

Amplifying Voice and Choice in the EFL Classroom

Research suggests using student voice strategies can contribute to positive outcomes, including: improved relationships, positive self-regard, feelings of competence, student engagement, and enhanced academic performance.

In this webinar, we will:

- explore a variety of student voice strategies
- examine how to select or adapt strategies that suit your context, students, and teaching style
- build an action plan for implementing these strategies in your classes



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Lindsay Lyons



Lindsay is an educational consultant who works with teachers and school leaders to inspire educational innovation, create curricula grounded in youth activism, and build capacity for shared leadership and racial and gender justice.

She taught literacy and social studies to English language learners and special education students in New York City for seven years.

Lindsay holds a PhD in Leadership and Change and is the founder of the educational blog *Time for Teachership*.



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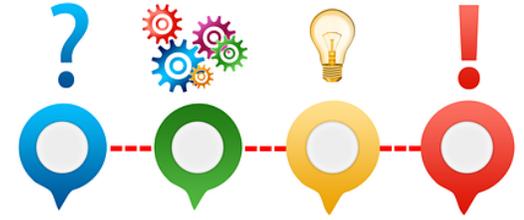
Amplifying Voice and Choice in the EFL Classroom

with Lindsay Lyons



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Let's hear from you!



Please share your name and where you teach.

What do you hope to learn today?

Overview

- I can **identify** the difference between choice and voice, places where I can offer them, and why it's valuable to do so.
- I can **explore** examples of student voice and choice from both a student and a teacher point of view.
- I can **build an action plan** for learning more about student voice and choice after this session ends.

Agenda

	Key Questions	Resources
Opening 5 mins	<i>What are our hopes for the workshop?</i>	Slides
Shared Foundation 15 mins	<i>What is the difference between choice and voice?</i> <i>How can I offer choice and voice in my class(es)?</i>	Additional Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Elevating Student Voice in Education” report• “The Value of Student Voice” article
Explore 20 mins	<i>What strategies can I use to offer choice and voice?</i> <i>How can I select or adapt a strategy for my students?</i>	Choice Board
Create 10 mins	<i>How will I implement what I learned today?</i>	Planning Template
Questions 10 mins		Connect with Lindsay: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website• Educator Facebook Group

Student Voice and Choice: Overview

Student Voice

Student voice allows students to make decisions that affect their learning.

Note: Student voice here does not refer to literal voice (speaking).

Student Voice: Animal Adaptation Project

Students decide...

What they would like to learn

Which animal would you like to learn about?



How to take in new information

How would you like to learn about the topic you've selected?



Timelines and checkpoints

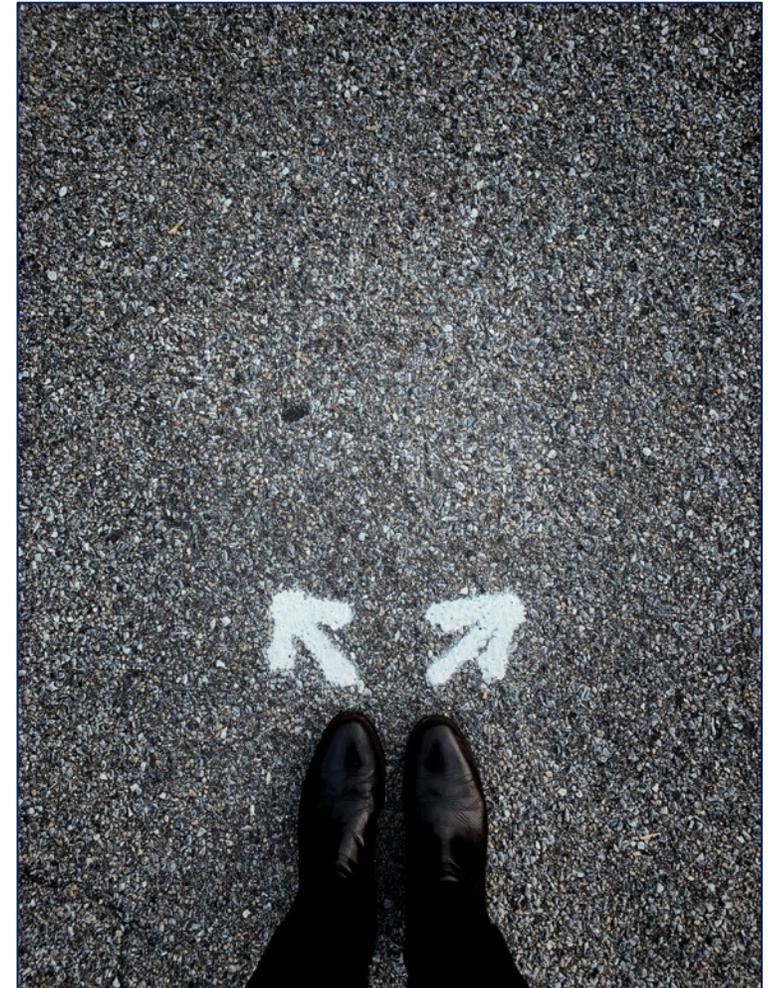
What timeline seems reasonable for your learning?



