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## Effective Strategies for Third-Party Stakeholders to Promote Autonomous Student Learning

Meaghan Solenberger  
meaghansolenberger@gmail.com

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**Literature Review Outline: Effective Strategies for Third-Party Stakeholders  
to Promote Autonomous Student Learning**

Meaghan Solenberger

School of Education, University of Washington Tacoma

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Dr. Rios

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## Effective Strategies for Third-Party Stakeholders to Promote Autonomous Student Learning

**Abstract**

Shifting the focus of learning to be centered around the student rather than the course content presents a unique opportunity for third-party stakeholders to engage differently with students. Traditionally, the behavior-centered approach in the classroom has driven the flow of curriculum, the development of parent-teacher relationships, and the way that students comprehend and retain important learning. This paper highlights the autonomous teaching and learning approach which puts students as drivers of their learning experience. Also discussed are the various strategies that parents, guardians, and caregivers can use to promote the use of these learning practices. Finally, this project includes the different methods teachers can implement within the classroom that promote autonomous learning.

*Keywords:* autonomy, third-party stakeholders, support, effective

## **Effective Strategies for Third-Party Stakeholders to Promote Autonomous Student Learning**

### **Purpose**

This project is meant to serve as a supportive piece encouraging readers to better understand the different ways autonomous learning strategies can be implemented. The strategies outlined within this paper can serve as a resource for parents, caregivers, teachers, administrators, and other supportive community members that share a common interest in seeing their students succeed. The research synthesized within this essay is a direct result of my own curiosity to find effective ways to increase the independence of my students.

Aspects of autonomy in the classroom are valuable to the student and learning community because these skills require the student to be aware and invested in their learning process. In time, these skills can increase a student's ability to self-regulate and persevere when learning is perceived as difficult. As a middle-school science teacher, I see my students struggle to grasp learning routines and practices without direct instruction or ample support. My goal with this paper was to explore the different ways to put students at the center of their thinking so that I can shift my role from the direct keeper of knowledge to more of a facilitator of learning.

In a sense, I chose this topic out of necessity because of the increased pressure I faced in my own classroom. Students taking middle school science are a mixed bag of general education students, MLL students, students with IEPs and 504s, and SPED students. In any given classroom throughout my workday, I can have a mixture of students with vastly different needs and learning abilities. By learning more about how to create, engage, and sustain students in autonomous learning practices, my hope was to lessen my workload and to learn how to increase the confidence of my students to become more self-started learners. Shifting this focus will allow

for both me and my students to be more efficient and effective with our time, and to be more focused in our learning goals and when setting our intended learning outcomes.

### **Focal Problem**

The paradigm shifts in education from a behavior-centered approach to a more student-centered approach have increased interest in effective teaching and learning strategies that support learning skills (Vasu, 2022). Placing students at the center of the learning experience enables different stakeholders to shift from being sole distributors of knowledge to more of a facilitator of learning. Developed learner skills such as having a sense of personal initiative, resourcefulness, and persistence in one's learning (i.e., coming to class prepared, using appropriate resources to advance one's learning, and not giving up) is at the heart of autonomous learning practices (Ponton & Carr, 2000). I am interested in synthesizing empirical research that highlights ways to support student learner autonomy. Some of the focal questions I will address within this project are: What is student autonomy? What does student autonomy look like in the classroom? Do certain supportive strategies used by third-party stakeholders increase student autonomy? Are there ways to engage third-party stakeholders to support students in ways that increase their learner autonomy?

### **Context**

The effect that third-party involvement has on a student's ability to work as an autonomous learner is a topic that has been of interest to many researchers for many years, and even more so now that students are navigating education in a post-pandemic society. In a student's educational journey, third-party involvement would be considered any type of educational support from another source. This would include parents or home caregivers, teachers, administrators, and counselors. Student autonomy is understood as a learner's ability to

take steps to understand their learning and use support tools to undergo learning and comprehension.

### **Local Connection**

While the focal question of the literature review can be applied to students on a global scale, there is sufficient reason to connect all understandings back to the local community.

Students who serve in the Tacoma Public School district, whether online or in person, experience varying levels of third-party educational support from home or school environments.

