

*Thank you*

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INTEREST IN  
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Rebound, Grades K-12*, by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, Dominique Smith, and John Hattie. Module 3 covers rebuilding student agency.

**LEARN MORE** about this title!

## PRAISE FOR *REBOUND*

School leaders and educators have an opportunity to learn from the lessons of COVID-19 and the movement for racial justice and create schools that fundamentally dismantle the inequities that have been laid bare. This book offers educators essential guidance for transforming their schools in ways that intentionally meet the needs of every student.

—**Nancy Gutierrez**, President, The Leadership Academy

*Rebound* is a valuable and timely book. This masterful collection of proven strategies to accelerate learning for all students and staff is essential for all school districts. The information provides immediate opportunities for your team and students to achieve maximum impact in teaching and learning as we move forward from distance learning.

—**Martinrex Kedziora**, Superintendent, Moreno Valley Unified School District

Some books come along at exactly the right moment. Arriving just as we begin to heal from our collective trauma, this book provides a combination of inspiration, advice, and practical tools that teachers, leaders, and educational practitioners need to rethink, reimagine, and reinvent the schools our students, families, and educators need and deserve.

—**Sandi Everlove**, Director of Instructional Design, Committee for Children

This book is phenomenal! I really haven't enjoyed reading a practitioner book more in a long time. The way that the authors have structured the book provides a great way for readers to engage and make applications to their own practice. The modules are constructed in an easy-to-use format. There isn't wasted space in this playbook. It's holistic and it addresses such a broad range of topics that it will stand the test of time for educators and administrators who are invested in being better for their school communities.

—**Doug Anthony**, Chief Consultant, Anthony Consulting Group  
Former Associate Superintendent of Talent Development  
Prince George's County Public Schools

This playbook is for all educators and provides all the elements to ensure we come out of the pandemic on top. From educator self-care to building successful learning systems to meet the needs of each and every student, *Rebound* provides us a clear path to navigate these uncharted waters.

—**Guido Magliato**, Assistant Superintendent, Leadership and Learning  
La Mesa-Spring Valley Schools

*Rebound* is a gift to educators. The book is an amazing resource for all of us to rethink our classrooms and schools as we work to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have had many struggles in education during this pandemic; however, we have also learned new strategies that we need to capture and continue to implement as we move out of the pandemic. This book will help you do that!

—**Debra Kubin**, Superintendent, Ukiah Unified School District

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## MODULE 3

# REBUILDING STUDENT AGENCY

Agency isn't just for adults. Young people's sense of agency drives their learning in and out of school. You can see a student's agency in your own classroom. The students who exhibit self-regulation skills such as taking turns and working through a multistep math problem draw on their agency. The metacognition needed to reflect on ideas, ask questions, and recognize their progress is another dimension of agency in learning. Those two elements—self-regulation and metacognition—fuel learning. The school years are essential, as self-regulation and metacognition undergo rapid development beginning at about four years of age and continuing across a lifetime.

Student agency is key to our success as educators. Teaching is not a push-and-pull process, with the teacher pushing information out and the student pulling the information in. Think of student agency as the catalyst that makes those exchanges possible.

The agency of many young people has taken a hit during remote learning. There has been a destabilizing effect for some students who do not see the fruits of their labors. Decreased socialization opportunities with peers haven't helped, and some of the cues that are in a physical classroom have been harder to come by. Rebuilding student agency is crucial to re-establishing their relationship to learning.



## WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

- I am learning about eight dimensions of student agency.
- I am learning about creating student opportunities to rebuild student agency.
- I am learning about the role of student collaboration in agency.
- I am learning about teacher-led approaches to build student agency.

### SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can create a plan to embed student agency in my classroom or school.
- I can host individual conferences with students about their agency.
- I can utilize feedback to build agency and motivation.
- I can help students reestablish their relationship with learning.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Use the provided scale to identify your level of knowledge about student agency. Consider each of these statements:



- I am knowledgeable about the role of student agency in learning.



- I know specific ways to build student agency in my classroom.



- I understand how goal setting can fuel student agency.



- I am aware of how feedback can build student agency.



## RE-ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP TO LEARNING

There is much to celebrate about what our students have learned to do in this past school year. The rise in their digital competency (and our own) is extraordinary. Young children have learned how to take screenshots and create short videos explaining their thinking. Older students navigate learning management systems (LMS) like the pros they have become. Many young people have learned a new level of time management that is less dependent on bells and schedules (talk about self-regulation!).

