There’s a growing consensus that personalized learning is the future of education. But people still don’t seem to agree on what, exactly, a personalized learning environment ought to look like.

And that’s just fine. Research is showing that there’s more than one way to design a successful personalized learning environment. However, for as much as they may differ in approach, the best personalized learning environments do have a few key elements in common.

What are these elements?

The following list, compiled from research findings from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and iNACOL, sums up these elements and provides a starting point for educators looking to create a personalized learning environment for their students.

Create Learner Profiles
This involves capturing the individual skills, gaps, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and aspirations of each student. It’s about knowing each child through a combination of assessments, surveys, and relationships built inside and outside of the classroom.

Focus on Individual Mastery
Schools must continually assess student progress against clearly defined standards and goals. Students advance—generally at their own pace—based on demonstrated mastery of these learning targets.

Design Personal Learning Paths
This involves creating an individual pathway for each student based on his or her unique learner profile. Each student has his or her own learning goals and objectives, and learning experiences are diverse and matched to the individual needs of students.

Make Your Learning Environments Flexible
Educators should include multiple options and approaches in their delivery of instruction to support student learning.

Develop a Culture of Student Agency
Students should have some control over how they learn. With the help of their teachers, they should be involved in designing their own learning process and should be given a choice in how to demonstrate their learning through performance-based assessments.

FIVE KEY ELEMENTS FOR CREATING A PERSONALIZED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT