In April 2017, approximately 40 teachers from four New Tech Network (NTN) high schools participated in a series of focus groups designed to collect information on the practices they used to build student agency among their students. The data collected from the focus groups were utilized to develop the Menu of Teacher Practices on Student Agency.

Three categories provide the organizational framework for the menu: 1. Student Opportunities, 2. Student-Teacher Collaboration, and 3.Teacher-Led Approaches.

The menu includes brief descriptions of 17 teacher practices that fall within each of these three categories, and key elements that teachers identified as being part of each practice.

Menu of Teacher Practices on Student Agency

Student Opportunities

Choice. Teachers provide students with opportunities to make choices about the content and process of their work.

Group Work. Teachers provide students with opportunities to work in groups to learn and practice agency necessary for group success.

Harnessing Outside Opportunities. Teachers provide students with opportunities to demonstrate agency outside the classroom and make connections between outside agency and its application in the classroom.

Revision. Teachers provide students with opportunities to revise assignments or tests after they have received feedback.

Student Self-Reflection. Teachers provide students with opportunities to self-reflect using journals, logs, or other structured templates or tools.

Student-Led Instruction. Teachers provide students with opportunities to demonstrate agency by leading instruction on a particular skill or concept.

Student-Teacher Collaboration

Developing Relationships. Teachers develop personal relationships with students to better understand their agency strengths, needs, and motivators.

Feedback. Teachers provide students with feedback and scaffold the process of students asking for feedback.

Goal Setting. Teachers help students set goals to complete coursework while improving agency.

Individual Conferences. Teachers hold one-on-one meetings with students to discuss elements of student agency and its relationship to academic work.

Student Voice. Teachers provide students with opportunities to contribute to and provide feedback on key decisions in the classroom.

Teacher-Led Approaches

Assessment. Teachers design formative and summative assessments to evaluate student agency and/or to provide students with extrinsic motivation to build agency.

Direct Instruction. Teachers provide explicit instruction to develop skills related to student agency.

Modeling. Teachers model agency to demonstrate it to students in a meaningful context.

Positive Reinforcement. Teachers provide positive reinforcement for demonstration of agency.

Scaffolding. Teachers provide students with tools, strategies, and resources to help scaffold students toward mastery of agency.

Verbal Cues. Teachers provide brief spoken prompts in real time to highlight or remind students of behaviors that demonstrate agency.

CHOICE: Teachers provide students with opportunities to make choices about the content and process of their work.

Key Elements of Choice

Choice of Content: Students have the opportunity to choose a topic or content area that builds personal relevance.

Choice of Method: Students have the opportunity to choose an approach to meeting the requirements of an assignment.

Choice of Skill: Students have the opportunity to choose their role in a group, the skills they are seeking to develop, and/or extra supports for skills that they find challenging.

Choice of Engagement: Students have the opportunity to choose their level of participation and engagement in a task.

GROUP WORK: Teachers provide students with opportunities to work in groups to learn and practice agency necessary for group success.

Key Elements of Group Work

Clear Roles and Responsibilities: Teachers facilitate group success by working with students to clearly define each group member's roles and responsibilities.

Clear Expectations: Teachers work with group members to establish goals and benchmarks so that all group members have a common understanding of the task.

Assessment: Teachers assess elements of group work, such as communication and collaboration, often incorporating a dimension of self-reflection and peer feedback.

HARNESSING OUTSIDE OPPORTUNITIES: Teachers provide students with opportunities to demonstrate agency outside the classroom and make connections between outside agency and its application in the classroom.

Key Elements of Harnessing Outside Opportunities

Embedding Personal Relevance: Teachers provide students with opportunities to work on projects that are personally meaningful and foster conditions for students to demonstrate agency.

Making Connections: Teachers illustrate connections between student actions and the extent to which they demonstrate agency.

REVISION: Teachers provide students with opportunities to revise assignments or tests after they have received feedback.

Key Elements of Revision

Providing Opportunities to Revise Before Grading. Teachers embed the revision process into their project timeline, providing students with feedback and an opportunity to revise before grades are provided.

Providing Opportunities to Revise After Grading. Teachers provide students with the option to revise and resubmit an assignment or test if they are not satisfied with the grade they receive.

Providing Student-Led Opportunities to Revise. Teachers provide students with opportunities to collect feedback and make revisions if they choose to do so.

STUDENT SELF-REFLECTION: Teachers provide students with opportunities to self-reflect using journals, logs, or other structured templates or tools.

Key Elements of Student Self-Reflection

Regular Self-Reflection on Coursework: Teachers provide opportunities for students to reflect on their coursework each day, identify challenges, and plan for next steps.

Self-Reflection on Student Agency: Teachers provide opportunities for students to explicitly reflect on their own student agency skills.

Self-Reflection on Summative Performance: Teachers provide opportunities for students to reflect after a project has been completed or on test performance or grades.

Tying Self-Reflection to Evidence: Teachers require students to support their self-reflection with evidence, such as coursework or concrete examples.

STUDENT-LED INSTRUCTION: Teachers provide students with opportunities to demonstrate agency by leading instruction on a particular skill or concept.

Key Elements of Student-Led Instruction

Student-Led Instruction on Content: Teachers provide students with opportunities to teach concepts or skills that are necessary to master as part of an academic course.

Student-Led Instruction on Agency Skills: Teachers provide students with opportunities to teach agency skills that help foster student success on group or project work.

