"The Key Is Relationships": Personalized Learning at Learn4Life Charter Schools

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Key Points

- Learn4Life is a network of charter schools that uses a personalized learning model, driven by one-on-one instruction, to help high school students who have dropped out or are struggling in the public school system to reach graduation and college or a career.
- A central and distinct element of Learn4Life's model is that each student is paired with a single "supervisor teacher" to serve as an instructor, guide, and mentor from enrollment to graduation.
- Although it is not guaranteed to work as a general model, Learn4Life's programs offer compelling insights about the potential for, benefits of, and hazards around this application of personalized learning.

It is a Wednesday afternoon in May, and for most students at Desert Sands Charter School, it is a pretty normal day—though it might not look normal compared to many other schools. A large, warehouse-like room that was originally designed to be an Office Depot makes up almost the entire schoolhouse, and several activities are happening at once. Some students work quietly on packet assignments at the rows of desks in the center of the space. Others meet individually with teachers at one of the many faculty desks that circle the room. Still others work in groups with a teacher in one of the small classrooms along the walls.

The activity suddenly pauses when one teacher stands and calls for everyone's attention. Everyone looks toward the teacher and female student standing in front of him. Holding out a certificate, the teacher announces that Desert Sands has just produced its newest high school graduate. A chorus of cheers fills the air, and each teacher rings a bell to congratulate the girl as she receives her diploma.

Desert Sands is part of Learn4Life, a network of charter schools that uses a personalized learning model—driven by teachers who provide one-on-one instruction and build individualized learning plans—to help high school students who have dropped out, are at risk of dropping out, or are struggling in other ways with the public school system to reach graduation and postsecondary achievement.[1]

During a May visit to Learn4Life's headquarters and two of its schools in Lancaster, California, the wide-open instruction spaces and small-group classrooms were a marked contrast to typically structured schools. The enthusiasm in the graduation celebration at Desert Sands was also reflected in

interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Amid all the enthusiasm, the question remains: Is this enthusiastic environment and focused personalized learning model delivering the supports these mostly struggling students need for success?

While Learn4Life's mission to lift students on the brink of failure to success through individualized instruction is exciting, it also involves some serious challenges. Those involved in this promising yet difficult approach deserve praise for their work, even if there is no guarantee that it works across the board. In the end, Learn4Life's programs offer compelling insights about the potential for, benefits of, and hazards around this application of personalized learning.

What Is Personalized Learning?

Although the general idea of customizing education for individual students has been the subject of research and various educational approaches for decades, the term "personalized learning" has gained widespread popularity in just the past 10 years and has been the target of major philanthropic donations. In December 2015, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, promised to invest approximately $45 billion dollars in various causes, the first of which was personalized learning.[2] The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has three philanthropic initiatives focused on personalized learning and funded a series of RAND Corporation studies on the subject.[3] Personalized learning has also received major support from federal dollars, most visibly when the district-level round of the Race to the Top competition in 2012 distributed $350 million among 16 school districts to develop personalized learning initiatives.[4]

But what exactly *is* personalized learning? The term encompasses a wide variety of ideas and practices. According to the Aurora Institute, formerly the International Association for K–12 Online Learning, it entails "tailoring learning for each student's strengths, needs and interests—including enabling student voice and choice in what, how, when and where they learn—to provide flexibility and supports to ensure mastery of the highest standards possible." The institute identifies 10 elements of personalized learning, based on its national teacher survey. They include "immediate instructional interventions and supports for each student is on-demand, when needed"; "individual student profiles"; and "anywhere, anytime learning."[5]

Enthusiasm for personalized learning is often tied to conversations about how schools can help students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out.[6] And that population is unsettlingly large. In 2018, an estimated 659,000 teens age 16–19 nationwide did not have a high school diploma and were not in school.[7] About 50,000 of them were in California, where Learn4Life's headquarters and most of its schools are located.

In addition, a significant portion of current high school students do not graduate on time: In 2017, of the cohort of students in ninth grade four years earlier, 15 percent nationwide and 17 percent in California had not finished with a degree.[8] Dropping out or not finishing on time places adolescents and young adults at higher risk of a series of harms including unemployment, low income, health problems, and incarceration.[9] Clearly, Learn4Life schools have a large contingent of students who might need their help to graduate.

