Personalized Learning: Preparing High School Students to Create their Futures. Joseph DiMartin, John Clarke, and Denise Wolf, eds. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003. 346 pp.

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The goal of *Personalized Learning* is to construct a road map for educators who are attempting to create a more personalized learning environment for high school students. According to the editors, "[past] high school reform has had a disappointing history in American education because most reform initiatives overlook a defining attribute of young adult learners-their drive to establish an independent identity in their community" (p. xix). By personalizing learning for each student, schools will "create environments that engage and enrich the lives of all students" (p. 327).

Organized into four sections, the volume examines personalized learning via several initiatives. Four chapters comprise section 1, "Personalized Learning Plans," each telling a different story about how personalized learning plans are being used with success at various school sites. As the narratives reveal, in schools with personalized learning plans, projects and portfolios can replace standardized tests and state benchmarks, and parents and the community become partners in students' education. Each chapter is rich with suggestions and examples. Moreover, the section clearly presents the premise behind personalized learning plans and personalized learning in general.

The second section, "Personalized High School Teaching," switches focus from the parent-teacher-student-school-community roles in personalized learning to teachers' positions in the development of such reforms. Through the accounts in chapters 5 and 6 readers gain an understanding of the processes and struggles teachers face when giving up the "authority" of the textbook and/or curriculum as they change to personalized learning. Chapters 7 and 8 provide interesting, although somewhat ancillary, examples of personalized/service learning combinations. Chapter 9 is a reflection by a teacher educator offering ten "ideas for individual student learning personalization" (p. 169), including a bibliography of resources.

Chapters 10 through 13 make up section 3, "Designing Schools That Engage Each Student." Clarke and Frazer identify six categories of support structures necessary for personalized learning experiences. In chapter 11, Robert Mackin provides his key ingredients for personalization. Mary Ann Lachat (with Williams), in the subsequent

chapter, addresses the crucial dis-aggregation of data to look at student performance utilizing one "highly versatile" (p. 218) software system in particular. However, a weakness of this chapter was its commercial tone-Lachat and Williams co-developed the software under discussion. The concluding chapter seeks to answer the question, why do we still have such difficulty with secondary school reform?

The last section describes "systemic changes that must accompany and support personalized learning for all students" (p. xviii). Chapter 14 reports "on a retrospective study of long-term change in three American high schools" (p. 245). Chapter 15 depicts Maine's campaign to personalize learning for all secondary students. Gray-Bennett, in chapter 16, summarizes the changes in the school accreditation process that occurred in New England over the last few decades, and the relationship to student learning outcomes. Chapter 17 offers a definition of systemic change and its relationship to various attempts at personalized learning reforms; however, its placement at the end of the book seems rather odd considering its relevant definition and examples. Chapter 18, by DiMartino, Lopez, Wolk, and Miller, concludes the volume with the apt observation of the pressure from all sides to improve our nation's high schools. Succinct and abounding with ideas, this chapter alone could provide a starting place for administrators or teachers to begin researching the idea of personalized learning at their schools.

As a whole, the book reads a little long. Part of the challenge is the arrangement of and inclusion of particular chapters. Sections 1 and 4 are, by far, the strongest and most cohesive in the book. The two middle sections each include a chapter or two that perhaps does not quite fit their themes so well, detracting from the entire volume. However, the strength of this work is that each chapter is accessible as an individual piece. For those attempting personalized learning for the first time, or for those who want to gain an understanding of what it means, this is an acceptable primer. The book can be used as designed-by teachers, administrators, researchers, and/or policymakers-who are beginning the journey toward personalized learning.