



AGENCY BY DESIGN

An Educator's Playbook

By Derek Wenmoth and Marsha Jones
with George Edwards and Annette Thompson

AGENCY BY DESIGN: AN EDUCATOR'S PLAYBOOK



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ISBN: 978-0-473-69252-0 (NZ)

ISBN: 979-8-9891858-1-8 (USA)

Front page photo credit: Vanessa Loring/Pexels

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many schools and educators they have worked with in the US and New Zealand who have helped shape and inform the ideas in this playbook. We'd like to thank the following organizations for their generosity and support for helping make this book possible:



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION
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Welcome to this Playbook

Credit: Anastasia Shuraeva/Pexels

Welcome to the Agency by Design Playbook. The fact that you are reading the introduction to our playbook is encouraging to us! We hope that you will take the next steps to engage in an exciting and perhaps challenging opportunity to open doors for your students, leading to authentic engagement and more agentic behavior.

We care deeply about the need to increase engagement, self-direction, and overall sense of agency with students, and we created this playbook with you in mind! We are taking the theoretical concepts of agency and sharing practical guidance and examples.

The best way to serve our students, now and in the future, is to design a learning environment that builds a stronger sense of agency for both you and your students. The shifts suggested within the playbook, with agency as the driver, can create a stronger bond and partnership between you and your students.

This may require you to take a leap of faith! When you institute new ways of interacting, supporting, and engaging students, the students become the beneficiaries. That leads us to the purpose of the playbook. Within the pages of this guide is the Overarching Framework (page 11) for making changes that are subtle at first and eventually become bolder, empowering both you and your students.

What We Want for Our Students

Ultimately, we want our students to grow in their ability to internalize their learning, apply their learning in new ways, and become problem solvers and solution finders.

We need them to be able to interact with their fellow students in ways that are productive and respectful. And we need them to understand how their actions and attitudes influence the world they live in.

As educators, we need to give students guidance and practice so they can embrace the skills, dispositions, and knowledge they need to be successful. Embedded in the very nature of increased student agency is students' ability to relate to what they are learning—and to recognize and activate personal adjustments needed to master the knowledge, dispositions, and skills found in their curricular experiences. And, as educators, we want to build a sense of student efficacy so that the responsibility and opportunity for learning are shared by both teacher and student.

That is the motivation behind the Agency by Design Playbook. Let's make this happen!

Rigorous Expectations

Rigorous learning expectations, in all aspects of the required or desired curriculum, are embedded in the Overarching Framework. Here is a simple example: By increasing student engagement, we build their understanding of what it means to meet performance expectations. Students' understanding of what it means to be “on grade level” or “meet standards” may be vague, and we clear up that uncertainty.

How can this be done? Students access models, rubrics, anchor papers, or other tools that clearly demonstrate what is expected. By analyzing these examples, students are invited to contribute to the explanation and definition of what it means to meet specific standards of learning. This allows them the opportunity to internalize their understanding of the performance expectations.

Other examples, sprinkled throughout the playbook, are the passion projects and other self-directed learning activities that allow students to experience the joy that comes from “owning” and sharing meaningful learning opportunities.

A close look at the Overarching Framework can provide insight into how various elements of the framework support one another when implementing the examples described above. Don't worry—it's not as complicated as it may appear at first glance! You are already familiar with all the elements presented; we are just tweaking them during the implementation process.

Benefits of the Playbook

The playbook is designed to be used individually or with a team of colleagues. **IMPORTANT:** It is not a recipe book. Many decisions will need to be made at the classroom, grade level, course of study, or building level.

Included in the playbook are the following tools to support your journey:

- **An Overarching Framework:** Significant change does not occur in isolation. A constellation of elements interact and support one another when shifting toward a student agency model.
- **Personal Reflection:** The suggested shifts are expected to build on a foundation already in place within your current practice, which allows agency to flourish. Use the reflection sections to see where to begin based on what you are already doing.
- **Colleague Conversations:** The playbook invites you to visit with colleagues as you consider what steps you may want to institute in your classroom, grade level, content course, or school. The synergy produced among colleague conversations is amazing!
- **Definitions:** Vocabulary matters! To make sure that we are all on the same page, we have provided the definition of what we mean when certain terms are used.
- **Insights From Practice:** Narratives describe practice, sharing the stories of real people who have found success in their shifts in practice.
- **A Continuum for Progress Monitoring:** Tracking progress over time is good for all of us—students and teachers. The continuum allows continuous monitoring of our progress—and celebrations along the way are encouraged.
- **Resources:** A plethora of resources has been published about increasing student agency—those resources are shared within the playbook.

Let's Get Started

The time is now. Our students are willing and able—we just need to create the conditions. The shift to a more student agency-centered model requires courage and determination. After all, we most likely did not experience this model of learning. However, as adults, we know that agentic behavior is essential for a healthy, successful life. We can start building that bridge to increased agentic behavior by allowing our students to be partners in the process of learning. Start small. Think big!





Engaging with the Playbook

Credit: Mart Production/Pexels

Your Personal Invitation

A great opportunity to engage in new practices that shift and share the ownership of learning with our students awaits! The title of this section, “Engaging with the Playbook,” is a deliberate invitation for you to truly engage with the various sections of the playbook as you explore new ways of enhancing your teaching practices.

The playbook’s suggested shift in learning has the potential to build wonderful partnerships with your students. Please notice the phrase “partnerships with your students.” The partnerships must be presented as plural, because a partnership must be built with each and every student. We can maximize our influence with many students if we authentically engage them so that they want to learn, have the capacity to adjust their learning as required for improvement, and are able to apply their learning. Unlocking each student’s sense of agency is what this playbook is all about!

How to Use the Playbook

This playbook is designed to be interactive and open-ended. You have the freedom to make the playbook work for you in any way that makes sense. This is not a textbook—it is something to use as a guide, a model, and a resource.

Foundation and Implementation

There are two major sections to the playbook: the Foundation Section and the Implementation Section.

Part I: Foundation

The Foundation Section includes the following:

1. Welcome to this Playbook
2. Engaging with the Framework
3. Implementing the Overarching Playbook
4. Understanding Agency by Design
5. Three Dimensions of Agency
6. Design-Inspired Leadership

We recommend that you spend time reading, reflecting on, and discussing the fundamentals presented in the Foundation Section. This section identifies those elements that need to be in place if shifts in practice are to occur. Important guidance is found in each element of the Foundation Section:

1. **Welcome to This Playbook:** If you have not already read this section, we recommend that you begin your journey by reading the Welcome section. The benefits of the playbook are presented, as well as assurances about maintaining rigorous expectations and grade-level standards as requirements of our work.
2. **Introduction to the Framework:** This section introduces the Overarching Framework that describes the elements linked to the conditions of learning. There are 14 elements in total. Seven elements define the conditions promoting more agentic learning behaviors by students that are teacher centered. Seven elements define the characteristics promoting more agentic behaviors that are student centered. The graphic and the explanation that accompanies it set the stage for the more in-depth look at conditions for learning and the characteristics of learning that occur in the second part of the playbook, the Implementation Section.
3. **Foundations:** This part gets into the heart of what we are talking about when it comes to enhancing student agency. It is important because it allows for conversation about the tenets of what it means to activate agency in ourselves and our students. General understanding and agreement among leadership and colleagues about the values stated here are an important cornerstone to moving forward with the work. This section contains reflective questions that will help ensure that everyone is on the same page.
4. **Three Dimensions of Agency:** This important section clarifies the responsibility we have to consider the impact that our behavior and our students' behavior has on people around us and our environment. We do not operate in a vacuum. Our actions have consequences, positive and negative, within the ecosystem in which we live. This section brings a depth of understanding to that concept.
5. **Leadership:** Successful development of student agency needs leadership at all levels—classroom, building, and district. Various leaders' roles are described in this part. Student agency is not developed from the top down. And it can be inhibited if the leadership for this initiative is limited to the classroom.

To develop student agency within the building, you need building-level support. Spreading agency across the grades needs support at the top levels. This section brings focus to the type of leadership needed and the shared responsibility required of leaders if agency is to flourish. This section is a must-read for everyone in a leadership role—which is each of us.

Part II: Implementation

The Implementation Section contains 14 discrete elements that stand alone, yet they work interactively with one another. This section comprises:

Conditions Created by Teachers:

1. Motivation and Engagement
2. Support and Supervision
3. Measuring Success
4. Learning Environments
5. Curriculum

6. Acts of Teaching
7. Design of Learning

Characteristics Observed in Students:

1. Collaboration
2. Digital Literacy
3. Assessment for Learning
4. Learners as Leaders
5. Competencies for Life
6. Learner-Driven Learning
7. Assessment Capability

This part of the playbook provides the specific opportunity to review current practice, reflect on changes, have dialogue with colleagues, and implement change. Once changes are occurring, the cycle of reflection, conversations with colleagues, and evaluation of what's next continues.

Each of the sections contains the following:

1. **Why Is This Important?** The “why” of what we are doing is essential if we are to sustain our efforts through the change process.
2. **Dig Deeper:** The authors want you to clearly understand what is being presented as an element of agency. The Dig Deeper sections offer further in-depth understanding of the condition or the characteristic.
3. **Teacher/Student Chart:** *Agentic behaviors are fostered when...* These charts are useful tools for looking specifically at what the teacher and the student should exhibit when agentic behaviors are occurring.
4. **Insights From Practice:** Sharing others' experiences can be extremely useful. In this section, you can get an insider's understanding of lessons learned and real-world implementation experiences.
5. **Invitation to Act:** This is the catalyst. The questions are intended to prompt opportunities to build on current conditions in the classroom as well as address areas that may not yet be present.
6. **Notes:** Each section contains notations that can serve as examples or ways a teacher might approach implementation. These are not all inclusive and are only to be used as samples.
7. **Measuring Progress:** A rubric is attached to the conditions and the characteristics. This can be a helpful tool to observe and then track the concrete shifts in classroom practice that are occurring.
8. **Resource Ideas:** This provides quick access to the resources that can support the specific condition or characteristic being studied.

Part III: Measuring Progress Using Rubrics

The final section of the playbook provides an overview of the ways in which you can use the rubrics to help you monitor your progress as you seek to create a more agentic learning environment in your classroom or school. In this section it suggests that you use the collated rubrics at the end of the book as a starting point to help you create a baseline of where you are at currently, and to identify the specific places to begin your activity.

This playbook is for you. It is designed to support you in your desire to transform your classroom to a more agency-centered model. Have fun and start to “play”!



Implementing the Overarching Framework

Credit: Anna Shvets/Pexels

We hope you are ready to take your work to the next level. With the hope of organizing the shift to an agentic model of teaching and learning, the Implementation Section of the playbook (beginning on page 28) is devoted to delving deeply into the components as shown in the graphic below. Understanding the Overarching Framework is key to creating a plan of action that works best for you.

Unpacking the Framework

In an effort to have a common frame of orientation within the playbook, we have provided a framework for implementation (see page 11). As one might expect, this framework is built on the classic elements that are familiar to educators and required for learning to occur.

What makes this framework unique is the collective shifts in practice within each of the elements, by both the student and the teacher—with the expected benefit of increasing agentic behaviors with students.

The terms used to identify the elements of practice are familiar. Our challenge is to take this framework and design learning in our schools and classrooms that promotes the growth and development of agentic learners, as noted in the center of the figure.

The left side of the framework, in blue, addresses the teacher's role. The right side of the framework, in green, addresses the student.

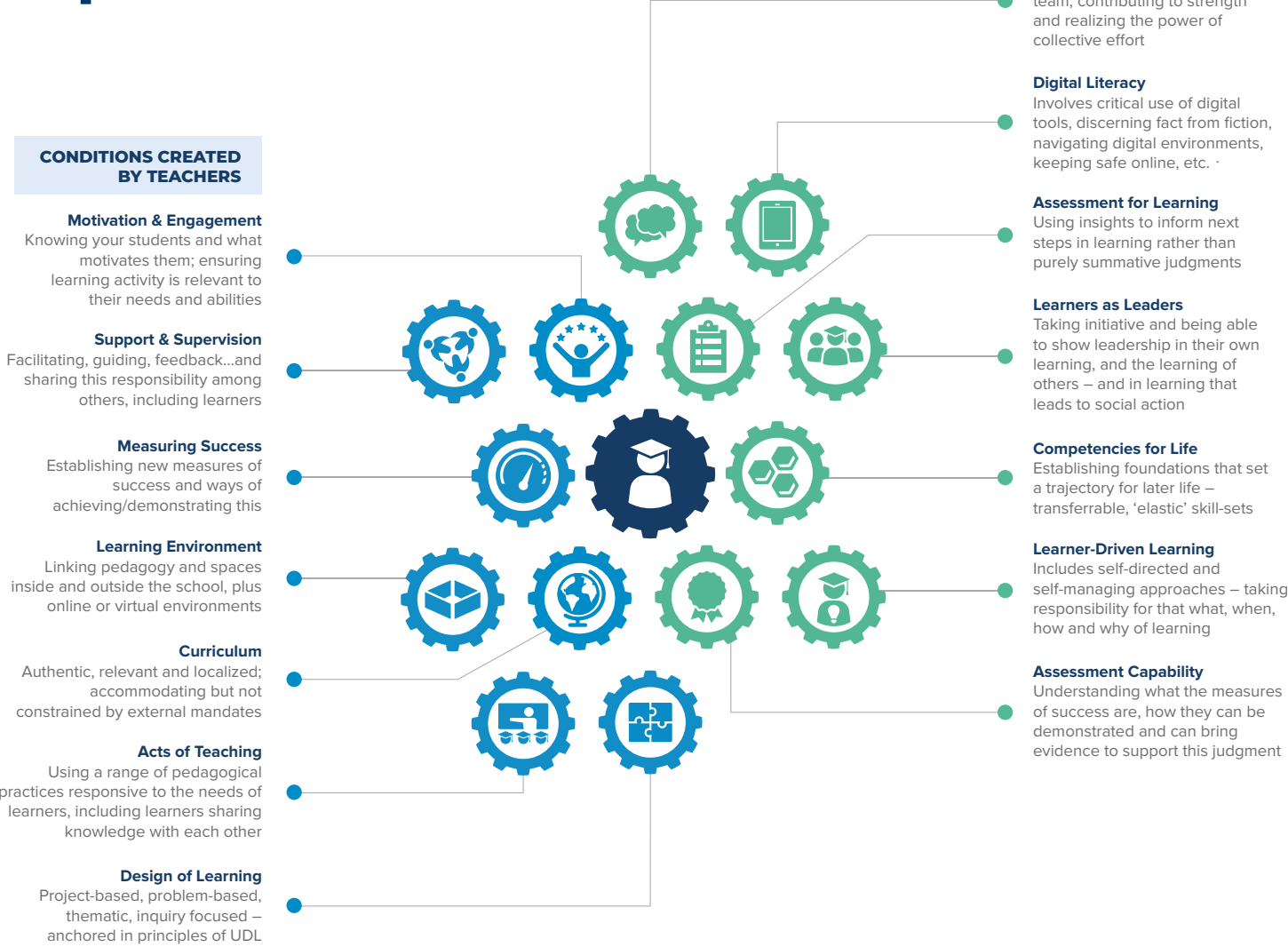
Learners at the Center

Developing agency in learners requires a fundamental shift in the way we think about the relationships and learning activity in our schools and classrooms. It recognizes the learners as its core participants, encourages their active engagement, and develops in them an understanding of their own activity as learners.

A learner-centered view of teaching recognizes that all learners come to class with rich knowledge and experiences; it acknowledges that each learner brings different language and learning abilities. So a truly learner-centered approach provides a learning environment that is more likely to address learners' diverse needs.

Placing the learner at the center of all learning experiences means more than simply accommodating individual learner needs or preferences.

Framework for Implementation



It means developing within each student the capabilities required for them to assume an increasing responsibility for and ownership of their learning. It also means preparing them to participate fully and meaningfully as contributing members of their communities and of society.

Conditions Created by Teachers

To create the conditions conducive to the developing agentic learners and learning, educators must take responsibility for the seven elements identified on the left side of this framework.

These conditions are:

- Motivation and Engagement
- Support and Supervision

- Measuring Success
- Learning Environments
- Curriculum
- Acts of Teaching
- Design of Learning

These conditions must be considered in the design of learning, and they will require a shift in thinking from what many educators have experienced in the past. Educators must take responsibility for ensuring attention is given to each of these conditions, to be confident that the learning experiences they design provide maximum opportunity for learners to experience and develop agency as learners.

Characteristics Observed in Students

The seven elements identified on the right of the framework provide key, observable characteristics that will be evident as learners become more agentic in their learning.

These characteristics are:

- Digital Literacy
- Collaboration
- Assessment for Learning
- Learners as Leaders
- Competencies for Life
- Assessment Capability
- Learner-Driven Learning

These characteristics may form or contribute to a “profile of a graduate” from our schools—the qualities, capabilities, and dispositions that we believe will ensure that our learners are equipped to thrive as citizens of the future.

Playbook Approach

The playbook has been designed as an interactive process that encourages colleague conversations, as well as personal reflection, about shifts in practice. For each element in the framework, the playbook offers an explanation and series of questions and examples to help guide you in applying each element in your context. A rubric is also provided to help you assess where you are in your development of these elements in your own practice and context.



Understanding Agency by Design

Credit: Pavel Danilyuk/Pexels

First, some background

In recent years, a lot has been written and discussed about placing the learner at the center of our teaching and learning, with advice for educators on creating learner-centered classrooms, and focusing on supporting learners to become self-directed and self-managing in their learning. We agree with much of this—but in our view, much of what happens in classrooms falls short of the promise that promoting authentic learner agency offers.

We believe that the concept of learner agency is the important differentiator here—shifting the focus from merely employing strategies that make the individual learner the focus of our teaching (student centered), to a genuine shift in the ownership of learning, where the learner has choices about their learning and the ability to act on those choices.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this concept for us, when schools were locked down for some time and students were required to continue their learning at home, without the teacher’s direct supervision. What we learned about school during this period of sporadic face-to-face and virtual learning is that there is a tremendous need to ramp up our efforts to make this shift in ownership happen.

Many students were lost when engagement required much more than compliant behavior following face-to-face, teacher-centered guidance. We lost valuable time with students due to the pandemic when students did not have the skills to be self-directed learners. Hence our focus in this playbook on taking responsibility to prepare our students to have the ability and opportunity to be part of the learning design.

Of course, the pandemic is not the only disruptor of our traditional education system. Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), the emergence of “deep fake” software, and AI tools such as ChatGPT are challenging the traditional roles of teachers and enabling learners to explore different pathways for learning.

We must ask: How will advances in artificial intelligence influence student learning? How will the use of AI advance the human aspect of communication and collaboration to enhance learning in social situations, instead of AI being the controller of learning in isolated ways? What about new ways to access learning or new ways to measure learning? What effects will they have? Will they provide an alternative to authentic engagement, or will deliberate and planned redesign of the learning environment lead to an increase in engagement and deeper learning for students?

All these questions require educators to rethink their role in the teaching and learning process, and to design learning experiences so that learners are committed to the learning process. Examples of shifts we already see occurring are the adoption of competency-based grading and the movement away from measuring learning by seat time (inputs) to a system that measures learning by the attainment of skills, knowledge, understanding, and dispositions.

This playbook suggests that as educators, we must be proactive to promote agentic behaviors as part of our school and lesson-planning model. We propose that we must be more intentional within the learning environment, to foster and scaffold opportunities to give students a more personalized learning experience that instills a sense of agency. We explore more of these ideas and strategies in Part II: Implementation.

Understanding Learner Agency

Let's begin with an explanation of what we mean by learner agency. We believe that it is the skill set that enables the student to become self-directed, self-managing, a problem solver, and responsible for their own learning. For this to occur, the student and the teacher must change their relationship and establish a partnership-in-learning process. Even respectful compliance is not the desired outcome—rather, the desired outcome should be for students to be committed to the learning and to drive their own learning.

In the book [Putting Students First](#)¹, the authors define student agency as follows:

“Students taking ownership of and responsibility for their own learning is nearly universally accepted as a desirable and positive trait. When students have a say in what and how they engage with content, learning deepens and carries over into new applications and areas. There are numerous, well-documented, research-based practices designed to support and promote student voice and choice, including things like project-based learning, student involvement in school governance and advisory programs where individuals set and work toward short- and long-term goals.”

New Zealand's educational system has been ahead of the game when it comes to promoting what they label as *learner agency*. The conversations taking place in New Zealand contribute greatly to building understanding of this concept:

“Learner agency is about having the power, combined with choices, to take meaningful action and see the result of those decisions. It can be thought of as a catalyst for change or transformation. Learner agency is about students having the understanding, ability and opportunity to be part of the learning design and taking action to intervene in the learning process and become effective lifelong learners.”²

Understanding Agency by Design

The title of this playbook, *Agency by Design*, is based on the belief that learner agency is something that develops not by chance or accident, but through the deliberate design of the learning experiences that we create for the learners in our classrooms and schools. To see our young people develop agentially, we

¹ Jones, M., Avery, L., & DiMartino, J. (2020). *Putting students first*. Rowman & Littlefield.

² CORE Education. (2017). Ten trends: Learner agency. https://core-ed.org/en_NZ/free-resources/ten-trends/2017-ten-trends/learner-agency

must be intentional about the culture we create in our schools and classrooms—where the characteristics of agency can be nurtured and grow.

Agency cannot be developed in our learners in a vacuum. We must be intentional about it. The teacher cannot simply announce that, henceforth, students will be in charge. To do that is simply to abdicate the responsibility we have as educators.

A Cautionary Tale: Visitors, administrators and teachers, themselves, may be misled that compliant classrooms are evidence of student-engaged classrooms. This may be based on the idea that a quiet classroom with students in their seats listening to the teacher in the front of the room implies students authentically connected to what is being presented. When a classroom was noisy, when the students were out of their seats, when the teacher wasn't in the front of the room, it might appear that the class was out of control. Those of us proposing more agentic behavior by students now realize that this “messy classroom” may actually be the one where students were authentically engaged unlike the quiet ritually compliant classroom.

But neither can we decide one day to teach our students to be agentic. **Agency cannot be taught; it is experienced.** It is what happens when we deliberately shift the ownership of learning and create the right conditions and environments. This will allow our learners to become co-constructors of the curriculum and learning experiences—and to be contributors and activists rather than consumers in our instructional process.

Several dimensions must be considered as we become intentional about encouraging agency in our learners.

First is creating the climate and culture for understanding the meaning of student agency and *why* this shift should happen. It is important to purposely create a common vision and mission of developing agentic learners, followed by agentic learning design based on proven pedagogical models, including constructivist practices and backward design in lesson planning.

Fostering agentic behaviors with our students fits well into the science of learning theory as a way to encourage

more authentic student engagement with the learning. Simply put, it is a matter of looking at what we do traditionally with lesson design and inviting the students to be contributors along the way. The teacher is still in charge, but as conditions warrant, the student is invited to have more voice and choice in the learning environment.

Another important aspect of creating the climate and culture is moving away from the traditional top-down model of leadership, toward a more inclusive and distributed approach. We must create a climate and culture where shared leadership encourages innovation, collaborative problem-solving, and risk-taking.

A traditional learning design model starts with the end in mind—what we want our student to know and be able to do; a design for how we are to assess the learning outcomes; and, finally, the types of activities that would support our learning outcomes. Those fundamental planning and teaching skills will always remain important. Otherwise, we're simply abdicating responsibility as the more experienced learner/leader.

The critical differentiation from traditional teacher-centered planning comes with shifting from a unilateral approach to a bilateral approach. Once the required elements of learning or assessments are accounted for, we can look to broaden the learning environment by allowing our learners to become more actively involved in every aspect of the planning process, including what is being learned and how.

Joseph DiMartino, in his book *They're Not Stupid*, states that “in the ideal student-centered environment, student input is sought, listened to and addressed authentically... Students can become the chief architects

of the learning and contributing citizens to the school community.”³ So it is with this spirit of students as architects of their learning that we explore the various points in time along the planning and delivery cycle when we have opportunities to include student voice and choice.

Being Intentional About Agency-Driven Lesson Design

Without intentional agency-driven lesson design, which fosters agentic behaviors, students may not know how to behave in a learning environment that is not closely directed by a teacher. By contrast, intentional lesson design with agency in mind builds students’ capacity to develop problem-solving skills, cope with ambiguity, increase depth of content knowledge, and allow for individual and equitable learning outcomes, because their learning is more personalized.

The excitement we have seen in interactions among students and teachers as the ownership and engagement shifts to the learner is palpable. To the right are our belief statements as we encourage a more intentional approach to ensuring students are included in the learning process.

One way to observe agentic behavior is by noting levels of engagement. What we often see disguised as authentic engagement is merely students exhibiting compliant behavior. Based on our experiences as seasoned educators, that compliant behavior has guided many children as they come into the classroom and begin their day with face-to-face instruction.

Compliant children are often the ones we say have learned how to “do school” well. They sit up straight in their seats, they make eye contact with the teacher, they follow all the classroom rules, and they raise their hands and answer questions when called on. Their compliance is often confused with real engagement in their learning.

The emphasis on a teacher’s role in maintaining focus and control over the students often disguises a student’s lack of engagement with the work, because the student has simply been compliant and completed the assignment. As we have observed, this does not necessarily indicate interest in or connection with the learning itself. Many students we have encountered are satisfied to do what is asked

We believe...

- that student agency is an essential attribute of learners of all ages.
- that student agency must be developed deliberately and intentionally.
- that agency should be a core component of the requisite planning, so all learners can thrive and be successful.
- that agency can and should be promoted within the organization of the curriculum, the planning process, the design of instructional activities, and the assessment of learning.
- that elements of student agency already are established in teacher evaluation and supervision models, but they are not at the forefront of teacher expectations.
- that a catalyst for success requires leaders (classroom, building, district) to embrace “design-inspired” leadership strategies.
- teachers must be given agency and that a climate and culture that encourages and supports agency is an essential part of a school and school district
- leaders must be intentional about giving the teacher agency in a safe environment to make mistakes.

³ DiMartino, J., & Millwood, J. (2017). *They're not stupid: Unleashing the genius of each student* (p. 60). Rowman & Littlefield Publishing.

of them and complete their assignments whether they like them or not. This implied agreement between teacher and student allows for a well-managed classroom, with little enthusiasm or engagement required on the learner's part.



Conversations with Colleagues

Use the questions below to guide some conversations you may have with colleagues to help refine your thinking and understanding about what has been introduced in this section.

1. Do you agree with the differences between learner-centeredness and learner agency as discussed here? What examples of each or either can you identify in your own practice or in your school?
2. How do you determine whether or not students are authentically engaged in the learning process or simply being compliant when completing the assignment?
3. How do the Belief Statements as provided above reflect what you believe about student learning?
4. What examples of authentic student learning can you share? And how do these illustrate your understanding of learner agency in practice?
5. Can you cite examples of strategies that have been taken or should be taken to create a climate and culture that encourages and supports teacher agency?
6. In what ways have you been a leader in the transition to a more agentic approach in your classroom/school/district?