Personalized learning sounds like a promising approach, but does it work? And in particular, can it help struggling students? Research on its effects is mixed. A 2015 randomized control trial from Columbia Business School examining a personalized learning-based math program found it "had neither very large positive nor very large negative effects relative to the math instruction that students would have otherwise received."[10]

A 2017 RAND Corporation study found that schools using a personalized learning model had achievement gains that exceeded those of a national sample by a significant margin in math, though not in reading.[11] As the Center for Reinventing Public Education's Betheny Gross put it, with personalized learning, "there's a ton of variation found in terms of impact."[12] While the approach could affect student engagement and academic achievement, it seems there have not been enough data to support causal conclusions.

It is safe to say that whether a school adopts something described as "personalized learning" matters much less than *how* it works. So, how does

Learn4Life work, and how does it focus on the students who are on the verge of falling out of the system?

What Is Learn4Life?

Learn4Life was founded as a high school program in 2001 by Jeff Brown and Dante Simi, businessmen who observed the large numbers of high school students dropping out in their California neighborhoods and worked with educators to build a program to reengage these students in school. Today, Learn4Life enrolls about 47,000 students per year (Table 1). For a sense of scale, if it were a school district, it would be one of the largest 120 districts in the nation. However, that number tends to change throughout the year, explained National Superintendent Caprice Young.

> A traditional school will have more students in October than in April, because 10–12 percent drop out by [the spring]. . . . We're the place kids drop out to, so we get more kids throughout the year, not less. If you ask me how many kids we have in October . . . we're going to have about 18,000 students. As kids drop out [of other schools], and our community outreach happens during the year, we end up getting more students. By April, we've got 23,000 students, and then during the summer, we're now over 45,000.[13]

Learn4Life's academic calendar runs year-round, and about 20,000 students come during just the summer months for credit recovery courses. How long students remain varies, depending on how far along they are in their credits when they enroll, but they tend to stay for less than a year. In the 2018–19 school year, 46 percent of students stayed for about six months (180 days) or less, 15 percent stayed for six to nine months, and 39 percent stayed for the full calendar year.[14]

The charter management organization Lifelong Learning supports all Learn4Life schools. These schools are established by charter or contract with a district or county and structured as independent nonprofit organizations. The network is concentrated in California, with 82 schools there, one in Ohio, and one in Michigan.

Overall, school size averages about 350 students, but sizes vary widely. Desert Sands, one of the oldest Learn4Life locations, has about 850 students. Other schools in Antelope Valley in southern California have as few as 20 students or as many as 1,200, according to Regional Principal Taera Childers.[15] The Columbus, Ohio, location, which launched three years ago, has about 250 students, and the Flint, Michigan, location, which began last fall, has a little over 100.

The variation in size influences each school's setup, but in general, they look similar to Desert Sands: They are often nestled in strip malls or office complexes, side by side with retail stores, clinics, or cafés. They usually consist of one main room where most of the studying and teaching happens, with a handful of small classrooms and offices bordering the room. School hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., year-round. Teachers work five days a week and are grouped into two six-hour shifts: five hours for teaching and one hour for lesson planning.

But not every student is at school every day. Each student has an individual schedule designed with teachers when they enroll. On average, students come about twice a week for two to three hours each day, but the range is wide. Some come four or five times a week for a full school day, and others check in once a week.

Why so much flexibility? Learn4Life's philosophy is that most students who have fallen out of the public school system, or are on the verge of it, need the ability to build their own timeline to complete high school. "Most of these kids have adult responsibilities, which is why the traditional public school doesn't work for them," said Bob Morales, senior vice president of external affairs.[16] Those responsibilities include working part or full time, babysitting younger siblings in single-parent homes, or, for 22 percent of Learn4Life's student population, taking care of their own children.

A small portion of students (less than 5 percent) are accelerated learners who come to Learn4Life for an academic plan that fits their quicker learning pace. But most Learn4Life students need major catching up. On average, students enroll at age 17,

Table 1. Learn4Life at a Glance

Founded	2001
Founders	Jeff Brown and Dante Simi
Superintendent	Caprice Young
Chief Executive Officer	Pete Faragia
Enrollment*	47,000
Average Daily Attendance	21,244
Demographic Breakdown*	86% Hispanic 14% White 12% Black or African American 6% Mixed Race, Asian, or Other
English Language Learners	40%
Special Education Enrollment	16%
Free or Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility	87%
Teacher Count*	906
Average Teacher Retention Rate**	89%
Headquarters	Lancaster, California
Locations	California (82 Schools and 21 Charters) Columbus, Ohio (1 School) Flint, Michigan (1 School)

Note: *Data from 2018–19 school year. **Calculated from data available (past three school years).
Source: Learn4Life.

but they have a fifth-grade reading level, are at least a year behind in high school credits, and have been unenrolled from school for an average of 80 school days. Learn4Life's mission is to reengage and keep its students on a path toward graduation, college, and career by setting a pace that works for them and keeping them on it.