But much has been lost as well, especially in terms of students' relationship to learning. Learning is an inherently social act, typically constructed with other humans (Vygotsky, 1978). Our students have had to navigate a learning landscape they were not prepared for (not just an LMS). In the absence of the environmental cues of the classroom, many had to reconcile learning in a home environment more readily associated with sleeping, eating, or play. Because the teacher wasn't able to use proximity, gestural cues, and physical prompts like a hand on a shoulder to redirect, caregivers had to run interference instead. Shortened

instructional minutes meant that there was a greater reliance on independent learning, but with less supervision and encouragement than comes when it is happening in a live space.

Those who lack the skills of agency about their learning are likely to suffer the most from pandemic teaching. On the other hand, we can learn much to reboot our classrooms from enhanced attention to teaching self-regulation skills, having students less dependent on us, and devising lesson planning to capitalize on students teaching and learning from each other.

The cost to student agency has been greater still for vulnerable students. It is a double-whammy. Many experienced economic hardships and lack of reliable access to the internet. Others had difficulty in carving out a figurative and literal learning space in households stretched thin by childcare, unemployment, sickness, and, in some cases, substance abuse. Children and their families found themselves unhoused, crushed by racial injustices, and weathering the profound loss and death of loved ones. Students with disabilities, English learners, and others who require compensatory supports had fewer options, despite the efforts of schools and districts.

It's fair to say that the confidence of many learners has been shaken by the experiences they have had during the past year. Young people are amazingly resilient, and without question, all of us continue to be awed by what students have and still are accomplishing. There are many who flourished with the reduced teacher direction, the bells, the distractions of others, and the opportunity to be efficient in their learning. They certainly should not be forced to go back to the old



REBUILDING  
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TO LEARNING.

ways and lose these values and skills. We have a rebuilding process in front of us. We need to re-establish students' relationship to learning.



## PAUSE & PONDER

Consider the experiences you believe your students had or may continue to be having that could be a threat to their sense of agency.

**1. My students are/were able to regularly access technology (hardware and internet).**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**2. My students have/have had difficulty in finding a reliable physical space to learn.**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**3. The families of my students are/were able to provide consistent learning support.**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**4. My students are/have experienced housing and/or food insecurity.**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**5. My students have/had significant attendance problems that compromised their learning.**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**6. My students are/were able to access compensatory supports at pre-pandemic levels (special education, language, counseling, or tutoring supports).**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**7. My students are/were able to complete independent work.**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

**8. My students are/were able to collaborate with their peers.**

None (0%–10%)      Some (11%–50%)      Most (51%–89%)      All (90%–100%)

## EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF STUDENT AGENCY

Agency is central to a positive relationship to learning. Student agency is the management of one's own learning. Students with low levels of agency believe that learning is something that happens to them, and if they don't learn something, it is because of the teacher's inadequacies or their own traits. They don't see their own role in their learning. Dominique's daughter asked him



to throw the ball to her. When she didn't catch it, she said, "You missed." She attributed her lack of success to him.



STUDENTS WITH  
LOW LEVELS OF  
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Student agency is multidimensional and fostered by approaches to instruction, task design, motivation, assessment, and the development of study habits. These are also key for transfer of learning, which is the ability to apply knowledge and strategies under new conditions (National Research Council, 2012). Research on student agency in schools identified eight dimensions: self-efficacy, pursuit of interest, perseverance of effort, locus of control, mastery orientation, metacognition, future orientation, and self-regulation (Zeiser et al., 2018).

**Self-efficacy.** The belief that one can achieve goals is fundamental to student agency, as it is with adults. You'll recall from the previous module that the four sources of self-efficacy are having mastery experiences, seeing models, benefiting from social persuasion and encouragement, and knowing how to manage the physiological responses (Bandura, 1982). A child who possesses a higher level of self-efficacy believes that they can reach goals. Self-efficacy, with an effect size of 0.71, reliably holds the potential to accelerate learning (Hattie, n.d.; [www.visiblelearningmexta.com](http://www.visiblelearningmexta.com)).