A photograph of four diverse students (two women and two men) standing outdoors in a park-like setting. They are looking at a map held by one of the men. One woman is pointing upwards, and another is shielding her eyes from the sun. The background shows trees and a bright sky.

Three Dimensions of Agency

Credit: RDNE Stock project/Pexels

Agency is about “we,” not “me”!

Simply placing the learner at the center of our planning and instruction will not produce agentic learners. Neither will simply giving individual learners more choice and voice in their learning.

Why Is This Important?

We all live as part of a complex, interconnected world. If we have agency, we can participate fully in that world, understanding the limits and potential of exercising our responsibility as a unique individual and as a citizen of the world. A focus only on the individual aspect of this idea can result in self-absorption and selfishness—a modern-day hedonism. We must consider the wider context.

Digging Deeper

Demonstrating agency is primarily about demonstrating responsibility. Every day, individuals exercise responsibility (or lack of it) in the decisions and choices they make. The consequences of those decisions may affect them personally (for example: Will I gain weight if I eat this donut?), or their relationship with others (How will the others feel if I eat all the donuts?), or even the environment around them (What will happen if we all simply drop our donut wrappers on the ground instead of putting them in the waste bin?).

These are the three dimensions of responsibility that must be considered when designing for learner agency development:

1. **Responsibility to self:** Managing self, self-regulation, and self-direction are terms used in classrooms where learner agency is intentionally promoted. Having the freedom to choose or express ideas is good, but those things come with a responsibility to do so in a way that avoids harm or negative consequences.
2. **Responsibility to others:** To focus purely on self and not consider the impact of our words and actions on others isn't agency—it's hedonism. As individuals, we live within an interdependent ecosystem. As such, a student's capacity to enact personal agency mediates and is mediated by the classroom's sociocultural context.

- 3. Responsibility to our shared environment:** Just as we live in an interdependence with other humans, that ecosystem must involve the environment(s) we share. Developing agency includes being aware of the responsibility for one’s own actions and the group’s actions on the environment that is shared. For some of us, centuries of seeing ourselves as somehow separate from the environment we share is now catching up with us, and we are understanding that so many of the environmental concerns we are now addressing are a direct result of our own choices and decisions.

To foster authentic, meaningful, and sustainable agency in learners, we must be intentional about our focus on all three dimensions in our planning and implementation of classroom and school programs.

Further, we cannot expect these qualities to simply appear—we need an intentional, scaffolded approach to developing these areas of responsibility in our learners. Sometimes things need to be taught explicitly, at least at the beginning. This is the essence of Agency by Design! You cannot leave it to chance.

To illustrate what this might look like in practice, consider the examples below:

Responsibility to self:

- Ensure that when choice is offered, frameworks or scaffolds are provided to allow students to be intentional about the choices they make and the reasons for making them.
- Provide opportunities to take risks and to make mistakes—but always ensure there is an opportunity to reflect on and learn from those mistakes.
- Help them confront challenges when things get too difficult—provide encouragement and scaffolds for approaching problems. Introducing the “learning pit” by James Nottingham can be useful here (Nottingham, 2017).
- Provide opportunities to learn about the consequences of making poor decisions, such as highlighting the impact of cyber-bullying or ignoring others’ advice.

Responsibility to others:

- When focusing on collaborative activity and group work, ensure the group has authentic ways to process choices and decisions. Assigning group roles can be a good starting point here, so that over time, groups will choose to assign roles themselves as they become more aware of the strengths and contributions that individuals bring.
- Take time to allow learners to process conflict in groups, learning to accept different points of view, express empathy, and work as part of a team. Provide assurance that this sort of thing is a natural part of how people address problems. Model these behaviors as adults, and use opportunities to explain this responsibility to students.

Responsibility to the environment we share:

- In the immediate environment of the classroom or school, this can include putting away library books, keeping the grounds litter free, cleaning the paint trays, disposing of waste materials or recycling materials used for learning, and making decisions about using plastics vs. natural products when selecting resources for school use.
- For the broader environment of the community or world, examples include demonstrating concern for local or global environmental issues, such as the design and use of public spaces, pollution of local streams and waterways, treatment of refugees, and how local and national political decisions are made.

- The key point here is that students understand how their actions and others' actions cannot be divorced from the impact on the environment we share—now and into the future.



Conversations With Colleagues

Review the three dimensions of agency. How are the students encouraged to:

1. Take responsibility for self?
2. Demonstrate responsibility to others?
3. Demonstrate responsibility to the school environment?





Design-Inspired Leadership

Credit: Yan Krukau/Pexels

The role of leadership is essential in designing a teaching and learning environment that promotes authentic and sustained learner engagement, self-direction, and ownership of learning. As leaders, we need to respond to this key question: **How do we embrace students as partners in the instructional planning process?**

Leadership is not only defined by a role or position. Leaders show initiative and have agency to act in the interest of learners. They get personally and publicly involved in promoting student agency. People in leadership positions need to develop a climate and culture where these characteristics are shared among those in the school or district community. These positional leaders should encourage and support others to assume leadership roles and partner with them to design agentic learning experiences.

Making the Shift to Design-Inspired Leadership

As the title of this playbook suggests, agency isn't something that happens by chance. It requires the proactive approach of educators who are intentional about making it happen and who do so through their design of the curriculum, of programs, of assessment, and of learning spaces, for example. This same purposeful approach should be considered when designing systems and programs for the district and the school levels.

School leaders, then, must adopt a design-inspired approach to how they provide the leadership that enables agency to develop. This often means embracing a new perspective of your role as a leader. Leaders should adopt a design-inspired leadership approach, bringing fresh perspectives to their work and sparking positive change in education. Design thinking principles can be used to generate participation and partnership in learning from staff and students.

A second key shift involves including students in the design. Leaders should involve students in decision-making processes, allowing them to contribute to classroom design, learning space optimization, and displays that inspire and celebrate learning. Traditional hierarchical leadership models can hinder these efforts.

Shifting Leadership Roles

To implement agentic learning, leaders need to reassess their roles and behaviors. Consider these approaches to leadership:

- **Influence and support:** Focus on being an influencer who empowers and supports other educators in moving away from traditional teaching approaches, creating a clear understanding of performance accountability.
- **Adaptive leadership styles:** Employ various leadership styles, including captain, coach, democrat, and politician, to produce positive results and fit situational needs.
- **Team-building and distributed leadership:** Build team capability, distributed leadership, and infrastructure or systems to support sustainable change.
- **Student engagement in governance:** Give students significant roles in school governance, allowing them to hold key leadership positions and make up most of the site council.
- **Performance models and culture change:** Apply individual, team, and organizational performance models while embracing culture change best practices.
- **Effective communication:** Create and implement communication plans that address internal and external/community needs, using appropriate communication vehicles.
- **Open-mindedness and flexibility:** Adopt an open-minded approach to using space, encouraging less structured time and allowing student input in decision-making processes.
- **Listening and reflecting:** Focus time on listening to the voices of others—students, colleagues, parents, and community—and employ strategies for reflection where new insights grow and new learning occurs.

Create a Supportive Culture

A positive and supportive school culture is essential for fostering student agency. School leaders are critical in cultivating such an environment. For example:

- **Place learners at the heart:** Prioritize learner-centered experiences and provide opportunities for students to have a voice and choice in classroom functioning. Recognize that classroom activities will reflect more choice, self-determination, ownership, self-management, creative freedom, and student leadership.
- **Promote agency among staff:** Teachers should consider themselves partners in the design process and should work to meet expectations set out for them. Any attempt to introduce a focus on learner agency will likely fail if staff don't feel they have agency in the work they do. Leaders must focus on ways of ensuring that staff are empowered to act agentically in their practice, and to create a climate that supports and encourages agentic learning for both students and teachers.
- **Foster teacher innovation:** Encourage and support teachers in exploring innovative teaching methods that foster learner agency. Provide opportunities for experimentation, reflection, and collaboration. Accept that roles and relationships between student and teacher will be different when agency is activated.
- **Foster collaboration:** Establish structures that encourage collaboration among educators, allowing them to share best practices, exchange ideas, and collectively solve challenges related to promoting student agency.
- **Recognize and celebrate success:** Regularly acknowledge and celebrate instances where student agency is evident. Publicly recognize both students and teachers for their efforts in creating engaging and empowering learning experiences. Adopt a growth mindset and view successes and mistakes as learning opportunities to move forward and improve. Learning comes from productive struggle.

Supporting Strategies to Promote Learner Agency

To support staff in their journey to promote student agency, school leaders can provide practical suggestions and ideas for implementation, including:

- **Encourage student voice and choice:** Promote opportunities for students to have a say in their learning experiences. Encourage educators to provide choices within assignments, projects, and assessments, allowing students to exercise autonomy. The principles of Universal Design for Learning⁴ provide an excellent framework for making this happen.
- **Foster inquiry and problem-solving skills:** Encourage teachers to design learning experiences that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry-based approaches. Provide resources and support for educators to implement such strategies effectively.
- **Develop reflection and goal-setting practices:** Help educators incorporate regular reflection and goal-setting practices into their instructional routines. Support them in guiding students to assess their progress, set meaningful goals, and take ownership of their learning growth. Part II: Implementation provides specific examples of how to do this.

Developing a Partnership Learning Model

Thinking about developing a “partnership learning model” in our classrooms is a useful way of becoming more intentional about our leadership in this area. In this model, learning design is a shared responsibility involving teachers, students, and, where appropriate, parents. The questions that follow may help guide decisions about the new systems and structures being put into place:

- How do learners know when and how to take personal initiative? Do assignments and classroom systems invite individual student initiative? Are there reflective questions for students as they grow in their understanding of what self-regulation looks like when problems arise?
- What opportunities are available for students to establish and work within an interdependent ecosystem? How do individual students understand their contributions to the group’s success? Examples include meeting classroom or grade-level goals, smooth transitions between activities, and small-group project work.
- What structures or systems are in place to ensure that the environment is a safe and orderly place for learning? Do the systems and structures in place give students explicit guidance, such as posted, agreed-upon norms, rubrics, and other aids to help students acquire self-directed behaviors socially and academically?
- Are we clear about what success looks like and how it will be measured? Are learners a part of developing the criteria for success? Do they explicitly practice and then evaluate their actions or product against a student and teacher or class-generated rubric? Do they celebrate progress toward the goal if the student is “not there yet”? How is lack of success incorporated into the learning process?

A sense of agency grows in a supportive environment. The environment for learning is designed, managed, and controlled within intentional learning design. Therefore, the dimensions described above must be considered and then woven into the daily learning environment.

⁴ CAST. About universal design for learning. <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

Potential Barriers to Success

As with any change process, some obstacles and barriers will inhibit change from happening. Many of these obstacles and barriers will highlight areas where existing ways of working need to be changed, and where legacy systems or processes must be let go. Some of the barriers leaders may need to navigate when promoting agentic learning include:

- **Overemphasis on student management:** Shifting from student management to authentic engagement is crucial for fostering agency. The temptation to “micro-manage” must be balanced with support for developing self-managing strategies among the learners.
- **“Loose vs. tight” management:** Leaders must focus on their management style and determine the correct balance between a looser and a tighter style. They must also determine the circumstances when a loose or a tight management style is most appropriate. By “giving permission” through a looser management style, leaders provide agency to their teachers.
- **Primary focus on academic performance through grades:** Prioritize authentic achievement over grades. While academic success must remain a key focus for all learners, a singular focus on grades as a measure of success limits the broader means by which success can be recognized and celebrated. This is particularly challenging because of the perception (particularly among parents and in the community) that grades are the key to college and university admissions. The movement of colleges and universities away from standardized test scores and toward more holistic admissions criteria prioritizes learning ahead of the assessment focus.
- **Balancing structure and innovation:** Finding a balance between structure and innovation is essential for creating an agentic culture. Structures (such as curriculum, timetables, and classes) are all useful, and necessary at times, to help us best use time, space, and resources in our schools. But we must be prepared to be more flexible about these things when we want to promote and support more innovative approaches to learning.
- **Collaboration vs. hierarchy:** Prioritize collaboration over hierarchical decision-making processes. Research shows that educational experiences that are active, social, contextual, engaging, and student-owned lead to deeper learning.
- **Encouraging self-direction:** Prioritize self-direction over compliance. Too often, the parameters of a learning task are governed by the time available to complete it or the resources available to undertake it, for example. Promoting self-direction requires more flexibility in terms of both time and resources, and it also requires helping learners develop the tools and strategies to become more independent and self-directed in their learning.
- **Fostering a growth mindset:** Promote a growth mindset over a fixed mindset among staff and students. Understanding that agency involves having choices and being able to act on those choices means that the individual must be empowered to see possibilities and pursue them in ways that are appropriate for their abilities and interests.
- **Embracing risk-taking:** Provide permission and support for teachers to take risks in their instructional practices. This also applies to the learners themselves. Risk aversion or avoidance can be a significant barrier to developing learner agency.

Leadership is an essential component of any successful school or district. Meeting the needs of agentic learners requires a new and improved form of leadership. It requires a form of leadership that establishes a climate and culture that encourage and support innovation, and a transition to agentic learning. It requires shared leadership and the encouragement of a leadership structure that is not based on traditional, top-down, hierarchical models but rather a structure where teachers are offered opportunities to join in the leadership. It requires distributed, design-inspired leadership.



Conversations with Colleagues

The Colleague Conversations section provides prompts and guidance for the administrative leadership and teacher leadership to collaboratively engage with some of the ideas introduced in each section.

Note: For these conversations to take root, create a sense of “permission” to try new things and address issues head-on, in a culture of safety, when expressing ideas or opinions. The rubrics in Part II: Implementation will be useful tools when addressing these questions and creating plans of action.

Review the section titled Create a Supportive Culture. Which areas are a strength, or a potential strength, on which to build an agentic environment? Second, which areas would be areas of growth? What action steps would be required to build on the area of strength? What action steps would be required to enhance the area of growth?

Note: The shift to an agentic environment will take time. Small steps that can be monitored and adjusted as needed, and can show incremental change, will lead to success. The rubrics found within each of the 14 elements in the Implementation Section will provide guidance on suggested next steps.



Review the section titled Potential Barriers to Success. Which of these potential barriers may need to be addressed to allow shifts in practice to occur? Which barrier would you address as a priority? Which of these would require professional development support? Which of these are within the locus of control of the classroom teacher or the building-level administrator? How can you maintain a positive mindset about change while addressing these potential barriers?

Note: On review, you may note that many of these barriers are “mindset” issues of traditional practice. A culture of support, realizing that first attempts sometimes will not go as planned, is required. A well-entrenched understanding of the reasons why change is beneficial will most likely need to be revisited during colleague conversations, to sustain the momentum of change and not allow potential barriers to inhibit the change process. This can be addressed by revisiting the belief statements found in the section titled Understanding Agency by Design.



Review the section titled Developing a Partnership Learning Model. Which areas are in the teacher's locus of control? When do parents need to be involved in the shifts? Which areas need the support of the building-level leaders and/or the district leadership?

Note: Rubrics found in Part II: Implementation will be helpful tools when addressing the following question. What is a reasonable plan of action based on a few targeted shifts in practice, a time frame for change, a baseline based on the provided rubrics, a checkpoint date, and next steps?

Partnerships are essential to create a more agentic model. Neither parents nor administrative staff should be "surprised" by changes. External support for some changes may be a requirement. And, at all times, the curricular expectations should be honored.







Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Motivation & Engagement

Time to eliminate boredom!

Learners must be fully invested in their own learning for it to be meaningful

Why Is This Important?

Research has demonstrated that engaging students in the learning process increases their attention and focus, as well as motivating them to engage in higher-level critical thinking. We need to be focused on achieving more than compliance in our classrooms. Ensuring learners are intrinsically motivated and engaged is essential for their learning to be meaningful, because it fosters sustained interest, active participation, increased effort, emotional connection, and the application and transfer of knowledge. These factors contribute to a deeper understanding, improved retention, and a genuine passion for learning.

Belief Statement

We believe that student agency must be developed deliberately and intentionally. **Motivation** is the driving force that causes a student to take action. **Engagement** encompasses the thoughts, actions, and emotions that reflect this inclination, as well as the observable behavior or evidence of that motivation.

DIG DEEPER



To maximize learners' motivation and engagement in classrooms where learner agency is being promoted, consider the following strategies and use the space below to record your thoughts:

1. Listen to your students

Learners feel empowered when they are given opportunities to express their ideas, goals, and learning preferences. Be intentional about finding out what motivates and interests your learners. By incorporating learners' interests into the learning process, teachers can make the content more relatable and meaningful. This connection facilitates better comprehension, retention, and the transfer of knowledge to real-life situations.

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2. Provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences

Learners are more likely to be motivated and engaged when they see the relevance and importance of what they are learning. Connect classroom learning to real-world applications and encourage learners to explore topics that are of interest to them.

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3. Encourage collaboration and peer-to-peer learning

Collaborative learning can foster a sense of community and support learners in developing a sense of agency. Encourage learners to work together and share their ideas and perspectives, and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback and assessment.

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4. Use inquiry-based learning

When learners have the opportunity to explore areas of interest generated by their own questions and ideas, they are likely to be more motivated and engaged. Inquiry-based learning provides an ideal vehicle for this, giving learners greater control over their own learning.

While initially some teachers may feel they “lose control” of the learning process with this approach, the rigor and structure remains. Teachers can scaffold inquiry-based learning for younger grades and provide learner autonomy as the learners develop stronger organizational skills, and as the teacher gains more comfort with “giving it a go.” This way, the learners become more empowered to be self-managing and self-regulating, developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the process.

5. Provide choice and autonomy

Giving learners choice and autonomy can help increase motivation and engagement. Encourage learners to choose topics, projects, and activities that align with their interests and learning goals, and allow them to have a say in how they demonstrate their learning.

6. Use positive feedback and reinforcement

Positive feedback and reinforcement can help motivate learners by highlighting their progress and achievements. Provide specific and meaningful feedback, and recognize learners for their efforts and successes. The teacher can structure activities for learners to give feedback to each other, such as using sticky notes or structured talk buddies.

7. Foster a growth mindset

A growth mindset encourages learners to view challenges as opportunities for growth and to see their abilities as malleable. Encourage learners to take risks and to see mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow.

8. Provide opportunities for reflection and self-assessment

Reflection and self-assessment can help learners develop a sense of agency by encouraging them to think critically about their own learning. Encourage learners to reflect on their progress and to identify areas where they can improve, and provide opportunities for self-assessment.

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9. Build strong relationships

Building strong relationships between teachers and learners, as well as fostering a sense of community within the classroom or school, is crucial for promoting learner agency. When learners feel valued, supported, and connected to their teachers and peers, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning.

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10. Create a sense of membership of school/classroom

Creating a sense of belonging and a positive classroom or school culture can enhance learner agency. When learners feel like they are part of a supportive community, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning and actively participate in the educational process.

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11. Enhance task interest

Increasing task interest by making learning experiences engaging, stimulating, and enjoyable can boost learner agency. Incorporate elements that capture learners' curiosity, challenge them appropriately, and provide opportunities for creativity and personal expression.

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12. Ensure relevance

Highlighting the learning content’s relevance to learners’ lives and future goals can increase their motivation and engagement. Show how the knowledge and skills they are acquiring are applicable and valuable beyond the classroom.

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13. Connect with students’ values, goals, and identity

Helping learners make connections between the learning content and their personal values, goals, and identity can enhance learner agency. By understanding how their learning aligns with their own aspirations and identities, learners are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and purpose in their educational journey.

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14. Set goals and provide regular feedback

Setting goals that are specific, attainable, and meaningful to learners and providing regular feedback on their progress can promote learner agency. When learners have clear targets to work toward and receive timely feedback on their performance, they can actively monitor their own learning and make adjustments as needed.

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15. Talk explicitly about motivation

Discuss motivation explicitly—including the importance of being motivated to learn. Help learners understand the various factors that influence motivation and encourage them to reflect on their own motivations for learning. This dialogue can foster metacognition and empower learners to take responsibility for their own motivation.

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These strategies can help you create a learning environment that maximizes learners' motivation and engagement in classrooms where learner agency is being promoted. These strategies can also help learners develop important skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and self-regulation, which can serve them well throughout their lives.





FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through effective motivation and engagement

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I take time to know my students, what interests them, and what motivates them, and I use this information to inform my planning decisions.• I invite my learners to express their ideas and make choices about their learning.• I actively encourage my learners to take greater ownership of their learning.• I develop deep and meaningful relationships with my students.• I set clear goals and provide regular feedback to my learners.• I create opportunities for social, emotional, and cognitive engagement in learning.• I use the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all my learning design to ensure that all learners' needs and interests are catered to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What I am learning is meaningful to me. It connects with my interests, abilities, and cultural background.• I can make choices about what I learn and how I learn.• I am welcome to ask questions and share my ideas.• My teacher knows me and understands what interests and motivates me. I trust my teacher.• I can provide feedback to my teacher on her or his teaching.• I have skills and tools required to allow me to manage my own learning.• I feel my efforts as a learner are recognized and valued.• I draw strength and inspiration in my learning from working alongside others.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real world examples are important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The “insights from practice” shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Strategies for increasing motivation

- 1. Motivation linked to interest surveys by the teacher:** Student interest can be greatly enhanced if the design of learning activities includes areas of interest to the student. Teachers can gather that information from student-based interest surveys.
- 2. Motivation linked to individual goal setting and student tracking of goals:** Students respond well when setting their own goals, with input and guidance from their teacher. Students can track their progress electronically or in hard copy.
- 3. Motivation based on “must do, may do” charts:** Students choose the order of their must-do tasks and select options from the may-do tasks, including genius hour or passion projects.
- 4. Motivation supported by self-reflection:** When students have an opportunity to reflect on the challenge, work completed, and how their work can improve along the learning ladder, they develop a sense of self-sufficiency. This allows students to determine what they do well, what they need to improve, and what resources are available to assist them. It is helpful for students to have examples, rubrics, or resources in their student-led conference folders.
- 5. Motivation using feedback surveys:** Teachers can give students a feedback survey at the end of each unit or week. Students evaluate themselves to determine whether they have mastered it or whether they need second learning opportunity (SLO) time the next week. Groups sort themselves the next week based on the survey. These motivation strategies defer the use of grades as the final determinant for monitoring progress. Formative assessment tools are essential to promote motivation. Students will receive a final grade with opportunities to improve before the summative assessment.

Students are motivated when they create a solution to a problem they see

When learners create a solution to a problem they see, they have greater ownership and therefore increased motivation to engage with it. The opportunity to participate in solving a problem also supports key learning skills in the areas of reading, researching, and applying math skills.

Example 1: One group of students created a plan to put in a wiffle ball field. The solution included reading, researching, and applying math skills. They researched the equipment cost, surveyed coaches about the best equipment, created a PowerPoint, and presented their project to the maintenance supervisor. The students were able to turn their high interest into a real project that would serve their school community upon completion.

Example 2: A group of students at John Tyson Elementary researched, worked with community partners, and installed a school garden. They noticed their classmate who was in a wheelchair could not use the community garden because it was on the ground. She needed a raised garden bed. So

they wrote a grant to put one in the school garden. They made a positive, long-lasting impact on the lives of other children at their school.

Example 3: Before Dr. Jim D. Rollins Elementary School of Innovation opened its doors, a group of students and parents formed a committee with the principal, Dr. Thompson (one of the playbook’s authors). The children surveyed their peers at their current school about the type of equipment that was a “must have” for the new school. They met with the playground company, selected pieces that fit within their budget, surveyed their peers again about their choices, and chose the color scheme.

Soon after the playground was installed, a fifth-grade student said, “Dr. Thompson, we don’t have any sidewalk games.” She responded, “Oh, no. That’s a problem. What are you going to do about that?” He looked at her with a puzzled expression and then said, “I don’t know.” So she told him he should take charge of this project for the school and find out the kinds of games children in grades K-5 would like to have at the school. He created a survey and sent it to the principal, who sent it to all teachers. He even kept up with which teachers had given the survey to their students and which had not. He came on the morning announcements and said, “Now teachers... I have 9 surveys completed by teachers, and I need 17! Please put this on your agendas to complete.” He created a presentation to announce the results of the vote, met with the sidewalk painter, and determined the location of the games by measuring the area they had available. This project was his from start to finish, and he was so proud of his leadership.

Example 4: At the high school level, senior projects can offer this opportunity. At Bow High School, students select a project that they are passionate about and that addresses a problem or need in the school or community. Students identify the topic, they research a solution, and they work with community partners to identify and implement a solution. Students also present their project to a panel of school and community members and get feedback on their work.

Promote a growth mindset over a fixed mindset

- Develop meaningful and respectful relationships with your students.
- Grow a community of learners in your classroom.
- Establish high expectations and clear goals.
- Be inspirational.

These things could be achieved, for example, by holding a student-centered morning meeting about goals and behaviors that support a growth mindset.

Let students know that they are welcome to share their own ideas

Give students a chance to give their feedback on your teaching.

Students look to teachers for approval and positive reinforcement, and they are more likely to be enthusiastic about learning if they feel their work is recognized and valued. You should encourage open communication and free thinking with your students to make them feel important. Be enthusiastic.

Guy Claxton suggests creating a learning environment that doesn’t show only finished pieces of learning, but the learning process as well. He refers to this as “the guts of learning.” Doing this develops a positive attitude toward making, learning from, and building on mistakes.

A “learning ladder”⁵ is useful here for content tasks. Learners read and annotate a text, then give each other feedback using a proficiency scale and the learning ladder. They move a token to the part of the ladder that best reflects their progress on that task. This also gives feedback to the teacher on whether the lesson was too easy, just right, or a stretch.

⁵The concept of a learning ladder comes from the work of Guy Claxton, which is outlined in his Building Learning Power website: <https://www.buildinglearningpower.com/>.





INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on your students' behaviors when engaging in the learning process.

What strategies do you use to gather insights from your learners about their interests and what motivates them to learn? When do you take time to listen to them for these things? How is this information captured and used to inform your planning?

Tip: This doesn't need to be a formal "interview" with students. You can capture these sorts of insights in various ways, such as inviting students to create an "about me" profile at the beginning of the year, or holding peer interviews where students interrogate each other to discover things that interest them, and then report a summary to the class. Don't forget that parents may have particular insights that are helpful, so you can invite feedback from them as well.



What examples can you share when you have seen your students authentically engaged in what they were doing? What are your insights from practice? Can you observe a difference in behaviors between compliance in learning and authentic engagement? Can you observe when students move from authentic engagement to empowerment?

Tip: Your examples may come from outside the classroom—watching students participate in a soccer game, for example. Or they may come from a special activity you have provided through an art class or another voluntary project.