How Does It Work?

When a new student comes to Learn4Life, he or she first takes the Northwest Evaluation Association assessment in reading and math to give teachers a snapshot of that student's current academic standing. These data shape the curriculum prescribed for that particular student, though they are not the only determining factor.

"We have set graduation requirements that are board-adopted for each charter," said Chief Academic Officer Chris Hodge.[17] Those requirements include state standards and, in California, the University of California's entrance requirements, so that students are eligible to attend a four-year college after graduation. Depending on the charter, Learn4Life graduation requirements range from 210 to 230 credits. Hodge continued, "Where the flexibility comes in is the *pace* of learning. Do they want to do one class at a time or three at a time? . . . Or [they can choose] which courses they do in what order."[18]

A student's postgraduation aspirations also influence the number and type of courses added to the curriculum. Shawn, a student at Desert Sands, hopes to be a plastic surgeon, so his coursework includes extra math, biology, and chemistry so he can transfer credits to Grand Canyon University

and pursue that career path after graduation. Jacob, a student at Learn4Life's Assurance Learning Academy, plans to be a network engineer and has taken almost every one of the school's career and technical education courses in information technology.

One of the most distinctive elements of Learn4Life is that each student is paired with a single "supervisor teacher" to serve as an instructor, guide, and mentor from enrollment to graduation. Supervisor teachers, who are all certified and assigned to teach solely on a one-on-one basis, build their students' course schedules, work with them on lessons, and keep track of their academic progress throughout their time at Learn4Life. "Our supervising teachers are the case-load managers for their group of kids, but they also provide content instruction to other kids as needed . . . in their area of credentialing," said Hodge. "So for instance, a student could get math one-on-one from a supervisor teacher."[19]

But one-on-one is not the only form of instruction. Apart from supervisor teachers, each school also has a group of subject-specific teachers dedicated to small-group instruction to supplement the one-on-one instruction when needed.

Hodge said that Learn4Life teachers tend to be in their first five years of teaching, but there is a lot of variability. "We have a number of teachers who have taught for a whole career and have retired from traditional teaching . . . [and others] who are right out of credentialing programs."[20]

Hodge described supervisor teachers as "the hub" of a Learn4Life education. For each student's course completion plan, they can schedule individual meetings for one-on-one instruction, assign lessons for students to work on independently and review together later, and sign up students for online courses as needed. About 15–20 percent of students take at least one online course per year—usually for accelerated learning, dual enrollment, or career and technical education purposes.

At the same time, all students interact with supplemental online materials, such as READ 180, System 44, or online programs for math practice. Young emphasized that all students, including those taking online courses, still receive one-on-one instruction and that less than 1 percent of students have a purely online curriculum. Supervisor teachers can also integrate additional resources into a student's individual learning plan as they see fit, including tutoring, career and technical education programming, and even travel opportunities through experiential learning programs.[21]

How are all these resources funded? Learn4Life funding comes entirely from state education dollars, although according to Young, administrators are open to seeking philanthropic dollars or setting up paid contracts directly with school districts. In California, state funding is determined by not only average daily attendance data but also student work samples that Learn4Life staff catalogue and that state officials review. "We get credit for students being there based on the work they do, as opposed to seat time," said Young.[22]

Since most Learn4Life students come to the program after leaving other schools, one might reasonably wonder how the per-pupil dollars shift when a student transfers from a district school. Young explained that funding models vary across states and localities, but in general, annual funding for each student is spread over 12 months (as opposed to nine for a district school since Learn4Life runs year-round with no summer break). Each month, Learn4Life receives one-twelfth of that per-pupil funding—which, depending on the locality, ranges from $8,800 to $14,000. Learn4Life students who have aged out of the traditional public school system receive support services funded through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.[23]

Each Learn4Life school handles its own budgeting strategy, although there are some overarching procedures for how funds are distributed. Young explained that in California "we are required by law to spend 80 percent on instruction, including at least 40 percent on certificated staff salaries and benefits and 20 percent on non-instruction cost like administration."[24] Learn4Life also allocates funds for resources meant to help students get to and stay in school. Those who face transportation challenges receive free bus passes, those who are parents can bring their small children to school and take parenting classes, and those who have no lunch can grab a sandwich in the front hall.