Student Choice

Students choice allows students to choose an option for learning from a short list of teacher-provided options.

Note: Usually, it's a list of activities that students can choose to complete.



Student Choice: Animal Adaptation Project

Students decide...

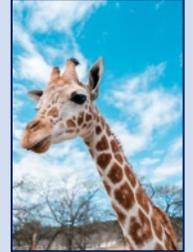
What they would like to learn



OR



OR



OR

How to take in new information



OR



OR



Usually not...

Timelines and checkpoints

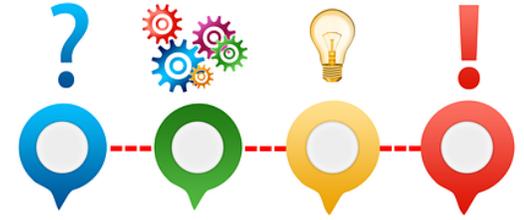
Due Date:



Voice and Choice: What are the differences?

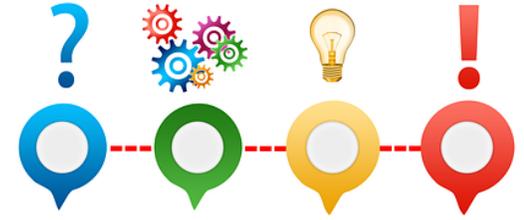
Voice	Choice
Options are not provided by the teacher (open-ended)	Options are provided by the teacher (limited)
Multiple places for student voice	One place for student choice (how)
Multiple opportunities during a lesson	One opportunity during a lesson
More and deeper self-awareness required	Less self-awareness required

Let's hear from you!



**What challenges might you face
with student voice?**

Let's hear from you!



**What challenges might you face
with student choice?**

Voice and Choice: Considerations

Best time? Independent learning and longer projects

Age? Can be adapted to work with any age

How much? Too much is overwhelming (one piece at a time)

How to build up to voice? Start with choice and ask students to self-reflect on what helps them learn

Places for Voice and Choice

Places for Voice and Choice

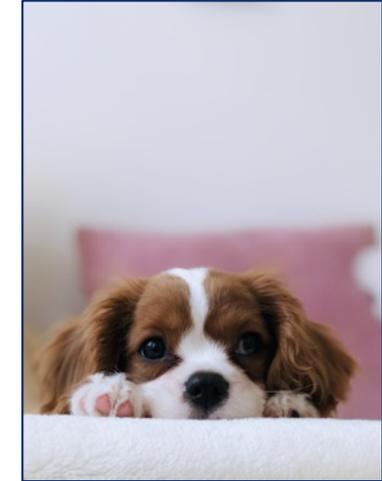
What *kind* of decisions affect student learning?

- **What** do I want to learn about?
- **How** do I want to take in new information and demonstrate my understanding?
- **Where** do I learn best?
- **When** will I be able to learn and at what pace?

Voice in WHAT to Learn

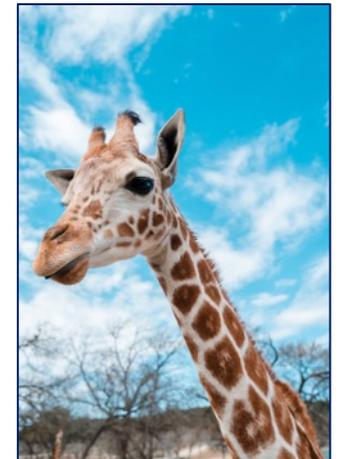
Animal Adaptations Unit:

- Which animal do you want to learn about?