Understanding the varying social factors that shape how support is given is a vital part of this project. Understanding this will give context to the trends of educational engagement and the support systems used to bolster these trends.

### **Regional and National Connections**

Regionally, students are subject to experiencing similar socio-economic conditions based on where they live and attend school. Students may also experience similar access issues or success to learning tools. By analyzing educational supports on student learning I will outline national trends of self-purported learner autonomy along with other measures of the effectiveness of third-party educational support. The empirical research examined throughout this work will outline several aspects of educational psychology; including how socioeconomics relates to how support is given, received, and extended throughout different areas of the world and the effectiveness of that support on the learning process.

### **Personal Connections**

The amount of work that goes into supporting students in various ways throughout their educational journey is huge. This workload is shared by all stakeholders involved in the student's journey and is often but not limited to family members, caregivers, counselors, teachers,

administrative staff in the schooling environment and more. Understanding the connection between providing supportive structures to increase comprehension levels for arrays of different students can better support my teaching practice. This is important for me to examine to better supply my own educational toolbox with strategies to help students. By researching this topic, I will gain a thorough understanding of how to support students from the role that I occupy in that moment, whether that be teacher, counselor, parent, etc. This work will underscore many of the philosophies that shape my practice.

For the communities of students that I am teaching currently and will teach for years to come, the work that I am doing for this literature review will help me better understand their needs and the behaviors that they exhibit in the classroom. The work that is conducted for the purpose of this project will be used to inform the ways that I design and plan lessons, the ways that I structure formative and summative assessment, and to help shape the different ways that I continue classroom outreach with families. This work will define a reason to look more closely into my own community and the communities that I teach in. Understanding the different social dynamics and varying levels of support that students living in my own community receive will help me better understand effective support strategies as I continue my practice.

### **Literature Review**

Educators, parents, guardians, and other stakeholders in a student's education may have different views about the most effective ways to engage each student. However, it can be assumed that the student's intended learning outcomes are similar for all stakeholders; to see them successfully engaged in the learning process in and out of school environments. The process of learning and participating in a school environment through various social and academic endeavors is what builds a basis of understanding countless different concepts

throughout the rest of a student's life (Vygotsky, 1978). Holistically analyzing the motivations, dependencies, and limitations of different stakeholders can reveal insights that would be difficult to determine otherwise (Yang, 2020).

For this project, I will use the term *third-party stakeholders* to contextualize any person or group of people that has an interest in a student's educational experience. This may include parents, caregivers, teachers, counselors, or community members. Although these stakeholders' specific hopes for their students may vary, for this project's purpose, I assume that the stakeholders I will write about share an active interest in the student's success in school.

Different areas of the educational experiences explored through this project will be a student's academic experience and their social experience. These areas are influenced by the different tools they have access to and which the student deems legitimate. "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs or definitions" (Yang, 2020, pg. 3-4).

While the employment of teaching and support strategies is encouraged for all stakeholders, student's autonomous learning practices may also be important for stakeholders to consider. Autonomous learning practices play an active role in shaping the way that their student learns. This project explores effective strategies for third-party stakeholders to promote autonomy in and out of the classroom. I will refer to the autonomous learning process as a beneficial tool to students at these practices can help increase comprehension of learned material. The various levels and methods of support extended to students by their parents, caregivers, teachers, school staff and community members shape the experience of students, and the effectiveness of those support strategies are analyzed within this project.



It is important to note that drawbacks of this strategy exist. Stakeholders may embrace autonomous learning practices, or they may not. Because of this, students will need to navigate through potentially complex and disconnected learning environments to make sense of their learning (Mattern, 2014). This project will synthesize a summary of effective strategies used by third-party stakeholders and will address ways to promote autonomous student learning.

- The first portion of this project will be divided into two different subsections. The first subsection will be used to introduce the working definition of learner autonomy. The second subsection will be used to more vividly define what a third-party stakeholder is. This section is used to provide readers with the information that they will need to understand the different parts of the literature review.
- The second portion of this project's overall theme is to discuss third-party stakeholders in the home environments, and the effective strategies that can be utilized to promote learner autonomy for their students. This section will also be divided into two different sub sections: the first to explain in depth different strategies parents and caregivers can take within the home environment, and the second highlighting strategies that these stakeholders can use when interacting with the school community.
- The third portion of this project will be a space that synthesizes strategies used to promote autonomous student learning in the classroom and school environments. The research used to shape and augment this section will draw on the research conducted within various classrooms. Although historic accounts of educative strategies will not be the focus, I plan to draw on changes within the education system that have positively promoted varying levels of student autonomy in the classroom.
- Lastly, there will be a conclusion portion of this project.

