ISTE Objective: Teachers foster a culture of student agency where learners are empowered to take ownership over their learning goals and outcomes.  by Nathan Smith, Senior Lecturer, Utah State University

Fostering a culture of student agency is not designed into our system of education in America. On a system level, this is where we fail. Ours is an industrial age, factory model of teaching. We put our children on a conveyor belt when they are 5 or 6 years old, and run them through a gauntlet of standards and objectives. We run them through it simply by age. There is no consideration for ability, interests, or readiness. Currently, attempts at fostering a culture of student agency only happens at the teacher level, and if you're lucky, at a school level. Our current education system doesn't support it.

In this article we'll look at ways teachers and schools can foster a culture of student agency. This can happen on two levels.

One level focuses on systemic change - you need to become an advocate and a change agent. One organization that is actively advocating for systemic change is the International Society for Technology in Education. This article's objective is part of the new teacher standards they released in June 2017.

America's education system has a huge amount of inertia to stay on the same path implemented over a hundred years ago. It will take an incredible effort to change its course. I believe that will eventually happen as technology adds potential to do this.

The other level change can happen is in your own school - and in your own classroom. It's built on human relationships - student, teacher, parent, and administrator relationships, with the teacher knowing students well enough to understand their abilities, interests, and readiness. For this change to happen, the role of a teacher is vitally important! I believe that it never could be replaced by technology and artificial intelligence. It's that human touch that only a teacher or mentor can provide. Technology can assist, but never replace those important human relationships.

How can I get to know my students' abilities, readiness, and interests? (some ideas)

Use social emotional learning strategies: Let's start with this idea: Please watch the video and read the article, "Wellbeing: Developing Empathy, Emotional Awareness, and Agency." It would also be worth your time to explore Edutopia's Social and Emotional Learning section. You might want to watch, "Ms. Noonan: Your Unique Class Culture (6:00)" where she used one variation of this idea. This effort to build proper human relationships and understandings are foundational to deep learning, especially collaborative learning.
Depending upon the age of your students, you can **create a survey** focused on finding out more about your students’ abilities, interests, likes, and dislikes. Use Google Forms to survey parents and/or students. I learned of one middle school teacher who used this idea with his students daily. He would take the first few minutes of class and have them respond to a short Google form about how they were doing, what issues were they facing today, etc., and while they were working on something, he would go through the responses. This helped him to understand his students, and particularly, what issues they were dealing with that day. It helped him adjust to their needs.

**Observe and record:** Be a careful observer, and take time to record your observations so you don’t forget them. There are many tools that could help you do this. Here are a few...

- **ClassDojo** - a digital classroom management tool designed to help teachers improve student behavior and communicate more effectively with parents. Students can share their digital portfolios with parents in ClassDojo’s Student Stories!
- **Bloomz** - One app for all your teacher communication. With Bloomz, teachers save time by having all the tools they need to communicate with today’s parents in one easy-to-use (and free) app.
- You can also use note taking apps or database applications - anything that would let you quickly record an observation, and then let you search and find it later when you need it. Here’s a teacher example of using Trello to do this.

**Ideas for fostering student agency - letting them take some ownership in their education.** In self-directed learning, the role of the teacher shifts from the expert to the guide, but that doesn’t mean you have to overhaul your teaching. *Instruction that emphasizes skills, learning strategies, and projects over memorizing content and taking tests helps create a self-directed learning environment.* (Source)

The main idea is to engage your students! I encourage you to watch *Shelley Wright’s experience*. It’s a great example of what can happen if you let your students direct their own learning.

Here is another article I would suggest reading: *Student Choice Leads to Student Voice.*

- Use the [Gradual Release of Responsibility Model](https://www.learner.org/series/gradual-re.html) of Teaching: I do - We do - You do.
- Give students choice on how they will demonstrate mastery of a required learning objective. For example, writing a paper, creating an audio or video podcast, building or completing a project, etc. While attending a workshop on using Canvas here at USU, I learned of a professor who helps his student identify their particular learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.). Each assignment he gives has different modalities - the students can choose a preferred modality to complete it. When submitted, the professor responds to each student in their modality (if they submitted video [visual modality], he responds with video). It was quite interesting, and successful, too. Students are encouraged to try out other modalities than their strong one.
- Give students a choice on various paths through a learning objective. Let them propose a way they want to master the objective.
- Use project-based learning strategies that you’ve learned about. Here’s a free guide from Apple Computer. They call it Challenge-Based Learning.

Another interesting article: *It’s About Self-directed Learning*

Has this sparked ideas? Caused you consternation? Made you ponder and consider? I hope so! Share your thoughts with us! You are the future of education in America. What will you do with it?
Learn to Use Some Great Educational Technology Tools!

Learn how to use a simple poll-making tool called Tally to create quick polls. No registration required!

Learn about a fun and interesting AI experiment by Google called Google AutoDraw. AutoDraw makes it much easier to draw common items. AutoDraw automatically recognizes what you’re trying to draw and recommends shapes for you to select and place on the canvas.

Learn to use Vocaroo to record your voice online in the cloud. No registration necessary! Just go to Vocaroo.com and get started. One of the best Vocaroo features is that it gives you a QR code to your voice recordings so that anyone who scans the code will hear your voice recording.

Learn about a FREE and easy online tool that makes it a snap to send large files over the Internet with having to set up an account or own an email address. That makes it ideal for students who are too young to have their own email address. It’s also good for sending large student projects to the teacher.