Describe students' behaviors when they are fully engaged or empowered. Do you see that same enthusiasm and involvement in core content classes? Is this true for some students and not for others?

Tip: Some students may eagerly look for advanced math projects or do research regarding their science content on their own, for example.



Using the strategies that are listed in the Dig Deeper section or examples in the Insights From Practice section, can you create conversations with students about the relevance of their learning, develop the class culture about achieving the learning goal, allow for choice or self-expression, or encourage personal goal setting and rewards for goal achievement?

Tip: These strategies depend on interacting with students and understanding their interests and connectivity with the unit or assignment. This may be achieved in part during a class conversation about the learning goals. Great insight can be gained by spending a small amount of time creating a class conversation with a focus on high expectations that supports the learning outcomes for the unit or course of study. Capture their thoughts on a class anchor chart or in videos during which students explain their learning outcomes and goals.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for motivation and engagement

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
<p>Learners demonstrate lack of motivation, disinterest, and sometimes boredom, and they are often disengaged in their learning.</p> <p>Engagement in learning is mostly through compliance.</p>	<p>Learners are asked to contribute their thoughts and ideas to inform decisions being made about learning content and approaches.</p> <p>Learners comply with these requests, but with limited enthusiasm for tasks.</p>	<p>Learning programs are designed to maximize the opportunity for learner choice. Emphasis is on activity in learning.</p> <p>Students demonstrate greater interest or connection to their learning.</p>	<p>All learners have the opportunity to contribute to all decisions made about the content and approach to learning.</p> <p>Students exhibit energy, curiosity, and high interest in their learning tasks.</p>	<p>Learners are actively driving the learning design. They are able to pursue their learning in the ways and time that suits them. Learning is an active experience, relevant to the needs, interests, and context of each learner.</p> <p>Students are authentically engaged, as observed in their high levels of interest and desire to continue working, even when time is up, and provide ideas to extend their learning.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>

Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Support & Supervision



Stop interfering

Support and supervision of learning should be a shared responsibility—involving teachers, students, and parents.

Why Is This important?

By taking responsibility for their own learning, learners can get a much better idea of what they are best at, what they need to work harder at, and where they may need support. In this process, it becomes important that people supporting the learner have good strategies and systems in place to identify the need and provide support as it is required. It is also essential that students know where and how to get the support they need.

Belief Statement

We believe that agency can and should be promoted through the intentional design of learning activities and the assessment process. This includes the opportunity for self-determination, within a safe and supportive learning environment, with scaffolds as needed to guide learners. Students can support and supervise their work with tools and resources that give guidance and feedback along the way. Timelines, checkpoints of progress with projects, consultations with teachers on a scheduled basis, and rubrics that give clear guidance on outcomes can be useful tools.

DIG DEEPER



To support and supervise learners in schools where learner agency is a priority, consider the following and use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Create a safe and supportive learning environment

It is important to create an environment where learners feel safe to take risks, share their ideas, and make mistakes without fear of judgment or criticism. Encourage a culture of collaboration and respect among learners and between learners and teachers.

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2. Provide opportunities for choice

Giving learners choice can help to increase their sense of ownership and investment in their learning. Offer opportunities for learners to choose topics of study, assignments, and assessment methods.

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3. Foster self-reflection

Encourage learners to reflect on their learning and progress. This can help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and take ownership of their learning.

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4. Encourage self-regulation

Help learners develop the skills to self-regulate their learning, such as setting goals, monitoring progress, and seeking support when needed.

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5. Use formative assessment

Use formative assessment to give learners ongoing feedback on their progress and to help them identify areas where they need to improve.

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6. Support collaboration

Encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers, which can promote greater levels of agency by allowing learners to share ideas and co-create knowledge.

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7. Provide plenty of scaffolding

While promoting learner agency is important, learners may need support and guidance to develop the skills and confidence to make decisions about their learning. The thoughtful and appropriate use of scaffolds will ensure learners are able to take the steps they need to as they work through their learning process.

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By following these principles, you can support and supervise learners in schools where learner agency is a priority, helping to promote student ownership of the learning process and to create a culture of engaged, motivated, and self-directed learners.

FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through effective support and supervision



What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am guided by the principle of transparency to ensure that learners and their parents/ caregivers have access to everything required to understand the expectations, descriptions, and outcomes of what they should be able to know and do at the end of a learning experience. • I use a range of support options (including technology-enabled) to ensure learners have support available when and where they require it. • I regularly meet with my learners to ensure their needs are being addressed. • I create opportunities to involve other content specialists and learning support specialists to contribute to supporting learners (in person and virtually). • I provide opportunities, space, and guidelines to promote effective peer support where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have access to all the tools and resources available within the unit of study. • I am provided clear expectations, descriptions, and outcomes as to what I should be able to know and do at the end of the unit of study. • I have access to several support options, such as direct instruction, online tutorials, and other individual tutorials such as peer support and problem-solving resources when additional help is needed. • I can collaborate with my teachers on calendar checkpoints. • I am given opportunities to provide input on the type of support that is best for me. • My parents and I are aware of the resources, tools, and checkpoints that help guide the learning process. • I collaborate with the teacher for the purpose of constructive feedback and have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.





INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE

Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Support and frequent feedback loops (supervision strategies) at the start of building agency

When first asking students to be more self-directed, we need to provide concrete models, examples, guides, or rubrics. For example, having students self-check their written work before turning it in is a simple act. A poster on the wall can remind students to check for correct spelling, complete sentences, capitalization, appropriate end point punctuation, or other expectations for the draft of a paper. Students should be encouraged to get a peer review as well. If a paper is turned in that does not have that level of review, a teacher–student conference can help walk the student through the process or let the student select a peer to assist them.

Creating an environment where it is OK to make mistakes

During school-wide morning meetings, share “the Power of Yet” mindset through videos and examples of student work, and share that mistakes are “how we do things around here.” If we are not making mistakes, we are not learning. Share “learning pit” stories⁶ during morning meetings. Celebrate the productive struggle publicly with all children. This creates a safe culture to take risks.

Providing choice

Provide students with several books on the same topic and allow them to choose which book they want to read. You can also choose books with different reading levels to meet students’ abilities. Also, offer students a choice in the way they demonstrate their learning. Students may give a class presentation, create a newsletter, produce some artwork, or write an essay to demonstrate what they have learned.

⁶The Learning Pit. www.learningpit.org

INVITATION TO ACT



The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on the opportunities for self-determination within the context of a safe and supportive learning environment.

When reviewing a curricular unit of study, are there opportunities for students to self-pace, make choices, or have flexibility in their learning experiences?

Tip: To enable student agency, opportunities for choice or pacing can be provided in the curricular unit's design. For example, if students are given a window of time for multiple assignments to be completed, but they have the option of completing them in any order, students can experience self-determination in the pace of what they do and in what order they complete the work.



When allowing for a more self-directed model for completing assignments, what guidance, rules, or support systems need to be in place?

Tip: Self-determination in choice of assignments, pacing, or order of completion may be a new phenomenon to the students. For this to be successful, explicit guidance will need to be provided, such as timelines, rubrics, and feedback loops via teacher conferencing for progress monitoring and review of work in progress. Students help by having conversations with their teacher in the context of class meetings about the process and what additional guidance may be needed.

For example: Do the students have opportunities to use resources outside the classroom, that they can help identify and/or individually contact from a predetermined list, and that can add value to their classroom work?

Students can make relevant connections about what they are learning from real-world advisors. For example, if students can visit with construction professionals about the value of the Pythagorean theorem, that adds value to their work. If industries in the community give math tests for entry-level positions, that may help a struggling math student put more effort into learning math. If a business partner talks about the "soft executive skills" required in his workplace, that can support the collaborative learning processes in the classroom.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for support and supervision

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
The learner depends on the teacher for direction and support in all aspects of his or her learning.	Some tools and strategies exist that learners could use to support their learning, but these are not yet formally introduced and are used without purpose.	A range of tools and strategies has been introduced, and learners are developing confidence in seeking support from a variety of sources.	Learners are regularly accessing the support they need from a variety of people (including teacher, peers, and parents) and tools/resources (including online).	Learners routinely take the initiative to plan for and ensure that the appropriate support is available to them and their peers when embarking on new learning.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Measuring Success

Success is about more than grades

We need to explore more holistic approaches to assessments, instead of relying solely on traditional measures such as grades and standardized tests.

Why Is This Important?

Considering different approaches to measuring success when promoting learner agency helps to value diverse perspectives, encourage self-reflection, foster intrinsic motivation, promote real-world relevance, enhance holistic development, and encourage active participation. By taking a learner-centered approach to assessment and providing opportunities for learners to actively engage in the assessment process, learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning journey.

Belief Statement

Agentic behavior is more likely to develop when students have a clear and precise understanding of what is expected when demonstrating grade-level performance on any given learning expectation.

DIG DEEPER



It is important to think differently about how success is measured in our schools, because traditional measures of success, such as grades and standardized test scores, often provide a limited and narrow perspective of a student’s abilities and potential. We must be sure that our assessment practices align with the principles of learner agency. Here are some considerations as we expand our thinking about what success looks like for our learners. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Holistic development

Success should not be determined solely by academic achievements. Students are multidimensional beings with unique talents, skills, and interests. By broadening the definition of success, we can recognize and celebrate diverse forms of excellence, including creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, teamwork, empathy, and resilience. A comprehensive approach to measuring success promotes holistic development and encourages students to explore their full potential.

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2. Real-world relevance

Traditional measures of success often focus on memorizing and regurgitating information, which may not adequately prepare students for real-world challenges. To thrive in the modern era, students need a range of skills, such as adaptability, collaboration, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. By shifting the focus to skills and competencies that are relevant to the twenty-first century, we can better equip students for future success and employability.

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3. Individual differences

Students have unique strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. A one-size-fits-all approach to measuring success fails to recognize and accommodate these individual differences. By adopting more personalized and flexible assessment methods, we can better understand each student’s progress and provide targeted support to address their specific needs. This approach promotes inclusivity and ensures that success is attainable for all students, regardless of their background or learning style.

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4. Lifelong learning

Success should not be seen as an endpoint but as a continuous journey of growth and learning. By encouraging a growth mindset and valuing effort, curiosity, and resilience, we foster a love for learning and personal development. Emphasizing the process of learning rather than just outcomes helps students become self-directed learners who are motivated to pursue knowledge beyond the confines of the classroom.

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5. Well-being and happiness

A narrow focus on academic achievement can create immense pressure on students, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout. By reevaluating success measures, we can prioritize students' well-being and happiness. A balanced approach that considers mental health, emotional intelligence, social skills, and overall happiness promotes a positive and nurturing learning environment.

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Changes you could consider to widen your assessment approaches include:

6. Formative assessment

Focus on providing feedback and supporting learners' growth and development, rather than just summative assessment, which focuses on assigning grades or evaluating performance at the end of a learning period. Formative assessment allows learners to reflect on their progress, receive feedback, and make improvements, which is essential for promoting learner agency. Encourage self-assessment and peer assessment, as they enable learners to actively participate in the assessment process and develop metacognitive skills.

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7. Personalized assessment

Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and instead tailor assessments to meet the unique needs and preferences of individual learners. Consider incorporating personalized assessment approaches that take into account learners' interests, strengths, and diverse backgrounds. This promotes learner agency by honoring learners' individuality and empowering them to take ownership of their learning.

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8. Authentic assessment

Use assessments that align with real-world contexts and challenges. Authentic assessments offer learners meaningful and relevant opportunities to apply their learning in authentic ways, promoting learner agency by connecting their learning to the real world and fostering a sense of purpose and relevance.

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9. Process-oriented assessment

Focus on assessing the learning process, not just the end product. Consider how learners engage in the learning process, including their ability to set goals, plan strategies, reflect on their learning, and make adjustments. Process-oriented assessment values the learning journey and promotes metacognitive skills and self-regulation, which are essential for learner agency.

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10. Learner involvement in assessment

Involve learners in the assessment process by encouraging self-assessment, peer assessment, and co-creation of assessment criteria. This gives learners a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own learning, promotes reflection and self-regulation, and fosters learner agency by empowering learners to be active participants in the assessment process.

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Several practical assessment strategies can support learner agency. These strategies are designed to empower learners, promote reflection and self-regulation, and encourage active participation in the assessment process. Here are some examples:

11. Self-assessment

Encourage learners to engage in self-assessment, where they reflect on their own learning progress, strengths, and areas for improvement. Give them assessment criteria or rubrics, and guide them in evaluating their own work against these criteria. Self-assessment promotes metacognition, self-reflection, and self-regulation, as learners take ownership of their learning and become actively involved in the assessment process.

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12. Peer assessment

Foster peer assessment, where learners assess and provide feedback on each other's work. This encourages learners to take on the role of both assessor and recipient of feedback, promoting a deeper understanding of the criteria for success and developing critical evaluation skills. Peer assessment also encourages collaboration, communication, and social learning, as learners learn from each other's perspectives and feedback.

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13. Co-creation of assessment criteria

Involve learners in the co-creating of assessment criteria or rubrics. This empowers learners to participate in defining what success looks like and gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility in the assessment process. Co-creation of assessment criteria promotes learner agency by valuing learners' input and perspectives, and by promoting a shared understanding of expectations and standards.

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14. Reflective journals or portfolios

Encourage learners to maintain reflective journals or portfolios where they document their learning journey, set goals, and reflect on their progress. These reflective practices promote metacognition,

self-reflection, and self-regulation, and they allow learners to track their own learning progress over time. Reflective journals or portfolios give learners a tangible way to demonstrate their agency in their learning process.

15. Flexible assessment options

Offer learners flexibility in assessment options, allowing them to choose from various formats or approaches that align with their interests, strengths, and learning styles. This honors learners' individuality and empowers them to take ownership of their learning, as they have a say in how they are assessed. Flexible assessment options promote learner agency by valuing learners' preferences and promoting a sense of autonomy and choice.





FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through measures of success

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I involve my learners in the process of setting expectations and articulating what grade-level performance looks like. • I create rubrics with clear progressions and indicators so that learners (and parents) understand clearly what success will look like, and I use these for both formative and summative assessment. • I provide opportunities for learners to record and manage aspects of their learning so that they have evidence they can use to support their claims of success. • I provide regular feedback, based on the rubric indicators, and encourage learners and parents to do the same, so that meaningful learning conversations are taking place throughout the learning process. • I hold regular learning conferences where learners have an opportunity to share their progress and discuss the evidence they provide to identify where they are. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am able to contribute to setting clear expectations about what grade-level performance looks like. • I can contribute to developing the rubric for defining grade-level or beyond performance levels. • I can analyze samples and determine why a specific sample of work meets (or does not meet) grade-level performance criteria. • I can use exemplars to determine areas in need of improvement for my own work. • I can use both self and peer assessments so that I can reflect on and meaningfully discuss my progress with my peers. • I can confidently participate in a learning conference with a teacher or other adult, and I am able to provide evidence to support where I am in a progression.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Students use rubrics as a way of measuring success

Students are asked to review the components of the rubric based on feedback received about their work (from the teacher or peers). For lines of learning, students write on a sticky note what they need to do to improve their work to get to the next level. For example: “I’m a 2 right now because....To move my learning to a 3, I need to do....” A line of learning shows the continuum of a standard across grade levels. Students enjoy learning what they need to do to move to the next level of thinking for a specific standard.

Students need a clear explanation of what the rubrics stand for and look like

The teacher cannot assume that the students understand the criteria for grade-level performance based on the rubric as stated. Students benefit from many examples and practice in using the rubric before applying it themselves. For example, anchor papers can be used as an activity where students see how papers have been scored using a writing rubric, then reflect on the reasons a score was received. This can be done as a guided group activity at first and then individually after students have greater insight on using the rubric.

Students’ grit and perseverance

The Odyssey of the Mind team from Dr. Jim D. Rollins Elementary School of Innovation built a car, and it broke down during the regional competition, but the team kept going. They scored high enough to go to the state competition. They researched why their car broke, tore apart the belts by the wheels, and rebuilt a stronger car. They analyzed the problem with their car and built a pulley system to replace the other car parts that did not function as they expected. One day after school, the principal heard loud drilling coming from upstairs. She thought it was the maintenance crew and went to investigate. The noise was coming from a student with a drill, who was being supervised by his teacher and parent. He was determined to try to fix the car again and had an idea he could not wait to try! The car broke down again at the state competition, but it was a much better model. The students articulated exactly what went wrong with the car. They learned a lot about simple machines and trial and error.

For students, goal setting, checking off progress, and making changes in their work are important steps to building perseverance and self-awareness.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to consider how you are engaging your students in the act of progress monitoring

How are rubrics currently being developed and used, and who is using them?

Tip: Consider opportunities for students to have input into the student-friendly descriptors of rubrics, based on elements that describe expected performance levels. Consider having students use the rubric for self-assessment or with peers, before teacher review in personal conference sessions.



What samples, models, or anchor papers are posted or made available to students?

Tip: Consider providing these concrete examples of what is expected.



Do you use student-led conferences as a tool for progress monitoring that includes student samples of work, as well as student-generated goal setting?

*Tip: For more information about student-led conferences, see *Implementing Student-Led Conferences*.⁷ Also, *Tapping into the Power of Personalized Learning: A Roadmap for School Leaders*⁸ provides the foundational understanding of personalizing learning by building ownership and independence. The learner profiles component lends itself directly to student-led conferences.*

Consider the value and benefit of student-led conferences to bring relevance and authenticity to progress monitoring, as students share their personal data, goal setting, and work samples with their parents or other significant adults.



How are teachers and students using technology to aid in progress monitoring?

Tip: Consider various platforms that may be available within the existing programs in your school, as well as what other resources may be available so that both teachers and students can track their progress.



⁷ Bailey, J., & Guskey, T. (2001). *Implementing student-led conferences*. Corwin Press.

⁸ Rickabaugh, J. (2016). *Tapping into the power of personalized learning: A roadmap for school leaders*. ASCD.



MEASURING PROGRESS

for measuring success

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
All forms of assessment are selected and designed by the teacher, and they focus mostly on grades and summative assessment approaches.	Learners (and parents) are given clear progressions and indicators so that they understand what success looks like and how it will be measured.	Learners are involved in the process of setting expectations and what success will look like, and what needs to be demonstrated for both formative and summative assessment.	Learners are able to record and manage aspects of their learning so that they have evidence they can use to support their claims of success. Regular feedback is provided, based on the criteria and indicators of success, to encourage learners and enable meaningful conversations about learning progress.	Learners are contributing to setting clear expectations of what success looks like, and they can contribute to developing rubrics. They are able to provide evidence from their own learning to match the indicators on the rubric, and they can use both self and peer assessments to reflect on and meaningfully discuss their progress.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Learning Environment

Where we learn matters

Cultivating agentic behavior requires a supportive learning environment.

Why Is This Important?

The design of the learning environment is critical in developing learner agency, as it can promote autonomy, support engagement, cultivate collaboration, encourage reflection, foster inclusivity, and encourage innovation. A learner-centered environment that values learners' agency and provides opportunities for them to actively participate in their learning journey can empower them to take ownership of their learning and become self-directed, motivated, and lifelong learners.

Belief Statement

We believe that student agency must be developed deliberately and intentionally, with a particular focus on the learning environment. An essential element for fostering agentic behavior is creating an environment that allows students to have flexibility, voice, and choice in how they use their physical environment. The definition of a learning environment should not be limited to a physical place or time in the traditional school or classroom, and it may include home and community spaces.

DIG DEEPER



The design of the learning environment is crucial in developing learner agency. The learning environment encompasses the physical, social, emotional, and cultural context in which learning occurs, and it greatly influences learners' attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.

When thinking about the learning environment, it is important to consider the range of settings where learning takes place, including the classroom, specialist facilities (libraries and technology centers), community spaces (parks and museums), and the learner's home.

Also, we need to consider the virtual environments that are becoming more common in our young learners' lives. These environments provide the opportunity for focused, personal learning, as well as feedback that is responsive to the individual learner. They also provide opportunities for collaboration that transcend the time and space limitations of a traditional classroom.

Below are some reasons why considering the design of the learning environment is important for developing learner agency. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Promoting autonomy

Learner agency is about empowering learners to take ownership of their learning journey and make meaningful choices about their learning. The learning environment should provide opportunities for learners to make decisions, set goals, plan their learning, and take responsibility for their progress. For example, a flexible and inclusive learning space that allows learners to choose their learning activities, collaborate with peers, and personalize their learning can foster a sense of ownership and autonomy, promoting learner agency.

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2. Supporting engagement

The learning environment should be engaging and meaningful, taking into consideration learners' interests, needs, and backgrounds. An environment that is conducive to active learning, inquiry-based approaches, and real-world relevance can enhance learners' motivation, curiosity, and intrinsic drive to learn, promoting learner agency.

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3. Cultivating collaboration

The learning environment should foster collaboration by providing spaces and tools that facilitate peer-to-peer interaction, group work, and cooperative learning. For example, collaborative workstations, group seating arrangements, and digital tools for online collaboration can support learners in developing collaboration skills and promoting learner agency.

4. Encouraging reflection

Reflection and metacognition are key components of learner agency, as they involve learners in critically evaluating their own learning and making informed decisions about their learning strategies. Learners need opportunities to reflect on their learning, assess their progress, and set goals for improvement. For instance, spaces for quiet reflection, journaling activities, and regular feedback from educators can encourage learners to engage in self-reflection, promoting learner agency.

5. Fostering inclusion

All learners, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, and identities, should have equitable access to learning opportunities and resources. Learning environments should be inclusive and considerate of diverse learners, accommodating their needs, providing multiple means of representation, and valuing their perspectives. For example, a learning environment that is accessible, culturally responsive, and inclusive of diverse voices and experiences can promote learner agency by creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all learners.

6. Encouraging innovation

Learners need to be actively involved in shaping and innovating their learning experiences. The learning environment should encourage innovation by providing opportunities for learners to experiment, take risks, and engage in creative problem-solving. For example, a learning environment that provides access to technology, encourages project-based learning, and values creativity and innovation can foster learners' agency by promoting a culture of exploration, experimentation, and innovation.

FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through an expanded view of learning environments



What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I/my school has strategies in place to ensure learners have access to the devices and internet services required to allow them to learn outside of the classroom (such as at home). • The space I teach in is deliberately organized to provide a range of spaces for learners to use based on their needs at the time (quiet space, group spaces, performance space). • I avoid an overly structured approach to time-tabling, which is likely to inhibit the flow of learning and interrupt the learners' focus. • I give students flexibility around completing learning tasks to ensure they have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. • I use a range of strategies to involve subject experts and learning support people so that learners can access them both in and outside of the traditional school day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have access to digital devices and internet services to enable self-directed work outside the realm of the classroom. • I have flexibility in seating areas, small learning hubs, collective workspaces, and quiet workspaces. I know how to use each space appropriately. • I have flexibility in managing time. For example, hour-by-hour bell schedules are replaced with larger time frames that allow students to be more fluid in their use of time. • I have a choice in how I manage my time. I know how to manage my time to complete my tasks. • I am given options to complete learning tasks in unique environments through internships or extended learning opportunities in the community. • I have access to the teacher, subject experts, or learning support people at times other than the traditional school day.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.





INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE

Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Use models that promote long-term agentic behaviors

Creating an agentic learning environment requires the use of deliberate models that give students the opportunity to reflect and improve. An example is offering “second learning opportunity time,” or SLO. Based on students’ needs, time is set aside in the schedule for SLOs. Students select which workshop they need to attend to learn the concept they have not mastered yet. At the start of this practice, the teacher should give guidance and suggestions. A schedule of opportunities is posted and students sign up.

An alternative idea is for students to offer workshops for each other. We have observed this in students as young as kindergarteners. A kindergarten student offers to teach peers the letters and sounds that they have mastered but others have not.

This concept works well with upper-grade students teaching primary-grade students targeted math skills, and when younger students have an opportunity to read with older students. This has worked well with upper-grade students who need to practice their reading or math skills and have a safe way to do that with younger students.

Use student-friendly rubrics

The shift to a more agentic learning environment will be easier if we give students a precise understanding of what that means. One idea to begin this is to create student-friendly rubrics with the students that describe the learning behaviors demonstrated at each stage of the progression in the rubric. If students are learning in the spaces farthest from the teacher, they demonstrate a set of learning behaviors that differs from those in the other spaces closer to the teacher. For example, “I can demonstrate my learning in one seating area in the room.” “I can demonstrate my learning across two zones (the couch and the desk).” Create a common K-2 rubric and a 3-5 rubric. Use yearbook pictures, copy them on the copier, laminate them, and then have students put their picture in the learning space they are going to in the school. Take pictures of the learning spaces. Put them on a poster with velcro dots on the back. This lets the teacher know how many are in each learning space. When a zone is full, learners have to choose another space.

Purposefully build a school-wide common vision for agentic learning

In one school, the first year it opened, the staff and students decided as a whole school family that they must purposefully develop the school’s culture through the foundation of developing their learners’ agentic behaviors. They selected the Learning Powers⁹ that they wanted to teach and developed a monthly calendar of when these would be taught school-wide. The school leadership

⁹Claxton, G. & Carlzon, B. (2018). *Powering up children: The learning power approach to primary teaching*. Crown House Publishing.

provided professional development for the teachers, so they could understand how to shift from the teacher in front of the room, to the facilitator (or “guide on the side”)—explicitly teaching these learning practices. They included opportunities for learners to apply these practices in the classroom. The teachers carried their phones around and captured videos of learners talking about and practicing the Learning Powers.

To develop a foundation of agentic behaviors, we appeared on a school-wide Zoom each morning for three to five minutes. This was a heartwarming way to build a family connection across the school. During these minutes, we shared videos, pictures, and children’s books to launch our Learning Power for the upcoming weeks. We believed that physical and emotional health were the foundation for learning and developing agentic behaviors, so we included social skills tips, physical activity, and health lessons as well. We opened the morning meeting with a “two-minute morning move,” during which we all participated in two minutes of cardio and toning exercises led by our school’s physical education teacher. He created mash-up videos highlighting children and teachers demonstrating the exercises. The children loved seeing themselves on the big screen! Our school nurse shared a “Wellness Wednesday” tip. We used resources, such as videos, children’s books, and ideas from experts in the field, such as Jamie Nottingham, Guy Claxton, A.J. Juliani, and John Spencer, just to name a few. Others are listed in the resources section.

At the end of each month, the children and teachers in each classroom and ENCORE class (art, PE, music, library media) selected two students who had shown evidence of the Learning Power in action during that month. Postcards were sent home to the families highlighting each child. At the assembly, we showed a video of the child’s picture and the teacher talking about why this child was selected by the class to receive the Blazing Trailblazer Award. The children also received a trailblazer balloon to take home.

