



## **Editor's Note: It's Personal**

by Megan Schmidt

Most educators acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all approach to learning does not lead to the level of student engagement and academic success that they strive to achieve. Individualized instruction and personalized learning are two different approaches to education, but both have qualities that could give students more than what a traditional classroom can offer.

The U.S. Department of Education classifies individualization as instruction that is paced to the learning needs of the student. Learning goals are the same for all students, but students can progress through the material at their own pace and according to their learning needs. This approach allows students to spend more time on topics they are having difficulty with or skip material they already know altogether.

Personalization is similar, but it refers to a teaching style that is paced to the student's learning needs and tailored to his or her learning preferences and interests. In an environment that is fully personalized, the learning objectives, material, the method of instruction and pace can all vary.

Traditionally, education is lecture-based because that is how many teachers learn best, Judy Pauley explains in this month's exclusive feature, "Learning Styles Matter." Judy and her husband, Joseph, have championed individualized instruction for more than 20 years and have taught educators how to engage different learning styles in the classroom. The Pauleys, who will present at the [2013 National Quality Education Conference in Milwaukee Nov. 17-18](#), say that student-driven models lead to higher levels of achievement and engagement in all grade levels and fewer disciplinary problems.

Some might chalk up personalized and individualized learning as the latest buzz words or flavor-of-the-month methods to implement in the classroom. But I wonder if this could be the start of a shift in the way education is delivered.

The world outside of the classroom is completely different than it was 20 or 30 years ago. Technological advances, the constant churn of digital content, an increasingly globalized society, the Obama administration's [support for innovative teaching methods, and the break from mandated "seat time"](#) requirements may have brought education to a tipping point.

We all want students to live up to their potential and succeed. Ultimately, personalized or individualized instruction may not be the silver bullet, but it does encourage us to ask ourselves an important question: How can we best satisfy students' needs?

***What do you think about personalized and individualized learning? Email me at [mschmidt@asq.org](mailto:mschmidt@asq.org). Also, did you know I'm on Twitter? Connect with me [@ASQ\\_Megan](#).***