Throughout this project there will be a differentiation between the different third-party stakeholders and the degree of their involvement; its' effectiveness to promoting autonomy and the effects of the student utilizing the autonomous learner strategies. In other words, the connections between the stakeholder, the support, and the utilization of the strategies will be discussed throughout the different subsections. Research discusses both effective and ineffective strategies that stakeholders can use to promote autonomous student learning. For the purpose of this project, I will mainly focus on the effective strategies that can be utilized by different stakeholders.

## **Section One: Autonomous Learning and the Third-Party Stakeholder**

### ***Subsection One: Autonomous Learning***

What is autonomous student learning? How does a student learn to be an autonomous learner? What are the benefits of being an autonomous learner and how does that support a student's educational journey in school and throughout life? While these questions could be enough to form a project within themselves, they all support the idea that learner autonomy is a skill that is developed on an individual basis. In fact, autonomous learning is a way to describe the understanding of how one learns. There may be similarities in the way that people learn, but the process in which their brain can recognize and comprehend different information is an individualized experience. Autonomous learning includes the exhibition of personal initiative, resourcefulness, and persistence in one's learning (i.e. coming to class prepared, using appropriate resources to advance one's learning, and not giving up); it is characterized by behaviors such as goal directedness, action orientation, and an active approach to problem solving, persistence in overcoming obstacles, and self-startedness (Ponton & Carr, 2000). Self-startedness is a desirable behavior for students in the classroom and throughout life. It can be

described as the behavior of motivating oneself to begin to learn something new, creating goals, developing plans to achieve those goals, and working towards independent accomplishment (Ponton, 2000).

Students learn different strategies in and out of school environments that help them to employ methods of autonomy, and the effects of this can help them through challenging situations throughout their life. Autonomous learning is the process of understanding how an individual learns and using that knowledge to promote present and future learning to take place. When a learner is autonomous, they can distinguish how they can learn information at that time and place. Learner autonomy skills are developed through the understanding of metacognitive learning practices. Metacognition involves the learner's process of planning, creating, recording, identifying, and altering their learning to improve one's performance (Hart, 2014). Through these practices, students can transform the learning that takes place in the classroom to become more meaningful and retainable. Metacognitive practices in learning are not limited to one subject area. In fact, once identified, metacognitive practices can be used as a tool to navigate any learning space. For example, metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (MARS) is a tool that students can use to increase their ability to self-monitor their comprehension of material (Wu, 2021).

These learners are then able to understand what they need to do to grow their understanding of something without giving up. They are also able to fully inhabit the space where they are their own valuable stakeholders in their education. Some of the essential features of putting learners at the center of their own educational experience is ensuring they are actively attempting to solve their own problems, make relevant connections, formulating and answering questions, brainstorming, and discussing learned material, and working within teams for positive

independence (Chowdhury, 2021). When this happens, the learner experiences long lasting connections to what they are learning because the connections are deeply rooted in how they learn and process information.

A sense of autonomy has a positive influence on student learning. Students who were afforded a lot of autonomy through the different stages of their educational experience report that they were less distractable and more centrally focused when in school. They were also better planners, analyzed content deeply, and could take a sense of responsibility and ownership in the learning process (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, and Soenens, 2005). When faced with challenges, autonomous learning skills can help students find solutions to problems, make connections, and assume responsibility in their learning journey.

### ***Subsection Two: The Third-Party Stakeholder***

The definition of a third-party stakeholder can vary depending on the regional context as well as the environment in which the student is being served: whether that be in person, through online instruction, or a mixture of both. In this sense, there is not a set definition for third-party stakeholder but for the purpose of this project, I will be referring to parents, caregivers, teachers, counselors, and other members of the community when referring to stakeholders. A student's educational journey often involves interactions with different stakeholders who can support or suppress different intended learning outcomes. Much research has been conducted to distinguish effective supportive strategies that different stakeholders can use vs noneffective strategies. Although great differences are present in comparing the time and money investments from families of different classes and backgrounds, there are no significant and remarkable differences in parental company between different classes and groups (Li & He, 2022). The measure of

success may vary in the eyes of the stakeholder, while also varying in context. For example, a stakeholder may be interested in one area of the student's educational experience or multiple.