The second year, as we reflected on our progress, we decided we wanted to make our morning meetings more structured so teachers could use them as launching points during their 30-minute morning meeting in each classroom following our Zoom. This was very successful, as we had more consistency in teaching the Learning Powers—infused social skills and grade-level-specific content curriculum.

Extended learning opportunities

School is not the only place where learning can take place. Once learning objectives or competencies have been identified, learning can take place in various places both in school and in the community. A student who is enrolled in a summer enrichment program could be recognized for the experience by their school. Similarly, students who have a keen interest or aptitude could take classes at a local college or receive credit for the work they do in their community theater group.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on the learning environment provided for your students.

How is the student's schedule dictated by the teacher?

Tip: In traditional practice, the teacher likely controls all events of the day.



What events during the day could allow the students more control over their use of time?

Tip: For example, if the reading block allows students time for independent reading, writing activities, and research, students could choose which element of literacy to work on first, second, or third. This can also be practiced with a selection of stations that students visit during the day.



What guidance would need to be put into place so that students have responsible and accountable behavior during more flexible time?

Tip: For example, if students choose which stations to work at, the number of students at a station at any one time might need to be limited. Students also might need pacing suggestions that are not too tight but give students guidance on task completion in a finite window of time.



Are students given extension activities that allow them to have learning opportunities outside the classroom with family or community resources?

Tip: These extension activities, where students gain knowledge from others outside the classroom, help with the relevance of what is being taught. The assignments need to be sensitive to the limitations some students may experience outside of school. Should a student not have external opportunities, school-based or teacher-provided resources would allow the students the same opportunity.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for learning environments

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
Teaching and learning are confined to a single classroom space, with uniform desk arrangements.	Use of different learning environments is encouraged but generally is directed by the teacher and supervised by her or him.	Classroom environments provide different types of spaces to support a range of learning activities, such as independent and group work. Use of virtual environments and outdoor environments is possible with teacher direction.	Learners routinely move between different areas of the classroom and the school that best meet their needs for different phases of learning. Teachers and learners use virtual environments to connect learning at home and at school. Outdoor learning environments are used to provide unique experiences for learners that are not available in a classroom setting.	The traditional classroom’s limitations of time and space no longer apply, with learners able to move freely among a variety of learning spaces (physical and virtual, inside and out of school) to engage with their learning and with others in that process. Learners can choose to use designated spaces that support independent study, group discussions, and practical tasks.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

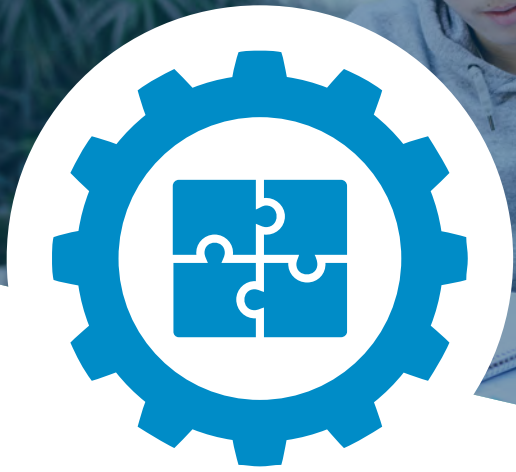
Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Design of Learning

Have you forgotten something—the learners?

Learners should be partners in the process of designing learning.

Why Is This Important?

Engaging learners as collaborators in the goal-setting and learning design process is a critical shift, and it is required to achieve agency in learning. Learners who are actively involved in setting their learning goals are more likely to take ownership of their learning, be motivated to achieve their goals, and develop a sense of agency and self-direction in their learning process.

Belief Statement

We believe that agency should be a core component of the requisite planning, so all learners can thrive and succeed. The design of learning occurs when teachers engage in planning the lesson or units of work, based on the curriculum. The challenge here is to ensure that this process involves learners as design partners, and that the design includes opportunities to create learning partnerships with students.

DIG DEEPER



The concept of “shifting the ownership” of learning is central to creating the conditions for learner agency, and this starts with how we design the learning. Traditionally, the teacher designs it and then presents it to the learners. To create a truly agentic culture, however, developing learning goals and designing learning experiences must be a collaborative effort, involving both the teacher and the learners. This is critical if we are to achieve the level of motivation and engagement, and the transparency around assessment and measuring success, as detailed elsewhere in this playbook. Below are some strategies that teachers can use to engage learners in collaborative goal setting and learning design. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Involve learners in setting goals

Encourage them to reflect on their learning needs, interests, and aspirations. Provide opportunities for learners to share their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions for setting learning goals. This can be done through individual conferences, group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and written reflections.

2. Make goals and activities relevant and meaningful

Help learners connect their personal goals to the curriculum, real-world contexts, and their future aspirations. When learners see the relevance and meaning of their goals, they are more motivated to work toward achieving them.

3. Foster collaborative learning design

Provide opportunities for learners to discuss, negotiate, and co-create goals with their peers. Collaborative goal setting and activity design can foster a sense of ownership, accountability, and shared responsibility among learners, as they support each other in achieving their goals.

Encouraging learners to ask their own questions and then design experiences that help them pursue the answers can be a powerfully enabling approach. **The concept of asking “fertile questions” is powerful here. Fertile questions are designed to stimulate inquiry, encourage independent thinking, and promote meaningful discussions among students.** They often do not have one single correct answer but rather invite multiple perspectives and interpretations. These questions encourage students to consider different viewpoints, make connections, and apply their learning to real-world contexts.

Some key reasons for considering this approach include:

4. It promotes active engagement

When students are asked thought-provoking questions, they become more involved and interested in the subject matter. This engagement leads to increased motivation, participation, and desire to explore and discover answers.

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5. It encourages critical thinking

Fertile questions go beyond simple factual recall and encourage students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. This helps develop higher-order thinking skills and nurtures a deeper understanding of the topic.

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6. It stimulates curiosity and inquiry

Students become inspired to ask their own questions, investigate further, and seek answers independently. This fosters a spirit of inquiry, self-directed learning, and a lifelong love of learning.

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7. It encourages discussion and collaboration

Fertile questions often have multiple perspectives and interpretations, which stimulate meaningful discussions in the classroom. Students can share their thoughts, ideas, and diverse viewpoints, fostering a collaborative learning environment. This enhances communication skills, empathy, and respect for others’ opinions.

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8. It enhances problem-solving skills

By grappling with these questions, students develop problem-solving skills, resilience, and the ability to approach challenges from different angles. They learn to think critically, propose solutions, and evaluate the effectiveness of their approaches.

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9. It deepens conceptual understanding

Students make meaningful connections between different concepts and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This promotes long-term retention and transfer of knowledge to real-world contexts.

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10. It supports self-directed learning

Learners take responsibility for their own learning and develop the ability to identify their learning needs, set their own goals, and plan their learning activities. This helps them become more self-reliant and resourceful learners who can navigate their own learning journey.

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Including question asking as a fundamental aspect of the learning design promotes active learning, critical thinking, curiosity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. It transforms the learning experience from a passive, information-gathering process to an engaging, meaningful, and transformative journey of discovery.



FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through effective learning design

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have systems and approaches in place that enable my learners to collaborate with me in identifying new areas for learning and the purpose of this learning.• I work with my learners to co-construct the learning goals and learning activities that are appropriate for them, ensuring their learning is culturally appropriate and authentic to their needs or interests.• I encourage my learners to pursue their learning based on the questions they ask, and I promote the use of a structured process to help them scaffold their inquiries.• I encourage learners to pursue the approach to learning that suits them best, and I use the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to ensure they have multiple ways of accessing, engaging with, and representing learning.• I encourage the use of student questions as the basis of engagement in learning activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can collaborate with the teacher and my peers in identifying the purpose of what is being learned.• I am able to co-construct the learning goals and outcomes with the teacher.• I can collaborate with the teacher in designing the learning activities.• I can contribute to the design of the learning by formulating questions to be answered within the unit of study.• I am motivated to pursue answers to the questions I ask, either on my own or as part of a collaborative effort.• I am able to participate in what is designed based on my individual learning needs and preferences.• I have access to learning activities that allow for flexibility, voice, and choice.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Design of learning activities—in stages

Involving students in the design of learning begins by taking small steps. One idea is to start with class-wide interest projects in kindergarten. The teacher chooses the topic that goes with their science or social studies standards. The students choose which part of the curriculum they will study.

These don't have to be hard to start. Use the current curriculum in science and social studies. Explicitly teach children how to do an inquiry. Move from heavily scaffolded to more and more independence as learners mature. Create a common rubric with the learners before starting. What cross-curricular standards will they show mastery of through their inquiry?

For example, students in kindergarten were learning about habitats and animals that live in those habitats. They all selected their own animal and researched it using choice boards provided by the library media specialist. They created a project to demonstrate what they had learned about their animal and its habitat. They created posters, wrote songs, built dioramas, and created video books with their voices coming out of the animal's mouth using an app called Chatterpix.

To help deepen learners' understanding as they move from grade to grade, you can teach goal setting in school-wide morning meetings for all grades, so they have a common vocabulary. Share examples of students' goals and progress during morning meetings via Zoom or Google Meet. This builds a sense of community celebration for all learners working toward achieving goals.

Fostering curiosity

Another way to engage students in the design of learning is to explicitly teach what curiosity means during school-wide morning meetings. Give examples of questions of the day—about what is being studied in science or social studies. Create “wonder walls” with peer-generated wonder wall questions on topics they are curious about investigating. Share examples of student passion projects.

The value of rubrics

It is important to develop a rubric with the learners that shows what proficiency in the standard looks like. This gives learners a clear target to reach and shows what they can do to take their learning to a deeper level.

No matter what topics learners choose to research, the standard is common for all, and it can be measured by applying the standard within the students' projects. For example, when researching a topic, learners have to read, compare, and contrast two or more texts when they come across conflicting information. When they write about their research, they may have to state a claim and defend it. They also must write complete sentences to convey meaning gained from multiple sources (digital, media, and text).

Tracking progress

To evaluate mastery of a standard, teachers use a spreadsheet of the standards they are looking for in students' projects, and then check off when they see the standard applied. A proficiency scale can be used to determine whether students have met the standard or gone beyond it, or they need more support to master the standard.

Identifying learning competencies

When Bedford High School opened, the administrators identified the competencies (school-wide and by course) for which students would be responsible. Near the end of the semester, a student approached her teacher with a question about the competencies in the class. She said she was looking at the various competencies she was responsible for and realized that there was one competency that she wanted to focus on and improve in during the remaining weeks of the class. This illustrated that the student understood her learning and where she needed to improve. She had taken responsibility for her learning.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on the learning environment provided for your students.



What opportunities do students have to create student-friendly language to describe the learning expectations?

Tip: Allowing students to help describe and define the learning expectation helps minimize any misunderstanding about the learning expectation and can alert the teacher to any misconceptions students may have about it. This activity helps with the planning, as the teacher considers the foundational learning that must take place before the learning can be applied.



When introducing a new unit of study, what opportunities do students have to engage with the teacher about the upcoming unit of study and pose questions they may have about the unit?

Tip: Engaging students in conversation about the unit of study, including posing questions they may want to investigate, can strengthen ownership of the learning expectation. Based on the nature of the questions students pose, the teacher can insert the questions into the planned lesson design and allow students to build on their knowledge using their questions.



What opportunities are students given to have choices in exhibiting their learning?

Tip: This question is particularly useful in content areas such as social studies and science, where the concepts being studied would allow for flexibility in exhibiting learning. These flexible options should include any required component, such as a written summary. Students could display their learning using technology, tri-fold posters, and dioramas. Students could work alone or in teams, as appropriate. The planning process could include students identifying how they would like to present their learning in collaboration with the teacher, as well as elements that must be in place to support the learning expectations. This model supports the universal design for learning concepts as well.



MEASURING PROGRESS

for design of learning

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
Learners are given little or no opportunity to contribute to the design of learning.	<p>Learning design is primarily the teacher’s responsibility, taking into account student needs and interests.</p> <p>Students pursue inquiries around themes and topics using questions provided by the teacher.</p> <p>Some choice may be provided around how knowledge is accessed, used, and represented, but mostly within the scope of what the teacher has provided.</p>	<p>The teacher invites contributions from learners as part of the goal setting and design of learning activities.</p> <p>Learners can pursue their own inquiries within the framework provided by the teacher, and these may be completed independently or in groups.</p> <p>Learners are given a range of options for how they access, engage with, and represent their learning.</p>	<p>Learning is designed to be an active process, with learners posing questions that are authentic to them, then seeking to answer them either alone or with others.</p> <p>Teachers and learners co-construct the learning goals and learning activities that are appropriate for them, ensuring their learning is culturally appropriate and authentic to their needs or interests.</p> <p>Use of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework in the learning design ensures that students have multiple ways of accessing, engaging with, and representing learning.</p>	<p>Learning design is always a co-constructed activity, often initiated by the learners, working either independently or collaboratively with others.</p> <p>Learning goals are focused on developing learner qualities and on addressing complex challenges at a local or global level.</p> <p>Learners routinely select the ways they access, engage with, and represent their learning that are appropriate to the focus of learning and the agreed learning goals.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>

Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Curriculum



The curriculum is a living asset

Excellence in curriculum is achieved when it is authentic, relevant, and localized.

Why Is This Important?

The essence of our work as educators is found within the curriculum. Learner agency is enhanced when students contribute to curriculum design through building empathy or passion for what they are expected to learn, and when they have voice and choice through extended learning opportunities in the broader community. Excellence can be achieved when the curriculum is authentic, relevant, and localized. Curricular experiences should be aligned to standards and achievement goals, but not constrained by external mandates.

Belief Statement

We believe that agency can and should be promoted within the organization of the curriculum, the planning process, the design of instructional activities, and the assessment of learning.

DIG DEEPER



A learner-centric curriculum design should prioritize the learner’s needs, interests, and context. It should empower learners to develop a sense of ownership, autonomy, and agency in their learning journey. It should provide multiple pathways or entry points for learners to develop agency, as some learners need more explicit instruction on how to develop agency.

Many traditional views of curriculum are based on the transmission of a fixed body of knowledge. While content knowledge remains a key part of any curriculum, attention also must be given to developing competencies for life, including the skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to be a successful learner—now and into the future.

A “problem-based” approach to curriculum is also important to consider, as this provides a way of engaging learners with content knowledge—but through the process of authentic inquiry around a topic or theme of interest or relevance to them.

Some educators confuse the idea of a syllabus with a curriculum. A **syllabus** is typically focused and specific, providing detailed information about the content, structure, and requirements of a particular course or subject. **Curriculum**, on the other hand, is a broader term that encompasses the overall plan or framework for an educational program or system. As such, a curriculum is more of a living document, capable of accommodating a range of learner needs, perspectives, and contexts.

Below are some factors to consider when designing curriculum that can support learner agency. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Flexibility and choice

A learner-centric curriculum should provide flexibility and choices to accommodate different learning styles, interests, and abilities. It should allow learners to have some autonomy in selecting topics, projects, or learning pathways based on their interests, needs, and goals. This can be achieved by offering various options, such as elective courses, project-based learning opportunities, and personalized learning plans. Plans could include options for adjusting the content, process, or product produced as evidence of understanding. According to Carol Ann Tomlinson¹⁰, these methods of showing evidence allow students more choices in their learning. Through assessment data and interest surveys, teachers can guide students toward choices that match their interests.

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2. Real-world relevance

A curriculum that is relevant to the real world can motivate learners and enable them to connect their learning to their everyday lives. Curriculum design should incorporate real-world

¹⁰ Tomlinson, C. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

applications, authentic tasks, and opportunities for learners to apply their learning in practical contexts. This can foster a sense of purpose and agency among learners as they see the relevance of their education to their lives beyond school.

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3. Inquiry-based learning

Enabling learners to investigate and explore questions, problems, or issues of interest can promote learner agency by encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Curriculum design can include opportunities for learners to engage in open-ended inquiries, conduct research, and pursue their own questions, allowing them to take ownership of their learning process and develop agency.

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4. “Fertile questions”

These questions are deep, complex, and perfect for inquiry—the answers cannot be found in a textbook or through an online search. By posing fertile questions, educators foster a student-centered learning environment that promotes critical thinking, problem solving, and the development of essential skills. These questions encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, collaborate with their peers, and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

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5. Opportunity for growth

Curriculum design could include scaffolding as learners gain more confidence and independence during inquiry-based learning opportunities. Essentially, some students start off right away on a new assignment, while other students get “stuck.” Students build a sense of efficacy if they have resources (teacher, peer, posted guidance) that can assist them in their struggles with new learning.

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6. Culturally responsive curriculum

A curriculum that recognizes and values learners' diverse cultural backgrounds and identities can enhance learner agency. Curriculum design should incorporate diverse perspectives, voices, and experiences to create a culturally responsive learning environment that validates and respects learners' identities and backgrounds. This can empower learners to bring their own experiences and knowledge to the learning process and develop a sense of agency in their education.

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7. Ongoing reflection and revision

Curriculum design should be an ongoing process of reflection and revision. Educators should regularly review and revise the curriculum based on feedback from learners, assessment data, and changes in the learning environment. Tools for giving feedback could be Google surveys, Learning Ladders¹¹, and Engagement Sliders by Te Kete Hono.¹² This allows for continuous improvement and ensures that the curriculum remains responsive to learners' evolving needs and interests, supporting their agency in the learning process.

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Decisions about the curriculum's content should ideally be made through a collaborative and inclusive process that involves various stakeholders, including educators, learners, parents or guardians, community members, and other relevant parties. Here are some key considerations for making decisions about curriculum content:

8. Educational goals and standards

The curriculum's content should align with the educational goals and standards established by the national, state, or district priorities. These goals and standards typically reflect the knowledge, skills, and competencies that learners are expected to achieve at different stages of their education. Decisions about curriculum content should be guided by these goals and standards to ensure that learners are provided with a rigorous and relevant education.

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¹¹ Learning Ladder. <https://learningpowerkids.com/learning-environment/>

¹² Te Kete Hono, Engagement Sliders. <https://www.tekete hono.nz/>

9. Learner needs and interests

Consideration should be given to the learners’ diverse needs, interests, and backgrounds. This can involve conducting needs assessments, surveys, or focus groups to gather input from learners themselves about what topics, subjects, or areas of study are meaningful and relevant to them. This can help ensure that the curriculum is learner centric and responsive to their interests, which can foster motivation, engagement, and agency in the learning process.

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10. Relevance to real-world contexts

The curriculum content should be relevant to real-world contexts and reflect the needs of the society, community, or industry. It should prepare learners for the challenges and opportunities of the real world by incorporating current, authentic, and practical content.

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11. Multiple perspectives and diversity

The curriculum should reflect diverse perspectives, voices, and experiences to promote inclusivity, equity, and cultural responsiveness. It should avoid biases, stereotypes, and omissions, and it should represent a wide range of perspectives from different cultures, genders, races, religions, and backgrounds. This can foster learners’ critical thinking, empathy, and global awareness, as well as help them develop a broader and more inclusive understanding of the world.

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FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through curriculum



What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seek to ensure alignment between national/ state curriculum requirements and local needs/opportunities. • I ensure that I use learning content that addresses cultural differences and individual differences. • I use “fertile questions” as a way of encouraging students to engage actively with the subject matter and fostering a deeper understanding of the topic. • I make all my planning and success criteria available for learners and their parents throughout the learning process. • I create opportunities for my learners to bring their own knowledge and experiences to their learning. • I constantly seek ways to make sure my students’ learning has real-world application and will equip them with the capabilities they will require in the future. • I make use of external expertise (local and online) to contribute to the pool of knowledge learners have access to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand why the content is important and how I might use it. • I participate in learning experiences that are culturally relevant and address my individual needs or differences. • I can use a fertile question as the basis of my inquiry and work alone or with others to engage meaningfully with content. • I can contribute to the lesson design with suggestions for additional content, variations, or additions to the learning activities based on my personal interests. • I can access the complete unit of study and the required performance activities at any stage during the learning process. • I am able to expand the curriculum to include topics or units of personal interest beyond the traditional curriculum content. • I can apply my learning to real-world experiences that I design and implement. • I access knowledge from local and online experts to help with my learning.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.





INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE

Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Students contributing to ways the curriculum is experienced

While the required curriculum may, at times, feel constraining, this needn't limit the many opportunities for students to make choices about the types of learning activities through which they express their learning. For example, within the writing standards, students can be given choices about the topics they choose to write about, or they may have some suggestions of their own.

If the writing exercise can include a real audience, that makes the purpose of the writing more valuable. For example, if a new city park is being developed, students may want to use their writing skills to ask the city council to consider installing a skate park. This is a way to practice persuasive writing with real-life impact for the students.

Fun ways to apply learning

When studying math concepts, designing a playhouse (using an online source or graph paper) is a great way to apply measurement concepts. Using a ramp for miniature cars (or other objects that roll), students can measure distance and the mean, median, and mode of the distance for the various times the cars run down the track.

Passion projects and genius hours

Passion projects and genius hours¹³ are activities that allow students to investigate topics of interest. This allows for a more student-centered curriculum. While they are called different names, they are basically the same thing. Learners start by developing a “burning question based on a topic of interest.” Some teachers create wonder walls full of burning questions written by the students. Others have students keep their wonders in a journal or a digital format.

Burning questions take some time to research. After they research, students develop a way to launch their project to an audience. This can be classmates, other grade-level students, families, or people outside the school through podcasts, video production, or music production, for example. Students should reflect on the whole process and write what they did well and how they could improve for their next project. This practice encourages learners to stretch themselves.

Teachers are to be facilitators, procurers of resources, editors, and supporters when projects don't come out the way students expect. However, it is hard for teachers to figure out how to manage this time, so getting started may be difficult. A good suggestion is to start with 20 percent of your weekly time to allow students to study topics of interest. The teacher must scaffold this time at first, so learners know how to question, get organized, research, and develop a project.

¹³ Spencer, J. Genius Hour. <https://spencerauthor.com/tag/genius-hour/>

Digital choice boards

The library media specialist at Dr. Jim D. Rollins Elementary School of Innovation created digital choice boards that supported each grade level's units of study, so students could research topics of interest. Students can click on their grade level or other grade levels and have many safe sites for researching their wonderings and burning questions.

Curriculum connections

Many schools are creating interdisciplinary courses, or at the very least, making explicit connections among disciplines in the curriculum. One way to do this is to create interdisciplinary, team-taught courses. At Bow High School, English and social studies in the ninth and tenth grades are team-taught, interdisciplinary humanities courses. These courses are organized around essential questions, and the literature and writing are integrated into the study of historical themes. An example might be the historical theme of the 1920s in the United States. Students might be asked to read the book *The Great Gatsby*, listen to music of the era, and reflect in an essay or poster on how the music and/or literature represented the times.





INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to consider what you teach as you look for ways to shift toward a student-centered approach

How can you create learning experiences that make the required curriculum relevant to the students?

Tip: Consider ways the students can help analyze what they are learning to make connections with relevance.



When reviewing the required curriculum units, are there opportunities for students to have choices about when and how they complete the learning activities?

Tip: Consider ways the curriculum units could allow for students' self-directed or self-paced action.



Do students have opportunities to extend or expand their learning beyond the required curriculum content?

Tip: Consider the potential for extended learning and personal initiative students may exhibit during the course of the unit. This could be based on personal interest, using strategies such as passion projects or genius hour projects within the unity of study, for example.



In what ways can the curriculum be linked to real-world activities? Do learners have opportunities to connect with “experts” in the field?

Tip: Consider the community resources that demonstrate the “why” of the required curriculum content.



How might you use a fertile question as the focus of your approach to a curriculum topic or theme, to stimulate authentic inquiry and engagement with relevant content?

Tip: Fertile questions provide an alternative to starting by thinking about the content to be delivered. They do not have a single correct answer and invite multiple responses and interpretations. They encourage students to think deeply and consider different viewpoints.



MEASURING PROGRESS

for curriculum design

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
The curriculum being followed is “standardized” and uses resources that support national guidelines.	<p>The curriculum is designed primarily to meet national or state requirements, with some attempts to adjust to meet learners’ needs in the local context.</p> <p>The teacher offers learners differentiated ways of engaging with content.</p>	<p>The curriculum is designed primarily to meet external standards, but with modifications to meet learners’ needs and/or to draw on the local context.</p> <p>Some choices are provided for learners to pursue their own areas of interest, but these are mostly set as additional to the core curriculum content being covered.</p>	<p>The required curriculum is enriched and implemented primarily around the learners’ needs and the local context.</p> <p>Learners have choices about the avenues they pursue within a designated topic of study.</p> <p>Effective use of inquiry questions and process allows for meaningful student engagement with content.</p> <p>Outside experts are used to provide content knowledge (local and global).</p>	<p>The required curriculum is fully localized and provides real-world application designed to equip learners with the capabilities they will require in the future.</p> <p>The use of fertile questions and inquiry topics leads learners to engage with and explore content individually and collaboratively.</p> <p>Learners routinely contribute to ways the curriculum is experienced as written, extended, or modified.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Conditions Linked to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Acts of Teaching

The teacher's role re-defined—think partnerships

As the ownership of learning shifts in the agentic classroom, the teacher becomes a collaborator in the learning process. They no longer act as the primary source of instruction.

Why Is This Important?

Many traditional classroom approaches designate the teacher as the primary source of instruction, with learners the passive recipients of what is being taught. Lessons are taught to the class, with little attention to learners' diverse needs, interests, or approaches.

Agentic behavior is expressed by the degree to which students are active participants in the learning process and not passive recipients of curriculum delivery. The teacher's role must change, and the acts of teaching must become more responsive and personalized.

Belief Statement

We believe that student agency must be developed deliberately and intentionally through changing the acts of teaching that have dominated in traditional classrooms.

DIG DEEPER



A shift in ownership of learning is fundamental to developing learner agency. To do this, the teacher's role must change from being the primary source of instruction to adopting a range of roles to support, direct, scaffold, and provide feedback on the learning activity. To support the development of learner agency in the classroom, teachers need to consider aspects of their pedagogical approach that need to change. These include:

1. Shifting from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach

Teachers can empower learners to take ownership of their learning by shifting from a traditional teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. This involves valuing and respecting learners' interests, strengths, and diverse perspectives, and involving them in decision-making about their learning goals, strategies, and assessments. Teachers can act as facilitators or guides with learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and meaningful to learners, and that allow them to have a voice and choice in their learning journey.

2. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment

Teachers can create a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment that nurtures learner agency. This involves building positive relationships with learners; promoting a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration; and valuing diversity. Teachers can create opportunities for learners to express their ideas, thoughts, and questions, and provide constructive feedback that encourages reflection, self-assessment, and a growth mindset. Teachers can also foster a sense of belonging by regularly recognizing and celebrating learners' unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

3. Encouraging inquiry-based and experiential learning

Teachers can promote learner agency by encouraging inquiry-based and experiential learning approaches. This involves providing opportunities for learners to explore, investigate, and construct their own knowledge through hands-on activities, problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflection. Teachers can encourage learners to ask questions, seek answers, and make connections between their learning and real-world contexts, which can foster curiosity, autonomy, and creativity.

