
Providing Learner Agency to Support Inquiry Skills

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “Teacher Moves that Cultivate Learner Agency,” from Edutopia. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Discuss how providing learner agency can support inquiry skills in young children who have experienced trauma.
- ◆ Reflect on your current practice and how providing learner agency in your learning environment supports young children’s inquiry skills.
- ◆ Develop a plan to offer opportunities for children who have experienced trauma to develop inquiry skills by providing agency in their learning.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading, use the questions below to guide your discussion and action plan.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support young children’s inquiry skills.

Cultivating learner agency is an endless journey.

Paul Emerich France

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ The article states, “By telling students you trust them..., you let them know that no matter what happens – even if they make a mistake – it’s all going to be OK.” Young children who have experienced trauma may not feel confident or safe questioning and exploring their world. They may need your support to take agency, or a more active role, in their learning and inquiry.
 - How might trauma affect a child’s development of inquiry skills (e.g., exploring how a toy works, asking questions, investigating where a sound came from, etc.)?
 - How might these traumatic experiences impact a child’s sense of agency in their learning environment?
 - What role should educators take in supporting children’s inquiry skills in the infant-toddler years?

- ◆ The article suggests embracing the quiet moments to support learner agency. Reflect on your current practice. Consider how embracing quiet moments supports children’s inquiry skills.
 - How might quiet moments encourage young children’s inquiry skills?
 - Why might quiet moments be especially important for supporting the development of inquiry for children who have experienced trauma?
 - In what ways do you currently embrace quiet moments? How have these quiet moments impacted children’s inquiry skills in your learning environment?

- ◆ Consider a young child in your care who may have experienced trauma. Reflect upon their agency and use of inquiry skills in the learning environment.
 - What behaviors have you observed?
 - In what ways does the child demonstrate agency in their inquiry and learning?
 - How have you responded or provided support for this child? How have they responded to your supports and scaffolds?
 - Have you implemented the strategies suggested in the article?
 - What was successful?
 - What challenges arose? What supports do you need to overcome these challenges?
 - What additional strategies (if any) have you used to support the child’s inquiry skills? How effective were these strategies?

- ◆ Develop an action plan to support the young children in your care who have experienced trauma to develop inquiry skills by providing learner agency in your educational environment.
 - Use your observations and experiences to guide your supports.
 - Consider using the strategies provided in the article.
 - Monitor children’s progress and modify supports as necessary.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting young children’s development of inquiry skills:

- ◆ **Source:** PBS Parents
 - ◆ **Article:** Encouraging Curiosity with “Elinor Wonders Why”
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/encouraging-curiosity-with-elinor-wonders-why>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article provides strategies for encouraging young children’s inquiry skills.
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- ◆ **Source:** Sesame Street in Communities
 - ◆ **Article:** Answering Even More Questions
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/divorce/?activity=when-kids-have-more-questions>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article provides suggestions and strategies to support children’s inquiry around difficult questions related to divorce.