**Pursuit of interest.** Think of this as a consistency of passion for a topic. We've seen the determination of students to learn everything there is to know about something that has seized their interest: coding, the Titanic disaster, geocaching, ice skating. They pursue their interests by reading books, talking with others about them, practice, and searching for new challenges that will build their skills. An important aspect of this is that they stick with some interests for a period of time and don't lose interest quickly (Peña & Duckworth, 2018).

**Perseverance of effort.** Hand-in-hand with interest is the willingness to continue on when something becomes more difficult. A student's persistence and concentration of effort to finish tasks has the potential to accelerate learning, with an effect size of 0.54 (Hattie, n.d.; [www.visiblelearningmexta.com](http://www.visiblelearningmexta.com)). A student with a higher degree of persistence understands that setbacks can happen but is willing to see a project or task through to the end. Importantly, perseverance of effort can't be fostered when the tasks are not challenging. Unfortunately, this happens too often with some advanced students who skate through their years of schooling, only to discover that when they reach college, they don't have the wherewithal or the resiliency to confront challenge.

**Locus of control.** The key word is "control"—To what extent does a learner believe that they are an influencer in the successful completion of the task? The location, or locus, of control speaks to where they attribute success and failure. A person with a strong internal locus of control places a higher value on their own skills and effort, while those with an external locus of control focus on the difficulty of the project or what other people's skill levels are. In truth, locus of control is on a continuum, rather than an internal/external binary. Learners can also attribute luck or an authority, such as the teacher, in explaining their success. A learner

who says, “The teacher doesn’t like me; that’s why I got a bad grade” is attributing failure to an external authority figure. “I got lucky on that exam, so that’s why I got a good grade” is attributing success to luck. An internal locus of control is associated with higher levels of achievement (Shepherd et al., 2006).

**Mastery orientation.** Goals drive all of us, but there is also the motivation for those goals. The beliefs we have about the goal orient us onto a path. The goals of students can fall broadly into two paths: a mastery orientation or a performance orientation (Pintrich, 2003). Students with a mastery orientation understand that what they are learning benefits them. They understand that learning a topic in one class will benefit them in another. As well, they judge their own performance in terms of what they have learned, not in comparison to others. A student with a mastery orientation says, “I want to learn Spanish so I can speak to my grandparents.” Students with a performance orientation have goals, too, but they may be tied more closely to the amount of effort required and their standing with others. A student with a performance orientation may say, “I want to pass Spanish class” or “I want to get an A in this class so I can move up in the class ranking.” A student with a deep motivation and approach seeks mastery and is willing to invest a higher degree of effort. That kind of motivation has an effect size of 0.57 and can accelerate learning (Hattie, n.d.; [www.visiblelearningmetax.com](http://www.visiblelearningmetax.com)), which is why we encourage conversations with students about the question, “Why are we learning this?”



**Metacognition.** Often described as “thinking about thinking,” metacognition develops in the first years of schooling and continues across a lifetime. You’ll notice this happening with the five-year-old that checks the picture on a puzzle box lid to complete it. Metacognitive strategies are embedded in instruction. We teach early readers to monitor their understanding so that when they lose meaning in a text, they go back to reread. We teach older students to take notes and use them as part of their studying. A student with a higher degree of metacognition will notice what is confusing, ask questions, and mentally summarize what they are learning.

A CHILD WHO  
POSSESSES A  
HIGHER LEVEL OF  
SELF-EFFICACY  
BELIEVES THAT THEY  
CAN REACH GOALS.

**Future orientation.** Perceptions of what constitutes the future are definitely going to vary with age. Young children may consider the future to be lunchtime. But a goal of schooling is to help students see that the learning they do today is grounded not only in their current context but also in their investment in their own future aspirations. Early grades social studies curriculum includes study of different occupations and community roles, and lots of schools host Career Days so that children can ask questions about how the firefighter decided on that professional field. Middle and high school efforts include helping students develop resumes and introducing academic and extracurricular efforts that will burnish their postsecondary applications. Students with a future orientation are able to equate their school efforts and experiences as a foundation for adult aspirations.

**Self-regulation.** All of these above relate to the notion of “self-regulation,” a term closely related to metacognition. A student with a higher degree of self-regulation can reset their attention during math when they notice they’re thinking instead about a video game; they can choose a different strategy for learning when the first does not work; they can seek, hear, and act on feedback from others. Self-regulation plays an important role in practice and studying. For instance, being organized, keeping track of assignments, and setting aside time for study are all essential skills.