When asked how these services fit into the budget, administrators answer that their flexible student schedules allow them to redistribute

funds. Specifically, one of the biggest money savers is on facilities; since not all students are present every day, Learn4Life schools are relatively small in terms of square footage. "A traditional charter school that runs its students through a classroom, cohort type situation, allocates about 60 square feet per student," said Young. "We allocate 20 square feet per student."[25] With that smaller budget, said Hodge, "we can repurpose what would otherwise be facilities costs into enrichment programs."[26]

What Are the Challenges?

Without question, this is some of the hardest work in education. Engaging high school students who are struggling the most or have fallen out of the system completely and getting them on a successful path to graduation and beyond requires a huge amount of empathy, communication, creativity, and perseverance. At Learn4Life, the teachers and staff clearly believe that getting to know students individually and accompanying them one-on-one through personalized instruction is key to driving them toward academic and postsecondary achievement, and they throw themselves into that work every day. Still, genuine challenges remain, and success is not guaranteed.

The complexity and magnitude of such an endeavor are what made past personalized learning initiatives fizzle out, such as the "open schools" movement of the 1970s.[27] Learn4Life teachers and administrators admit it remains a complex task. They seek to do this by offering curricular resources and arranging a schedule structure upon which teachers can build.

They also try to keep schools small and student-teacher ratios low: Each teacher manages about 35 individual student plans, and depending on those plans, that teacher might not see all those students every day. This significantly contrasts the life of a typical public high school teacher, who might interact with 140 or 150 students per day. Learn4Life's philosophy is that the smaller ratio will allow teachers to give each student sufficient attention and assistance.

Moreover, the increased independence compared to most traditional public schools raises the question of whether students are using their time responsibly. What prevents a student from idly sitting at a desk with a blank packet? On the one hand, there is no systematic device or official supervision meant to keep students on task. On the other hand, Childers explained that after students scan their thumbprints to enter the building, notifying faculty and staff of their presence, teachers are instructed to follow up with them. "We're constantly training [teachers] on noticing . . . is a student's head down? Is [the teacher] getting out of their seat, walking around, asking about siblings . . . showing interest in who they are?" She also noted, "Sometimes it could take a little bit of time [to reengage them] . . . but the key is relationships."[28]

Once teachers know who is at school and requires attention, they still need to help students who are not coming to school enough or at all. "We have an entire division of people that are based in each learning center [whose] job is to reach out and touch base with kids," said Hodge. "They'll go do home visits if needed."[29] Teachers can notify the retention staff whenever they have a student who is not coming to school, but at the same time, they are expected to be the front line in discovering and addressing attendance obstacles.

One challenge to this approach is finding and retaining teachers willing to do all the tasks that Learn4Life's model demands. Childers said that for many teachers, the personalized model is attractive, especially to those who have felt stymied in building one-on-one relationships with their students in a traditional classroom. Each teacher is paired with a mentor teacher for support and guidance, and most sites dedicate at least one day a month to professional development, which includes training in trauma-informed care. In the 2018–19 school year, Learn4Life had 906 teachers and a teacher retention rate of 91 percent.

What Are the Outcomes?

Since the program's founding, about 16,300 students have graduated from Learn4Life—2,791 of them in 2019. Small percentages of students have joined the military or gone directly to work upon graduating—in the 2018–19 school year, about 4 and 5 percent, respectively. Among the students who graduate from Learn4Life, 46 percent enroll in postsecondary education. This does not include

the approximately one-third of students who return to their district schools after catching up on credits at Learn4Life. About 11 percent of students drop out or lose connection with the program.

The uniqueness of Learn4Life's structure and student population makes communicating its performance results a challenge. By standard metrics, the program's annual results are abysmal: Its four-year cohort graduation rate is 29 percent. When asked about this, Learn4Life leaders respond that this is the wrong way to measure their performance. "You're looking at a high percentage of students coming to us because they were kicked out of school or because they're so far behind . . . [so] not every kid is eligible to graduate every year," said Hodge.[30] In other words, given the student population and the individually based course completion timelines, a significant portion of Learn4Life students do not graduate within four years after beginning high school.