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4. Encouraging risk taking

Encouraging learners to step out of their comfort zones can foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. It can also help learners develop resilience, adaptability, and a growth mindset, where they are willing to try new things, learn from failures, and persist in the face of challenges. This requires a safe and supportive learning environment where learners feel encouraged to take risks without fear of judgment or failure. It also requires equipping learners with the strategies and tools to help them work through challenges while in the “learning pit.”

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5. Providing choice and autonomy in learning activities

Teachers can support learner agency by providing choice and autonomy in learning activities. Teachers can offer a range of learning options, resources, and pathways that cater to diverse learner interests, preferences, and readiness levels. This can allow learners to take ownership of their learning, set their own learning goals, and make decisions about how, when, and where they learn. Teachers can also encourage learners to reflect on their learning progress and adjust their strategies accordingly, which promotes metacognition and self-regulated learning skills.

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6. Fostering collaboration and peer feedback

Fostering collaboration and peer feedback among learners can support learner agency by promoting social learning, communication skills, and critical thinking. Teachers can design collaborative learning activities that encourage learners to work together, share ideas, and provide feedback to each other. This can create a collaborative and supportive learning community where learners can learn from each other, develop a sense of responsibility, and contribute to each other’s learning.

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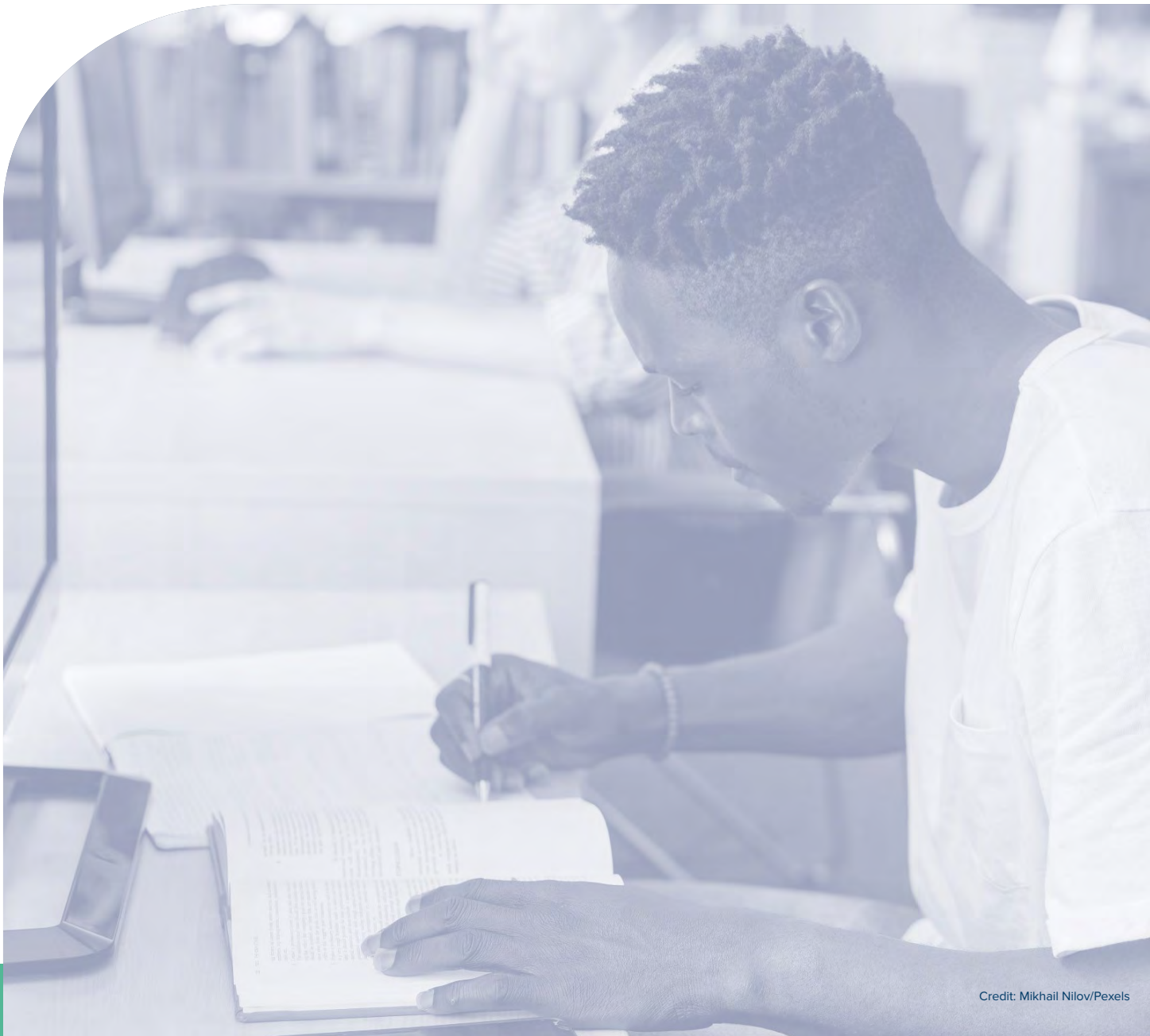
7. Emphasizing reflection and self-assessment

Teachers can encourage learners to reflect on their learning process and self-assess their progress toward their learning goals. Teachers can provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement, and to set their own learning targets. This promotes metacognition, self-awareness, and self-directed learning, and it enables learners to take ownership of their learning journey.

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FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through acts of teaching

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I provide opportunities for participation and collaboration at all points of the learning process, limiting times of direct instruction to when it is appropriate or required. • I provide explicit expectations for peer-to-peer feedback that include kind, respectful, courteous, and non-hurtful responses. • I create opportunities for learners (and parents) to support each other’s learning, and I provide scaffolds to enable this to happen. • I provide time and opportunity for learners to take risks and learn from mistakes. • I encourage the use of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills as learners work through personal learning dilemmas (or the “learning pit”). • I ensure learners receive targeted feedback throughout the learning process and encourage it from their peers and parents as well. (Using indicators on the learning rubric progressions helps with this.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am able to collaborate with others in groups, with individual responsibility as well as group accountability. • I can respectfully give and receive feedback. • I am given an appropriate level of freedom in relation to my self-expression and self-direction in approaching my unit assignments. • I am equipped with tools and strategies to resolve difficulties I have in my learning (the “learning pit”). • I am given the opportunity to personalize my assignments in ways that support cultural differences, showcase different strengths and talents, and allow for an inclusive learning community. • I regularly receive personalized feedback throughout the learning process. I am kind to other learners as we share ideas, and I am not hurtful with my feedback.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Students' understanding of their engagement

When participating in the act of teaching, students need an explicit understanding of what their engagement looks like. A class meeting before the feedback session can be helpful, along with an anchor chart that explicitly explains what it looks like when a learner is giving feedback or when all members of a group are working together. Learners evaluate themselves against the chart after the feedback session.

A beginning step in this process is to ask learners how they would like to demonstrate their understanding of a concept. The teacher could start by giving students options to choose from, such as choice boards or lists, and then move to more student-selected options as the teacher becomes more comfortable moving away from teacher-centered instruction and assessment.

Risk taking

Encourage risk taking by celebrating regularly when learners challenge themselves. Publicly share what risk was taken and celebrate making mistakes as learning opportunities. For example, teachers can structure time for learners to share reflections and plans for next steps with peers. Questions could include: How well did I do? Did I fall short of the goal? What steps can I take next to make progress toward the goal?

Students designing and planning their learning

One way to empower students as active participants in the learning process and not passive recipients of curriculum delivery is to allow them to design and plan learning activities. At Bedford High School, Intersession gives students this opportunity. Intersession is held during three days before the spring vacation. Students identify areas that they want to study for these three days. They work with a teacher who guides them and helps with administrative requirements, such as permission slips, transportation, and other details. Topics have included various career explorations, forest ecology studies, intensive physical training, and trips to other states and countries.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on the actions that are occurring during instruction, as you consider how to provide opportunities to engage and involve students as partners in the learning process.

In what ways can students be given the skills needed to be responsible collaborators?

Tip: Consider what explicit instruction may be necessary so that students can work successfully in groups and hold the group accountable.



How are students provided opportunities to demonstrate self-expression and self-direction in unit assignments?

Tip: Consider what explicit instructions or models are needed to support the concepts of self-expression or self-direction.



Is the “learning pit” model¹⁴ part of your classroom culture?

Tip: Consider how students are supported and encouraged to embrace the challenge of new learning with appropriate scaffolds and support.



In what ways are students receiving targeted feedback about their learning from sources other than the teacher?

Tip: Consider how students could use peer-review models or rubrics to self-assess, with the opportunity to make changes and improvements in their exhibition of learning.



¹⁴Nottingham, J. (2017). *The learning challenge: How to guide students through the learning pit*. <https://www.learningpit.org/product/the-learning-challenge/>

MEASURING PROGRESS

for acts of teaching

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
The teacher is the primary source of instruction and makes all decisions about the learning process.	<p>There is a high level of dependency on the teacher for all aspects of the learning process.</p> <p>Direct instruction and teacher-directed group work are the primary modes of instruction.</p> <p>Teacher feedback focuses on addressing mistakes made.</p> <p>Some simple protocols for addressing mistakes are in place and used by the class.</p>	<p>Learners are given some choice about what they learn and/or how they learn within the scope of work set by the teacher.</p> <p>Direct instruction is limited to when it is appropriate or required.</p> <p>Learners are confident about exploring new ways of working within the guidelines provided by the teacher.</p> <p>Feedback provided promotes learners’ next-steps thinking.</p>	<p>Opportunities are provided for contribution, participation, and collaboration at all points of the learning process.</p> <p>Learners have time and opportunity to take risks and learn from mistakes, and they are developing competence with the tools and strategies to resolve difficulties they encounter.</p> <p>Feedback is provided by the teacher and peers and is a valued part of the learning process.</p>	<p>The design and implementation of all learning activities is a partnership involving learners and the teacher.</p> <p>Risk taking and learning from mistakes are features of all learning, and learners are confident in using tools and strategies to resolve difficulties they and others may encounter.</p> <p>Constructive and targeted feedback is received from the teacher, peers, and parents, and learners regularly give feedback to others.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>

Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Collaboration



“I’m better with you than without you!”

The most powerful learning occurs when working together to share knowledge and skills, collaborate on ideas, and receive feedback from others.

Why Is This Important?

Collaboration promotes a more active and engaged learning experience. When children work collaboratively with their peers, they are exposed to different perspectives and approaches to problem solving, which can help them develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the material they are learning.

Belief Statement

We believe that agency should be promoted with the organization of the curriculum, including the opportunity for collaboration among students and the adults at school and in the community. By working together to generate new ideas, children can develop a more diverse and robust set of strategies for addressing complex problems.

DIG DEEPER



Collaborative activities can bring many benefits to schools that emphasize learner agency. Consider the benefits below and use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Promoting shared responsibility

Collaborative activities encourage learners to take shared responsibility for their learning, promoting a sense of agency and ownership over the learning process.

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2. Enhancing communication and collaboration skills

Collaborative activities allow learners to communicate and collaborate with their peers, helping them develop important interpersonal and communication skills that will be valuable throughout their lives.

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3. Encouraging peer-to-peer learning

Collaborative activities allow learners to learn from each other and to share their knowledge and ideas, promoting peer-to-peer learning.

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4. Encouraging diversity and inclusion

Collaborative activities can help break down barriers between learners from different backgrounds and promote inclusion, diversity, and cultural understanding.

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5. Fostering creativity and innovation

Collaborative activities can spark creativity and innovation by encouraging learners to brainstorm and generate new ideas.

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6. Providing opportunities for reflection

Collaborative activities can also provide opportunities for reflection and self-assessment, helping learners develop a sense of agency over their learning.

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7. Supporting problem-solving and critical thinking

Collaborative activities require learners to work together to solve problems and think critically, promoting the development of important cognitive skills.

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Overall, collaborative activities can help create a learning environment that supports learner agency by encouraging learners to take shared responsibility for their learning, to communicate and collaborate with their peers, and to develop important interpersonal, cognitive, and communication skills.

FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through collaboration



What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I establish collaborative work groups for my students with intentional learning expectations.• My lesson planning includes opportunities for students to brainstorm, research, share ideas, solve problems, and communicate peer-to-peer.• Students in my classroom have opportunities for peer-to-peer review of their work using assessment for learning tools.• The collaborative group has understood roles and responsibilities with collective expectations for all to meet the learning outcome.• I deliberately plan for structured, accountable student engagement, including scaffolding for learners who need support to own their roles during collaborative work sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have opportunities to work in collaboration with others with an intentional learning outcome.• The collaborative assignments in which I participate have opportunities to brainstorm ideas, carry out research, address problems to be solved, and allow for peer-to-peer communication strategies.• Collaboration in my classroom allows for peer-to-peer review of work using the assessment for learning tools made available to our group.• While in our collaborative work teams, we have understood roles and responsibilities; our collaborative group also understands the expectation that the learning outcomes are for each of us within the group.• I reflect on my own contributions to the group and provide feedback to my peers on their engagement as well.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.





INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE

Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Time for reflection

When giving students time for reflection, allow them to share their thinking with a fellow student or small group of students. Then the student can act on that input from others. A rubric and set of reflection questions can be useful tools in the productive group work model.

Student-generated feedback

Provide opportunities for learners to evaluate themselves and others, including feedback to the teacher using rubrics. This feedback could include whether their group collaborated well or needed more support to complete the task.

Peer mentors

Allow older students to become peer mentors to students who may need support in content areas, such as a fifth-grade student supporting the learning of a third-grade student when learning science or math concepts. Invite high school students to become reading partners with elementary students, using prepared comprehension questions.

For example, when a group of fifth-grade students was learning how to write an argumentative essay, the teacher contacted the debate teacher at a nearby high school. He brought his debate class over to coach the students on how to make their arguments better.

In another example, when studying the Pythagorean theorem, high school students helped elementary students build birdhouses, using the Pythagorean theorem to create the triangle shape needed for the roof.

Create intentional work groups where the students' individual strengths are considered in the groupings, with structured group expectations, so that all are involved and accountable.

Incorporating 21st century skills

It is important to include 21st century skills among the competencies expected of students. These skills are highly valued by employers. The ability to work constructively on a team and to accept feedback and incorporate that feedback in your work are two important 21st century skills. Students can acquire these skills through working on teams to complete projects or assignments, presenting to classmates and getting feedback, and editing their peers' written or creative work. Students can also present their work to authentic audiences. In one high school, for example, students were required to invite community members and mentors to their senior project presentation to gain authentic feedback on their work.

Transforming activities into collaborative activities

- **Discussion groups:** Organize small groups for focused discussions on a particular subject or reading material. Participants can share their interpretations, insights, and questions.
- **Collaborative writing or editing:** Assign participants to collaboratively write a report, essay, or document. Alternatively, they can edit and improve each other's work, fostering a sense of shared ownership.
- **Case studies:** Present real-life cases for analysis and problem-solving. Participants can work together to analyze the situation, develop strategies, and propose solutions.
- **Jigsaw method:** Divide a complex topic into segments and assign each segment to different groups. Later, have representatives from each group come together to share their knowledge and create a comprehensive understanding of the topic.





INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to investigate ways students can have opportunities to apply collaboration skills in the context of their learning activities.

What opportunities do students already have to work together? Do they have opportunities to take that experience and allow for more authentic collaboration?

Tip: Authentic collaboration occurs when students experience some of the benefits listed above.



How can the suggested benefits in the Dig Deeper section be put into practice?

Tip: Some examples for transforming an activity into a collaborative activity can be seen in Insights from Practice above. Ask your colleagues for other ideas.



What specific guidance should be provided to students before they begin their collaborative work?

Tip: When students are being placed into groups, they may or may not clearly understand group norms, performance outcomes, or individual accountability indicators to be met. Successful group work requires intentional planning to ensure success. The Fisher & Frey resource listed under Collaboration on page 182 can be of great help when considering collaboration activities.







MEASURING PROGRESS

for collaboration

Using this rubric: The rubric below has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
Learners work independently to complete learning tasks.	Learners work in pairs or groups for specified activities, usually as directed by the teacher.	Group work is becoming a regular feature of classroom learning. Protocols for group roles and ways of working together are provided to guide group activity.	Learners are routinely collaborating in all areas of their learning. They are familiar with the protocols for successful collaboration and able to review their progress as a group.	Learners routinely initiate and pursue collaborative activity. They actively negotiate their shared purpose and ways of working, and they regularly seek out new or different ways of working and people to work with.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>

Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Digital Literacy



“I think I’m cyber-savvy now!”

Learners are at risk in the digital environment if they lack the skills and understanding of how to use it wisely and safely.

Why Is This Important?

Digital literacy is critical for learners who are being encouraged to learn agentially. It can help them access information, become more self-directed learners, collaborate with their peers, communicate effectively, be more creative, and adapt to new learning environments. Also, being safe online is an essential component of digital literacy. It helps individuals protect personal information, prevent cyberbullying, avoid harmful content, maintain online reputation, and promote digital citizenship.

Belief Statement

We believe that student agency is an essential characteristic of learners when navigating and accessing the digital world.

DIG DEEPER



Being digitally literate is an essential characteristic of all who live in a world where digital technologies are increasingly affecting almost every aspect of how we live, learn, and work together. Digital technologies enable learners to learn agentially in numerous ways. Consider the examples and use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Access to information

Having the skills to find, evaluate, and use information from various digital sources is a key part of being digitally literate. This can be particularly helpful for learners who are developing agentially, as they can use digital tools to research and explore topics that interest them personally.

2. Self-directed learning

Learners can use a range of digital tools and platforms that allow them to set goals, track their progress, and identify areas where they need to improve.

3. Communication

Learning how to communicate effectively with others in a variety of digital formats, such as email, social media, and video conferencing, is another key aspect of digital literacy. Agentic learners are competent in using digital tools to connect with others who share their interests or goals.

4. Collaboration

The use of online tools and applications that allow learners to collaborate with their peers and work together on projects or assignments is becoming a more common part of young people's lives. Understanding how to work together to achieve common goals is a key part of being agentic.

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5. Creativity

Digital tools and environments open up opportunities for learners to express themselves in their own unique ways. They can use digital tools to create multimedia projects, explore virtual worlds, or design their own learning experiences.

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6. Flexibility

Agentic learners can adapt to new technologies and learning environments—and use digital tools to adapt their learning experiences to their own needs and preferences.

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Being safe online is crucial to the concept of digital literacy. Digital literacy involves not only the ability to use digital technologies effectively, but also the ability to use them safely and responsibly. Here are some areas to consider.

7. Protecting personal information

Learners must know how to protect personal information, such as login credentials, financial information, and sensitive personal details. Individuals should also be able to avoid identity theft, online fraud, and other types of cybercrime.

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8. Preventing cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a serious problem that can cause significant harm to individuals and communities, and learners should know how to prevent and respond to it.

9. Avoiding harmful content

There is a lot of harmful content on the internet, including violent, pornographic, and extremist material. Being safe online means knowing how to avoid this type of content and to protect oneself and others from exposure to it.

10. Maintaining online reputation

In the digital age, it's important to be aware of one's online reputation and to take steps to protect it. Being safe online means knowing how to manage online privacy settings, to avoid posting inappropriate or offensive content, and to respond appropriately to online feedback.

11. Being a digital citizen

Digital citizenship is an important part of digital literacy, as it enables people to become informed, engaged, and responsible members of digital communities.



FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through digital literacy

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I provide opportunities for students to access online resources with guidance and appropriate grade-level supervision. • I ensure that students are aware of the need to access sites in a safe and responsible manner to avoid potential negative consequences. • Learning activities include opportunities for students to connect with and interact with people and places outside the local community, including through online learning, as a way of enhancing communication skills as well as building knowledge. • I provide learning opportunities for students in collaborative groups or individually that allow for flexibility in when, where, and how students work toward meeting learning goals when using technology tools and resources. • Digital environments are a seamless part of my classroom's daily operations for tracking student goals, monitoring progress, assignments, and collecting students' work samples. • I provide my students opportunities to use digital resources in creative ways to exhibit learning, research personal interests, or help design learning activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I access online resources following the guidelines/policies in place. • I accept the responsibility to use online resources in a safe and responsible manner, and I realize the inappropriate use of technology can have long-term consequences. • I expand my connections and interactions with people and places by using online resources outside my local community, as a way of enhancing my communication skills and building knowledge. • When using technology tools and resources, I engage in responsible learning behaviors when provided opportunities to work collaboratively or independently with flexibility in when, where, and how I work toward meeting learning goals. • I use digital tools as part of the school day's daily operations, for tracking personal goals, monitoring my progress, accessing assignments, and storing work samples. • I am a learner who takes advantage of the opportunities to use digital resources in creative ways, to research topics of personal interest, or to contribute to the design of learning activities.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Embracing technology and encouraging its ethical use

Much is being said and written about students' use of large language models such as ChatGPT. Many educators are quick to denounce the use of such AI tools. There is, however, an opportunity to incorporate the use of AI tools into the learning process. Since we know students are going to use these tools, why not help them learn how to use them productively and ethically? One such activity would be to ask students to have an essay written by ChatGPT and then have the student “grade” the essay and make comments on how the essay could be improved and/or how it might be wrong. Students could also be assigned a research paper in segments, including a thesis, an outline, a bibliography, and the actual essay. This reduces the opportunity for students to have AI do all of their work. Students could be required to use a large language model for one or more of the segments.





INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on your intentional use of digital learning.

What changes in your classroom would be needed so students know that accessing digital resources is viewed as a “way of doing business” on a daily basis, rather than something that is an add-on to the classroom work?

Tip: The ubiquitous nature of technology in our world today suggests that students should be in an environment where technology is highly integrated.



What explicit instruction in digital literacy is in place to avoid the pitfalls of technology as stated in the Dig Deeper section above? What policies are in place that guide the use of technology in the district?

Tip: Growing awareness of the pitfalls of technology makes vigilance a requirement for using digital resources. Avoid assuming that students use safe practices.



How could you balance safety issues related to allowing open access to online resources that students may need when researching resources?

Tip: The information technology team in your school or district can be a support when seeking safe ways to search the internet. You also may want to provide sites that you have already discovered to be useful, and place parameters on which sites students should access for specific assignments.

Technology is always changing. Organizations that monitor apps and online sites for safety provide newsletters and information. It is a good idea to subscribe to these organizations to educate yourself regularly.



In what ways could you give students the opportunity and responsibility to use online resources for daily operations, accessing information, researching personal interests, designing creative ways to share knowledge, or enhancing communication skills?

Tip: For students to have the knowledge and skills they need when using digital platforms outside the classroom, you must practice and intentionally reinforce accountability and responsibility in using online resources.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for digital literacy

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
The use of digital tools and/or resources is limited to demonstrations or tasks set by the teacher.	Access to digital tools and resources is managed by the teacher and provided within a secure online environment.	Learners are exposed to an increasing variety of digital tools and resources, which they use to support their learning. These are generally accessed within a secure online environment provided by the school.	Learners are confident and capable users of a range of digital tools and technologies to support what they want to achieve in their learning. They understand the importance of safe and responsible use of digital technologies, and they follow guidelines provided to ensure this.	Learners select and use a range of digital tools and resources that allow them to set goals, track their progress, and identify areas where they need to improve. They leverage the potential of these technologies to create new resources and to expand connections and interactions with others. They are proactive about ensuring their digital safety and responsible use of the online environment.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>

Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior



Assessment for Learning

“What’s my next step, please?”

Assessment for learning helps you guide students to their next steps in learning.

Why Is This Important?

Assessment for learning (A4L) (also known as formative assessment) can promote learner agency by encouraging self-reflection, developing metacognitive skills, promoting student ownership of learning, fostering a growth mindset, and supporting differentiation. Learners become more active and motivated in their own learning and better able to take responsibility for their own progress and success.

Belief Statement

Assessment for learning is a student-centered approach to assessment that can help develop learner agency—or students’ capacity to take an active role in their learning process.

DIG DEEPER



Assessment for learning is used to gather information about a student's current knowledge and understanding to inform the next steps in the learning process. The goal of assessment for learning is to identify a student's strengths and weaknesses, to provide feedback to the student about their progress, and to adjust instruction to better meet the student's needs. In this approach, assessment is an ongoing process that occurs throughout the learning experience, not just at the end of a unit or course.

Assessment of learning (also known as summative assessment) is used to evaluate student learning at the end of a unit or course. The goal of this assessment is to measure how much a student has learned and to determine their level of proficiency in a particular subject. This type of assessment is often used for grading and to determine whether a student has met a course's learning objectives.

Assessment for learning and assessment of learning serve different purposes and have distinct benefits. However, assessment for learning is often considered more useful because it focuses on supporting and enhancing student agency throughout the learning process. Below are additional reasons for prioritizing assessment for learning as a means of increasing learner agency. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. It increases student engagement and ownership

A4L encourages self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-regulation by helping students understand their strengths, areas of growth, and learning goals. By providing constructive feedback and guidance, assessment for learning empowers students to take ownership of their learning, set realistic goals, and monitor their progress. This fosters a sense of agency and responsibility, promoting intrinsic motivation and active engagement in the learning process.

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2. It engages students in the assessment process

Students develop a greater understanding of the purpose of learning, allowing them to co-construct criteria, set goals, and monitor their progress. By involving students in decision-making, assessment practices give them a sense of ownership and control over their learning. When students have agency, they are more motivated, engaged, and invested in their educational journey, leading to improved learning outcomes.

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3. It helps inform next steps in learning

A4L provides ongoing feedback to both students and teachers, helping to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. This feedback enables teachers to tailor their instruction and interventions to meet each student’s specific needs. It allows for timely adjustments in teaching strategies, content delivery, and support mechanisms, leading to more effective learning experiences.

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4. It provides targeted support

A4L helps identify specific areas of difficulty or misconceptions that students may have. This targeted information enables teachers to provide individualized support and interventions to address those areas, preventing learning gaps from widening. By addressing students’ learning needs in a timely manner, A4L promotes continuous progress and reduces the risk of students falling behind.

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5. It helps cultivate metacognitive skills

Through self-assessment and feedback, students are encouraged to reflect on their thinking processes and learning strategies, and to develop metacognitive skills, such as evaluating their own understanding, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and determining strategies for improvement. These metacognitive skills are valuable for lifelong learning, as they help students become more effective and independent learners.

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6. It provides a balanced assessment approach

A4L recognizes that assessment is not solely about assigning grades or determining outcomes at the end of a learning experience. It emphasizes a broader range of assessment methods, including formative assessments, observations, student self-assessments, and peer feedback. By employing various assessment strategies, assessment for learning provides a more holistic view of students’ progress, taking into account their diverse talents, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds.

