

WHITE PAPER

# A Solid Foundation for Results: The Pedagogical Basis for the *MyGuide* Personal Learning Program

The *MyGuide* Personalized Learning Program is a innovative supplemental program in reading and math designed to meet the diverse needs of learners in today's classrooms by creating teacher-led differentiated instruction. Components include individualized student content based on ongoing assessment data and created with The Grow Network's proprietary technology, rich teaching resources, and thorough ongoing professional development.

## Differentiated Instruction Meets Individual Learning Needs

According to observations by Gibson and Hasbrouck, a common trait of highly successful schools are classrooms that positively affect student achievement by providing differentiated instruction tailored to students' specific needs.

As Tomlinson notes, in a differentiated classroom the teacher assumes that different learners have differing needs. The teacher proactively plans a variety of ways to get at and express learning and fine tunes instruction for individual learners. When teachers have different learning options available, they can provide the most appropriate learning experience for each student.

The *MyGuide* Personal Learning Program enables teachers to deliver an unprecedented level of differentiated instruction.

In their writings on differentiated instruction, Gibson and Hasbrouck recommend that changes must be made to improve instructional delivery and create supportive learning environments that are learner-friendly. Some ways they suggest to achieve these goals include

- Using data to determine what students know, what they need, and what they can do
- Using data to group students for instruction
- Selecting skills-focused materials and practice activities that are sensitive to student variance, academically profitable, and scaffolded from easy to difficult

Accordingly, *MyGuide* uses formative assessment along with proprietary technology incorporating standards to generate individualized instructional material as learning progresses. Each student is assigned material with the right leveled content, focusing on the skills that the student needs to improve, creating effective differentiated instructional materials that more precisely address the student's learning needs.

In a differentiated classroom, the teacher uses many different group configurations over time, and students experience many different working groups and arrangements. (Benjamin, 2002) The smaller group size increases opportunities for students to respond or stay engaged. (Gibson and Hasbrouck, 2008)

As a corollary to the creation of student material, *MyGuide* organizes students, for the teacher, into whole and small instructional groups on a topic-by-topic basis. The groupings change according to students' learning needs. In so doing, the *MyGuide* program performs the type of labor-intensive task that typically makes differentiated instruction prohibitive for teachers to implement.

"Teachers need professional development that provides teaching tools for 1) collection and using data for diagnostic decision making about placement in curricula, grouping students for instruction, and monitoring student progress or evaluating achievement 2) making decisions for selecting teaching strategies, materials, and activities that attend to student variance and are skills-focused and academically profitable, and (3) using flexible grouping practices and patterns for managing whole-class and small groups to differentiate and enhance student progress and achievement."

(Gibson and Hasbrouck, 2008)

Key to the effectiveness of the *MyGuide* Personal Learning Program is comprehensive professional development.

## Effective Differentiated Instruction Requires Professional Development

Researchers have found that teachers struggle to differentiate their instruction because it is difficult to meet all students' needs. (Willis & Mann, 2000) Many programs talk about individualizing instruction, but few provide the tools to help teachers.

“Currently teachers are expected to diagnostically and prescriptively teach all the students in their class. They must develop skill sets that help them differentiate instruction by modifying classroom environments, behaviors, and instruction. This type of differentiation is not simple; it is a constant and complex challenge, even for master teachers. Teachers need tools that help them manage instruction and satisfy instructional demands. Yet teachers report they have no time to read research, nor do they receive professional development in best practices for improving instructional delivery.”

(Gibson and Hasbrouck, 2008)

*MyGuide* supports teachers with rich teaching resources, a Teacher Guide, and ongoing professional development. In so doing, *MyGuide* moves teachers beyond the basics into adept delivery of truly effective differentiated instruction for the middle school classroom. In addition to tools, teachers are supported with instructional strategies as they work with heterogeneous groups based on leveled content and different learning modalities as well as with ELL students and other diverse learners.

*MyGuide* Professional Development Services incorporates the expertise of Vicki Gibson, noted authority on differentiated instruction. The program is flexibly designed around district goals and ensures smooth implementation. Options include:

- Onsite foundation training of instructional staff
- Workshops in differentiated instruction for teacher groups and individual teacher classrooms
- Workshops targeted for administrators at schools and district offices
- Ongoing structured support provided for teachers extending beyond *MyGuide* instruction

## Fulfilling the Promise of Formative Assessment

As Anne Lewis has written, “Formative assessment is central to good instruction in several ways, including focusing learning activities on key goals; providing students feedback so they can rework their ideas and deepen their understanding; helping students develop metacognitive skills to critique their own learning products and processes; and providing teachers with systematic information about student learning to guide future instruction and improve achievement. **Yet teachers typically have little preparation in assessment or how to use such information well.**”

Today’s teachers are responsible for an ever-growing list of instructional and administrative requirements to support learning. As a result, incorporating formative assessment for individualized learning is often ignored. Many teachers do not have the tools they need to interpret the formative data and respond to student needs.

The *MyGuide* Personal Learning Program fulfills the promise of formative assessment by utilizing proprietary technology to help the teacher direct student learning.

In a discussion of instructional efficacy, Popham references learning progressions which are sequenced sets of subskills and bodies of enabling knowledge that students must master en route to mastering a more remote curricular aim, known as the “target curricular aim.”

*MyGuide’s* use of unique technology incorporates these learning progressions into the development of instructional material. The Grow Network uses the McGraw-Hill’s proprietary Comprehensive Content Standards Framework to create and align instructional content to state standards. By analyzing the number of precursor and postcursor skills associated with each targeted skill, as well as the skills actually assessed by state and national tests, the Content Standards Framework:

- Creates a comprehensive learning map from state standards
- Defines how students are likely to progress through the universe of skills
- Highlights skills with highest cognitive importance

To assign content on a student-by-student basis, *MyGuide* Personal Learning Program analyzes district assessment data using a patented algorithm that:

- Distills the learning map into leveled activities
- Establishes the range of scores that fall into each topic level
- Determines appropriate instructional materials for each student

*MyGuide* provides the “right” content for your students to deepen their knowledge of core subjects and accelerate their achievement.

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