Guiding question:

- What do you think is the most interesting animal?



Voice in HOW to Learn

Animal Adaptations Unit:

- How would you like to learn about this animal?

Guiding question:

- Do you learn best by watching a video, reading a text, or having a hands-on experience?



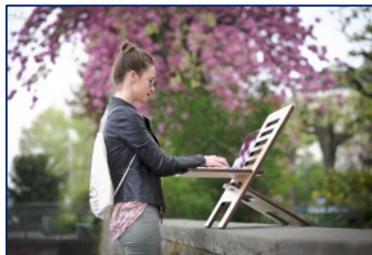
Voice in WHERE to Learn

Animal Adaptations Unit:

- What would be the most comfortable learning space for you as you complete this project?

Guiding questions:

- Are you able to focus better at home? In school?
- Do you need total silence or do you like to talk as you learn?
- Do you prefer to stand or sit?



Voice in WHEN to Learn

Animal Adaptations Unit:

- When would you like to work on this project?



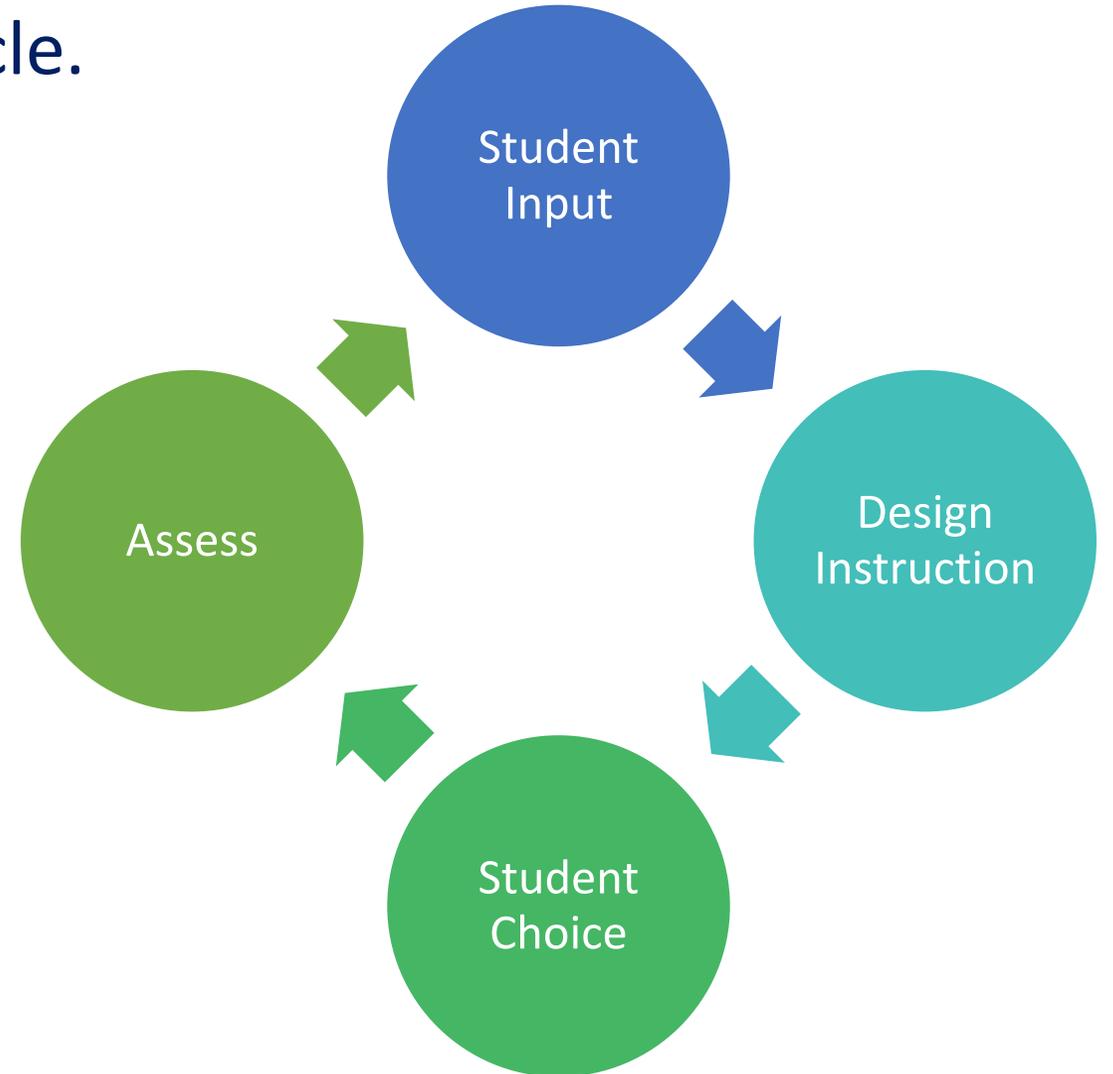
Guiding question:

- Do you prefer to work in the morning, afternoon, or night?
- What's a good timeline for you?

