

Learner Profile Visioning Convening: Areas of General Consensus

On August 14-15, 2014, Public Impact convened 40 parents, teachers, students, technology and learner profile developers, researchers, neuroscientists, and policy experts to consider the potential for learner profiles to help students become agents of their own learning success and equip teachers and the educational environment to better understand and respond to diverse learners. These experts discussed opportunities and challenges that exist for the learner profile concept, what would be needed to achieve the desired outcomes, and whether this is a strategy worth pursuing.

On what a learner profile should be, include, and do:

- Be dynamic to capture changes in the learner over time.
- Facilitate conversations and relationship building.
- Allow students, teachers, parents, and others to contribute data and engage in a feedback loop.
- Set the foundation for lifelong learning, not just school-based learning.
- Key characteristics and descriptors: choice, agency, clarity, positivity, transparency, simplicity.

On learner profile development:

- Change the “profile” terminology.
- Put a strong focus on a comprehensive communications campaign.
- Include student input on the content and function of profile tools.
- Ensure the tool’s benefits outweigh whatever cost in extra time and effort it requires.
- Start with the NIH toolbox and other frameworks with widely established validity.
- Include measures in prototype tools that are testable and falsifiable.

On whether and how to help move the concept forward:

- With growing support for education data collection initiatives at the U.S. Department of Education and in the philanthropic sector, NOW is the time to pursue learner profile concept development.
- The needle needs to move along two fronts:
 1. A field-wide effort to define essential standards and measures of learner attributes, and
 2. A push to catalyze a market response to create multiple versions of product interfaces, possibly through a contest or “grand challenge.”
- Change could occur not only through the schools, but also in wraparound/afterschool services, “where the school has a vote, but not a veto.”
- It is essential to continue to engage additional experts and stakeholders.

Lingering concerns and questions:

- Can the profile really drive or facilitate major change when the focus of school accountability remains the same (academic standardized tests administered to age-grouped students)?
- Remain cognizant of data privacy concerns.
- Identify all risks associated with a learner profile to address or mitigate those that you can within design and implementation phases.
- Identify opponents of this concept and understand their concerns.