## CASE IN POINT

Lynette Carter and Randy Espinoza are educators who share several students in common. Mr. Espinoza is the special educator who supports the English department at their inclusive high school, and Ms. Carter is one of the English teachers. They are hosting individual meetings with some students who have been a cause of concern because of what they perceive as a lack of agency, damaging their relationship to learning. They don’t want these conversations to devolve into a litany of problems, the shaking of an adult finger, and a silent and sullen teen. Instead, they use a scripted series of questions to talk to each student (Smith et al., 2015):

1. When do you feel proud of yourself, inside or outside of school?
2. Why did you feel that way?
3. What obstacles did you overcome, and how did you do it?
4. What obstacle is holding you back right now?
5. Could some of those same strategies you used to overcome obstacles be used in this situation?
6. Let’s make a plan to overcome that obstacle. I bet you’re already feeling proud of yourself for tackling this.



THE AMOUNT  
OF AUTONOMY  
EXPERIENCED BY  
STUDENTS HAS A  
DIRECT LINK TO THEIR  
SENSE OF AGENCY.

Arturo is one of the students they are meeting with today. He transferred to the school before the pandemic as an eleventh-grade student who was behind in his credits and eligible for special education services. A transcript analysis meant that he needed to enroll in some classes that are typically completed in tenth grade, and while it was a blow to his ego, he made steady progress and recouped some of his earlier losses. However, his return to school has been problematic. He struggled with distance learning and has not made expected gains in face-to-face instruction. His family was hit hard by COVID-19 and his father nearly lost his life after weeks on a ventilator. As the oldest child, Arturo took care of his family during the crisis.



## REFLECT

*What do you see as strengths to leverage to rebuild Arturo's sense of agency? Which dimensions of agency would you suggest these educators target (keep in mind that they can target more than one)?*

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## TEACHER PRACTICES TO REBUILD STUDENT AGENCY

Teachers play an important role in the relative amount of agency a student possesses. You'll recall that we discussed teacher autonomy in Module 1. The amount of autonomy experienced by students has a direct link to their sense of agency (Filippello et al., 2019). Teaching that is highly controlling places a premium on compliance, conveys approval that is dependent on achievement, and ignores students who do not achieve, resulting in a "chilly" classroom climate. These teaching behaviors foster an external locus of control that is authority based, and students in these classrooms grow more insecure about their learning and their ability to take action. The result can often be learned helplessness.

In contrast, teaching styles that increase students' autonomy foster those who have a higher sense of learning agency (Filippello et al., 2019). These autonomy-supportive classrooms are led by teachers who encourage discussion, listen for students' points of view, make feedback informative, and take the time to link student actions to their success. Choice and relevance are crucial curricular

features. Importantly, in doing so, they help students develop an internal locus of control. For a student who has had a compromised relationship to learning, autonomy-supportive classrooms can be transformative.



FOR A STUDENT WHO HAS HAD A COMPROMISED RELATIONSHIP TO LEARNING, AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS CAN BE TRANSFORMATIVE.

We note a problem in that it is students who perform above average who prefer teachers taking more control, talking more, asking more about the facts—as they know how to play this game and are winners. Many forms of our current accountability systems are dependent on multiple-choice or closed forms of assessment. These appear to students to privilege content-based knowledge, and so often these students come to believe that the “good student” is the one who “knows lots.” It is fascinating to note how few gifted students go onto become gifted adults (less than 2% of child prodigies do so) primarily, we would argue, as they do not have high skills at self-regulation in areas other than their “gift,” struggle with not knowing, fear challenges in areas where they are less familiar, and have fewer skills of working in teams to solve problems (often preferring to shine by themselves).

The intentional use of teacher practices specifically aimed at building student agency has shown promising results over time, as short as within a single school year (Zeiser et al., 2018). Given that the rebuilding of student agency can fuel student learning, this is an investment that can deliver measurable results. In this module and those that follow, we will discuss these practices, which cluster into three categories: student opportunities, student–teacher collaboration, and teacher-led approaches. How many of these practices are part of your daily instruction?



## PAUSE & PONDER




### Menu of Teacher Practices on Student Agency

Use the traffic light scale to reflect on your current practices as they relate to teaching about and creating opportunities for agency. What areas do you want to strengthen?






#### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

<p><b>Choice.</b> Students make choices about their strategies for learning.</p>	
<p><b>Group work.</b> Students have opportunities to work in groups to learn and practice agency necessary for group success.</p>	
<p><b>Harnessing outside opportunities.</b> Students have opportunities to demonstrate agency outside the classroom and make connections to its application in the classroom.</p>	







**STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES** (Continued)

<b>Revision.</b> Students are able to revise assignments or tests after they receive feedback.	
<b>Student self-reflection.</b> Students self-reflect using journals, logs, or other structured templates or tools.	
<b>Student-led instruction.</b> Students demonstrate agency by leading instruction on a particular skill or concept.	

**STUDENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION**

<b>Developing relationships.</b> Teachers develop personal relationships with students to better understand their agency strengths, needs, and motivators.	
<b>Feedback.</b> Teachers provide students with feedback and scaffold the process of students seeking feedback.	
<b>Goal setting.</b> Teachers help students set goals to complete coursework while improving agency.	
<b>Individual conferences.</b> Teachers hold one-on-one meetings with students to discuss elements of student agency and its relationship to academic work.	
<b>Student voice.</b> Teachers provide students with opportunities to contribute to and provide feedback on key decisions in the classroom.	

**TEACHER-LED APPROACHES**

<b>Assessment.</b> Teachers design ways to evaluate student learning agency.	
<b>Direct instruction.</b> Teachers provide explicit instruction to develop skills related to student agency.	
<b>Modeling.</b> Teachers model agency to demonstrate it to students in a meaningful context.	
<b>Positive reinforcement.</b> Teachers provide positive reinforcement for demonstration of agency.	
<b>Scaffolding.</b> Teachers provide students with tools, strategies, and resources to help scaffold students toward mastery of agency.	
<b>Verbal cues.</b> Teachers provide brief spoken prompts in real time to highlight or remind students of behaviors that demonstrate agency.	

Source: Adapted from Zeiser, K., Scholz, C., & Cirks, V. (2018). *Maximizing student agency: Implementing and measuring student-centered learning practices* (Appendix A: Menu of Teacher Practices on Student Agency). American Institutes of Research. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED592084.pdf>

## THREE WAYS TO CHANGE THE RELATIONSHIP TO LEARNING BEGINNING TOMORROW

Increased student agency doesn't occur due to a few isolated practices that happen every once in a while. The steady implementation of the techniques discussed in the previous "Pause and Ponder" requires commitment on your part. It's important to gain a toehold to ramp up your practice. We'll take one element from each of the three areas of the teaching practices for student agency scale to build a foundation.

### 1. Student Opportunities for Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment



Do you know that feeling when you are trying to make your way through a dark and unfamiliar room? Your senses are heightened as you strain to see and hear, hoping for a clue. You move slowly and cautiously for fear you'll run into something or even fall. But switch the light on, and you visibly relax as you move with more assurance. Student self-reflection works like a light—it illuminates a path that makes acceleration possible.

STUDENT SELF-REFLECTION WORKS LIKE A LIGHT—IT ILLUMINATES A PATH THAT MAKES ACCELERATION POSSIBLE.

Students need opportunities to regularly reflect on their progress. This builds their confidence, allows them to make plans for improvement, and reinforces their awareness of their skills (a metacognitive trait). Further, these should happen through the learning process. At the beginning of a unit of instruction, share the success criteria for the students and allow them to rank order the relative level of difficulty for each item. Although this is in advance of instruction, it provides students with an opportunity to consider their own present skill level and to make early decisions about where they will need to concentrate more effort. The feedback to you is quite helpful, too. Imagine knowing at the start of a unit who already is feeling as though they may have more difficulty than you anticipated. This presents opportunities to provide instruction on gaps in skills or concepts, as well as to provide students with feedback about their agency. Figure 2 displays an example of a seventh-grade math unit on multiplying and dividing rational numbers; notice how this particular student said that identifying a terminating or repeating decimal would probably be the most difficult.