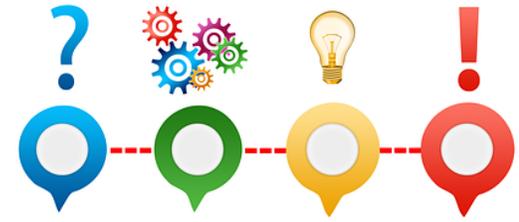


Feedback Loop

It's not one-way. It's an ongoing cycle.



Let's hear from you!



**What will it look, sound, and/or feel like if
this strategy is successful?**

How will you measure success?



Voice and Choice: Practice

What could we do *before* to prepare the class to engage with a voice or choice activity?

Let's practice!

Set a Goal

STUDENT LENS:

“I want to learn more about _____.”

TEACHER LENS:

*You are defining **WHAT** you will learn.*



Choose Your Resource Type

STUDENT LENS:

“I need to learn by _____ today.”

TEACHER LENS:

*You are defining **HOW** you will learn.*



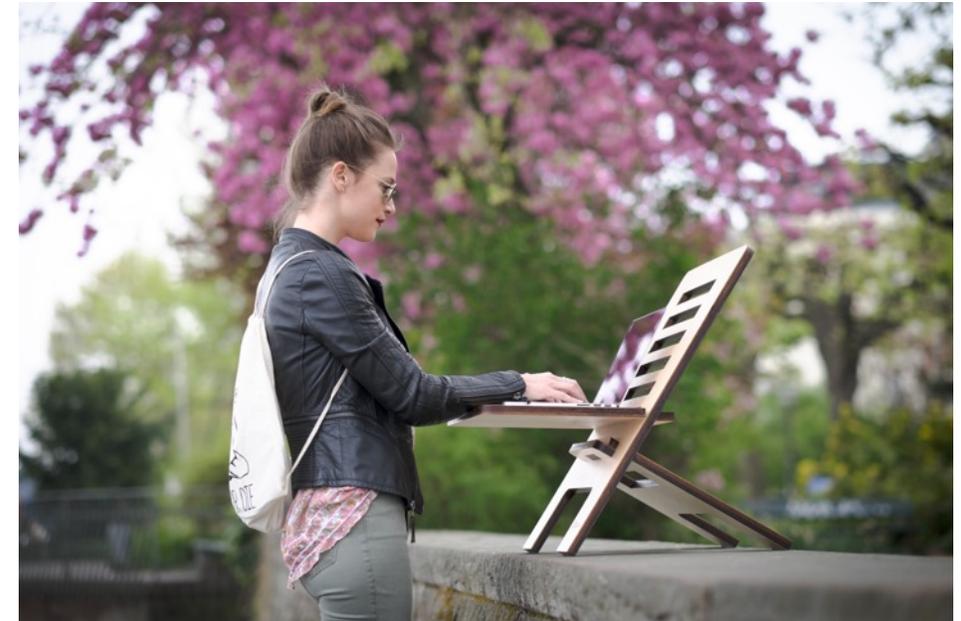
Find Your Place

STUDENT LENS:

“I will learn best if I am_____.”

TEACHER LENS:

*You are defining **WHERE** you will learn.*



Set Your Pace

STUDENT LENS:

“My plan for this hour is_____.”

