

# Module 15: Strengthening the Student Role in Learning

## *Extended Learning Activities*

### Background

In **Module 15: Strengthening the Student Role in Learning** teachers gained an understanding of how students learn to learn and develop metacognition and self-regulation through formative assessment. This module also explores the characteristics of the schoolwide learning culture, and how cultural conditions improve student agency.

Module 15 provides a definition of learner agency and describes four foundational concepts – learner autonomy, self-regulation, metacognition, and self-efficacy – that are developed through formative assessment. Readings and videos highlight how teachers and students can strengthen each of these four constructs during learning. When students are able to accurately notice and effectively respond to evidence to guide their own learning, it is because these skills of self-regulation and metacognition have been explicitly modeled, taught, and nurtured during daily lessons.

In these optional extended learning activities, teachers and leaders can further explore the relationship between formative assessment and student agency. These learning opportunities can be done independently as individual readings and reflection, or with colleagues. Guiding questions are offered to support individual reflection, as well as to strengthen collaborative dialogue and increase shared understanding for site-based teams.

### How to Use this Resource

Teachers may select **one (or more)** of the following learning experiences to further explore ideas and insights from this module.

- If you and your colleagues want to better understand how **students think about their current role as learners**, go to first extension activity: *Interviewing Students About Their Role(s) as Learners*.
- If you and your colleagues wish to explore further how your **students are exhibiting agency** in the classroom, go to Activity 2: *Student Agency and the Instructional Practices that Support Agency*.

- If you and your colleagues would like to **unpack the results of the student survey tool**, go to Activity 3: *Student Survey Tool Reflections*.

# Module 15: Extended Learning Activity 1

## Interviewing Students About Their Role(s) as Learners

### Context

In **Module 15: Strengthening the Student Role in Learning** teachers explored learner agency and the four underlying concepts –learner autonomy, self-regulation, metacognition, and self-efficacy –that contribute to learner agency. When formative assessment practices are in place in a classroom, students talk about the shift in their Identity as learners as a result of formative assessment. When students have positive learner identities, they express their thoughts and feelings to others in the classroom knowing that their peers can offer valuable guidance to support their learning. Students learn to comfortably take on many roles, including those of leader, collaborative peer, and reflective listener. They seek feedback knowing that it helps them develop as a person and as a learner. Students try on and explore different academic identities in the classroom (mathematician, writer, friend, supportive peer, leader). They collaborate with peers on projects, contributing where it furthers the goals of the project and giving others space to make their contributions, too.

When confronted with setbacks, students with positive self-identities don't get lost in negative self-talk, such as, "This means I'm bad at this," "I'll never be able to do it," etc. Instead, students know that if they continue onward, asking for help where needed, trying alternate strategies, or collaborating with others, they can overcome barriers without getting stalled by mistakes. Students also value the knowledge and experiences they bring to the classroom from their homes and communities. They use this to make sense of new learning, draw connections, and extend the scope of what they already know so that new knowledge expands their existing understanding. Learning from students and understanding their experiences as learners is an important aspect of formative assessment.

This optional extension activity can be done independently or in a collaborative group. Its purpose is to give you the opportunity to explore how your students think about their role(s) as learners and understand what language they use to talk about learner agency.

**Time:** 30 minutes

### Learning Goals

- Explore how students voice their personal and academic identities as learners

## Success Criteria

- Articulate language and themes students use to describe their role as learners
- Identify shifts in practice to support students in developing positive learner identities

## Task Directions

Step 1: Review the [Sample Student Interview Questions\\*](#). Select 4-5 students (or more) to interview that are representative of your classroom or school.

Step 2: Interview students. You may wish to record them to share their insights with colleagues or to come back to in order to reflect later in the year.

Step 3: Discuss or reflect in your journal:

- What did you notice about how students talked about their role as learner? What did you notice about how students expressed the concepts of agency?
- What excited you about how students voiced their role as learners?
- What did you learn from students that could strengthen the learning culture in your classroom? What supports might you need to develop a strong learning culture?
- Given what you learned from students in their interviews, what goals do you have for students in relation to their role as learners?

