

Student Agency

Presentation Audio Transcript

Slide 2: Students have long been put in the passenger seat of their education. When learning is teacher-directed and one-size fits all, students do not have the opportunity to take ownership or exercise choice in their learning.

However, as this quote from the Vermont Agency of Education shows, personalized, proficiency-based learning puts students in the driver's seat and prioritizes their individual curiosity, passions, needs, and agency in the learning process.

If we want students to be intrinsically-motivated, lifelong learners, we need to help them start practicing those attributes during their K-12 experience by inviting them to be co-designers of their learning

Slide 3: Student agency can transform classrooms and requires a significant shift in education as it has been practiced for many years.

Instead of being the expert and holder of knowledge, the teacher role shifts more to a facilitator or coach for student learning.

While many traditional classrooms utilize lecture and front of the room instruction, student-driven learning shifts the emphasis to student-to-student collaboration as a way of increasing student participation and engagement.

If learning is going to support student agency, it needs to shift from a one-size-fits-all model to a curriculum that is negotiated with every student to meet their needs.

Similarly, set tasks requiring a single way to demonstrate proficiency must open up to more voice and choice in how students demonstrate their learning.

Finally, teachers must be prepared to give up some control and ownership of the learning process to enable greater student agency.



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Slide 4: There are three considerations in student agency: choice in content, choice in medium, and choice in end product. While it is not necessary for any particular activity or task to invite student choice in all three components at once, developing activities that provide choice in each of these areas can help increase ownership and engagement.

Slide 5: Choice in content allows students a voice in the topic they learn.

Let's take an example from the video featured in the "Student Experience" section of this page.

The teacher in the video invited students to demonstrate a Vermont global citizenship graduation proficiency in history that required them to "Evaluate the credibility of differing accounts of the same event(s)". The teacher could have selected a single historical event for all students to focus on, but instead, he asked each student to pick a revolution to explore. Having choice allowed the students to engage more deeply in the material and take greater ownership over their learning.

Slide 6: The second consideration in supporting student agency is providing options for how students will learn content and skills.

Allowing students to choose how they will take in information -- whether through a book, interview, quantitative research, or other medium -- allows them to differentiate and find a medium that suits their learning style.

There may be times when students must learn how to take in information through a particular medium, but when that is not necessary, providing choice in medium can help increase engagement.

Slide 7: The final consideration in supporting student agency is choice in end product.



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Depending on the task, students may be able to demonstrate their learning through a variety of products. Allowing students choice in their final product can help them to build skills in areas of interest. For instance, a student interested in video production may choose to make create a film to demonstrate their understanding of how a bill becomes a law, while one interested in politics may choose to create a policy proposal.

As an educator, you can never design a single learning experience that meets the all the needs and interests of the diverse group of students in your classroom. Offering students voice and choice in the learning process can help them self-differentiate and increase agency and engagement.

Slide 8: Thank you for watching. The resources and activities on this page will help you explore further aspects of student agency. If you have any questions or want to share additional resources you think might help others, please contact the Center for Collaborative Education at vtclg@ccebos.org.

