Zweig, J. (2026). Nevada Future of Learning Network Case Study: Churchill County School District. Retrieved from <https://www.nvfutureoflearning.org/jobs/case-studies>.