The 89 percent success rate that Learn4Life advertises includes students who have transitioned to other schools and those who have not graduated that year but have continued with the program from one year to the next—in other words, those who have stayed on track to graduate. "Using [our] success rate tells a larger part of the story," said Hodge.[31]

Of course, as a network of public charter schools, Learn4Life's work does not occur in isolation, and this raises the question of how its presence might influence the incentives of districts and schools. When asked about this interaction, administrators respond that their model helps districts save money and raise graduation rates by catching the dropouts, who would have cost the district the money invested in their education and increased the dropout rate. Once caught up, former dropouts can either return to their local district school and finish there or remain at and graduate from Learn4Life.

What happens to district schools' graduation rates in these transfer situations? To answer this question, it is necessary to unpack the elements of the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) measure. A cohort consists of ninth-grade students who enter high school together at the beginning of a particular school year. The cohort size is adjusted over time by adding students who transfer to the school and subtracting students who transfer or drop out. When calculating ACGR, the adjusted cohort acts as the denominator of a fraction, while the number of students from that cohort who graduate within four years acts as the numerator. So, as the denominator shrinks (i.e., as students leave the cohort), the resulting fraction grows (i.e., the graduation rate increases).

When a student transfers from a district school to Learn4Life, he or she reduces the size of that district school's cohort. If that student does not return to the same cohort at the district school, that reduction could boost the resulting ACGR. In other words, district schools may have an incentive to send struggling students to Learn4Life because it could make their graduation rates look better.

The counterfactual argument is that without Learn4Life, students who would have entered the program would not graduate, especially if their district school lacked credit recovery or alternative education resources. And, as has been noted previously, graduating high school is overall better for students than not, regardless of the school.

Discussion

The Learn4Life model suggests advantages of rethinking uniform schedules and curricula to address varied student needs. While reasonable people can make the case about the advantages of a uniform and coherent curriculum, Learn4Life posits that those models may create barriers to personalization and success for students, especially the struggling students Learn4Life serves.

The school network's performance is woefully low according to traditional standards, although if one listens to Hodge's explanation, it is still helping some students advance toward academic success. This contrast raises thorny questions about the pros and cons of programs that run counter to not only the way traditional graduation rate metrics are supposed to work as quality indicators but also the goal of helping more students actually graduate.

Learn4Life's model hinges on teachers who approach their job differently from traditional classroom teachers. They must be able to undertake one-on-one academic instruction, manage student schedules, track credit completion, and

know when to direct a student to other resources, from advanced courses to counseling. Young emphasized the centrality of this supervisor teacher role: "It's absolutely critical," she said. "That's why [our model] works. It works because students are forming this one-on-one bond. The supervisor teacher is both their educator and their case worker . . . on a personal and an academic basis."[32]

Ensuring teachers fulfill such requirements could be difficult under traditional licensure systems, staffing models, salary structures, or contract rules. In California, for instance, state licensure requires applicants to demonstrate proficiency in computer technology, English language skills, and health education but not in individualized instruction, administrative responsibilities, or social and emotional learning.[33] These challenges might hinder other schools' ability to build a program like Learn4Life's, or it could compel them to partner with such programs.

The teacher's role is a central part of the Learn4Life model that contrasts with other school district approaches to help students who have fallen behind get back on track. Credit recovery programs have been the mainstay of these efforts, and most are premised on the notion that flexible online learning programs can fill these needs, allowing teachers to play a lesser, and less expensive, role in catching students up. While there are serious questions about maintaining academic standards for struggling students in both approaches, the high-touch approach Learn4Life takes has a more appealing value proposition because its animating premise starts with teachers focusing on individual students' needs and builds from there.[34]

Learn4Life is still growing, and how it will fare at its sites in California and beyond remains to be seen. Nevertheless, this organization's intent on helping students "change your story," as its motto proclaims, offers an intriguing perspective into how the story of personalized learning may unfold.

About the Authors

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Notes

1. Learn4Life also has a K–8 program, which it describes as its "home study program" that provides learning resources and lesson planning to parents who decide to homeschool their children. This program makes up a tiny portion of the Learn4Life organization, serving roughly 500 of its 47,000 students each year. Learn4Life's administrators said that while their schools offer the program on an "as-needed basis," it is not their "core mission" of reengaging students who have or are at risk of dropping out of high school. As such, this case study focuses on Learn4Life's high school program. Chris Hodge (chief academic officer, Learn4Life Network), in discussion with the author, August 20, 2019.