# Module 15: Extended Learning Activity 2

## Student Agency and the Instructional Practices that Support Agency

### Context

In **Module 15: Strengthening the Student Role in Learning** teachers explored the four building blocks of agency. An important idea from the module is that these building blocks—metacognition, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and learner autonomy—can, and must, be taught.

Learner agency requires an understanding of the learning process, a belief in one's abilities, opportunities to practice and demonstrate personal autonomy during learning, and the capacity to intentionally direct one's efforts to meet specific goals. Students with a high sense of agency create rather than respond to educational opportunities. In the classroom, they ask for a say in how problems are solved, seek to add relevance during learning, and communicate their interest in learning. They act with intention by recommending goals or objectives, soliciting resources, identifying strategies, and seeking guidance when needed. Students with agency advocate for their learning and that of others, and actively support peers' learning by offering suggestions, reflecting on the learning process, asking questions, and engaging in rich dialogue.

This optional extension activity can be done independently or in a collaborative group. Its purpose is to give you the opportunity to explore how students exhibit agency in the classroom and the explicit things teachers do to support developing learner agency.

**Time:** 30 minutes

### Learning Goal

- Understand how students demonstrate agency, through learner autonomy, metacognition, self-efficacy, self-regulation and mindsets, and the instructional practices that are most effective to develop each of the foundational elements of student agency.

### Success Criteria

- Identify a goal and strategies to meet that goal to strengthen key conditions of student agency in your classroom, or with identified students.

## Task Directions

Step 1: Read *Student Agency and the Instructional Practices that Support Agency*.\*

Step 2: Discuss or reflect in your journal:

- What current routines, techniques, or strategies do you feel are furthest along in your practice?
- Identify one of the four practices you wish to further develop with your students.
- Which instructional practices might be most helpful to meeting your goal?
- Where might you be able to add some of these instructional practices in your daily routines?

# Module 15: Extended Learning Activity 3

## Student Survey Reflections

### Context

In **Module 15: Strengthening the Student Role in Learning** teachers were prompted to explore how to assess their own classroom from the perspective of a learning culture. A critical moment for teachers learning formative assessment is when a shift occurs in mindset about the potential for the student's role in learning. This shift occurs when teachers recognize student capacity to gauge where they are in their own learning, to set their own goals for the next steps, and to help their peers tackle learning challenges.

A commonly held misperception is that agency is a fixed characteristic, either a student has it, or does not have it. The opposite is true - agency can and must be taught. Modeling and explicit teaching of the building blocks of agency are central tenets in deeper learning and assessment for learning practices, including formative assessment, graduate profiles, personalized learning, and student-led conferences.

However, when these models are placed within traditional instructional routines that rely heavily on teacher-instructs-students approaches to learning, the opportunities to explicitly model and teach the skills of agency are limited or absent. Developing these instructional approaches in ways that will support agency also involves addressing legacy systems (e.g., scripted curriculum, accountability-driven assessment practices) that encourage compliant behaviors and hinder opportunities for students to learn the foundational skills of agency.

This optional extension activity can be done independently or in a collaborative group. Its purpose is to give you the opportunity to explore more deeply the student self-reflection results from the module.

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

### Learning Goal

- Explore how students self-assess on the skills of learning to learn, aligned with the building blocks in support of student agency

### Success Criteria

- Articulate where your students assess themselves in relation to student agency
- Identify 1-2 places to focus to support your students in learning how to learn

## Task Directions

Step 1: Consider the results of the *Student Agency Self-Reflection Tool* from the module. Jot down key findings or themes from the survey.

Step 2: Discuss or reflect in your journal:

- What do these survey results tell you about how your students think about themselves as learners? Is there anything that surprised you? Is what they've articulated aligned with how you students show learner agency in the classroom?
- How do the student survey results align with the Building Blocks of agency, explored in the module?
- What do these results tell you about current strategies, techniques, and routines that are in place in your classroom in relation to how students demonstrate student agency?
  - What do you feel is furthest along in your practice?
  - What might you wish to build on to more fully align to ideas outlined in this module?

\*You will need to log into your Canvas account to access the links marked with an asterisk.