A second technique for prompting self-reflection about progress is to compare assessments over a period of time. This type of assessment, called ipsative assessment, is used to compare a student's past performance to a current one (Isaacs et al., 2013). Teachers often do ipsative evaluation to gauge growth over time, but it is less common for students to do so. This process allows the student to notice where growth has occurred and is self-referential (*How did I do compared to six weeks ago?*) rather than peer-oriented (*How did I do compared to my classmates?*). You see young children delight in doing this when they

**Figure 2** Sample Self-Ranking of Success Criteria

Difficulty	Success Criteria
3	I can use properties of operations to multiply and divide rational numbers.
5	I can identify the decimal form of a rational number as a terminating or repeating decimal.
4	I can convert a rational number to a decimal using long division.
2	I can justify the quotients of rational numbers.
1	I can justify the products of rational numbers.

compare a drawing they did at age three to another they made at age six. These comparative self-assessments can be especially motivating for learners who have larger attainment gaps compared to the grade-level expectations, as it allows them to view their growth and developmental progress (Hughes et al., 2014). Figure 3 is an example of an ipsative assessment about writing. The student chooses two pieces of writing, comparing one from earlier in the semester to a more recent one to identify where they have grown and where to focus effort.

**Figure 3** Comparative Self-Assessment for Informational Writing in Grade 6

Title and Date of First Essay	Title and Date of Second Essay
<b>Organization/Purpose</b>	
Topic is introduced clearly to preview what is to follow 4      3      2      1	Topic is introduced clearly to preview what is to follow 4      3      2      1
Ideas and concepts are organized using definition, classification, or compare/contrast 4      3      2      1	Ideas and concepts are organized using definition, classification, or compare/contrast 4      3      2      1
Transitions create cohesion and show relationships among ideas 4      3      2      1	Transitions create cohesion and show relationships among ideas 4      3      2      1
A concluding statement supports the explanation given 4      3      2      1	A concluding statement supports the explanation given 4      3      2      1
Task, purpose, and audience are aligned to prompt 4      3      2      1	Task, purpose, and audience are aligned to prompt 4      3      2      1
<b>Evidence/Elaboration</b>	
Develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, details, and examples 4      3      2      1	Develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, details, and examples 4      3      2      1
Follows a standard format for citations 4      3      2      1	Follows a standard format for citations 4      3      2      1

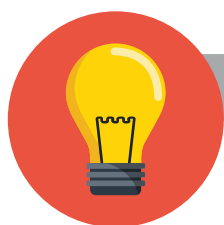
(Continued)



(Continued)

Evidence/Elaboration (Continued)							
Skillfully quotes and paraphrases 4      3      2      1				Skillfully quotes and paraphrases 4      3      2      1			
Uses relevant information from multiple sources 4      3      2      1				Uses relevant information from multiple sources 4      3      2      1			
Effective and appropriate style enhances content 4      3      2      1				Effective and appropriate style enhances content 4      3      2      1			
Conventions							
Demonstrates grade-level grammar, usage, and conventions 4      3      2      1				Demonstrates grade-level grammar, usage, and conventions 4      3      2      1			

Source: Fisher, D., Frey, N., Bustamante, V., & Hattie, J. (2021). *The assessment playbook for distance and blended learning*. Corwin.



## PAUSE & PONDER

### How Do Your Students Self-Reflect and Self-Assess?

There are many other ways to build these habits with your students. How many of these do you currently use?

SELF-REFLECTION	YES	NO	SELF-ASSESSMENT	YES	NO
I ask self-reflection questions at the end of assignments.			I use anticipation guides at the beginning of units so that students can identify their background knowledge.		
I ask self-reflection questions at the end of quizzes and tests.			I use polls or other universal response techniques so that students can self-assess.		
I have students make short videos of their reflections.			I have students compare their work to a rubric or checklist to self-assess before submitting it.		
I ask students to write exit slips at the end of lessons.			I provide time after collaborative tasks for students to debrief their processes.		

What self-reflection and self-assessment tools might you add to your repertoire?