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4. *Education Week*, "Race to the Top and Personalized Learning: A Report Card," October 22, 2014, https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/personalized-learning-special-report-2014/race-to-the-top.html.

5. Natalie Abel, "What Is Personalized Learning?," Aurora Institute, February 17, 2016, https://www.inacol.org/news/what-is-personalized-learning/.

6. Tara García Mathewson, "Personalized Learning Gives Students a Sense of Control over Chaotic Lives," Hechinger Report, January 10, 2018, https://hechingerreport.org/personalized-learning-gives-students-sense-control-chaotic-lives/; and Jennifer Bartell, "Why Self-Directed Learning Is Important for Struggling Students," EdSurge, April 5, 2018, https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-04-05-why-self-directed-learning-is-important-for-struggling-students.

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9. Alliance for Excellent Education, "The High Cost of High School Dropouts: The Economic Case for Reducing the High School Dropout Rate," https://all4ed.org/take-action/action-academy/the-economic-case-for-reducing-the-high-school-dropout-rate/; and Northeastern University, Center for Labor Market Studies, "Left Behind in America: The Nation's Dropout Crisis," May 5, 2009, https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/downloads/neu:376318?datastream_id=content.

10. Jonah E. Rockoff, "Evaluation Report on the School of One i3 Expansion," Columbia Business School, September 2015, https://www.edweek.org/media/evaluation%20of%20the%20school%20of%20one%20i3%20expansion%20--%20final%20copy.pdf.

11. John F. Pane et al., "Informing Progress: Insights on Personalized Learning Implementation and Effects," RAND Corporation, July 2017, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2042.html.

12. Beth Hawkins, "Does Personalized Learning Work? The Research Is Too Scant, Too New and Too Nuanced to Give a Clear Yes or No—At Least for Now," 74, March 25, 2019, https://www.the74million.org/article/does-personalized-learning-work-the-research-is-too-scant-too-new-and-too-nuanced-to-give-a-clear-yes-or-no-at-least-for-now/.

13. Caprice Young (national superintendent, Learn4Life Network), in discussion with the author, August 20, 2019.

14. This statistic excludes students who enrolled at Learn4Life during just the summer. Learn4Life counts those students in a separate cohort because the typically large wave and brief stay of summer enrollees could give a false impression of Learn4Life's overall enrollment trends year-round.

15. Taera Childers (regional principal, Learn4Life Network), in discussion with the author, August 20, 2019.

16. Bob Morales (senior vice president of external affairs, Learn4Life Network), in discussion with the author, August 20, 2019.

17. Hodge, discussion.

18. Hodge, discussion.

19. Hodge, discussion.

20. Hodge, discussion.

21. There is a wide variety of academic, extracurricular, and technical programs in individual Learn4Life schools that this case study cannot cover in detail. For instance, some schools have developed career and technical education programs in information technology and veterinary science, while others have established parental training programs. One location houses Prints4Life, Learn4Life's internal printing press that produces all its merchandise and paper instructional materials and allows students to receive training in graphic design and manufacturing. This case study focuses on describing the Learn4Life model more broadly while acknowledging that the experiences and opportunities available to students vary across schools.

22. Young, discussion.

23. This is a basic description of Learn4Life's funding model, and details vary depending on state and local policy. In Ohio, due to the funding gap between district and charter schools, when a district high school student transfers to Learn4Life, about 70 percent of that student's per-pupil funding carries over. The 12-month per-pupil funding model applies to all three states in which Learn4Life currently operates (California, Michigan, and Ohio), although minor differences also apply.

24. Caprice Young, "Budget Rations," email message to author, August 21, 2019.

25. Young, discussion.

26. Hodge, discussion.

27. Steve Drummond, "'Open Schools' Made Noise in the '70s; Now They're Just Noisy," National Public Radio, March 27, 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/03/27/520953343/open-schools-made-noise-in-the-70s-now-theyre-just-noisy.

28. Childers, discussion.

29. Hodge, discussion.

30. Hodge, discussion.

31. Hodge, discussion.

32. Young, discussion.

33. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, "Single Subject Teaching Credential: Requirements for Teachers Prepared in California," https://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/single-subject-teaching-credential-requirements-for-teachers-prepared-in-california.

34. For more information on credit recovery practice in high school districts across the country, see Nat Malkus, "Practice Outpacing Policy? Credit Recovery in American School Districts," American Enterprise Institute, November 21, 2019, https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/practice-outpacing-policy-credit-recovery-in-american-school-districts/.