At first thought, third-party involvement may seem as though it conflicts with ideas of autonomy. If autonomy is an individual understanding of one's learning process, how can third-party stakeholder support increase the learner's connection to their own autonomy? While they may seem in competition for exclusive existence, they are quite intertwined. When the stakeholder promotes self-regulatory practices in the home and school environment, the learner is more apt to utilize these strategies. Self-regulated learners must believe that certain learner strategies are beneficial for them to become meaningful. (Bursa Cengiz-Istanbullu, 2022) Some of these strategies include the use of: self-evaluation, goal setting and planning, knowing how to gather information, take notes and seek help. (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986) The introduction and implementation of self-regulatory learning and support strategies may benefit the student's journey towards autonomous learning as these skills can be used singularly or in conjunction with each other to accomplish tasks that extend beyond schooling environments.

From the viewpoint of a third-party stakeholder, it would be beneficial for a student to maximize their learning using various educational strategies of quality. The term quality is one that means different things to different people. (Green, 1993) Certain learning strategies can contribute to a student's success more than others, while some learning strategies may hinder or discourage a student from performing at their best. Teacher instructional strategies can be measured as high yield or low yield based on their effectiveness to significantly impact student achievement. (Learning-Focused, 2019) "Hence, the instructional strategies chosen by the teacher play essential roles as they drive the whole process of teaching and learning." (Vasu, 2020, pg. 613) The implementation of these strategies is not just limited to teachers, however, as

stakeholders across different lines of affiliation with the student can use different strategies to best engage and encourage educational growth from their student of interest.

Varying slightly or drastically from student to student, these stakeholders are assumed to have a common thread of interest, and that is of the educational success of their student. When paired with the practice of autonomy in the classroom, a third-party stakeholder can make a difference as to whether the association with autonomy is beneficial or not to the student. Promoting ideas of autonomy helps to connect students to the activity by activating their sense of self and connection. This way, the students can operate through whatever task they are assigned to with a sense of ownership (Admiraal, 2019).

## **Section Two: Effective Strategies for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers**

### ***Subsection One: Strategies in Home Environments***

When students are in their home environment, they have very different experiences. Whether cared for by parents, other family members, guardians or caregivers, the felt effects of support vary vastly. Latino parents interact and support their children in different ways not necessarily visible to the schools their students attend. This support may look like: encouraging positive behavior in school, tutoring, and telling their children that they want better for them than what they had (Mena, 2011). Parental involvement has a significantly positive effect on educational outcomes, and higher parental academic achievement is associated with higher levels of parental involvement (Mena, 2011). Socioeconomic differences may account for some level of varying support; as well as cultural differences, and regional differences in attitudes surrounding extended support from the home. The strategies that these stakeholders can take can have varying effects on their student's autonomous learning practices. For example, engaging in a

strategy that is helpful for a student at an early age may not be helpful for that same student as they develop cognitively throughout their educational journey.

Perhaps one strategy parents and caregivers can use to help develop learner autonomy is to actively encourage the student's growth of social emotional skills. These include skills such as developing their student's confidence in making informed relevant decisions. Caregivers can also provide opportunities for students to develop actionable and achievable plans in regard to home-based and school-centered goals (Murano, 2022).

Strategies that parent, caregivers, and guardians can take to better support their students as autonomous learners vary across socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. "Parents can take steps to demonstrate interest in their children's schoolwork by providing educational encouragement, sharing their educational expectations, and monitoring student activities" (Mena, 2011). Actions such as these can help to increase aspects of autonomy in the classroom for their students. The amount of family time input can vary greatly from family to family as well but is said to be an investment that can be the most effective way to improve the academic performance of students from marginalized and underprivileged backgrounds (Li, 2015).