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DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS: Teachers develop personal relationships with students to better understand their agency strengths, needs, and motivators.

Key Elements of Developing Relationships

Showing Commitment: Teachers follow through on commitments to students and show persistence in following up with students if they do not follow through on their commitments.

Showing Empathy: Teachers make an effort to understand students' circumstances when challenges arise and to help them think about how to overcome those circumstances or better prepare to face them next time.

Showing Collaboration: Teachers harness their colleagues' relationships with students when they have not yet established a relationship of their own or have trouble making the connection.

FEEDBACK: Teachers provide students with feedback and scaffold the process of students asking for feedback.

Key Elements of Feedback

Direct Feedback: Teachers give students feedback to help improve particular projects and skills and to help students understand that feedback should be seen as an opportunity for growth rather than failure.

Providing Opportunities to Ask for Feedback: Teachers scaffold the process of asking for feedback to ensure that students ask for feedback throughout the process rather than only when the teacher requires it.

Providing Opportunities for Peer Feedback: Teachers scaffold the process of students working with peers to provide feedback as well as the process of students asking their peers for help before going to the teacher.

GOAL SETTING: Teachers help students set goals to complete coursework while improving agency.

Key Elements of Goal Setting

Coursework Goals: Teachers work with students to set goals for project work so that students have benchmarks to guide themselves through a self-directed process of project completion.

Agency Goals: Teachers work with students to identify challenges they face due to gaps in agency skills and help students develop plans for improving those challenges.

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES: Teachers hold one-on-one meetings with students to discuss elements of student agency and its relationship to academic work.

Key Elements of Individual Conferences

Individual Conferences: Teachers may meet with students prior to beginning a project, during a project's implementation, or as a debrief after the fact to help students set goals for agency skills, problem-solve when agency is lacking, or reflect on agency strengths and challenges that they have demonstrated.

STUDENT VOICE: Teachers provide students with opportunities to contribute to and provide feedback on key decisions in the classroom.

Key Elements of Student Voice

Selection of Resources: Teachers work with students to select resources that best meet their needs.

Student Feedback: Teachers solicit student feedback and make changes to instruction or project parameters based on the feedback they receive.

ASSESSMENT: Teachers design formative and summative assessments to evaluate student agency and/or to provide students with extrinsic motivation to build agency.

Key Elements of Assessment

Assessment Content: Assessments may be designed to explicitly measure student agency or may be broader assessments that require student agency to successfully complete.

Assessment Data: Assessment data may include teacher observation, student self-reflection, and/or simple metrics, such as attendance or turning in homework.

Sharing Assessment Results: Assessment results can be shared with students to help build agency dimensions, such as motivation.

Student Design: Students can build agency by helping to design assessments of themselves and others.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: Teachers provide explicit instruction to develop skills related to student agency.

Key Elements of Direct Instruction

Mini Lesson: Teachers provide a whole-class lesson on a component of student agency.

Small-Group Instruction: Teachers provide small-group instruction on components of student agency for which the group has a need.

One-on-One Instruction: Teachers provide individual instruction on a component of student agency to address an immediate need.

MODELING: Teachers model agency to demonstrate it to students in a meaningful context.

Key Elements of Modeling

Deliberate Modeling: Teachers integrate opportunities for modeling into their lesson plans as a means of demonstrating agency to students.

Modeling as Part of Teachable Moments: Teachers model agency as situations arise that call upon them to exercise specific skills related to agency.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT: Teachers provide positive reinforcement for demonstration of agency.

Key Elements of Positive Reinforcement

Verbal Praise: Teachers provide real-time verbal praise for demonstration of student agency.

Celebrations and Rewards: Teachers set up larger celebrations or rewards focused on providing positive reinforcement for student agency.

Celebrating Failure: Teachers celebrate students who get things wrong to highlight that failure is an essential part of the learning process and overcoming failure is a key element of student agency.

Letting Students Self-Reinforce: Teachers help students establish systems that they can use to provide positive reinforcement to themselves.

SCAFFOLDING: Teachers provide students with tools, strategies, and resources to help scaffold students toward mastery of agency.

Key Elements of Scaffolding

Scaffolding Student Use of Time: Teachers provide parameters, tools, and strategies to help students accomplish a set of tasks in a predetermined length of time.

Scaffolding Organization: Teachers provide tools such as agendas, logs, binders, and access to online platforms to help students keep track of assignments and make plans for completing all required work.

Scaffolding Student Use of Resources: Teachers provide students with parameters and techniques to help them rely on a wide range of resources beyond asking the teacher for help.

Scaffolding Group Interactions: Teachers provide students with strategies and tools to facilitate productive group work experiences.

Scaffolding Problem Solving: Teachers provide students with strategies and resources to solve problems on their own when challenges arise.

Scaffolding Overcoming Failure: Teachers provide students with strategies for and experience with overcoming failure and working toward success.

VERBAL CUES: Teachers provide brief spoken prompts in real time to highlight or remind students of behaviors that demonstrate agency.

Key Elements of Verbal Cues

Reminders: Teachers provide students with brief, subtle reminders to demonstrate agency by reminding students of the desired behavior or praising students who are on track.

Questions: Teachers ask students questions to lead them to necessary agency skills while also giving them ownership over the process.

Explicit Links: Teachers make connections between the behaviors and skills they see and how they relate back to agency.

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