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## 2. Student–Teacher Collaboration for Goal Setting

Build the habits of self-reflection and self-assessment and you'll open the door to goal setting. A second aspect of rebuilding student agency is to assist them in setting goals. These can be academic goals for the completion of course work but can be further strengthened by imbuing them with agency. For example, a goal to “get better grades” is not especially useful—it is vague, doesn't have a time limit, lacks details in terms of the student tracking their progress, and, worst of all in terms of agency, doesn't have any kind of action plan to go with it. Solid goals meet four conditions (Martin, 2006):

- Specific in nature
- Challenging to the student
- Competitively self-referenced
- Based on self-improvement

We are fans of a personal-best approach to goal setting (Martin, 2006). These growth-oriented goals are set by the student to improve on previous performance. An important element shouldn't be lost—these are goals set by the student, not by someone else. They can be outcome goals, such as “improve my comprehension skills so I can achieve a new benchmark in my reading level,” or process oriented, such as reading for fifteen minutes every evening. Notice that neither of these goals involves comparisons to others; they have mastery, rather than performance, in mind. Because the goal is co-constructed with the student, personal-best goals are associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation, persistence, engagement, and enjoyment of school (Martin, 2011). Goals set with students can be personal (try out for the swim team) or nonacademic but school related (attendance).

Strengthen their personal link to the goal by discussing why it is of value to them. Too often young people will go through a goal-setting exercise because there is an adult insisting on it. When you talk with them about why it is important to them (not school, family, or friends), you further foster their sense of agency about the decisions they make and the direction they choose. Don't get discouraged if their initial goals don't seem all that substantial. You are building a habit and a disposition for them. Regaining one's agency takes time and it also takes early and small wins.

Importantly, it isn't so much the initial goal setting that has an effect, but rather what is done with it. If a goal is set but never revisited, it holds little to no value. Check in regularly with students to discuss their progress and adjust their planned actions as needed. Knowing that their plans can be adjusted based on new circumstances can be an eye-opener for students. They often look at the adults in their lives and see the accomplishments, but not all the zigzags it took to get there. These conferences are a great time to share your story and struggles and, in the process, build a relationship. And keep in mind what Bandura (1982) said



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about self-efficacy: there is incredible value in seeing agency modeled. But they'll never know how you have used your own agency if all they see are the outcomes, not the path you took to get there. An example of a personal goal-setting conference is in Figure 4.

**Figure 4** Planning Tool for a Personal-Best Goal-Setting Conference

What is an academic, school-related, or personal goal you have for yourself?

- Why is this something you value?
- What has your past performance been like? What has been your personal best so far?
- How will achieving this goal benefit you?
- How will you know you have been successful?
- What might get in the way of you meeting this goal?
- What do you need to achieve this goal?

Resources	Self	School	Family

Action steps to achieve this goal:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We will check in with each other every \_\_\_\_\_ weeks to talk about your progress toward your personal-best goal.

### 3. Teacher-Led Positive Reinforcement That Motivates

“If you’re going to offer critique, focus on the process and the possibility,” said Johnston (2012, p. 37). The language you use, he noted, shapes the agency that learners possess about their ability to act on the world. Noting that “causal statements are at the heart of building agency,” he and others have found that the power of feedback lies in its potential learning forward. Feedback that is general and vague is not going to build much agency or, for that matter, close the gap between their current level of performance and where they’re headed. Telling a student “Good job!” is not especially motivating. Making progress is highly motivating. The quality of the feedback offered can be motivating for students, particularly when it is useful for the student.



TELLING A STUDENT  
“GOOD JOB!” IS  
NOT ESPECIALLY  
MOTIVATING. MAKING  
PROGRESS IS HIGHLY  
MOTIVATING.

There are four types of feedback: task related, process related, self-regulation related, and feedback about the person (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Corrective feedback about the task (correct/not correct) has an important potential to motivate as students are beginning to learn the subject matter, the vocabulary of the task, and the basic ideas. Often such corrective feedback can be followed by re-teaching to ensure students have these basics before they move to relational and conceptual thinking. We do note that much of the written feedback we offer to students is in this form, and indeed students often welcome this form of feedback—as it is relatively easier to amend than deeper, more conceptual thinking. But we need to be careful that we do not stay with task feedback, as doing so reinforces to students that this is the prime purpose of the lesson.

Feedback about process and self-regulation holds a higher potential to motivate deeper thinking and mastery. In terms of process, drawing a student’s attention to something they successfully used reinforces elements of the process you want them to continue using. Adding the phrase “look how you” to process can be a game changer (Johnston, 2012).

- “Look how you mixed colors to paint the sky.”
- “Look how you worked with your peers in the shared doc and figured out this problem.”
- “Look how you used a math model to help you figure out this problem.”
- “Look how you thought about Boyle’s law when you were calculating pressure.”
- “Look how you shared your video reflection with the class.”