Learn how to use a free and easy online tool, called Photovisi, to make your own collages. One of the best things about Photovisi is it doesn’t require you to sign up for an account. No login and password required. This makes it ideal for quick student projects.
Learn how to use a free, online timer that's great for classroom use. If you're an instructor, teacher, or presenter of any kind, this little tool will definitely come in handy!

How to use the Name Picker Ninja to randomly choose names.

How to use Classtag.com to manage communication with parents.

How to Use Unio to Deliver Lessons to Students' Screens
How to dictaate Gmail messages. This Chrome extension makes it easy to dictate Gmail messages.

For those of you that are new to this series, these interesting websites I show you will cover a wide range of categories and hopefully you’ll find some of these sites to be useful to you. As requested, I’ve reduced the list down to 5 to spend more time on each website. So, in this video, I will show you 5 amazing useful websites that you wish you knew earlier!

Learn how to use Google Trends to identify what the masses are most interested in at the moment. It’s also great for comparing two or more things based upon how many Internet searches there have been for them over time. Google Trends can be very useful in business, in education, in entertainment, and more.

Learn how to use Google My Maps to create your own customized maps online. Google My Maps is great for student projects as well as for personal or business projects. You’ll also learn how to create layered maps and how to share maps with others. Come learn to use this great tool!
Learn how to use Classflow to create learning experiences for your students. The lessons you create in Classflow can have two parts to them: what the teacher sees on her/his screen (or shows on the screen at the front of the room), and what the students see on their screens. This powerful tool from Promethean can also help you to bring together educational resources from other websites, such as Kahoot!, Socrative, Quizizz, Voki, and much more!

Learn how to create your own zooming presentation from scratch using Prezi. After watching this 20 minute video you will have a thorough understanding of how to use Prezi to build great presentations!

Get an overview of a handful of websites that give you the ability to create custom educational computer games online for free. Two of the three websites featured in this video still give you that option: classtools.net and superteachertools.us.

Learn how to use an interesting tool called DragOnTape to make your own video mashups. Using DragOnTape you can splice together YouTube videos, trim out the parts you don't want to use, and create an edited playlist for viewers to watch.
Learn about a simple and very easy tool called Recite, which makes it easy for people to create their own online posters, memes, attractive quote pages, and much more. The best thing about Recite: no registration necessary!

Learn about the new Google Forms Quiz Template and how to use it to create self-grading quizzes for your students.

Learn how to use IFTTT to automate and program your digital life by using IF/THEN statements. IFTTT works with Google, Twitter, Facebook, Instapaper, Evernote, etc., etc., and it combines all of those services so that they work together to do what you want. It also works with smart devices.

Learn how to power-up your Google Docs, Google Sheets, and Google Forms with the help of Google Add-Ons. In this tutorial you'll learn about my favorite Google Add-Ons, including EasyBib, LucidChart, Word Cloud Generator, G(math), Split Names, Form Notifications, and Form Limiter.
Learn how to add useful extensions to your Google Chrome browser! This tutorial highlights some of the best, most useful Chrome extensions and how to put them to work for you to make your job easier. Extensions that are discussed in the video include: G Suite Training, Google Tone, Goo.gl URL Shortener, Bit.ly, Print Friendly & PDF, Extensity, Auto Text Expander, Awesome Screenshot.

Learn about a great, free app for iPad and iPhone that helps you identify and get excellent, paid apps for free. Every day the app gives you a list of recommended, high-quality apps that are temporarily free. In addition, AppAdvice Daily has great articles to help you find the best available apps, whether free or not, as well as tips and tricks for using your iPad. This app is particularly great for teachers and students.

Learn the basics (and more) of using the newly UPDATED GarageBand for iPad to create your own music, podcasts, and other audio programs on the iPad. In mid-January 2017 Apple updated the GarageBand for iPad app and this tutorial will show you how to get started using it.

Learn how to use Kahoot! to turn student devices, or any device with a browser, into a clicker system! Kahoots can be played as gameshows, but they also serve as formative assessment systems for teachers and students. After watching this tutorial you'll know how to get started using Kahoot!
Learn how to setup a class calendar for your school-related events using Google Calendar. You'll also see how to embed that calendar onto other sites so that parents and students can easily see it.

Learn the basics and more of LucidChart. LucidChart is great for creating flowcharts, diagrams, network maps and diagrams, graphic organizers, mind maps, webs, and much more. It's a great alternative to both Visio and Inspiration Software.

Watch this Twitter Advanced tutorial to learn some advanced tips, tricks, and tools that can help you use Twitter more effectively and enjoyably. These tips will be relevant regardless of why you're using Twitter, but there's also a tip at the end of the video that's specific to teachers only.

This Beginner’s Guide to Using Twitter for Professional Development takes you from start to finish and teaches you how to use Twitter to learn from others and share your own thoughts and resources with the world. You'll see how to set up a new account, follow other professionals, and share your thoughts. You'll not only learn how to use Twitter, but why to use it.
Learn how to set up OneDrive / SkyDrive on your Windows computer. Great way to store your documents in the cloud and sync them across all your devices.

Learn how to set up OneDrive / SkyDrive on your Mac computer. Great way to store your documents in the cloud and sync them across all your devices.

Exploring some basic data analysis in excel

Examining data analysis possibilities for tests, quizzes, assessments in general. This explores ways to look within data for certain averages and how to get class wide statistics.