### ***Subsection Two: Strategies in School Environments***

A community is felt when the members involved experience a shared sense of belonging or relatedness to something. Community members feel as if the group is important to them, and that they are equally as important to the group. (Osterman, 2000) A school community consists of individuals who work in educational environments. The people within school communities may have different roles but all inhabit the collective space that is their school. School communities are impacted by the social, economic, and cultural traits that broadly impact the

greater community at large. Because of these external factors, interactions between school communities and families are unique. The roles of teachers and parents are different, but both share responsibility for student success at school. (Arapi, 2020) Research has shown that there is a positive correlation with parental engagement and student academic performance. School community and family partnerships are built through communications between teachers and parents, caregivers or other guardians. (Arapi, 2020) High quality and frequent communication between parents and teachers makes a huge difference in the construction of collaborative school-home partnerships. (Karsenti, Lrose & Garnier, 2002) Although this piece may be considered a crucial piece of the puzzle, there are many different factors that may stand in the way between a parent or caregiver's level of engagement and the feelings that they have about the schooling system in general.

It is necessary to continuously acknowledge, represent, and amplify the experience of students who are marginalized within a school community. (Heidelberg, 2022) Longstanding feelings of distrust towards educational communities exist between marginalized communities who are part of society at large. Negative associations with school communities can decrease the amount of energy and time spent invested in activities and opportunities offered during and after school hours. Parents and caregivers' own experience with school communities may affect the way that they interact with the schools that their students attend. Positively maintained relationships with peers and school communities are vital to the emotional and physical safety of marginalized students. (Heidelberg, 2022) Systemic frameworks that shape the way our educational systems are run make it challenging for all families to build extended and trustworthy relationships with school systems. Additionally, educational communities in urban settings face unique challenges such as overcoming increased criminalization of disciplinary



infractions, lower performance on standardized tests, and larger numbers of multi-language learners (Lopez, 2020).

Because of these visible and invisible challenges placed on students and families across different marginalized communities, building relations with school communities can be difficult. For example, Indigenous parents have described that they seem to occupy two distinct worlds: a world of the Indigenous way of life and the way of the Western world which involves school (Sianturi, 2022). It is important to note that parental involvement activities are not always visible to systems of education (Mena, 2011). For example, a parent can be supportive and encouraging for their student at home by supporting them financially, attending to their nutritional needs, supporting their psychological wellbeing, and by encouraging healthy connections to others.

Strategies that families and caregivers can take to increase their student's autonomous learning practices may or may not directly involve interacting with school communities and may be easier said than done. At a rate that is increasing, schools across the world are being asked to serve more economically, racially, and culturally diverse populations giving special attention to improving the academic and social outcomes of marginalized students (Desimone, 2001). For socioeconomically disadvantaged communities' parents and caregivers can offer varying levels of support to school communities. Parents and caregivers can be met by the school communities through different resources and means of communication. Some schools across the world require there be funding to support these types of relationships because the need for schools and families to collaborate and become part of the same community has become so great. Educational policy in Indonesia and Australia, for example, has been changed to require schools to take ownership in providing opportunities for parental engagement across the cultural spectrum (Sianturi, 2022).

### **Section Three: Teacher Strategies that Support Autonomous Student Learning**

The purpose of this section is to provide an understanding of what it means to promote autonomous learning in the classroom. “Since learner centered teaching starts with the teachers, they play an essential part in developing an atmosphere that facilitates learning of their students, accommodates different learning styles of them, and motivates them to take their learning responsibility” (Chowdhury, 2021, pg. 1). School environments differ greatly from home and community environments in that they demand different cognitive ways of thinking, socializing, and learning. Some examples of autonomous teaching practices can be seen throughout current research, which suggests that when learning is viewed as a social activity it opens the class space to allow students to learn from their peers and their instructors. This way the traditional hierarchy in the classroom is challenged and replaced by more opportunities for engagement and self-discovery. (Marshall, 2022) “Students are likely to perceive teachers and the classroom climate as autonomy supportive when teachers provide choices and opportunities for self-expression and explain why learning activities are important” (Admiraal, 2019). From a constructivist point of view, a student’s learning experience is shaped by the knowledge that they build in their own minds. School environments that are supportive of this type of experience are directly or indirectly providing autonomous learning strategies for students.