Mind you, all of these can be followed with further feedback about what might have caused an error. Feedback about process is especially useful in helping students detect errors (Hattie & Timperley, 2007):

- “Look how you mixed colors to paint the sky. How could you use that same technique for the mountain lake in your painting?”

- “Look how you worked with your peers in the shared doc and figured out this problem. How can you use that experience to solve a problem on your own?”
- “Look how you used a math model to help you figure out this problem. Can you look at that model again to see what might have led you to the incorrect answer?”
- “Look how you thought about Boyle’s law when you were calculating pressure. Why didn’t it work as well when you were calculating the volume?”
- “Look how you shared your video reflection with the class. Can you work on your self-assessment and identify areas of strength and one area to grow?”

A second feedback technique is about self-regulation. This approach holds the possibility of being motivating for students. It can be the difference between the “want to do” element of motivation versus the negative feedback that can lead to “have to do” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 99). Feedback about self-regulation speaks in particular to agency:

- “I noticed that when the clay started wobbling on the potter’s wheel, you didn’t get frustrated and you kept going. How did that feel?”
- “I can see by your chart that you’re logging at least fifteen minutes a night reading. You’re keeping yourself focused even when there are other things you could be doing. What has been getting easier for you to do that?”
- “You were listening carefully to your opponent during the debate. Did that help you form your counterargument?”

Positive reinforcement about agency is crucial for students, as it assists them in seeing the results of their actions. Pair your feedback with a question that invites the student to self-reinforce (Zeiser et al., 2018). You want students to see their own growing agency:

- “I don’t get frustrated.”
- “I don’t get distracted.”
- “I listen instead of just arguing back.”

After all, the product of agency is how we talk to ourselves about our capacity to take action.

Feedback directed to the person tends to get recalled, as we all love to hear praise, what a wonderful person we are, and are hurt when the comments about us are negative. The power of these emotions so often leads to the student not then hearing the feedback about the work. Praise tends to dilute the impact of feedback on learning and achievement. This does not mean you should not use praise (it can be the essence of building positive relations), but we invite you to separate the occasions when you praise—and not include praise when you are providing feedback about the task, processes, or self-regulation.



## CASE IN POINT

The teaching staff at Fair Haven Elementary School have returned to face-to-face instruction after a prolonged period of virtual learning. Their students have done pretty well academically, and the families in their school have had praise for the school's efforts to keep their children connected to school and each other. In anticipation of returning, the school's instructional leadership team met with the parent-teacher organization to set some broad goals to be accomplished this year. One of them is to develop a schoolwide plan to rebuild student agency.

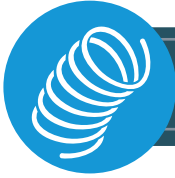


### REFLECT

*How would you advise Fair Haven to proceed? What kinds of tangible actions could they take to build a student agency initiative? We've reproduced items from the earlier assessment in this module to spark your thinking.*

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES	STUDENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION	TEACHER-LED APPROACHES
Choice	Developing relationships	Assessment
Group work	Feedback	Direct instruction
Harnessing outside opportunities	Goal setting	Modeling
Revision	Individual conferences	Positive reinforcement
Student self-reflection	Student voice	Scaffolding
Student-led instruction		Verbal cues

#### POSSIBLE ACTIONS

## SPRING FORWARD

Student agency fuels learning. During COVID times, many students have likely experienced some loss of agency about their learning and their lives, compromising their relationship with learning. Their agency hinges on two important elements: self-regulation and metacognition. If we are to make strides in addressing learning recovery, then we must take agency head on. Rebuilding agency is something we can do through the actions we take. First, we must talk about agency with our students—not just as a stand-alone lesson but as an ongoing conversation. We need to extend agency by creating opportunities for students to learn about themselves, notice their actions, and understand the goals they have for themselves, not just the ones that well-meaning adults have for them. Finally, we need to embed agency into the encouragement and feedback we offer to our students. That’s a goal for every educator: How are my actions building the agency of others?



## REFLECT

Reflect on your learning about agency and its impact on students’ learning. Identify actions you are considering based on your learning.

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## IMPORTANT

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very important and 1 being not important at all, how would you rate the value of addressing the student agency and rebuilding students' relationship with learning?

- 1      2      3      4      5



## WAIT, BUT WHY?

Explain your reason for the rating above.

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