

OWNERSHIP

What we want to do is activate within children the desire and will and great pleasure that comes from being the authors of their own learning.

REGGIO ALLIANCE (1)

We value the importance of involving students in decisions about their own learning and that taking ownership of learning results in the most engaging and enduring skills development. We recognise the power of sharing control of learning with the students. This requires a gradual release of responsibility through a guided and supported process, with teachers and parents playing a vital role as facilitators and partners in the pursuit of deep, meaningful learning.

We have sought research-based evidence about the effectiveness of student ownership on meaningful, lifelong learning. If we don't allow space for students to take ownership of their learning we will not be best equipping our students for the world of the future. As Will Richardson says: "Kids who are trained to wait to be told what to learn, when to learn it, how to learn it, and how to be assessed on that learning will grow into adults who are of the same cloth, waiting for someone to tell them what to believe and how to act and what to think."² Alfie Kohn, an American author and lecturer in education, in his research paper, "Choices for Children," cites many studies that show, "children given more opportunity to participate in decisions about schoolwork score higher on standardized tests." Also, he notes that high schools who were encouraged to develop innovative programs whose "essential value was democracy," produced graduates who did better in college than a matched comparison group from traditional schools.⁽³⁾



THE WHY SHEETS: OWNERSHIP

Ron Brandt in his book, "Powerful Learning," (4) provides us with a roadmap to ensure that all people learn well given a range of conditions. The following specifically encourage ownership:

1. What they learn is personally meaningful.
2. What they learn is challenging and they accept the challenge.
3. What they learn is appropriate for their developmental level.
4. They can learn in their own way, have choices, and feel in control.

Again, Will Richardson (5) and Alfie Kohn(6) help us define our role as educators: "We create conditions under which "agency" can flourish, under which our students can create their own power and become powerful in their own right. Conditions under which students have "mastery" over themselves and their learning, not just the content." (5) "We teachers must see ourselves as researchers, able to think, and to produce a true curriculum..... Overactivity on the part of the adult is a risk factor. The adult does too much because he cares about the child; but this creates a passive role for the child in her own learning." (6)

We want every child to be academically prepared and to have active control over their learning, feel fully supported by the adults in their education and be equipped with skills for a future, we can't yet imagine.

Partnership

You may find it helpful to consider the following reflective questions:

1. What decisions do I currently make as an adult that my child could make for themselves?
2. What environments enable me to learn best and how can I encourage my child to take ownership over their learning environment?
3. How can I step back and allow my child to navigate their own learning at the same time as supporting their learning?



CITATIONS:

1. "Loris Malaguzzi International Center." North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, www.reggioalliance.org/downloads/malaguzzi.ccie:1994.
2. Will Richardson, et al. "Playing at 'Agency.'" Will Richardson, 24 Jan. 2017, willrichardson.com/playing-at-agency/.
3. "Choices for Children: Why and How to Let Students Decide (*)." Alfie Kohn, 26 Nov. 2014, www.alfiekohn.org/article/choices-children/.
4. Ascd. "Chapter 1. Conditions for Powerful Learning." How Student Progress Monitoring Improves Instruction - Educational Leadership, www.ascd.org/publications/books/198179/chapters/Conditions-for-PowerfulLearning.aspx.
5. Will Richardson, et al. "Playing at 'Agency.'" Will Richardson, 24 Jan. 2017, willrichardson.com/playing-at-agency/.
6. "Choices for Children: Why and How to Let Students Decide (*)." Alfie Kohn, 26 Nov. 2014, www.alfiekohn.org/article/choices-children/.