Providing an environment that is supportive of learner autonomy is an important task for teachers. A strategy that can be used to make this happen is to construct a project-based learning environment, or a PBL environment. Within this environment, students learn by creating knowledge and meaning making through acts of asking questions, learning actively, sharing ideas, and reflecting on what they know (English & Kisantas, 2013). PBL environments must provide opportunities for students to develop their self-regulated learning skills as many students can improve their skills in this area to ultimately develop autonomous learning practices.

An important aspect of teaching autonomy in the classroom is associated with the educator's ability to set reasonable and visible outcomes for their students. This process can be the teacher helping their students to visualize or understand the intended learning outcomes at the beginning of the day, course, or year. It is also important for the teacher to make clear the ways in which their teaching style or course format best supports the accomplishment of the learning outcomes and targets. By making this known, students can use learning processes that they can adopt or construct to accomplish said goals (Ponton, 2000). A distinguishably difficult factor in teaching strategies is that students don't always use these strategies on their own, even after they are made aware of them (Hart, 2014). Coupling the support that students are receiving in school to enhance their autonomous learning practices with support received at home presents students with more opportunities to enhance their autonomous learning skills.

“Teaching presents sometimes minute-by-minute dilemmas faced by teachers. Decisions are complicated by the complexities and inconsistencies of each situation putting teachers in the position of having to take appropriate actions quickly” (Davis, 2005, pg. 9). Rather than using teacher moves that can exist in a vacuum in or out of the teaching spaces, teachers can encourage autonomous learning in their classrooms by using techniques that provide support and warmth, while also demanding that students be challenged in their learning. For example, cultural forms of language may be used to increase engagement and promote a connection between content and comprehension. Methods like using sermons, call and response, rhythmic and personal stories may draw upon the Black language (Marshall, 2022). Having a diverse set of practices that is authentic is the challenge that many teachers face today. When met, this challenge has the potential to shape a generation of future learners that can engage confidently with a world of challenges (Marshall, 2022).

Traditional and historical ways in which teachers serve their learning communities have been consistently looked at as an area to be improved, renewed, and examined. While traditional teacher moves of leaning towards correctness with a narrow window for success may have had value historically, the new ways in which students learn, participate, and experience school require more innovative ways of leading the classroom. “Student’s well-being and ongoing development are best served by the student’s ability to regulate learning processes themselves” (Admiraal, 2019). This, however, is easier said than done. When a focus group of teachers in the Netherlands were asked about how they felt about the process of teaching autonomy to their students, the reviews were mixed. Some of the teachers who participated believed that students can handle much more autonomy than teachers think, and there were others who believed that there were clear reasons for steering away from increasing autonomous learning and teaching in the classroom. “To be autonomous in the classroom, students must have *freedom of choice* to some extent” (Admiraal, 2019). This is where the connection to self comes in for the student because the power to make choices in one’s learning process is unique and meaningful only if the learner deems it to be.

Another aspect of supporting a student’s ability to be autonomous in their learning, is to prepare them for the world that they live in. Learning valuable life skills in the classroom is beneficial for students because they will be able to apply those skills to their daily lives. Teaching data literacy to students throughout their K-12 educational journey is to teach an enduring skill that will prepare them for the data driven world that we all inhabit. Data literacy not only sets students up for future employability, but it also allows for students to develop their perception of quality teaching performance (Yang, 2020). The benefits of students having a teacher who is literate in the locating, comprehending, and interpreting of data to better inform

their own teaching practice are measured through various studies. The term data in the classroom can be referred to as any information that is quantifiable that helps teachers understand more about their students. This knowledge assists in minute-to-minute and long-term instructional decision making (Filderman, 2022). This literacy skill then is understood and passed to students in the form of effective learning strategies such as:

*“Potential-focused learning aims at supporting the development of the potential of pupils and all other stakeholders, such as teachers, leaders, and parents, as effectively as possible. The focus here is on the reconstruction of perspectives and perceptions, by extending perception to potentially relevant information in the learning process. In our opinion, this information can be found above all in the positive differences of learning, which become accessible through a dynamic perspective”* (Lueger, 2020, pg. 54).

