

# Big changes come to Logan High School's Innovations program in its second year | USNS

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As the Logan High School Innovations program continues into its second year, administrators are focused on improving the shortcomings of last year's program and moving to competency-based grading.

The Innovations program is designed to provide a personalized learning experience for students.

Students in the program have the freedom to customize their schedule and move through coursework as quickly as they can demonstrate competency. They may take anywhere from three to eight courses at a time.

Theoretically, this allows them to complete graduation requirements more quickly and select the number of subjects they want to focus on — but that's not always what happened last year.

The 2017-2018 school year was the first year of the program and many of the participating students fell behind. Changes to program structure been made to address issues that led to this, and more changes are in the works.

Innovations program coordinator DeAnna Stallings said one of the next changes will be competency-based grading. According to Stallings, this form of grading utilizes a four-point scale. Rather than A, B, C or D, the scale is 1, 2, 3 or 4.

"When a student gets a B on an assignment that doesn't tell you if they are proficient or not," Stallings said. "It tells you how well they did the assignment. Letter grades are

very inaccurate. They don't tell you what a student really can do."

Stallings said there are even more changes she would like to see in the next five years. One of these would be gradually increasing the flexibility of a student's class schedule from their freshman to their junior year.

"Really we don't even want them in our program their senior year," Stallings said. "We want them in A.P., concurrent enrollment, Bridgerland. We want them doing post-secondary kind of work their senior year."

Some changes have already been implemented in the program.

This year students have to stay in their assigned Innovations class unless they are ahead. If they are ahead, they have time after the lesson to work on material from any subject and get help from any teacher.

If students are on or behind pace, they have to stay in their class to work on that subject. Compared to last year, this format is much more structured. Students have previously been allowed to roam at any time during the class, regardless of their progress.

"This system has worked really nicely," Innovations teacher McKell Redd said. "Structured time doesn't get interrupted but there is still the freedom for students to work on what they want if they are ahead."

Redd also said she likes being able to teach students at their own pace.

"I love that I am able to work with students where they are," Redd said. "It helps me get to know their learning styles and abilities more quickly. Then I feel like I can push each individual student in a way that is meaningful."

Freshman Dylan Smith said although it presents some challenges, he really likes being in the program.

"It can give you extra work time and let you get ahead," Smith said. "But you can fall behind semi-easily."

Smith also said from what he's heard, the program this year is much better than it was last year and he will likely continue participating.

However some students who were in the program last year dropped it after falling so far behind.

Stallings said one of the challenges last year is students were given too much freedom. Instead of using this

freedom to get ahead and learn at their own speed, students used it to get out of doing work.

"It just didn't work at all," Stallings said. "Kids didn't do anything. By this time last year, it was just out of control. We tried reeling it back in but it was just too late."

According to Stallings, the program changes are working well and helping students catch up from last year.