

# Five Ways to Foster Student Agency

#9 of series. Created by: **TOM SHERRINGTON & DAVID GOODWIN**  
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*I've had a lot of experience with students who, once encouraged to develop agency, driving their own learning – have seized the opportunity.*

**TOM SHERRINGTON**

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We want students to develop the attitudes and skills that, together, mean they can and will engage in learning processes in their own time, with effort and persistence, in a self-motivated manner. However, students will struggle to build the necessary habits unless we break down independent learning into actionable tasks. Here are five ways to foster student agency so students can decide for themselves without you needing to overcontrol everything.

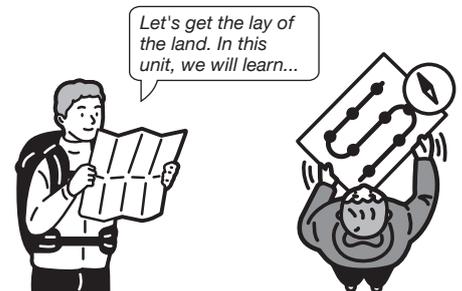
## 1 FOSTER NORMS AROUND EFFORTFUL INDEPENDENT WORK AND HOMEWORK.

Aim to nurture a culture where you have high expectations of homework. Let your students know homework matters, that it will help them learn, and that homework is a normal part of the everyday school/learning flow. To achieve this, set explicit homework goals with success criteria and deadlines. Praise students that produce exceptional work by showcasing their efforts. And rigorously set homework so that it becomes the norm.



## 2 SHARE THE BIG PICTURE OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Give students the lay of the land at the start of each new unit by reviewing the contents page of a textbook, a knowledge organiser or a specification overview. Doing so will give students a big schema map and allow them to gauge their progress – this is especially true if you provide regular opportunities for students to take stock. The same is true of assessments. Students should know when and how they will be assessed.



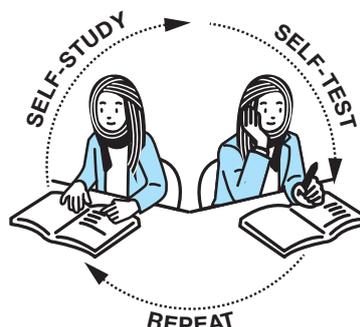
## 3 DEVELOP HABITS AROUND READING FOR STUDY

Empowering students to read is a crucial part of student agency because it helps students to explore independently. To achieve this, you must make it a staple part of students' learning diet, first in class and then extending to homework. Try using text-based resources to drive learning, making reading accountable, teaching note-taking and frequently setting reading as a part of homework.



## 4 ESTABLISH SELF STUDY, SELF TEST LOOPS

Certain materials, for example, recalling a set of quotes, are learnable through self-study and self-testing loops. Support students by modelling how to self-study and self-test by exploring the content, reading, discussing and engaging in retrieval practice. Show students how to create loops by identifying their own knowledge gaps, re-studying and re-testing.



## 5 SET OPEN RESEARCH AND REPORT TASKS

Provide your students with carefully scaffolded choices about their learning. Do so by identifying points in the curriculum where students can choose an area of study within the topic. This could include selecting poems from the anthology to compare. Invite students to report back in a variety of formats. They might write a report, make a slide deck, video or podcast.

