# 2026 North Carolina Education Innovation Lab

## TailoredLearningNC: Personalizing Learning for North Carolina's Students

### Draft Agenda

| Time | Session |
|---|---|
| **10:00 AM** | **Welcome & Opening Remarks** |
| **10:05 – 10:25 AM** | **From Conversation to Action: Why Tailored Learning, Why Now**<br>The session will establish why Tailored Learning, a convergence of competency-based education, mastery-based learning, and personalized learning, and represents a timely and necessary focus. Participants will be grounded in the post-COVID context, the emergence of new AI-enabled tools, and the existence of promising pilots already underway in North Carolina. The session closes by setting expectations: the day is designed to move beyond awareness toward clarity, alignment, and next steps. |
| **10:25 – 11:00 AM** | **The Promise, and Practical Reality, of Tailored Learning**<br>The keynote provides a national, research-based foundation for the day, clarifying what tailored learning is—and what it is not. Drawing on decades of work in competency-based education, the speaker will define the distinctions and overlaps among CBE, mastery-based learning, and personalized learning, emphasizing that tailored learning is a system redesign, not a curriculum or instructional add-on. The keynote will examine why traditional, summative assessment models provide only static snapshots of learning and fail to diagnose specific gaps or readiness for acceleration. In contrast, the session will highlight how formative, performance-based, and adaptive assessments enable real-time instructional decision-making. The speaker will also surface common implementation pitfalls—such as starting with report cards instead of competencies—and outline the conditions required for scale, coherence, and equity. |
| **11:00 – 11:50 AM** | **Panel 1: Building the Foundation for Tailored Learning: Structures, Culture, and Policy Alignment**<br>This panel explores the foundational shifts required to move from time-based schooling to mastery-based progression. Panelists will describe how tailored learning reshapes grading practices, pacing, instructional roles, and school structures—and why these changes are often most viable in high-need contexts willing to rethink traditional models. The conversation will address cultural and technical barriers, including community understanding of grading, teacher collaboration time, and calibration of mastery expectations. Panelists will also clarify where policy flexibility exists today in North Carolina and what statutory or regulatory changes may be needed to support broader adoption. The session is designed to help participants understand that successful tailored learning depends on aligned systems, not isolated innovation. |
| **11:50 AM – 12:35 PM** | **Networking Lunch** |
| **12:35 – 1:20 PM** | **Breakout Sessions: Round One**<br><br>**Breakout Room A: Classroom Practice and Instructional Design**<br>This breakout makes tailored learning concrete by focusing on instructional practice inside real classrooms. Facilitators will highlight how many educators already use formative assessment, flexible grouping, and differentiated pathways – often without labeling them as competency-based practices. Participants will examine how clearer learning targets, better assessment design, and emerging AI-enabled tools can help teachers understand precisely what students know and do not know. The session emphasizes how tailored learning can support both remediation and acceleration without stigma, while reducing – not increasing – teacher workload when implemented thoughtfully.<br><br>Facilitator:<br><br>**Breakout Room B: Leadership, Systems, and Policy Conditions**<br>This breakout centers on the system-level decisions that determine whether tailored learning can take root and scale. Participants will explore scheduling, staffing, accountability, and incentive structures that either enable or undermine mastery-based models. Drawing on examples from innovative schools and districts, the session will examine why competency-based approaches often emerge where urgency is greatest, and what that implies for statewide strategy. Participants will identify which system levers must move first and how leaders can sequence change without overwhelming educators or communities.<br><br>Facilitator:<br><br>**Breakout Room C: Scaling Tailored Learning Across North Carolina**<br>This breakout focuses on how tailored learning could scale responsibly across North Carolina. Participants will examine policy tools such as pilot grants, phased implementation models, and networked learning communities, drawing lessons from SB 580, the Golden LEAF PCBE cohort, and SparkNC. Groups will discuss how to balance innovation with coherence, identify capacity-building needs, and design pilots that inform long-term policy rather than remain isolated experiments.<br><br>Facilitators: |
| **1:25 – 2:10 PM** | **Breakout Rooms: Round Two**<br><br>**Breakout Room A: Classroom Practice and Instructional Design**<br>This breakout makes tailored learning concrete by focusing on instructional practice inside real classrooms. Facilitators will highlight how many educators already use formative assessment, flexible grouping, and differentiated pathways – often without labeling them as competency-based practices. Participants will examine how clearer learning targets, better assessment design, and emerging AI-enabled tools can help teachers understand precisely what students know and do not know. The session emphasizes how tailored learning can support both remediation and acceleration without stigma, while reducing – not increasing – teacher workload when implemented thoughtfully.<br><br>Facilitator:<br><br>**Breakout Room B: Enabling Conditions and Next Steps**<br>This session synthesizes the day's learning to identify what must change outside the classroom to support tailored learning at scale. Participants will consider implications for state guidance, accountability systems, reporting structures, and cross-sector alignment with higher education and workforce pathways. The focus is on translating insight into action, clarifying near-term priorities, roles, and decision points for state agencies, districts, philanthropy, and intermediaries.<br><br>Facilitator:<br><br>**Breakout Room C: Scaling Tailored Learning Across North Carolina**<br>This breakout focuses on how tailored learning could scale responsibly across North Carolina. Participants will examine policy tools such as pilot grants, phased implementation models, and networked learning communities, drawing lessons from SB 580, the Golden LEAF PCBE cohort, and SparkNC. Groups will discuss how to balance innovation with coherence, identify capacity-building needs, and design pilots that inform long-term policy rather than remain isolated experiments.<br><br>Facilitators: |
| **2:15 – 2:45 PM** | **Panel 2: Measuring What Matters: Assessment & Accountability**<br>This panel addresses one of the most persistent challenges in tailored learning: how to measure mastery, growth, and readiness fairly and transparently. Panelists will examine the limitations of traditional summative assessments and the promise of formative, adaptive, and competency-aligned approaches. The discussion will include North Carolina's current assessment landscape – particularly NC Check-Ins 2.0, and how it could evolve to support real-time instructional insight without abandoning accountability. Equity considerations will be central, with attention to calibration, grading consistency, and avoiding new forms of gatekeeping. The session reinforces that assessment is not a technical detail, but a core design choice that shapes instructional culture.<br><br>Moderator: |
| **2:45 – 3:00 PM** | **Closing Remarks: Setting the Stage for Innovation** |