

2.3 Create safe conditions for rigorous learning: Negotiate learning



Essence >
The teacher responds to students' changing needs and involves them in deciding the direction of the curriculum.

Key actions: Teachers

- Remember the power of student interest—what they bring with them as they walk in the door and what I generate with them; both are key to engagement and persistence in learning
- Empower my students by working with them to use the relevant curriculum guidelines as reference when setting their learning goals
- Progressively move from more prescriptive learning activities to student-led activities
- Support students to attain learning outcomes in personalised ways
- Listen to students to find out their learning needs and interests and use this to inform learning plans
- Design open-ended tasks with clearly defined criteria that challenge students to show initiative
- Scaffold students' efforts in developing targets for their own learning
- Work together with students to rigorously monitor their progress
- Teach students explicit skills in questioning to develop their own inquiry processes
- Clarify the steps needed to identify and access relevant resources for self-directed learning; model and practise this process with students
- Acknowledge diversity, involving families and community in supporting students' personal learning
- Establish ongoing procedures to engage students in goal setting, planning, self-monitoring, critical reflection and evaluation
- Actively involve students in the assessment process as an integral part of all negotiated learning

Key actions: Students

- Listen when the teacher is explaining the curriculum
- Ask myself, 'How will I make this learning task really suit me so that I can do my best?'
- Set my own learning goals, with the support of my teachers or peers
- Challenge myself to manage my time and work hard towards my goals
- Ask for help when I need it, so I can keep going



When children have a stake in their learning ... powerful things happen. They become more committed to their learning, and so are motivated to learn ... As they become autonomous learners, they grow in self-confidence and in belief in themselves.

Mark Collis & Joan Dalton

Justice alert

Are all students supported to engage in learning they are passionate about and achieve a meaningful outcome?

Ways to negotiate learning

Ordered sharing: Begin a term/teaching block by outlining the general learning focus and hearing all students' responses. Then discuss and collate ideas to inform your planning. At strategic points during the term, identify sections of the curriculum and discuss what students are expected to know, understand and do.

Flexible learning environment:

Ensure that students have easy access to resources, non-restrictive systems for movement outside the classroom (library passes etc), a balanced timetable with some extended blocks, and space for the 'teachable moments'.

Agree on protocols: Agree on ways for students to negotiate seating arrangements, grouping strategies, equitable use of ICTs/media, appropriate noise levels, and time management/organisation issues.

Classroom display: Displays can include flow charts for independent learning procedures, a peer skills register, agreed deadlines, clocks/timers, and sentence starters for students' critical reflection on their learning.

'Students' Tip' board: This could be a whiteboard where students can write tips about what worked for them/what didn't work, and strategies they used successfully.

Planning frames: Establish a convention of shapes and colours linked to elements needed for a good plan (eg green arrow for your target, blue hexagon for resources, yellow star for the people to help you, brown footprint for steps to take, grey clock for deadlines or time frames). For group or whole class work, use coloured card shapes to put together project plans. Set up symbols on the school computer network so that students can cut and paste these into their own personal learning plans.

Continued page 38

2.3

negotiate learning

Never too old to learn

I was working harder than my Year 9 SOSE class! If working harder means learning more, then I was learning more than they were. Things needed to change. I wanted my students to be motivated and take the lead in their learning.

A colleague suggested, 'Why not try negotiating it with the students? You could use individual or team learning plans with scaffolds to build their knowledge and skills to work more independently? My students are so much more motivated when we work this way.'

What did I have to lose? I'd give it a try.

I talked with the class about my ideas, emphasising that I had high expectations explicitly linked to the curriculum standards. It was important to me that they were motivated but also that they engaged in quality learning as well as produce quality work. I shared the standards with my students and had them highlight key words about the actions and the degree of skill and understanding needed. From this we developed a brief that outlined expectations and a planning proforma that could be used to develop inquiry questions from the unit of work.

The students chose their own learning focus within the SOSE unit. I then provided a range of proformas like the Bloom's Taxonomy with examples and question matrices to scaffold their learning.

The learning plans supported the development of rich inquiry questions—an essential element for success. We collectively brainstormed ways to publish and format the learning. As compiling a bibliography was part of the brief, I explicitly taught this skill. As opportunities arose for clarifying key concepts through the group work, I used them to demonstrate other skills such as using the Capacity matrix for the whole class. I found this explicit teaching at the point of need was much more effective.

As the students developed their personal learning, we stopped regularly to see what everyone was doing and what progress was being made. What help did they need? What was working well? Who was stuck? Where were the common dips and troughs? Along the way, the students shared their learning with each other and asked for feedback. They were becoming increasingly adept at providing explicit feedback and posing constructive questions.

After each of these monitoring sessions, I scaffolded their progress with targeted learning workshops for small focus groups and individuals. All students completed their inquiry with significantly more motivation and energy from them and less pushing from me.

Year 9 teacher of Studies of Society and Environment

A circular inset image showing a close-up of a person's face looking up at a butterfly perched on their hand. The butterfly has orange and black wings. The person's face is partially visible, looking upwards with an open mouth, as if in awe or about to speak. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.



- Do I listen critically when students are making choices for learning and do I provide adequate guidance when they need it?
- How am I involving students during the planning process?
- Do I focus on both the learning and the learner?
- Do I maintain a balance in explicitly teaching the skills and then reinforcing them in negotiated, student-directed tasks?
- Are our record-keeping processes targeted to individuals' needs?
- How am I ensuring that students and I share accountability for their negotiated learning outcomes?