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7. It builds a growth mindset

When students view challenges and mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth, they develop a growth mindset. By focusing on progress, improvement, and effort rather than solely on final outcomes, A4L creates a positive learning environment that encourages risk taking, resilience, and the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and practice.

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8. It promotes equity

By using multiple measures and providing ongoing support, A4L helps address individual student needs and reduces the impact of external factors on student achievement. Assessment for learning can help identify and mitigate educational disparities, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

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By providing tools and resources that allow the student to self-assess based on clearly determined standards, the student builds self-awareness in their progress toward meeting their expected levels of performance.



FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through assessment for learning

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I implement a model of assessment that includes the concepts of A4L where students have knowledge of and access to their own levels of performance. • I provide systems in my classroom that include opportunities for students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in their learning. • I use assessment feedback to make timely adjustments in teaching strategies, content delivery, and support mechanisms. • I provide systems in my classroom that include opportunities for students to set goals, track their progress, reflect on their progress, and share progress with parents or guardians. • A4L tools available in my classroom include rubrics, anchor papers, and examples. • I post guidance, such as the scope and sequence of a content area written in learner-friendly language, so students know where they are in the continuum and can plan for their next goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that assessment tools allow me to become aware of my current level of performance and, when needed, to set goals to improve. • I have the capacity to use the feedback I receive about my performance levels to identify my strengths and weaknesses in learning. • I am involved in co-constructing criteria, setting goals, and monitoring my progress. • I can successfully use the system provided to me in my classroom to set goals and track my progress, and I have time to reflect on my progress. • I use the A4L tools available in my classroom for self-reflection and make adjustments as required. • I am prepared to take risks in my approach to learning because I am confident that the feedback I receive will allow me to improve into the future (growth mindset).

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Collaborate on Proficiency Metrics

Teachers develop proficiency scales with students to make sure they understand what is expected to show mastery of the standard. The teacher also shows exemplars of proficiency for student reference. Learners evaluate their work with peers, identify areas where they made mistakes, and correct their work before submitting it to the teacher for review.

Collaborative teacher team meetings

In one grade-level team, teachers give a common formative assessment. During collaborative team meeting time, they analyze students' progress and errors and plan instructional moves for the next lessons. The students go to second learning opportunity (SLO) time taught by all teachers. It is important to note that the whole team shares all the students, and the teachers pull the students together who need the same support. Support staff push in for the next week or two, depending on when the teachers do the next common formative assessment. A critical step in this process is teachers sharing with the students which class they are going to and what skill they are practicing. As students get used to this process, they analyze their own assessments and determine what SLO class they need.

For example, in third grade, teachers use a Google form to ask learners to evaluate themselves and whether they have mastered the essential standard(s) taught that week. The teachers then meet and review students' responses together and form learning groups for the next week based on student responses. If a student evaluated himself or herself as having mastery, but the teacher saw evidence that the student was not there yet, the teacher has a mini check-in with the student and places the learner in the appropriate SLO group.

Assessment for learning and collaboration

The teacher in a second-grade class had frequently provided scaffolding and facilitation for structured collaborative learning groups. This decision greatly increased student self-efficacy. One day, two students were working on problem-solving strategies for addition. They decided to go sit by each other and work through the task. As they worked, they looked at each other's progress, made suggestions, and corrected their mistakes. They referred to the chart on the wall, which showed the next stage in the line of learning progression. All of a sudden, one of the students said to the teacher, "Wait a minute.... You mean all I have to do to move from a level 2 to a level 3 is move the zero?" The teacher said, "Yes." In a few minutes, the students came back and proudly told the teacher, "Look, we went all the way to 4! We knew if we could get to level 3, then we could go ahead and figure out how to get to a level 4!"

Competency-based learning and assessment

Students in a competency-based learning and assessment system rely on formative assessment to know where they are on their learning journey. Formative assessment will tell these learners what objectives they have achieved competency in, what objectives they have not yet achieved competency in, what the next steps in their learning are, and where they are in achieving their overall learning objectives.



INVITATION TO ACT



The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on ways students are provided tools and resources that build their capacity in assessing their learning.

How are you currently using rubrics, anchor papers, examples, posted guidance, or other tools that give students an opportunity to build their capacity to self-assess before turning in assignments for final grading?

Tip: Students can help contribute to the language of the rubric as they clarify what is expected.



When do students have an opportunity to have conversations with the teacher about what is expected of them in the final outcome of their performance?

Tip: Anchor papers and examples can be used to have conversations with students about why one example meets the performance standard but another example does not. Anchor papers that clearly define what is expected can be a very useful tool for students.



What systems are in place where students can seek additional guidance, peer support, or conferences with the teacher if they do not clearly understand what is expected before final grading?

Tip: For adults, college students, and people in the workplace, it is common and even expected that we get other opinions or have a colleague look at our report, our writing, or our research before submitting it. Giving students the opportunity to have someone else review the rubric with them encourages this adult practice through peer-to-peer interaction. This can be done within the confines of the classroom to ensure that the student, in the end, is fully accountable.



MEASURING PROGRESS

for assessment for learning

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>"Thinking About It"</i>	Developing <i>"Working on It"</i>	Implementing <i>"Living It"</i>	Transforming <i>"Shifting the Paradigm"</i>
<p>Assessment is mostly summative and based on test scores and the allocation of grades.</p> <p>Students receive limited or no feedback about assessment results.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are discussed as a part of introducing a topic or lesson.</p> <p>Students have some opportunities to make improvements based on feedback provided.</p> <p>Some formative assessment approaches are introduced.</p>	<p>Assessment focus is referenced at key points in the instructional process, with feedback provided to learners to help them improve on what they are doing. Some opportunities are explored for students to set personal learning targets.</p> <p>Formative assessment is used as a driver to aid students in knowing what they need to do to improve.</p>	<p>Teachers and learners have clarity about what is being assessed and why it is being assessed. The assessment criteria are available to all from the start of all learning activity.</p> <p>Learners are developing confidence in taking risks and are regularly involved in setting learning goals and using feedback to inform their next steps.</p> <p>Learners have a clear understanding of the relationship between formative assessment outcomes and summative assessment outcomes.</p>	<p>Assessment is fully embedded as part of the learning process.</p> <p>Learners routinely co-construct criteria, set goals, and monitor their progress.</p> <p>Risk taking and mistake making are viewed as a valuable part of the learning process, providing deeper insights and direction for the future.</p> <p>Learners can make adjustments in their practice, identify areas of strength and weakness, and assess their readiness to participate in assessment and their ability to meet performance standards.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what's happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Learners as Leaders

Learners today, leaders tomorrow

All learners have the potential to demonstrate leadership today and into the future.

Why Is This Important?

By promoting the concept of learners as leaders in schools, we can help create a learning environment that is more student-centered, empowering, and engaging, and that helps prepare students for success in the complex, ever-changing world of the 21st century. The use of learner profiles is important as a guide for students when defining the specific attributes and behaviors that build leadership skills.

Belief Statement

We believe that demonstrating leadership is an essential attribute and outcome when students have agency in their learning. Learners of any age have the potential to demonstrate leadership, and a well-constructed learner profile will support this.

DIG DEEPER



Promoting the concept of learners as leaders of their own learning—in schools, in community, and in the wider world—is an essential part of being agentic.

Our traditional approach to schooling emphasizes the need to follow instructions and conform to what is expected. But, to thrive into the future, we must value innovation, creativity, and problem solving. These things don't develop where conformity and compliance are the norm and where everyone is a "follower."

By empowering learners to take ownership of their learning and to develop the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in the modern world, we create opportunities for them to develop these leadership characteristics.

Below are some strategies you can use to promote the concept of learners as leaders in schools. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Provide leadership opportunities

Students of any age can be empowered to take on leadership roles that are appropriate for them. For example, they can participate in student council, peer mentoring, council of innovation, or leading classroom discussions.

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2. Encourage collaboration

Provide opportunities for students to work together to solve problems and share their knowledge and skills.

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3. Use student-centered approaches

Shift the ownership so that learners demonstrate increasing levels of leadership in their learning. Use approaches such as project-based learning and inquiry-based learning, which give students more control over their learning and allow them to pursue their own interests.

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4. Develop communication skills

Teach students communication skills that enable them to express their learning needs and provide feedback to their peers and teachers.

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5. Foster a growth mindset

Emphasize the idea that abilities and intelligence can be developed through hard work, perseverance, and a focus on learning from mistakes.

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6. Use assessment for learning

Use formative assessment strategies to provide feedback that encourages students to take ownership of their learning progress and to identify areas for growth.

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7. Encourage self-reflection

Provide appropriate scaffolds, tools, and processes for students to use when reflecting on their learning progress and to identify their strengths and areas for growth.

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8. Celebrate student successes

Celebrate student successes and provide opportunities for students to showcase their learning and leadership skills.

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9. Encourage empathy and social awareness

Foster an understanding of the broader social context and the needs of others. Provide opportunities for students to engage in community service, volunteer work, or projects that address social issues. This helps students develop empathy, compassion, and a sense of responsibility toward others.

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10. Foster ethical decision-making

Teach students about ethical principles and guide them in applying those principles to real-life situations. Encourage critical thinking and reflection on the consequences of their actions. Help them understand the importance of integrity, honesty, and accountability in leadership.

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11. Cultivate problem-solving skills

Develop students' ability to identify problems, analyze situations, and propose creative solutions. Encourage them to think critically and consider multiple perspectives when addressing challenges. Provide opportunities for students to collaborate, take risks, and learn from failure to develop resilience and adaptability.

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12. Promote effective communication and collaboration

Emphasize the importance of effective communication skills, including active listening, clear articulation, and respectful dialogue. Provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively in diverse teams, encouraging them to value different opinions and contribute their unique strengths.

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13. Foster self-awareness and reflection

Help students develop a deep understanding of their own strengths, values, and areas for growth. Encourage self-reflection through journaling, goal-setting, and regular check-ins. This self-awareness enables students to recognize their own potential and develop strategies for personal improvement.

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14. Encourage initiative and innovation

Support students in taking initiative and pursuing their own ideas and interests. Provide platforms for them to explore and develop their entrepreneurial skills, creativity, and innovation. Celebrate and showcase their projects, prototypes, or initiatives to foster a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

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15. Develop cultural competence and global awareness

Foster an appreciation for diverse cultures, perspectives, and global issues. Encourage students to engage with global challenges, such as climate change and social justice, and explore how their leadership skills can contribute to positive change on a global scale.

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16. Integrate reflection on leadership in assessment

Include opportunities for students to reflect on their leadership development and provide evidence of their growth in their learner profiles. This can be achieved through self-assessment, portfolios, presentations, or capstone projects that highlight their leadership experiences and contributions.

17. Encourage ongoing learning and growth

Instill a love of learning and a commitment to lifelong growth. Help students develop the skills and attitudes needed to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Encourage them to seek out new experiences, continue learning beyond graduation, and actively contribute to their communities as lifelong leaders.





FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through learners as leaders

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I create roles and responsibilities in my classroom that allow students to practice leadership.• I create instructional designs that allow students to work in small groups that foster collaboration and problem solving.• I provide project-based learning and inquiry-based learning options that are linked to student interest.• I plan for project-based and/or inquiry-based learning options that are linked to content areas, such as science and social studies, as first steps for learners beginning this journey.• I create a culture and a structure that support the students, where students have confidence to ask for help when needed from peers or the teacher.• I create a culture where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for self-reflection, and sustained effort and perseverance lead to improved learning.• I create opportunities to celebrate the effort and hard work that leads to improved learning outcomes. This includes acknowledging failure and what has been learned from any mistakes made.• I provide choices within the learning tasks, such as “must dos,” “may dos,” and playlists to give students opportunities to manage their time and how they will demonstrate understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I take advantage of the opportunities to be a leader in my classroom in structured opportunities or in opportunities that present themselves.• I understand the responsibility that comes with demonstrating leadership, as well as the need to take into account the impact of my decisions on others and the environment we share.• When given an opportunity to work collaboratively with my peers, I engage in the group work and hold myself accountable for the work.• I participate in projects or opportunities for inquiry into subjects that are of interest to me.• I use self-reflection as a resource to know when and how to ask for help based on the structure provided within my classroom.• I have a mindset that mistakes are a part of learning any new skill and that sustained effort and perseverance lead to improved learning.• I celebrate both small and big changes in learning that occur.• I manage my time and workspaces for learning. I manage task completion and monitor my goals for learning and academic behaviors.• I know how to use the spaces in the learning zone that support my learning best. I do not distract other learners or myself.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.

INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Getting started

For teachers, just getting started is hard. If they start with a content area, it is not as scary or overwhelming. This is a first step for teachers just beginning to make the shift, and it is not as scary as simply letting students go. Eventually, learners start to demonstrate on their own how they will master the content.

For example, use your phone to take pictures or short video snippets highlighting learners in the class who were “stuck in the learning pit” and overcame the obstacle. Take videos of learners explaining “The Power of Yet” or concepts that support a growth mindset¹⁵, such as perseverance, grit, and determination.¹⁶ Learners use part of their time each week to follow up on their wonderings or questions, or to research areas of interest. It is important to note that, in the beginning, just setting learners “free to wonder and research” may not be productive. If the teacher discusses, together with learners, the criteria that must be met as they work independently, learners will be more engaged and on task, as they can evaluate how well they did attending to their research. They can also evaluate each other’s learning behaviors during this time.

Using learner feedback

To build a common understanding of what competency looks like, the teacher and learners unpack the standard together. They discuss what mastery means and share ways they will review their peers’ evidence in a learner feedback session. Learners then move into partner work sessions, and the teacher circulates through the room, listening in and giving feedback and/or asking probing questions to deepen their reflection and understanding. At the end of the learner feedback session, the group comes back together with the teacher to discuss what worked during the feedback session, whether they collaborated well with their peers, or whether the rubric needs to be adjusted to be clearer or to provide more challenges.

¹⁵ Dweck, C. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success* (3rd ed.). Ballantine Books.

¹⁶ Claxton, G. & Carlzon, B. (2019). *The learning power approach to primary teaching* (The Learning Power Series). Crown House Publishing.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on the opportunities for student leadership.

What opportunities are available for students to take on leadership roles in your classroom?

Tip: Leadership can take many forms, including assuming individual responsibility for actions that make the classroom run more smoothly, such as organizing materials, books, or resources.

Other examples include leading a discussion based on student-prepared questions about a reading sample, or leading a workshop in reading or math for their peers during SLO time. Bigger leadership activities can include planning end-of-year “play days” or formal roles as advisory council members to the cafeteria, principal student leadership council, or community advisory group.



Do collaborative group work activities allow students to assign the roles within their group? How do they allow all members of the group to have individual accountability assigned to portions of the work to be completed?

Tip: These strategies can be used to build the concept of leadership within a collaborative activity. Highlight the need to adopt various roles and to understand that everyone’s contribution is important, not simply the person who is nominated as “leader” for that activity.



How do learners practice academic behaviors that support learning and positive peer relationships, such as how to give feedback, take turns, encourage other learners, and handle disappointment or disagreements?

Tip: The collaborative work group must maintain levels of accountability to each member to ensure that all students are benefitting from the time spent working in the group.



Do you observe students accepting that mistakes are part of the learning process? What structures are in place to ensure that students are allowed to learn from their mistakes and improve their performance?

Tip: This may require a shift in grading models. If the current system is based on single attempts that result in grades being assigned, students may not take action to learn from their mistakes. Multiple opportunities (but not unlimited ones) to improve performance will aid in this mindset.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for learners as leaders

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
Learners respond to the direction and leadership of the teacher and/or others in the school or classroom.	Learners are offered choices within the learning tasks (such as “must dos,” “may dos,” and playlists) to give them opportunities to manage their time and develop the attributes they will need as leaders of their own learning. Some of this involves group work.	<p>Learners take on leadership roles and responsibilities provided by the teacher as part of lesson or program design. This includes ways of demonstrating leadership in group or team work.</p> <p>They are confident about asking for help and in providing the same when approached by a peer.</p> <p>The learner profile provides a means of making explicit the leadership attributes being sought.</p> <p>Students exhibit leadership within the classroom.</p>	<p>Learners take responsibility for selecting learning tasks, including working in groups involving collaboration and problem solving. They are prepared to take risks, with encouragement and support, and can learn from mistakes to improve their performance. They are increasing their level of sustained effort and perseverance to complete tasks.</p> <p>The attributes of leadership are clearly understood via the learner profile.</p> <p>Students exhibit leadership within the classroom and wider school context.</p>	<p>Learners routinely choose the content and approach to learning that will allow them to achieve their goals, including working as part of a team or group. They demonstrate leadership skills in a range of contexts, both inside and outside of school, and provide support and guidance to others on the journey. They regularly try new ideas and are competent in using reflective processes that lead to ongoing improvement.</p> <p>Students exhibit leadership in their classroom, school, and community projects.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Competencies for Life

“How I am smart matters more than what I am smart at.”

Cultivating competencies makes someone a lifelong learner.

Why Is This Important?

Being educated carries the expectation that one will use and build on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained throughout life. Beyond the development of content knowledge, which has been the centerpiece of the instructional process for decades, are those other attributes and behaviors that are essential for students to succeed and thrive in their personal and professional lives beyond school. Competencies such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, for example, are critical for equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will need to successfully navigate their personal journeys in learning, living, and working.

Belief Statement

We believe that emphasizing competency development is a more holistic and student-centered approach to education, and it prepares students for success in the complex, ever-changing world of the 21st century.



DIG DEEPER

Competency-based learning is crucial to prepare learners for their future and equip them with the skills and abilities needed to navigate a rapidly evolving world. Unlike a traditional focus on content knowledge, which can be limited to specific contexts and timeframes, competency-based learning offers several key advantages that foster long-term success and adaptability.

The emphasis on competency development represents a shift away from traditional academic success, which has focused on acquiring and demonstrating knowledge through testing and grades. Ever since the early work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at the turn of the century¹⁷, education systems around the world have identified the need for competency development that is focused on developing the skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are needed for success in the real world—and for life.

Competency-based learning emphasizes the development of practical, real-world skills that are essential in various domains, including the workforce. In today's rapidly changing job market, employers seek candidates who possess not only academic knowledge but also a broad range of competencies. These competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, adaptability, and digital literacy, are transferable skills that enable individuals to navigate complex challenges and contribute effectively to their professional and personal lives.

By focusing on developing competencies, learners gain the practical skills necessary to excel in diverse situations, making them better prepared for the demands of the future.

Rather than make content learning redundant, competency-based learning fosters a deeper level of understanding and application of knowledge. Instead of relying solely on the memorization of facts and information, learners engage in active learning experiences that require them to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems and scenarios. This approach promotes critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis, enabling learners to connect concepts and ideas, make informed decisions, and develop a nuanced understanding of their subjects. By emphasizing the application of knowledge, competency-based learning gives learners the capacity to adapt their understanding to different contexts and to tackle new challenges they may encounter throughout their lives.

The shift toward competency-based education reflects the changing needs of learners and society. Consider the benefits below and use the space to record your thoughts.

1. Emphasis on real-world skills

Competency-based education (CBE) places a strong emphasis on developing practical, real-world skills that are essential for success in various contexts, including the workforce. It aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and the skills needed in the 21st century workplace.

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¹⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2001). Definition and selection of competencies: Theoretical and conceptual foundations (DsSeCo). <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/41529556.pdf>

2. Personalized learning

CBE recognizes that learners have diverse needs, interests, and starting points. It offers personalized learning pathways that allow students to progress at their own pace and focus on areas where they need additional support or can accelerate their learning. This individualization helps to maximize student engagement and outcomes.

3. Mastery-oriented approach

CBE prioritizes mastery of competencies rather than seat time or completion of a predefined curriculum. Students are encouraged to demonstrate their understanding and application of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. This approach fosters a deeper level of learning and ensures that learners develop a strong foundation of essential competencies.

4. Relevance and application

CBE promotes learning that is relevant and applicable to real-world situations. It aims to equip learners with the skills and abilities they need to tackle complex challenges, think critically, solve problems, and adapt to changing environments. By emphasizing knowledge application in practical contexts, CBE prepares learners to navigate an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world.

5. Lifelong learning and adaptability

The rapid pace of change in today's society requires individuals to be adaptable and lifelong learners. CBE nurtures skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and self-directed learning, which are crucial for continuous growth and success in a rapidly evolving world.

6. Alignment with workforce demands

Employers are increasingly seeking employees with a broad set of competencies beyond traditional academic qualifications. The competencies that they value highly include problem-solving, communication, teamwork, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial mindset.





FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through competencies for life

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student learning activities include opportunities for skill development in problem solving, critical thinking, and communication, beyond knowledge and/or skill acquisition. • I keep myself updated about opportunities available to my learners in the future and use this information in my program design. • I introduce my students to “experts in the field” who provide real-world examples that align with student interests. • My students have various opportunities to apply their learning in ways that are meaningful to them. • The statements in my learner profile provide guidance about the competencies that are valued in my context and what will be measured. • My students can set goals and determine a self-directed path toward meeting learning goals within a context of teacher guidance and support. • My learning activities involve focusing on real-world readiness that includes the skills and knowledge students need personally and in their future professional lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can apply myself when engaging in learning activities using critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, for example. • I use the learner profile to help me understand the competencies I must work on and demonstrate in my learning activity. • I am able to take the skills I have learned and apply them to real-world situations. • I have choices in the ways I can acquire new learning and demonstrate my learning. • I understand the responsibility to take ownership of my learning, set goals, and have a self-directed path of learning in partnership with the teacher. • I understand the connection between the learning activities and the skills that will prepare me personally and in my future professional life. • I challenge myself to learn about multiple career opportunities, by taking interest surveys or talking to experts in the world of work. • I conduct inquiry-based projects about the world of work to broaden my understanding of what is available to me in the future.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Preparation for college

“Before I went to KM Perform, I had little confidence in myself. I had difficulty speaking in front of large audiences, participating in class, and working with others. However, the nature of competency-based learning pushed me to work on these skills, which have prepared me tremendously for my post-secondary education.” —Briana Medina, Aurora Institute, a CompetencyWorks intern in May 2023

[Read the full story here: https://aurora-institute.org/cw_post/how-being-in-a-competency-based-learning-environment-prepared-me-for-college/](https://aurora-institute.org/cw_post/how-being-in-a-competency-based-learning-environment-prepared-me-for-college/)

Learner profile in action

With competencies for life, the conditions conducive to developing agentic learners come together with learning in practice. It may be seen in learner profile notebooks, which can be digital or in a binder. Learners take charge of organizing the evidence of learning, agreed on by the teacher and the learners. This can be done in class mini focus lessons and teacher-learner feedback sessions. Learners include evidence of learning core content, as well as fine arts entries of interest. The learner profile entries' level of sophistication can vary by grade level, so kindergarten entries in the profile will differ from those in fifth grade. However, all grade levels have a common profile of what is expected as mastery for that grade level, as well as choice entries in academics and the arts. It is important to include evidence of collaboration and leadership in the learner profile for each grade level.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on the opportunities afforded to your students that prepare and equip them with skills they will need personally and professionally.

What opportunities do students have to use critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills during learning activities?

Tip: Beyond the basic knowledge and skill acquisition, opportunities can allow students to apply their learning to real-world activities. This could come in the form of special projects that combine several of the foundation skills being taught in the required curriculum.



When reflecting on the manner in which the act of teaching occurs, what opportunities are there to deviate from the direct instruction model?

Tip: Sometimes direct instruction is the most efficient way to teach basic concepts and skills. However, other options, such as inquiry-based teaching and learning, allow students to engage in more of a discovery model by asking questions or through research on topics. Questions could be posed by the teacher or by the students, followed by time for students to explore their own possible answers. For example, through student research on the water cycle, they could discover and report on their theory about the water cycle and then share their findings.



What opportunities do students have to set their own timeframe and pace of work?

Tip: When doing project-based learning, students can set goals, timelines, and checkpoints. This model can be guided by a template and ongoing monitoring by the teacher to ensure that students are on track.

On a daily or weekly basis, students could be given their assignments for the day or week and then work on the various assignments as they choose. For example, during time set aside to do independent or collaborative work, where multiple assignments are to be completed, the students can select which assignments to do first.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for competencies for life

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Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
The dominant classroom learning involves acquisition of knowledge and skills.	Teacher-designed inquiry and project-based approaches to learning provide focused opportunities to practice problem solving, critical thinking, and communication. A learner profile is being developed but is not widely used yet.	Inquiry and project-based approaches to learning, where learners must engage in problem solving, critical thinking, and communication, are used regularly. Some opportunities are provided to apply these in real-world settings. Statements in the learner profile provide guidance for both teacher and learners about the competencies that are valued and addressed.	Learners understand the significance of competency development and are able to provide evidence of it through their various learning activities. These regularly occur in real-world contexts. Learners maintain a record of their learning that provides evidence of this development.	Learners confidently articulate the connection between learning activities and the competencies they require personally and for the future. They initiate and participate in authentic learning activities where these competencies can be demonstrated, and they take responsibility for managing their record of learning, guided by the learner profile.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
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- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
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Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Learner-Driven Learning



“Take the wheel, Sally!”

Learners cannot develop agentially if they don’t have ownership of their learning. They need to be in the driver’s seat!

Why Is This Important?

Learner-driven learning is tightly coupled to establishing a classroom culture in which learners have greater ownership of their learning. This involves a shift in student thinking from regarding themselves as passive recipients within a top-down hierarchy, toward an approach that gives them greater autonomy and choice, promotes ways they influence what is happening, and gives them a sense of ownership in their classroom and their school.

This shift is driven by learner attributes (knowledge, understandings, skills, and dispositions) that are found within the learner profile. The profile should contain descriptions of the attributes we are seeking to see in our learners as they develop agency in their learning. These should be understood and practiced by the student and reinforced by the teachers.

Belief Statement

We believe that student agency must be developed deliberately and intentionally through the shift in ownership of learning, reinforced by the development of specific learner attributes that promote students’ active engagement and ownership of the learning environment.

DIG DEEPER



Promoting the concept of learners as leaders of their learning is crucial for empowering students and promoting active engagement in their own learning. Here are some strategies that can be used in schools. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

1. Develop a learner profile

This should contain a list of the learner attributes you are seeking to see developed in your learners as they become more agentic in their learning. The attributes are those behaviors that allow for successful student engagement, such as self-awareness, respect, reflection, questioning, perseverance, honesty, responsibility, problem solving, creativity, leadership, self-discipline, motivation, confidence, curiosity, collaboration, and communication.

2. Setting learning goals

Encourage students to set their own learning goals and help them understand how to set goals that are realistic, achievable, timely, and relevant to their interests and needs. These learning goals should be clearly linked to the attributes in the learner profile and to the curriculum goals for the lesson, topic, or theme. Explicitly teach them methods they could choose from to track their goals, such as calendars and to-do lists.

