AGENCY

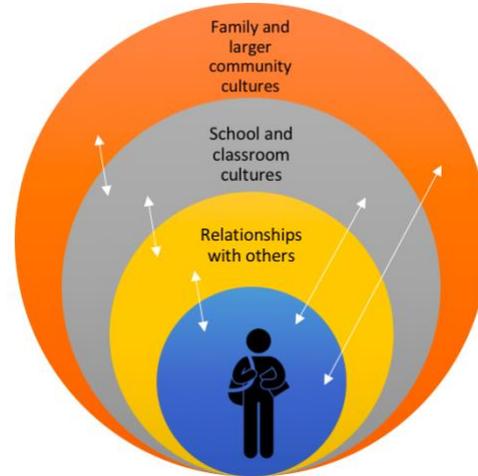> **Overview**
>
> **Agency** is a person's capacity and propensity to formulate intentions and take initiative to achieve them; these intentions are based on sense of purpose, individual values, goals, and needs. Ideally, agency has positive goals for the individual and reflects important prosocial values. Agency is contingent upon the person's mindset and skills and his or her interactions with the environment.[i]
>
> Children and youth who are able to enact their agency are actively involved in making their experiences, better able to adapt to various environments, use their creativity to overcome obstacles and achieve their desired outcomes. [ii,iii]

Mindsets & Skills That Undergird Agency	Environmental Factors that Support Agency
- Autonomy - Self-efficacy - Reflection - Self-regulation - Growth mindset - Sense of purpose - Self-awareness (one's thoughts, identity values, and goals) - Social awareness (community's values, goals, and needs) - Awareness of resources	**Relationships with others**, such as teachers and peers **School and classroom cultures** that provides opportunities for students to express thoughts, ideas, and opinions and respects them as "drivers" in their own learning **Family and larger community cultures** that are aligned in supporting and encouraging an individual's sense of agency - Access to resources and social supports that help make goals attainable
Agency requires individuals to integrate a wide range of mindsets and skills that empower them to seek and take initiative.	*An environment that supports agency is conducive to self-directed decision-making and is critical to allow the expression of a person's agency.*

FOUR FACTORS THAT ENABLE STUDENTS TO EXPRESS THEIR AGENCY[iv]:

1. Having access to options for different, but equally appealing, goals.
2. Having an understanding of actual and expected rewards to help motivate them towards achieving the goal. (Motivation can include sense of belonging, sense of competence, and sense of power or influence.)
3. Having the strategies needed to act on a plan, in pursuit of a goal.
4. Having the resources available to accomplish one's goal.

AGENCY ACROSS THE DEVELOPMENTAL SPECTRUM

Estimated Age group	Early childhood (ages 2-3)	Preschool (ages 3-6)	Middle to Late Childhood (ages 6-11)	Early adolescence (ages 12-14)	Late adolescence (ages 14-18)	Young Adulthood (ages 19-40)
Psychosocial stage in relation to agency	Children learn to exercise their **will** by making choices based on individual preference.	Children learn about purpose and their ability to **initiate** activities with others and carry out plans.	Children learn to be **competent** and effective at activities valued by others.	Adolescents look inward to understand their own sense of self and their role as a **group member**, while working to find a balance between the two.	Adolescents work to develop an understanding of **themselves**, their values and goals as they evaluate where they might want to go in adulthood.	Young adults work to form strong, loving **relationships** with others

PROMISING PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING STUDENT AGENCY

- **Student Portfolio Presentations** – Have students collect samples of their work to document their learning. Provide students the opportunity to identify goals for themselves, review and reflect on their work, and then showcase their learning at student-led conferences for parents or peers.[v]
- **Feedback for growth** – Provide instructional feedback that (1) explains that you're offering comments because you have high expectations of your students,[vi] and (2) provides clear explanations and actionable suggestions that help students spot mistakes and clearly coaches them on how to improve.[vii]
- **Engagement Exit Tickets** - Quickly gauge your students' perspectives after a lesson with an exit ticket by asking them how much they agree on one of the statements from this Agentic Engagement Scale.[viii] Discuss any trends that came up your students and identify what changes to implement to help amplify student voice in your classroom.
    - During class, I expressed my preferences and opinions.
    - During class, I asked questions.
    - I told the teacher what I liked and what I didn't like.
    - I let my teacher know what I am interested in.
    - I offered suggestions about how to make the lesson better.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS & RESOURCES

- TransformEd's Webinars, "Routes to Agency," "A Data-Informed Approach to Supporting Student Agency," and "Promising Practices for Promoting Student Agency," "The Intersection of Agency & Discipline"
- Transcend Education, Graduate Aims Database - Agency, includes example learner behaviors
- Competency Work's Mindsets and Student Agency
- GripTape's Framework for Facilitating the Emergence of Learner Agency
- Read more about how to use portfolios to build student agency
- Learn more about the facilitating students' goal-setting by exploring P21's Pathway to Personalized Agency[ix]
- Explore Henry County Schools' Tools for Progress Monitoring, Goal Setting, Reflection & "WIN" Time
- Next Generation Learning Challenges: Honor Agency; How Next Gen Learning Can Support Student Agency
- P21's "Agency in My Diverse Classroom": Part I, Part II
- NewTechNetwork's Agency Rubrics for Grades 2, 5, Middle School, High School

[i] This definition emerged from a literature review, as well as conversations with field experts. See the full references and acknowledgements for more information.

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[iv] Ferguson, R. F., Phillips, S. F., Rowley, J. F., & Friedlander, J. W. (2015). The Influence of Teaching Beyond Standardized Test Scores: Engagement, Mindsets, and Agency. *Retrieved from The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University website: http://www. agi. harvard. edu/publications. php*.

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[vi] Yeager et al., (2014). Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide Critical Feedback Across the Racial Divide. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143,* 804-824.

[vii] Ferguson et al., (2015). The influence of teaching beyond standardized test scores: Engagement, mindsets, and agency.

[viii] Items adapted from Reeve, J., & Tseng, C. M. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *36*(4), 257-267.

[viii] Bellanca, J. (2015). Part II: Student Agency Goal Setting: A Pathway to Personalized Agency. Retrieved from P21's website: http://www.p21.org/news-events/p21blog/1785-part-ii-student-agency-goal-setting-a-pathway-to-personalized-agency.

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