TEACHER LENS:

*You are defining **WHEN** you will learn.*



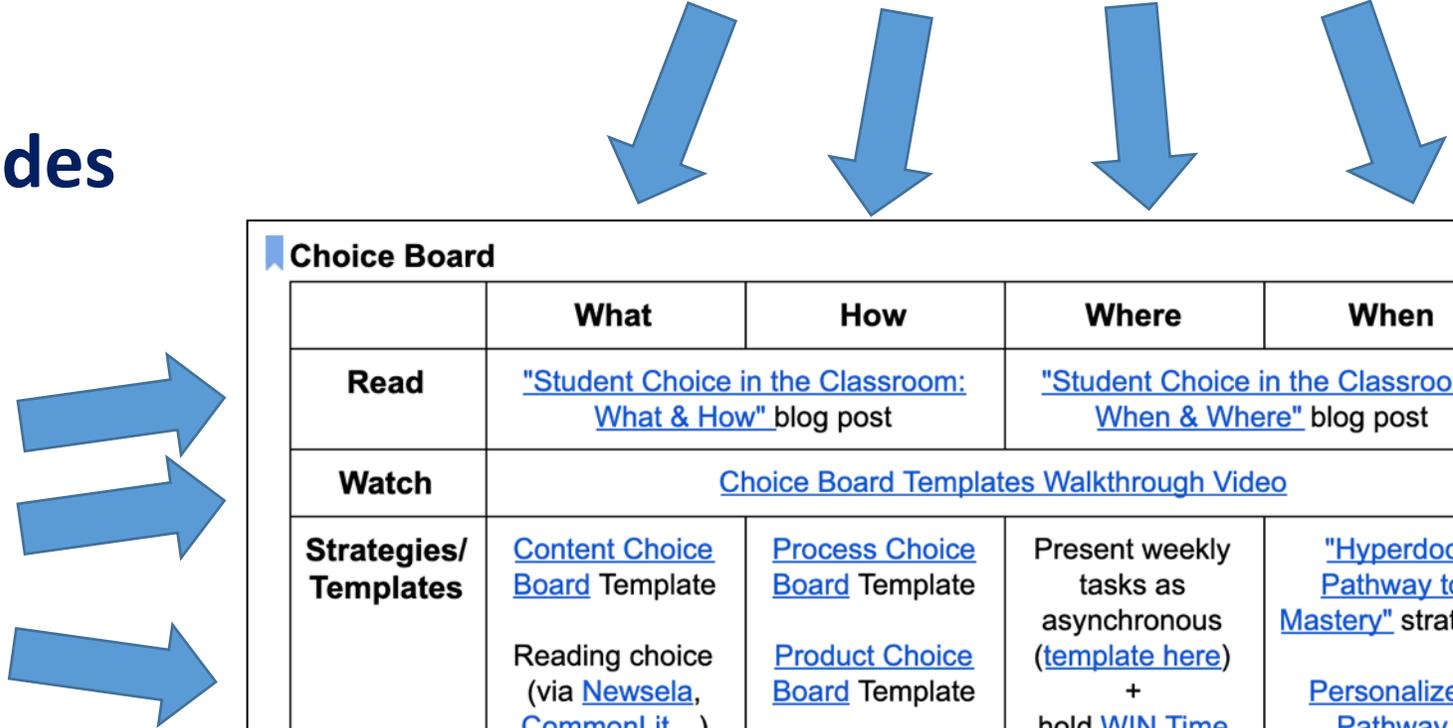
Student Choice Strategy: The Choice Board

A Choice Board

A choice board includes teacher-selected options.

Formats (HOW)

Topics (WHAT)



Choice Board				
	What	How	Where	When
Read	"Student Choice in the Classroom: What & How" blog post		"Student Choice in the Classroom: When & Where" blog post	
Watch	Choice Board Templates Walkthrough Video			
Strategies/ Templates	Content Choice Board Template Reading choice (via Newsela , CommonLit ...)	Process Choice Board Template Product Choice Board Template	Present weekly tasks as asynchronous (template here) + hold WIN Time during synchronous classes	"Hyperdoc Pathway to Mastery" strategy Personalized Pathway Template Students make their own schedule (sample teacher-facing template)

A Choice Board

Mr. Muhammad:
 "I want to know more
 about student choice
 in **WHAT** they learn."
 "I like to read."

Choice Board				
	What	How	Where	When
Read	"Student Choice in the Classroom: What & How" blog post		"Student Choice in the Classroom: When & Where" blog post	
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A Blog

CHOICE IN WHAT TO LEARN

Let's say I'm teaching a History class. I want students to understand the theme of Global revolutions. If ultimately what I want from the unit is for students to understand the basic ingredients of a revolution and the different types of revolution, I could present students with a choice board that contains links (or page numbers to read in a physical text) to different revolutions. Students could choose WHAT they are learning about.