3. Foster a growth mindset

Emphasize the idea that abilities and intelligence can be developed through hard work, perseverance, and a focus on learning from mistakes. Remember: The goals they are working toward should be shared and owned by them and should be developed in an environment that encourages risk-taking and allows for errors to be made.

4. Use assessment for learning

Use formative assessment strategies to provide feedback that encourages students to take ownership of their learning progress and to identify areas for growth.

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5. Encourage collaboration

Give students opportunities to work together to solve problems and share their knowledge and skills. Be intentional about building group skills and understanding of team roles and responsibilities.

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6. Embrace student-centered pedagogies

Make greater use of approaches such as project-based learning and inquiry-based learning, which give students more control over their learning and allow them to pursue their own interests.

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7. Encourage personal goal setting

Learners should be supported in setting personal goals that address the learner attributes. Create opportunities for learners to reflect on their progress in applying the learner attributes in their daily life.

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8. Develop student leadership opportunities

Develop leadership opportunities, such as student-led conferences, peer mentoring, and student councils, that allow students to take on responsibility and make decisions that affect their learning environment.

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9. Emphasize the development of communication skills

When students are able to clearly articulate their ideas and thinking, they are in a much better position to express their needs and preferences, to work as members of teams, and to explain their progress in learning. Plan to provide opportunities that enable your learners to express their learning needs and provide feedback to their peers and teachers. This should include developing interpersonal skills that support learning and peer relationships during collaboration and goal setting.

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FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through learner-driven learning

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have created a culture where students understand and embrace opportunities to set realistic goals, track progress, reflect on learning, and make adjustments as needed. • I have provided a learner profile containing the attributes a learner must demonstrate as they develop agency. This is shared with my learners and their parents, and it is referenced frequently during classroom learning activity. • I solicit opinions from my students about the types of learner attributes from the learner profile that are needed in specific learner activities. • I have provided my students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be a leader in the various options provided to them in the classroom or at the school level. • I focus explicitly on communication skills across all areas of classroom activity to help build competence and confidence when sharing thoughts and ideas and participating in group work. • Students have opportunities for self-directed, project-based, or inquiry-based learning that allows them to explore new learning, either independently or in collaborative groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use tools provided to set realistic goals; I use tools for self-reflection as I track my progress; and I know where and how to access support to improve my learning. • I know what is expected of me when I am given the opportunity to manage my own learning, including when working on project-based or inquiry-based learning. • I can manage how I meet the expectations I set for myself and those set for me by others. • I use the learner attributes in the learner profile to guide my goal setting and reflection on my learning activity. • I have practiced and can now demonstrate what is required of me in various contexts when using communication skills, whether it is oral, in writing, or online. • I can make choices about when I complete work independently and when I can work more effectively as a member of a team. • I participate in the planning, execution, and evaluation of special activities or events; this includes evaluating whether the learner attributes were being practiced.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

Fostering a growth mindset

Coauthor Annette Thompson shares this story from when she was a principal. When the school first opened as a school of innovation, it was a zoned school for students who lived in the attendance area and school of choice for students who did not live in the attendance area. She recalls: “As I read the transfer requests, I soon saw a common theme. Parents were looking for a place their children would be safe for learning, a place where their child could succeed where they had not succeeded in the past, a place where their child would be loved, encouraged, and held to high academic standards. I became more determined that we had to open a school with this vision.”

Thompson relates a situation that happened many times at the school, in various settings and with different children. “As the year progressed, the individual stories I had read in the transfer requests stayed with me. I remember a day when I got an urgent message from a teacher to come sit with a child who was so defeated she had crawled under her desk and would not come out. When I got to the room, I poked my head under the desk and said, ‘Want to come out and talk?’ She said through huge sobs, ‘NO, I’m stupid!’ I felt my heart ache when she said it. I crawled under the table and sat with her until she calmed down. After about 30 minutes, she agreed to talk. I told her she was using fixed mindset talk and explained what it meant. I proceeded to tell her my story. I could not read in the third grade. My grandmother read with me every day until reading got easier. I explained that if I could overcome my challenges, earn a doctorate in Educational Leadership, and lead this school as the principal, then she could achieve her goals, too. She just had to believe in herself, ask for help when needed, and not give up.

“That was two years ago. As I sit typing this story, I have a lump in my throat, because she did it. She is succeeding well. When she has struggles, she now has the tools she uses to push through. Her teacher did not give up on her. She did not give up on herself. I’ll never forget her story. Teachers matter. Teachers who build relationships and support learners until they can facilitate their own learning change the trajectory for children.”

Developing leadership opportunities

Students love to lead and take ownership. It gives them a sense of pride, and they become excited about being at school. One day, a group of fifth-grade students asked to meet with their principal. They shared that it was in their hearts to do something for a teacher who had a brother pass away due to a blood-borne cancer. The teacher had done a Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) fundraiser the previous year with her family in remembrance of her brother. This year, they wanted to lead the fundraiser for her. One of the students had gone home the night before and researched everything she could learn about LLS. She pulled out a stack of papers. She told the principal facts, statistics about cures, new advances in medicines, the careers of scientists who study blood-borne cancers, and more. As she talked, the principal sat in awe. This child had written at least 10 pages of information,

and she said she didn't copy straight from any site. She read and wrote her own notes. As the weeks progressed, the principal served as a facilitator, asking questions to guide their planning. The girls even had tasks they needed the principal to do, such as order the bracelets they designed. One girl kept a checklist, asked the principal about progress on the tasks she had been given, and checked off the tasks as they were completed. The students were empowered to make a difference in the life of a teacher—who was not even in their grade. She will never forget the kindness these girls displayed. The fundraiser was a huge success. Now that's leadership!

Proposing a new club or activity

At one high school, students were offered the opportunity to propose new clubs and activities. This helped ensure that student clubs and activities were based on actual student interest and not only offered because of their legacy at the school. This meant that clubs and activities were discontinued as well. Students needed to demonstrate interest among their peers, and they needed to enlist a faculty advisor. This was another way for students to have agency and to have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership.



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on ways students are provided experiences that are authentically learner driven.



In what ways are students engaged in reflecting on the mindset that new learning often requires perseverance and hard work?

Tip: Students will benefit from conversations or class meetings that discuss the concept of mindset and the qualities of perseverance and hard work that are part of the learning process.¹⁸



How do students demonstrate the goal setting cycle that includes monitoring, reflection, and adjustments in the learning process? How do teachers support a goal setting process driven by the student?

Tip: Students need to make the connection that it is through their personal ownership of learning that true increase in knowledge is attained. The goal is not achieving a grade—it is gaining knowledge and skills that can be applied to new situations that matter most. Giving students access to rubrics, anchor papers, time for personal reflection, and multiple opportunities can help promote this understanding.



¹⁸ See The Learning Pit. Learningpit.org

What input have students had on areas that affect them directly? How could students be given increased opportunities to provide input on the school operations?

Tip: Many examples show how students can have a positive impact on school culture when they are allowed to have a voice in the school operations. This might include organizing special event days, being advisors in developing the lunch menu, helping solve problems on the playground or bus, serving as ambassadors for new students, establishing school norms, leading assemblies, and reading school announcements.



How competent are my students' communication skills—oral, in writing, or online?

Tip: Students do not always arrive with competent communication skills based on their experiences outside the classroom. Examples include the ability to look a person in the eye when speaking, use standard forms of introductions, use correct forms when writing letters to family or to a business, and use correct etiquette for online communications. When engaging in application activities, direct instruction in the area of communication may be required.



What guidance is being provided to students to help them become better managers of their own learning? What supports, frameworks, and scaffolds are being shared to help them develop the routines and disciplines they need for this?

Tip: Students often need direct guidance as they increase their independence in learning and become more self-managing. Much of this is learned best through experience, rather than direct instruction. The thoughtful and timely introduction of routines, common frameworks, and scaffolds that the learner can adopt is an effective strategy here.



What guidance must be put into place for students to successfully engage in self-directed, project-based, or inquiry-based learning? What was successful with this type of learning? What did not work? What could make these types of projects work better?

Tip: When using new ways of engaging students in the learning, you should not expect things to go smoothly the very first time. By reflecting on what worked, what did not work, and what you could do differently, you can improve the process. Students can also give you feedback about the process as they reflect on what they learned through these models of learning.





MEASURING PROGRESS

for learner-driven learning

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All learning is led by the teacher, with little or no opportunity for input from students. No list of learner attributes exists.	Learners make choices about their learning and set personal goals under the teacher’s guidance. They can follow guidelines to complete tasks independently or in groups and can use simple strategies to solve problems as a part of this process. They are beginning to track their own progress using tools or frameworks provided.	Learners rely on the guidance of the teacher and others when making choices about their learning. They make effective use of various frameworks, strategies, and scaffolds to manage their own learning. They can use simple tools and strategies to track and reflect on their own progress, and they are able to communicate these ideas to others.	Learners are increasingly making choices about their learning and use the learner attributes as part of their goal setting when prompted. They confidently use a range of strategies to manage their own learning, and they are increasingly able to cope with and learn from failure as a part of this process. They make effective use of systems provided to record and communicate their learning progress.	Learners routinely make informed choices about all aspects of their learning, including referencing learner attributes in their goal setting. They can effectively self-manage their learning progress. They are comfortable with taking risks and use a variety of strategies to learn from failure. They are able to offer support and guidance to other learners who may be struggling in these areas.

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
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What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

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Learner Characteristics Linked
to Fostering Agentic Behavior

Assessment Capability



“Let me show you what I learned.”

Agentic learning includes the assessment process—students can and should be more involved with their own assessment practices.

Why Is This Important?

By developing the assessment capability of learners in schools, we can help create a learning environment that is more student centered, empowering, and engaging, and that helps to prepare students for success in the complex, ever-changing world of the 21st century.

Belief Statement

We believe that agency can and should be promoted in every aspect of the learning process, including building capacity for the student to share ownership over the assessment process.

DIG DEEPER



To enable students to take charge of their learning, they need to be deliberately and systematically taught how to be “assessment capable” and active in using assessment as learning.

Too often, assessment becomes the “tail that wags the dog” in our education process. Regardless of how innovative the instructional design is and how engaging the learning activity is, unless there is shared ownership and understanding of the assessment process, the focus on meeting the demands of an external assessment will end up driving what happens in the classroom.

This is the case particularly with high-stakes assessments, or assessments to meet externally imposed requirements. When learners can work with the assessment process in the same way they do with the learning process, it helps them take ownership of their learning and develop the skills and attitudes needed to succeed into the future.

In doing this, assessment becomes a part of the learning process, informing next steps, and it is “owned” by the learner, rather than being something external to them. Because of the transparency of this process, everyone can be involved in providing objective feedback—including peers, parents, and other teachers—based on the evidence the learner presents.

When assessment is an integral part of the learning process, and learners have access to the tools and frameworks that support it, they are far more likely to be focused on the purpose of what they are doing, and to take responsibility for how they will demonstrate what and how they are learning. Also, they are more likely to develop a tolerance for failure, as they will have a clearer understanding of why the failure may have occurred and how they can learn from it.

Explicit guidance about what success should look like at the beginning of a learning experience will clarify for students how they will be assessed and based on what criteria. Then they can focus on being able to create and provide the evidence they need to demonstrate success.

Perhaps most significantly, shifting the locus of control of the assessment process releases the teacher to work more as a mentor and critical friend, rather than the “external judge” of performance.

Here are some strategies that can develop learners’ assessment capability. Use the space below to record your thoughts.

The strategy here is to use criteria, progressions, and frameworks to provide transparency in the learning process and thus develop assessment-capable or active learners who can use these things to understand:

- What they need to learn
- Where they are with that learning
- What their next learning steps are

1. Be explicit about teaching assessment literacy

Teach students the language and concepts of assessment, such as formative and summative assessment, feedback, and rubrics.

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2. Promote the use of self-assessment

Encourage students to reflect on their learning progress and to identify their strengths and areas for growth.

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3. Use peer assessment

Encourage students to provide feedback to their peers and to develop their own assessment skills.

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4. Model effective feedback

Provide timely and constructive feedback to students, which encourages them to take ownership of their learning progress and to identify areas for growth.

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5. Teach goal setting

Teach students to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) learning goals, and to monitor their progress toward these goals.

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6. Encourage metacognition

Encourage students to think about their own thinking and to reflect on their learning progress and strategies.

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7. Use technology

Where appropriate, use technology to enhance assessment practices, such as online quizzes, interactive simulations, and digital portfolios.

8. Involve parents and caregivers

Include parents and caregivers in the capability building around assessment practices, and communicate regularly with them about their child's learning progress and goals.

Using progressions and rubrics is a powerful way to support the development of assessment capability in learners, as they provide clarity of purpose and make clear what success looks like—at each stage on the progressions with the indicator statements. Learners can use these to align the evidence they gather through their learning process to demonstrate where they are on the progression.

Here are some ways the use of progressions and rubrics can be helpful.

9. Clarifying learning goals

Articulating the progression headings and the indicator statements for each of the learning goals provides a clear understanding of what is expected of learners in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

10. Providing feedback

The indicator statements along the line of progression can be used to give students feedback on their learning progress, which can help identify their strengths and areas for growth.

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11. Encouraging self-assessment

Developing an understanding of the rubric structure allows students to self-assess their work against the criteria outlined in the rubric.

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12. Supporting goal setting

Students can be involved in setting and monitoring their learning goals, as well as tracking their progress toward these goals.

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13. Fostering metacognition

Encourage students to use the rubrics to think about their own thinking, and to reflect on their learning progress and strategies.

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14. Enhancing communication

Promote the use of progressions and rubrics to facilitate communication among students, teachers, and parents, by providing a common language and understanding of learning expectations and progress.

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15. Encouraging deeper learning

Deeper learning is made possible by sharing the assessment requirements in the form of a rubric, as it promotes the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.





FOSTERING AGENTIC BEHAVIOR

through developing assessment capability

What does this look like in action? How do you know you are fostering agentic behaviors? The teacher and student statements below can help you reflect on where you are (as a school or a team) in transforming your practice.

Teacher	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an emphasis on assessment for learning in my approach to assessment.• My learners know what is required of them in their learning and how it is going to be measured.• My learners are aware of what progression looks like so that they can set their own learning goals and “next steps” in learning.• My learners understand the value of and need for providing evidence to demonstrate their success in learning.• My learners are involved in the co-construction of criteria and indicators of success as part of the learning design process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I use the assessment information to set goals and make adjustments in learning.• I understand what is required of me for grade-level performance and the criteria that define it.• I have the knowledge and skills, or I know where to get support, to understand how to set goals that guide my next steps in learning.• I understand what evidence of learning is required to demonstrate learning.• I have contributed to defining the criteria that indicate success, in student-friendly language, and with guidance from my teacher.

Tip: Highlight the statements you feel you (or your teams) do consistently and actions you see in your students. Celebrate these! Then use a different color to highlight the statements that you identify as areas for growth. Write goals or action statements for next steps.



INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE



Access to real-world examples is important as we deepen our understanding of what is possible. The insights from practice shared below provide authentic classroom examples, captured from contexts in the United States and New Zealand. Consider what you could learn from these to inform changes you introduce in your classroom as you shift to a more agentic environment.

The value of class meetings

Class meetings are a great way to have conversations about learning progressions. At first, the teacher can model the “thinking” required when analyzing what it means to meet the expected levels of performance. For example, when looking at word problems, the teacher can demonstrate the deliberate “reading skills” required in mathematics, share a process for reading the words, think out loud about what problem-solving math tools are needed, and then use those tools to solve the problem. Students can become part of the conversation when the teacher invites them to help identify the problem to be solved, the tools to use, and the process for solving the problem.

Class meetings can provide the opportunity for conversations based on questions such as: What would need to be in your narrative? What would you put into an opening paragraph? How many paragraphs will it take to tell your story? When writing your story, have you used words that really tell the reader about your experience, such as what you saw and how you felt? What would a story be like that was at a Level 4 (the highest on the scale)? What would the narrative be missing if it were a 1 or a 2? Can a story be improved to make it 3 or a 4?

Errors welcome here

To build assessment capability, the teacher might make a common error deliberately, and let the students help “correct” the error. Also, students can use “anchor” papers that have errors in process in them, so they can begin to analyze why there are errors. These practice sessions help build the reflection skills required for independent work.

Student involvement in rubric development

Students can participate in developing the criteria used in the rubrics. If the teacher has provided a rubric, students can review the language and determine whether there is a better way (that is clearer to the student) to state what is expected. Students can help build the rubric based on criteria already established by the teacher. If, for example, in a narrative writing exercise, students are to create a descriptive paragraph about an experience they have had (real or imagined), the students can apply the expected performance levels to a rubric.

Student-generated progress monitoring

The teacher should guide the learners to review their learning progress in two ways. One way is to review where they are in demonstrating mastery of the standards, within the continuum of learning across the grade bands. As learners move across the proficiency band, they show evidence of mastery at each progression using a proficiency scale of 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3 (proficiency), and 4 (extending deeper than grade-level proficiency and understanding).



INVITATION TO ACT

The following questions invite you and your colleagues to reflect on ways teachers can build students' capacity to engage with and take ownership of the assessment processes.

In what ways are you providing assessment literacy so that students have access to and understand the data that is generated by the various assessments currently in place?

Tip: A key to goal setting linked to data from assessments is to have complete transparency with students about their data and what it represents in terms of grade-level learning expectations. Modifications for data sharing will depend on the student's age. Younger children can have a rubric with icons of faces showing different levels of performance described as "great work" to "let's keep working," for example.



What opportunities do students have to analyze their performance against established student-friendly indicators as a self-reflection, to determine what gaps in learning exist and so that students can correct errors or omissions in their understanding?

Tip: Developing self-awareness about strengths or weaknesses in learning is key to developing students' capacity to improve their performance. This is best achieved when using a rubric or other guidelines for performance, anchor papers, or performance indicators. The teacher may determine that students who are not yet able to participate in self-assessment may need additional instruction, Tier II intervention, or other tutorial assistance.



What capacity-building activities would be needed for students to successfully carry out the self-assessment process?

Tip: When first getting started, students will benefit from modeling by the teacher. Phrases such as, “When looking at your writing, be sure to use the poster that indicates whether your paper is ready to be turned in based on punctuation, spelling, complete sentences....” Or, for example, “When self-checking your math work, based on the worksheet indicating the correct answers, analyze your work to determine what went wrong with your calculations.” Project work can be managed by using a timeline for accomplishments and rubrics for performance indicators.

Creating a system where students can request additional help strengthens their capacity to view assessment data as feedback leading to improvement in performance, rather than a failure on their part. Multiple opportunities for improvement are key to building assessment capacity in students.



MEASURING PROGRESS

for assessment capability

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>“Thinking About It”</i>	Developing <i>“Working on It”</i>	Implementing <i>“Living It”</i>	Transforming <i>“Shifting the Paradigm”</i>
<p>All forms of assessment are selected and designed by the teacher, and they tend to focus on grades and summative assessment approaches. Learners are not involved.</p> <p>Students have no sense of ownership of the data.</p>	<p>Learners are informed of the measures of success at the beginning of each learning experience.</p> <p>They are invited to reference these at various points of the learning experience (such as in learning conferences).</p> <p>Students have limited understanding of measures of success and may not be able to use the indicators to improve their performance.</p>	<p>Learners are exposed to various assessment methods and are invited to help identify the criteria and indicators of success in some of these. They are developing their understanding of the concept of progression, and of the value of and need for providing evidence to demonstrate their success in learning.</p> <p>Students can use the performance indicators with guidance from the teacher to make shifts in learning.</p>	<p>Learners are regularly involved in decisions about what success will look like, and they co-design how it will be measured.</p> <p>They understand what progression looks like, so that they can set their own learning goals and next steps in learning.</p>	<p>Learners routinely take ownership of decisions about how success will be measured as a part of the design of learning experiences. They can accurately articulate and report on their learning achievements by matching evidence of their learning to the agreed-on success criteria.</p>

Important: Take note of the progression headings across the top, because they can help you think about the stages of development and the growth required to achieve them.

Some ways you can use the rubric:

- Read the indicator statements and identify the words or sentences that you feel best describe what’s happening in your context.
- Discuss with your colleagues the reasons you have for making this assessment. Identify the evidence you have to support this.
- Use the statements in the next stage of the progression to help you identify specific actions or areas for attention that you could focus on. Use the material in this chapter for ideas.
- Refer to these indicator statements regularly as you work toward improvement.

What's your evidence?

Use the action planning template below to plan where to go from here:

Targeted shift in practice	Current State	Future State	Next Steps	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<i>Name the specific area of practice you are focusing on</i>	<i>Insert words or phrases from the rubric that describe your current state</i>	<i>Insert statements from the next rubric stage that describe your desired future state</i>	<i>List the specific actions you will take to achieve this shift</i>	<i>Specify the timeframe in which you will do this</i>



Resource Ideas

Credit: Allison Shelley/EDUImages

Motivation and Engagement

- Covey, S. (2008). *The leader in me*. Free Press
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House
- The Education Hub. (2020). 10 strategies that increase motivation. <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/10-strategies-that-promote-motivation>.
- Schlechty, P. (2002). *Working on the work*. Jossey-Bass.
- Schlechty, P. (2011). *Engaging students: The next level of working on the work*. Jossey Bass.

Support and Supervision

- Couros, G. (2015). *The innovator's mindset: Empower learning, unleash talent and lead a culture of creativity*. Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc.
- Gallagher, A., & Thordarson, K. (2018). ASCD.
- Kallick, B., & Zmuda, A. (2017). ASCD.
- The Learning Pit. www.thelearningpit.org
- Lindsay Unified School District. (2017). *Beyond reform: Systemic shifts toward personalized learning*.

Measuring Success

- Assessment for Learning Project. <https://www.assessmentforlearningproject.org>
- Bailey, J., & Guskey, T. (2001.) *Implementing student-led conferences*. Corwin Press.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2007). *Checking for understanding*. ASCD.
- O'Neill, J., & Conzemius, A. (2006). *The power of smart goals: Using goals to improve student learning*. Solution Tree.

Learning Environment

- Beames, S., Higgins, P., Nicol, R., & Smith, H. (2023). *Outdoor learning across the curriculum: Theory and guidelines for practice* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Claxton, G., & Carlzon, B. (2018). *Powering up children: The learning power approach to primary teaching*. Crown House Publishing.
- DiMartino, J., & Midwood, J. (2017). *They're not stupid: Unleashing the genius of each student*. Rowman and Littlefield.

- Fleming, L. (2015). *Worlds of making: Best practices for establishing a makerspace for your school*. Corwin Publishers.
- Martinez, S., & Stager, G. (2019). *Invent to learn: Making, tinkering, and engineering in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Constructing Modern Knowledge Press.
- Nottingham, J. (2017). *The learning challenge: How to guide your students through the learning pit to achieve deeper understanding*. Corwin Press.
- Richardson, W. (2006). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. Corwin Press.
- Spencer, J., & Julani, A. (2017). *Empower: What happens when students own their learning*. IMPress, LP.

Design of Learning

- DiMartino, J., & Clark, J. (2008). *Personalizing the high school experience for each student*. ASCD.
- The Mastery Transcript Consortium. <https://mastery.org>
- Rickabaugh, J. (2016). *Tapping the power of personalized learning*. ASCD.
- Spencer, J., & Julani, A. (2017). *Empower: What happens when students own their own learning*. Impressbooks.org.
- Wenmoth, D., Jones, M., & Dimartino, J. (2021). *Agency by design: Making learning engaging*. Aurora Institute.

Curriculum Design

- Carey, S. (2016). How can curriculum design, both systems and intelligent tools, be used to form a basis for the effective development and sustainability of student agency to enhance student achievement in all learning? Sabbatical report, Newfield Park School. <https://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/content/download/78207/641526/file/Sonya%20Carey%20-%20student%20agency%20-%20sabbatical%20report%202016.pdf>
- Esner, M. (2020, July 19). Are you asking fertile questions? If not, you should be. *TES*. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/are-you-asking-fertile-questions-if-not-you-should-be>
- Fertile questions explained. National Library of New Zealand. <https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/our-work/schools-videos/fertile-questions-explained>
- Harpaz, Y. (2005). Teaching and learning in a community of thinking. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, ASCD. https://yoramharpaz.com/pubs/en_learning/teaching-learning.pdf
- MacKenzie, T., & Bathurst-Hunt, R. (2019). *Inquiry mindset: Nurturing the dreams, wonders, & curiosities of our youngest learners*. Elevate Books Edu.
- Spencer, J., & Julani, A. (2016). *Launch: Using design thinking to boost creativity and bring out the maker in every student*. IMPress, LP.
- Sturgis, Chris. (2019). *Activate student agency and ownership in competency-based education*. Aurora Institute.

Acts of Teaching

- Claxton, G. & Carlzon, B. (2018). Building learning power. <https://www.buildinglearningpower.com/>
- Kallick, B., & Zmuda, A. (2017). *Students at the center: Personalized learning with habits of mind*. ASCD.
- The Learning Pit. Books. <https://www.learningpit.org/resources/books/#the-pit>

- Lindsay Unified School District. (2017). *Beyond reform: Systemic shifts toward personalized learning*.
- Nottingham, J. (2017). *The learning challenge: How to guide students through the learning pit*. <https://www.learningpit.org/product/the-learning-challenge/>

Collaboration

- Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2008). *Productive group work: How to engage students, build teamwork, and promote understanding*. ASCD.

Digital Literacy

- Bark. <https://www.bark.us/>
- ConnectSafely. <https://connectsafely.org/>
- GoGuardian. <https://www.goguardian.com>
- Richardson, W. (2006). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. Corwin Press.
- Wenmoth, D. (2020). *Digital Pedagogy*. Wellington, FutureMakers Ltd.
- Wenmoth, D. (2020). *Digital Agency*. Wellington, FutureMakers Ltd

Assessment for Learning

- Absolum, M. (2006). *Clarity in the classroom*. Hodder Education. <https://www.evaluate.co.nz/resources/assessment-for-learning-resources/clarity-in-the-classroom-michael-absolum> (By sharpening clarity, students no longer ask “why,” because it is embedded into the learning activity.)
- Earl, L. (2013). *Assessment as learning: Using classroom assessment to maximize student learning* (2nd ed.). Corwin.
- Feldman, J. (2018) *Grading for equity: What it is, why it matters, and how it can transform schools and classrooms*. Corwin. <https://gradingforequity.org/> (Argues traditional grading practices have become a barrier to meaningful student learning.)
- Lucas, B. (2021). *Rethinking assessment: The case for change*. CSE Leading Education Series. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/16qKudSF7qKRpgLOc5Ut3XeNjPI7Ni39n/view> (Research reveals how high-stakes assessment is harming students.)
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. *Assessment for learning*. <https://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-for-learning>
- Patrick, S., Gagnon, L., & Weaver, A. (2023). *Going beyond the traditional: Next gen credentials and flexible learning pathways*. Aurora Institute. <https://aurora-institute.org/resource/nextgencredentials/>

Learners as Leaders

- Toshalis, E., & Nakkula, M. (2017). *Motivation, engagement and student voice*. The Students at the Center Series. Jobs for the Future. <https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/Motivation-Engagement-Student-Voice-Students-at-the-Center-1.pdf> (Note in particular the Spectrum of Student Voice diagram on page 10.)

