



3.2. FOSTERING STUDENTS' AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Learners benefit from knowing what capabilities they will be developing and how the activities they are engaged in at school will help them get there. To build your students' agency in the learning process, consider the following suggestions.



Reminder: It may be difficult to adopt these approaches consistently. Aim to offer each learner a mentored journey for at least one unit of study in the academic year.



PRACTICAL TIPS

- Invite learners upfront to identify what they need or want to be able to do
 - » in the context of the subject or topic, and/or
 - » more broadly, in life
- Co-design a roadmap of how they will get there
 - » share stories of how others have done it, or provide pathways
 - » invite others to speak about their journey
 - » establish that struggle and confusion is normal and can be overcome through discussion and asking for help and guidance
- Share assessment rubrics early on
 - » invite questions and provide clarifications
- Support students to
 - » assess where they are in relation to the relevant competencies
 - » identify what they will need to do to build their competencies
 - » set achievable goals, using a framework like [SMART](#) (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- Provide students with regular opportunities for self-assessment to gauge their learning progress, wherever possible against specific assessment rubric criteria.
 - » Exit slips
 - » Annotation of rubrics
 - » Reflection sessions
- Celebrate successes and milestones
- Encourage students to read and respond to targeted feedback you give them and communicate what they will do next
 - » Consider delaying release of numeric or letter grades for assessment tasks until after students respond with intention to your written or verbal feedback

Taking it further:

- Invite students' suggestions for future improvements to learning activities, project design and assessment criteria
- Explore with your school leaders any possibilities for students to contribute meaningfully to decision-making at school level (see Case study)

Q CASE STUDY: HARNESSING STUDENT AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Mount Alexander College, a government secondary school (years 7-12) in the Melbourne inner suburb of Flemington, takes student agency seriously. They have allocated a leading teacher role in *Student leadership and empowerment* to ensure that student agency is enacted and sustained across all aspects of the school.

There are 60 student leaders across all year levels, with multi-age school captains from year 9 - 12. These are not merely ceremonial positions. Student leaders sit on school council, lead assemblies, run fundraisers and organise theatre productions. They participate in student feedback forums on matters including school buildings, uniform policy, device and language use.

Student leaders are even called upon to sit in on hiring panels for new teachers. To prepare them for this, the school provides them with tailored training in merit, equity and confidentiality. There are also systems in place to ensure diversity in the student leadership group so that the student body is properly represented.

By enabling them to apply transferable skills to real-life decision making, these opportunities are an invaluable preparation for students in life beyond school.



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