

## Insights from the Nevada Future of Learning Network

# Student Engagement

The [Nevada Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#) envisions a Nevada where “every student has voice, choice, and agency over their learning journey,” ([NCIEE 2025](#), p 4). This brief highlights how educators and leaders across Nevada are implementing learner-centered practices, and perceptions of student engagement because of those practices. 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](#).

## Educators as Facilitators

Educators shared how they experimented with more learner-driven activities to foster student engagement and ownership over their learning. According to a survey administered at the Nevada Future of Learning Convening in January 2026, 80% of respondents strongly agreed and 20% agreed that students would have more ownership of their learning if Nevada shifted to a more learner-centered, future-ready approach to education.

- **Collaboration Skills:** An educator shared how she provided choice with scaffolding to build students’ collaboration skills as part of their local Profile of a Learner. Learners chose who they worked with on their math assignments but were required to check their answers and check in with their teacher if they struggled with any concepts. The teacher explained that it took “some time and trust to build, but they know that these are the steps we are going to take to make sure that we are successful.”

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“I think that collaboration and feedback...makes a big difference in what I'm able to get out of them and what they're willing to try.”

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- **Innovation Time:** A district leader described how one elementary school had “a block of time for an hour-and-a-half called “innovation [block]” every Monday. Each teacher hosted an activity based on their own expertise and students’ interests, such as gardening, Legos, and karate. Students signed up and engaged in the activities with students across grade levels. The principal shared data demonstrating an increase in attendance following the launch of innovation block on Mondays. “Kids are getting some experiences that they don't necessarily have the opportunity to experience outside of school. They want to be there.”
- **Care and Community:** In one school, educators were cultivating student care and safety through a hydroponics lab. The lab provided students who were previously expelled from school a chance to start anew. “The students are taking ownership of their plants [...] Their behaviors have gotten better because they have something to care for and nurture.”

## Learners as Co-designers

Educators and leaders described how they incorporated learners’ interests, feedback, and preferences into their classrooms. These strategies provided opportunities for learners to have a voice in the educational experience and choices that help to make the work meaningful. Based on the January 2026 Nevada Future of Learning Network Convening survey, 83% of respondents strongly agreed and 17% agreed that students would be more engaged if Nevada shifted to a more learner-centered, future-ready approach to education.

- **Feedback and Ideas:** An educator has a large “parking lot” poster in the classroom where students can write questions, ideas, or shout-outs. Students are active with this board and leave notes about learning, such as “I have an idea to help us in this,” and social needs as well, “Can you please change the seats? They're distracting for me.” The educator acknowledged that it was challenging at times to keep up with all the comments, but because the opportunity for voice and choice has kept students engaged and taught them to advocate for themselves, she has prioritized addressing comments on the board.
- **Setting and Tracking Goals:** An instructional coach described how teachers were unpacking standards with their elementary students. Even kindergarten students were able to explain what proficiency looked like and what they “needed to do to be proficient at this standard.” Once they were proficient, they got a stamp or a sticker and took their data notebook home to communicate with their families about their learning progress. The instructional coach provided her perspective on the impact for students: “They can speak about their learning, and then it's more empowering for them, too, and they're motivated.”
- **Communicating Vision:** An administrator shared how students were involved in ideating about ways to communicate the district’s vision for their Portrait work. One student suggested that they “wrap a school bus with our portrait.” Though that idea was not possible, the district instead wrapped their district cars. A district leader visited the

student’s school and surprised him: “He was so excited to see his idea come to life!” Another student suggested creating stickers and was excited that her idea was chosen: “I showed up at her school one day to present the sticker, and it was lunchtime. So, we had an impromptu little assembly to celebrate her idea and give her the first sticker.”

## Getting Started

Educators who want to add more voice, choice, and agency into their classrooms could consider the following questions:

- What goals can students develop in my class? How can I incorporate standard operating procedures to help my students regularly track and reflect on their progress toward their goals?
- How can I introduce choice into an upcoming lesson? Is it possible to introduce content choices or allow students a choice in how they demonstrate their knowledge?
- How can I use the Portrait of a Nevada Learner or locally developed portrait to guide my approach to building more voice, choice, and agency into learning?
- When would feedback from my students be beneficial? Could I find opportunities before, during, or after a learning activity to build in intentional feedback?
- What opportunities exist for students to provide feedback at the school or district level to inform their learning experiences?

## 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 and the 2025 Virtual Winter Institute survey. There were 192 respondents to the survey, 114 of which reported implementing a learner-centered practice, and 110 answered the impact perception question. The Virtual Winter Institute was hosted by the Nevada Association of School Administrators. This brief 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>.

Zweig, J., & Kennedy, K. (2026). Insights from the Nevada Future of Learning Network: Student Engagement. Retrieved from <https://www.nvfutureoflearning.org/jobs/evidence-based-one-page-briefs>.