Competencies for Life

- Covey, S. (2008). *The leader in me*. Free Press.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

Several frameworks and lists of competencies can guide the development of competency-based approaches in education. Here are some examples:

- **New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL):** NPDL is an international partnership of educators and researchers focused on transforming education through deep learning principles. NPDL emphasizes developing a range of competencies known as the “6 Cs.” These competencies are designed to equip students with the skills and dispositions necessary to thrive in the modern world.
- **Batelle for Kids:** This now incorporates the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) framework, which identifies essential skills for success in the 21st century. It includes competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, and digital literacy. The framework can guide the development of competencies beyond traditional academic subjects.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner Profile:** The IB Learner Profile is a set of attributes that the International Baccalaureate Program aims to develop in students. It includes qualities such as being knowledgeable, open-minded, principled, reflective, and a communicator. The IB Learner Profile is used to guide the development of holistic competencies across various subject areas.
- **Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC):** MTC has developed a framework that emphasizes mastery of competencies and allows students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge through a mastery transcript.
- **UNESCO Competency Frameworks:** UNESCO has developed competency frameworks in various domains, including digital literacy, global citizenship education, and sustainable development. These frameworks offer guidance on the essential competencies required to address specific challenges and promote holistic development.

Internationally, a growing number of countries are using a competency-based approach to their national qualifications frameworks. Examples include:

- **European Qualifications Framework (EQF):** The EQF is a common European reference framework that seeks to promote lifelong learning and enhance the transparency and recognition of qualifications across European countries. It organizes qualifications based on learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- **Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF):** The AQF provides a national framework for qualifications in Australia. It uses a competency-based approach, focusing on learning outcomes and performance criteria. The AQF encompasses qualifications from vocational education and training (VET) to higher education.
- **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF):** The SCQF is Scotland’s national framework for qualifications. It organizes qualifications and learning experiences based on levels and credits, highlighting learning outcomes and competencies across various contexts, including academic, vocational, and lifelong learning.
- **New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF):** The NZQF is New Zealand’s national framework for qualifications. It adopts a competency-based approach, emphasizing learning outcomes and performance criteria. The NZQF covers qualifications from primary to tertiary education and aligns with the principles of lifelong learning.
- **Singapore’s SkillsFuture:** SkillsFuture is an initiative that promotes lifelong learning and the development of skills and competencies aligned with industry needs. It provides a framework for individuals to acquire and apply skills throughout their lives, supporting career progression and adaptability in a changing workforce.

Learner Driven Learning

- DiMartino, J., & Clarke, J. (2008). *Personalizing the high school experience for each student*. ASCD.
- Nottingham, J. (2017). *The learning challenge: How to guide your students through the learning pit to achieve deeper understanding*. Corwin.
- O'Neill, J., & Conzemius, A. (2006). *The power of smart goals*. Solution Tree.
- The Learning Pit. <https://www.learningpit.org/guide/>

Assessment Capability

- Dufour R., & Marzano, R. (2011). *Leaders for learning: How district, school and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Solution Tree.
- O'Neill, J., & Conzemius, A. (2006). *The power of smart goals: Using goals to improve student learning*. Solution Tree.
- Spencer, J., & Juliani, A. (2017). *Empower: What happens when students own their learning*. Impress. org.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2007). *Checking for understanding*. ASCD.





Measuring Your Growth Toward Agency

Credit: Karolina Grabowska/Pexels

Rubrics provide a roadmap for monitoring your progress

Traditional wisdom when making shifts in practice is to focus on the journey, not just the destination. The value of this advice allows us to make the progress we need in the timeline that works best for you and your students.

It also helps us to understand that progress is not always uniform or linear. Some steps will be easy; while others will take more time. It is important to keep moving and to celebrate the steps along the way and find joy in the process.

To aid us in this process, rubrics are inserted at the end of each of the chapters in the Playbook. The purpose of the rubrics is to give you insight into where you are in relation to the particular dimension, where you have been, and where you are going. It's a type of roadmap.

Realistically it is going to take time and hard work to achieve the ideal agentic learning environment. Not everyone will travel at the same pace, and some may not yet be on board at all. Recognizing and celebrating small gains is a great way to start to build some momentum. Over time, however, the benefits of shifts in practice will be observed as you begin to see students embracing their new partnership with you.

At times the journey may seem overwhelming; the destination too far away. Every journey starts with a single step. A single step may seem inconsequential but it starts you on the journey.

Understanding the use of rubrics

A rubric is a simple tool for assessing growth and development, promoting clarity, transparency, and fairness in the evaluation process. There are three key components of the rubric that are important to understand, as indicated in the image to the right:

- 1. Criteria:** These are the fundamental standards or dimensions against which performance is evaluated. There is one rubric introduced in this workbook for each of the 14 elements, and the element heading is used to identify what is being focused on.
- 2. Progression Headings:** These are the statements that appear across the top of each of the rubrics, and provide a consistent view of the different degrees or stages of growth and development within a specific criterion.

3. Indicator statements: these are the specific descriptors or characteristics that clarify what is expected at each stage in the progression. They provide concrete examples of observable behaviors, skills, or knowledge that demonstrate growth and development in relation to a specific criterion. The indicator statements make the rubric actionable and user-friendly. They provide a clear understanding of what to look for in assessing performance and how to improve.

MEASURING PROGRESS for support and supervision

criteria

progression
headings

Using this rubric: This rubric has been designed to help you discover where you are on the journey toward implementing the ideas introduced in this chapter.

Not yet Evident	Initiating <i>"Thinking About It"</i>	Developing <i>"Working on It"</i>	Implementing <i>"Living It"</i>	Transforming <i>"Shifting the Paradigm"</i>
The learner depends on the teacher for direction and support in all aspects of his or her learning.	Some tools and strategies exist that learners could use to support their learning, but these are not yet formally introduced and are used without purpose.	A range of tools and strategies has been introduced, and learners are developing confidence in seeking support from a variety of sources.	Learners are regularly accessing the support they need from a variety of people (including teacher, peers, and parents) and tools/resources (including online).	Learners routinely take the initiative to plan for and ensure that the appropriate support is available to them and their peers when embarking on new learning.

indicator statements

Establish your starting point

We suggest that you start by using the collated set of rubrics at the end of the playbook to do a quick inventory of where you are at the start of your journey. Take some time to scan all of the lines on this collated rubric and use the indicator statements to reflect on your current practice.

Use a highlighter or pen to identify the statement that best reflects where you feel you are currently. You may be pleasantly surprised that there are many foundation pieces in place. The language within the indicator statements in the rubric describe the shifts in practice along the way. As you do this you should try to keep in mind what you could use as evidence to support your decision to place yourself in this position.

Consider the indicator statements in the column to the right of the statement you've highlighted. This provides you with a way of thinking about what your 'next step' might be in this area, and what you might do in order to move there.

Once you have reviewed the overall status of your learning environment situation, you can select those two or three elements that you consider could be a good place to start in your context, and move to the next step of creating an action plan to guide you and your team.

Not yet Evident	Initiating "Thinking About It"	Developing "Working on It"	Implementing "Living It"	Transforming "Shifting the Paradigm"
The learner depends on the teacher for direction and support in all aspects of his or her learning.	Some tools and strategies exist that learners could use to support their learning, but these are not yet formally introduced and are used without purpose.	A range of tools and strategies has been introduced, and learners are developing confidence in seeking support from a variety of sources.	Learners are regularly accessing the support they need from a variety of people (including teacher, peers, and parents) and tools/resources (including online).	Learners routinely take the initiative to plan for and ensure that the appropriate support is available to them and their peers when embarking on new learning.
		where our evidence suggests we are now	where we want to move to	

Create an action plan

The rubrics give us valuable insight about our aspirational thinking: "This is what we want to do. This is what we hope our students will become." Aspirational thinking benefits from a Plan of Action. We have heard the expression many times: "Hope without a plan is just a dream." An action plan, formal or informal, will guide us as we pursue our hopes and dreams.

Here is a simple way of creating an action plan to help you:

- Step 1** Use the three or so elements identified in the step above and use these to create a baseline of practice. Using the indicator statements to guide you, work to build a picture of what is happening currently in your context, with evidence to support your observations. It is suggested this occurs at the first of the year, but really it can be done at any time prior to implementation.
- Step 2** For each element, use the indicator statements to the right of where you have positioned yourself to identify the goals you want to pursue, and unpack these further into actionable steps you can take to achieve these. For example, if your goal is to involve all learners in the decision-making process regarding what is learned and how it is learned, you might set aside time before each new topic by including some strategies that allow students to have input on what questions they may have about the new topic. Or, they might aid in developing the rubric that shows mastery of the topic.
- Step 3** Create a "checkpoints calendar." As you create your own action plan and calendar for implementation, determine the timeline for change in practice to begin, then establish frequent checkpoints. This could be a week, a month, or a quarter.

The important point here is to ensure that what you are doing is working. If yes, great! If not, assess what needs to change. Don't give up if at first you don't succeed!
- Step 4** Review progress on your action points on a regular basis, and revisit the rubric indicator statements as you systematically review your implementation goals. This could be by the quarter, the semester, or the year. Whatever the schedule of review, it needs to make sense to your situation.
- Step 5** This is a cyclical process—at the start of a new planning cycle return to Step 1.

As has been stated before, while the elements in our framework can be considered independently, they also support one another. You may need to shift your focus from one of the elements to another, based on the circumstances. That is the insight you get from your review.

Is the reason something is not working because you need to consider one of the other characteristics and make changes in practice there first? Or, have you moved along the rubric to the point that you can now shift your attention to another characteristic? Remember, progress in each of the areas will not be a straight-line relationship across the group of 14 elements—the expectation is that you may progress more quickly in some areas than others, based on your circumstance.

To identify where to position your school on each progression, you will need to record evidence, feedback and reflections from students and teachers on their experience with agentic learning. Using appropriate assessment tools and common language will expedite the process with students and teachers.

Action Plan Template (Sample)

The rubrics create an aspirational focus on what you want to do and what you hope your students will be able to do. But, as the saying goes, “Hope without plans are just dreams.” Taking your hopes and dreams and putting them into an action plan will aid in meeting your aspirational goals. You can create a simple table such as shown below to create an action plan to help guide you and others in your team down a pathway to success.

Characteristic Focus Area	Who is Accountable for Progress Monitoring?	Action Steps	Evidence Gathering	Dates of Checkpoints	Next Steps
<i>Select the elements you will focus on from and list below</i>	<i>Have we met the criteria on the rubric?</i>	<i>What are the specific actions you plan to take to make this change in your classroom or school?</i>	<i>What evidence will be required to demonstrate change in practice? How will this be gathered and stored?</i>	<i>When will you review how the plan is working? What could you do to celebrate success at critical milestones?</i>	<i>What new steps or changes/adjustments in planning are required to move to the next level?</i>

The time is now to create classrooms filled with tremendous potential! We wish you well with your efforts to create a more agentic learning environment for your learners.

Derek, Marsha, George and Annette

CONDITIONS CREATED BY TEACHERS

Section	Not yet Evident	Initiating “Thinking About It”	Developing “Working on It”	Implementing “Living It”	Transforming “Shifting the Paradigm”
Motivation & Engagement	<p>Learners demonstrate lack of motivation, disinterest, and sometimes boredom, and they are often disengaged in their learning.</p> <p>Engagement in learning is mostly through compliance.</p>	<p>Learners are asked to contribute their thoughts and ideas to inform decisions being made about learning content and approaches.</p> <p>Learners comply with these requests, but with limited enthusiasm for tasks.</p>	<p>Learning programs are designed to maximize the opportunity for learner choice. Emphasis is on activity in learning.</p> <p>Students demonstrate greater interest or connection to their learning.</p>	<p>All learners have the opportunity to contribute to all decisions made about the content and approach to learning.</p> <p>Students exhibit energy, curiosity, and high interest in their learning tasks.</p>	<p>Learners are actively driving the learning design. They are able to pursue their learning in the ways and time that suits them. Learning is an active experience, relevant to the needs, interests, and context of each learner.</p> <p>Students are authentically engaged, as observed in their high levels of interest and desire to continue working, even when time is up, and provide ideas to extend their learning.</p>
Support & Supervision	<p>The learner depends on the teacher for direction and support in all aspects of his or her learning.</p>	<p>Some tools and strategies exist that learners could use to support their learning, but these are not yet formally introduced and are used without purpose.</p>	<p>A range of tools and strategies has been introduced, and learners are developing confidence in seeking support from a variety of sources.</p>	<p>Learners are regularly accessing the support they need from a variety of people (including teacher, peers, and parents) and tools/resources (including online).</p>	<p>Learners routinely take the initiative to plan for and ensure that the appropriate support is available to them and their peers when embarking on new learning.</p>
Measuring Success	<p>All forms of assessment are selected and designed by the teacher, and they focus mostly on grades and summative assessment approaches.</p>	<p>Learners (and parents) are given clear progressions and indicators so that they understand what success looks like and how it will be measured.</p>	<p>Learners are involved in the process of setting expectations and what success will look like, and what needs to be demonstrated for both formative and summative assessment.</p>	<p>Learners are able to record and manage aspects of their learning so that they have evidence they can use to support their claims of success. Regular feedback is provided, based on the criteria and indicators of success, to encourage learners and enable meaningful conversations about learning progress.</p>	<p>Learners are contributing to setting clear expectations of what success looks like, and they can contribute to developing rubrics. They are able to provide evidence from their own learning to match the indicators on the rubric, and they can use both self and peer assessments to reflect on and meaningfully discuss their progress.</p>

Section	Not yet Evident	Initiating “Thinking About It”	Developing “Working on It”	Implementing “Living It”	Transforming “Shifting the Paradigm”
<p>Learning Environments</p>	<p>Teaching and learning are confined to a single classroom space, with uniform desk arrangements.</p>	<p>Use of different learning environments is encouraged but generally is directed by the teacher and supervised by her or him.</p>	<p>Classroom environments provide different types of spaces to support a range of learning activities, such as independent and group work. Use of virtual environments and outdoor environments is possible with teacher direction.</p>	<p>Learners routinely move between different areas of the classroom and the school that best meet their needs for different phases of learning. Teachers and learners use virtual environments to connect learning at home and at school. Outdoor learning environments are used to provide unique experiences for learners that are not available in a classroom setting.</p>	<p>The traditional classroom’s limitations of time and space no longer apply, with learners able to move freely among a variety of learning spaces (physical and virtual, inside and out of school) to engage with their learning and with others in that process. Learners can choose to use designated spaces that support independent study, group discussions, and practical tasks.</p>
<p>Design of Learning</p>	<p>Learners are given little or no opportunity to contribute to the design of learning.</p>	<p>Learning design is primarily the teacher’s responsibility, taking into account student needs and interests. Students pursue inquiries around themes and topics using questions provided by the teacher. Some choice may be provided around how knowledge is accessed, used, and represented, but mostly within the scope of what the teacher has provided.</p>	<p>The teacher invites contributions from learners as part of the goal setting and design of learning activities. Learners can pursue their own inquiries within the framework provided by the teacher, and these may be completed independently or in groups. Learners are given a range of options for how they access, engage with, and represent their learning.</p>	<p>Learning is designed to be an active process, with learners posing questions that are authentic to them, then seeking to answer them either alone or with others. Teachers and learners co-construct the learning goals and learning activities that are appropriate for them, ensuring their learning is culturally appropriate and authentic to their needs or interests. Use of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework in the learning design ensures that students have multiple ways of accessing, engaging with, and representing learning.</p>	<p>Learning design is always a co-constructed activity, often initiated by the learners, working either independently or collaboratively with others. Learning goals are focused on developing learner qualities and on addressing complex challenges at a local or global level. Learners routinely select the ways they access, engage with, and represent their learning that are appropriate to the focus of learning and the agreed learning goals.</p>

Section	Not yet Evident	Initiating “Thinking About It”	Developing “Working on It”	Implementing “Living It”	Transforming “Shifting the Paradigm”
<p>Curriculum Design</p>	<p>The curriculum being followed is “standardized” and uses resources that support national guidelines.</p>	<p>The curriculum is designed primarily to meet national or state requirements, with some attempts to adjust to meet learners’ needs in the local context.</p> <p>The teacher offers learners differentiated ways of engaging with content.</p>	<p>The curriculum is designed primarily to meet external standards, but with modifications to meet learners’ needs and/or to draw on the local context.</p> <p>Some choices are provided for learners to pursue their own areas of interest, but these are mostly set as additional to the core curriculum content being covered.</p>	<p>The required curriculum is enriched and implemented primarily around the learners’ needs and the local context.</p> <p>Learners have choices about the avenues they pursue within a designated topic of study.</p> <p>Effective use of inquiry questions and process allows for meaningful student engagement with content.</p> <p>Outside experts are used to provide content knowledge (local and global).</p>	<p>The required curriculum is fully localized and provides real-world application designed to equip learners with the capabilities they will require in the future.</p> <p>The use of fertile questions and inquiry topics leads learners to engage with and explore content individually and collaboratively.</p> <p>Learners routinely contribute to ways the curriculum is experienced as written, extended, or modified.</p>
<p>Acts of Teaching</p>	<p>The teacher is the primary source of instruction and makes all decisions about the learning process.</p>	<p>There is a high level of dependency on the teacher for all aspects of the learning process.</p> <p>Direct instruction and teacher-directed group work are the primary modes of instruction.</p> <p>Teacher feedback focuses on addressing mistakes made.</p> <p>Some simple protocols for addressing mistakes are in place and used by the class.</p>	<p>Learners are given some choice about what they learn and/or how they learn within the scope of work set by the teacher.</p> <p>Direct instruction is limited to when it is appropriate or required.</p> <p>Learners are confident about exploring new ways of working within the guidelines provided by the teacher.</p> <p>Feedback provided promotes learners’ next-steps thinking.</p>	<p>Opportunities are provided for contribution, participation, and collaboration at all points of the learning process.</p> <p>Learners have time and opportunity to take risks and learn from mistakes, and they are developing competence with the tools and strategies to resolve difficulties they encounter.</p> <p>Feedback is provided by the teacher and peers and is a valued part of the learning process.</p>	<p>The design and implementation of all learning activities is a partnership involving learners and the teacher.</p> <p>Risk taking and learning from mistakes are features of all learning, and learners are confident in using tools and strategies to resolve difficulties they and others may encounter.</p> <p>Constructive and targeted feedback is received from the teacher, peers, and parents, and learners regularly give feedback to others.</p>

CHARACTERISTICS OBSERVED IN STUDENTS

Section	Not yet Evident	Initiating “Thinking About It”	Developing “Working on It”	Implementing “Living It”	Transforming “Shifting the Paradigm”
Collaboration	Learners work independently to complete learning tasks.	Learners work in pairs or groups for specified activities, usually as directed by the teacher.	Group work is becoming a regular feature of classroom learning. Protocols for group roles and ways of working together are provided to guide group activity.	Learners are routinely collaborating in all areas of their learning. They are familiar with the protocols for successful collaboration and able to review their progress as a group.	Learners routinely initiate and pursue collaborative activity. They actively negotiate their shared purpose and ways of working, and they regularly seek out new or different ways of working and people to work with.
Digital Literacy	The use of digital tools and/or resources is limited to demonstrations or tasks set by the teacher.	Access to digital tools and resources is managed by the teacher and provided within a secure online environment.	Learners are exposed to an increasing variety of digital tools and resources, which they use to support their learning. These are generally accessed within a secure online environment provided by the school.	Learners are confident and capable users of a range of digital tools and technologies to support what they want to achieve in their learning. They understand the importance of safe and responsible use of digital technologies, and they follow guidelines provided to ensure this.	Learners select and use a range of digital tools and resources that allow them to set goals, track their progress, and identify areas where they need to improve. They leverage the potential of these technologies to create new resources and to expand connections and interactions with others. They are proactive about ensuring their digital safety and responsible use of the online environment.

Section	Not yet Evident	Initiating “Thinking About It”	Developing “Working on It”	Implementing “Living It”	Transforming “Shifting the Paradigm”
<p>Assessment for Learning</p>	<p>Assessment is mostly summative and based on test scores and the allocation of grades.</p> <p>Students receive limited or no feedback about assessment results.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are discussed as a part of introducing a topic or lesson.</p> <p>Students have some opportunities to make improvements based on feedback provided.</p> <p>Some formative assessment approaches are introduced.</p>	<p>Assessment focus is referenced at key points in the instructional process, with feedback provided to learners to help them improve on what they are doing. Some opportunities are explored for students to set personal learning targets.</p> <p>Formative assessment is used as a driver to aid students in knowing what they need to do to improve.</p>	<p>Teachers and learners have clarity about what is being assessed and why it is being assessed. The assessment criteria are available to all from the start of all learning activity.</p> <p>Learners are developing confidence in taking risks and are regularly involved in setting learning goals and using feedback to inform their next steps.</p> <p>Learners have a clear understanding of the relationship between formative assessment outcomes and summative assessment outcomes.</p>	<p>Assessment is fully embedded as part of the learning process.</p> <p>Learners routinely co-construct criteria, set goals, and monitor their progress.</p> <p>Risk taking and mistake making are viewed as a valuable part of the learning process, providing deeper insights and direction for the future.</p> <p>Learners can make adjustments in their practice, identify areas of strength and weakness, and assess their readiness to participate in assessment and their ability to meet performance standards.</p>
<p>Learners as Leaders</p>	<p>Learners respond to the direction and leadership of the teacher and/or others in the school or classroom.</p>	<p>Learners are offered choices within the learning tasks (such as “must dos,” “may dos,” and playlists) to give them opportunities to manage their time and develop the attributes they will need as leaders of their own learning. Some of this involves group work.</p>	<p>Learners take on leadership roles and responsibilities provided by the teacher as part of lesson or program design. This includes ways of demonstrating leadership in group or team work.</p> <p>They are confident about asking for help and in providing the same when approached by a peer.</p> <p>The learner profile provides a means of making explicit the leadership attributes being sought.</p> <p>Students exhibit leadership within the classroom.</p>	<p>Learners take responsibility for selecting learning tasks, including working in groups involving collaboration and problem solving. They are prepared to take risks, with encouragement and support, and can learn from mistakes to improve their performance. They are increasing their level of sustained effort and perseverance to complete tasks.</p> <p>The attributes of leadership are clearly understood via the learner profile.</p> <p>Students exhibit leadership within the classroom and wider school context.</p>	<p>Learners routinely choose the content and approach to learning that will allow them to achieve their goals, including working as part of a team or group. They demonstrate leadership skills in a range of contexts, both inside and outside of school, and provide support and guidance to others on the journey. They regularly try new ideas and are competent in using reflective processes that lead to ongoing improvement.</p> <p>Students exhibit leadership in their classroom, school, and community projects.</p>

Section	Not yet Evident	Initiating “Thinking About It”	Developing “Working on It”	Implementing “Living It”	Transforming “Shifting the Paradigm”
<p>Competencies for Life</p>	<p>The dominant classroom learning involves acquisition of knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Teacher-designed inquiry and project-based approaches to learning provide focused opportunities to practice problem solving, critical thinking, and communication. A learner profile is being developed but is not widely used yet.</p>	<p>Inquiry and project-based approaches to learning, where learners must engage in problem solving, critical thinking, and communication, are used regularly. Some opportunities are provided to apply these in real-world settings. Statements in the learner profile provide guidance for both teacher and learners about the competencies that are valued and addressed.</p>	<p>Learners understand the significance of competency development and are able to provide evidence of it through their various learning activities. These regularly occur in real-world contexts. Learners maintain a record of their learning that provides evidence of this development.</p>	<p>Learners confidently articulate the connection between learning activities and the competencies they require personally and for the future. They initiate and participate in authentic learning activities where these competencies can be demonstrated, and they take responsibility for managing their record of learning, guided by the learner profile.</p>
<p>Learner-Driven Learning</p>	<p>All learning is led by the teacher, with little or no opportunity for input from students. No list of learner attributes exists.</p>	<p>Learners make choices about their learning and set personal goals under the teacher’s guidance. They can follow guidelines to complete tasks independently or in groups and can use simple strategies to solve problems as a part of this process. They are beginning to track their own progress using tools or frameworks provided.</p>	<p>Learners rely on the guidance of the teacher and others when making choices about their learning. They make effective use of various frameworks, strategies, and scaffolds to manage their own learning. They can use simple tools and strategies to track and reflect on their own progress, and they are able to communicate these ideas to others.</p>	<p>Learners are increasingly making choices about their learning and use the learner attributes as part of their goal setting when prompted. They confidently use a range of strategies to manage their own learning, and they are increasingly able to cope with and learn from failure as a part of this process.</p> <p>They make effective use of systems provided to record and communicate their learning progress.</p>	<p>Learners routinely make informed choices about all aspects of their learning, including referencing learner attributes in their goal setting. They can effectively self-manage their learning progress. They are comfortable with taking risks and use a variety of strategies to learn from failure. They are able to offer support and guidance to other learners who may be struggling in these areas.</p>
<p>Assessment Capability</p>	<p>All forms of assessment are selected and designed by the teacher, and they tend to focus on grades and summative assessment approaches. Learners are not involved.</p> <p>Students have no sense of ownership of the data.</p>	<p>Learners are informed of the measures of success at the beginning of each learning experience.</p> <p>They are invited to reference these at various points of the learning experience (such as in learning conferences).</p> <p>Students have limited understanding of measures of success and may not be able to use the indicators to improve their performance.</p>	<p>Learners are exposed to various assessment methods and are invited to help identify the criteria and indicators of success in some of these. They are developing their understanding of the concept of progression, and of the value of and need for providing evidence to demonstrate their success in learning.</p> <p>Students can use the performance indicators with guidance from the teacher to make shifts in learning.</p>	<p>Learners are regularly involved in decisions about what success will look like, and they co-design how it will be measured.</p> <p>They understand what progression looks like, so that they can set their own learning goals and next steps in learning.</p>	<p>Learners routinely take ownership of decisions about how success will be measured as a part of the design of learning experiences. They can accurately articulate and report on their learning achievements by matching evidence of their learning to the agreed-on success criteria.</p>

Agency by Design

An Educator's Playbook

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NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International
ISBN: 978-0-473-69252-0 (NZ)
ISBN: 979-8-9891858-1-8 (USA)