Side note for teachers freaking out about teaching history thematically, not chronologically: Once I switched over to thematic teaching during my third year of teaching, I never wanted to go back to chronological teaching. It takes some guts to make the shift, but my students understood core historical concepts much better this way. Also, choice boards don't require thematic teaching. You could teach one revolution and have students dive into different "ingredients" of the revolution or players in the revolution.

Side note for teachers who don't teach history: Choice boards are not just for History. For example, in Math, you could have students choose in WHAT context they want to see a mathematical concept being applied.

The point about a "WHAT" choice board is that we can increase student engagement (and relatedly, student learning and retention), when we give students opportunities to explore what they're most interested in.

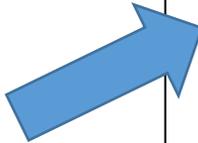
If you're brand new to this, start with 2-3 choices. You don't need to fill up a tic-tac-toe board with 9 options. That's a lot for you as a teacher and sometimes when I try to offer too many choices, it's either overwhelming to students or some of my choices are just not as high quality as others. (If you find yourself thinking "I don't want them to choose that option," my suggestion is take out that option!)

A Choice Board

Ms. Frias:

"I want to know more about student choice in WHEN they learn."

"I want to interact with a strategy."



Choice Board				
	What	How	Where	When
Read	"Student Choice in the Classroom: What & How" blog post		"Student Choice in the Classroom: When & Where" blog post	
Watch	Choice Board Templates Walkthrough Video			
Strategies/ Templates	Content Choice Board Template Reading choice (via Newsela , CommonLit...)	Process Choice Board Template Product Choice Board Template	Present weekly tasks as asynchronous (template here) + hold WIN Time during synchronous classes	"Hyperdoc Pathway to Mastery" strategy Personalized Pathway Template Students make their own schedule (sample teacher-facing template)

A Template

Directions:

- Pick which skill or standard you're working on, and write it on the first line below.
- Answer this question: Do you need more instruction on this skill or are you ready to re-assess?
- Fill out the row on the corresponding table ("*I need more instruction!*" or "*I'm ready to re-assess!*")

I'm working on the skill/standard: _____

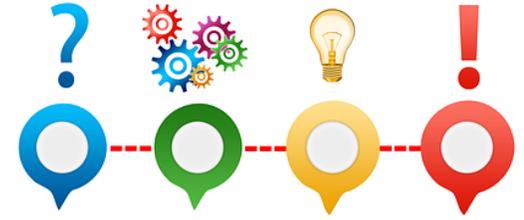
I need more instruction!

Date	Activity Options (select one)	Evidence of learning (jot notes, questions)	Questions I have (ask teacher or a peer)

I'm ready to re-assess!

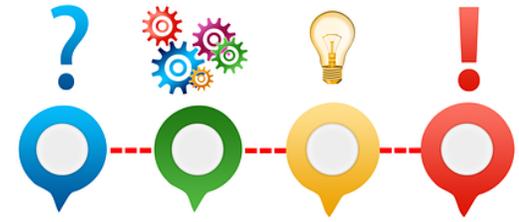
Date	Activity Options (select one)	Link to product you created or a quiz completion screenshot	Assessment results & feedback you received

Let's hear from you!



Where could you use a choice board in an
upcoming lesson?

Let's hear from you!



How might you **adapt** the choice board strategy for your students?

Summary of Key Points

Student voice allows students to make decisions that affect their learning.

Student choice allows students to choose an option for learning from a short list of teacher-provided options.

It's valuable because it improves students' self-awareness, self-esteem, motivation to learn, and ultimately, academic achievement.



References

- Bertrand, R. (2020). *Hyperdoc Pathway to Mastery*. BetterLesson. <https://betterlesson.com/strategy/119/hyperdoc-pathway-to-mastery?from=search>
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- Fielding, M. (2001). Students as radical agents of change. *Journal of Educational Change*, 2(2), 123–141. <https://dx.doi.org:10.1023/A:1017949213447>
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Reflection Questions

1. Describe one way you offer students choices about how and/or what they learn. Do you think this has been a beneficial practice in your classroom? Why or why not?
2. Do you offer students the opportunity to use language to express ideas and information that is personally important or relevant to their own life experiences? If so, how do you encourage this in your classroom?
3. How might you promote student voice and choice in your classrooms using the information learned today?



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