Instructional practices that teachers may utilize in support of increasing autonomy in and out of the classroom include promoting collaborative group learning, maintaining the choices of their students, building on the funds of knowledge of students, having designated checkpoints for understanding, accountability amongst students and teachers, building a sense of collective responsibility, and positioning students as experts (Marshall, 2022). When a space is held for a student to experience empowerment and ownership, the learning relationship is positively enhanced.

#### **Section Four: Conclusion**

To conclude this project, I would like to emphasize the importance of the different topics discussed. The subject of learner autonomy is one that is meant to spark a meaningful discussion about different strategies that can be used to increase a student’s ability to become more

connected to the way in which they learn and comprehend. In the school environment, students are expected to learn, comprehend, and retain so much information with so many different determining factors of success. Often these markers of success are rooted in academic performance that is measured in ways that are shaped by cultural norms. Teaching student autonomy enhances a student's capacity to learn and believe that they can understand the world around them, no matter what socio-positionality they occupy.

The main task of students who are active in their autonomous learning is to recognize and utilize control over various parts of their learning process. (Bouchard, 2009) This begins with the student's decision to learn-or not. A student who is encouraged to use autonomous learning practices may be supported by different stakeholders. These stakeholders all share a common interest in the student's educational goals in that they want the student to succeed. Whether success is measured through social, monetary, or academic means is dependent on the stakeholder and the student. However, the goal of the student and the stakeholder is to experience a common learning outcome. The different strategies that various stakeholders can take to promote autonomy in their students vary.

Much of the research used throughout this project included insight from a post-pandemic educational society. The significance of this time frame indicates that there were large shifts in the educational system that had to account for different learning environments being used by students rather than the more homogenous in-person schooling experience. To recognize the time and place of post-pandemic educational research is essential for readers to understand the current learner environment that exists.

This project also highlights different accounts of teacher and student experiences through studies from around the world. The purpose of providing windows into these locations is to

mainly provide context for the shared experiences of different stakeholders. Research from different regions provides context as to how schools in other parts of the world operate and perhaps gives readers a look at the values of that society. There is a myriad of different teaching, learning, and support strategies that exist currently with more being discovered. By providing readers with a synthesis of effective strategies that stakeholders can use, the goal was for autonomous learning practices to be seen throughout different living and learning environments.

### **Action Plan**

The goal of this project was to highlight the effective strategies used by third-party stakeholders to promote autonomous student learning. Current educational frameworks that support the development of this skill are cited throughout this piece and are seen throughout the world in different regional, national, and global contexts. The action plan below unpacks the different themes throughout this piece and provides tangible ways that various stakeholders can support learning autonomy in and out of the classroom. The action plan below is divided into three different categories that align with the themes presented in the literature review: (1) what is a third-party stakeholder, and what is autonomous teaching and learning practices, (2) parent strategies to increase learner autonomy, and (3) teacher strategies to increase learner autonomy. The different tables are broken into three different categories: the current research that I have synthesized throughout this project, what local and regional educational communities are doing to utilize autonomous learning practices, and what my recommendations are to researchers who choose to expand on the topic of increasing resources and implementation strategies around autonomous teaching and learning.

### **Autonomous Learning and the Third-Party Stakeholder**

Table 1 summarizes the working definitions of autonomous learning and the third-party stakeholder. The table also includes information about student and learner autonomy practices recognized and encouraged at Giaudrone Middle School in Tacoma, WA. Finally, the table includes different recommendations that I give to readers regarding the implementation and support of autonomous learning as well as recommendations that I have for the third-party stakeholders. Autonomous learning strategies place the learner at the center of their educational journey and allow for different stakeholders to become facilitators of support and knowledge rather than sole providers of information. Skills such as self-efficacy, goal-completion, and task management are all associated with autonomous teaching and learning practices. Students who possess a high level of self-efficacy seem to be more persistent and hard working because they can use self-regulatory strategies throughout their learning (Mickwitz, 2021). Third-party stakeholders are anyone who shares a common interest in the student’s success at school. Success may be measured in different contexts but focus on the student experiencing success academically or socially. These stakeholders include but are not limited to parents, caregivers, guardians, teachers, counselors, administrative school staff, community members and more.

**Table 1**

*Autonomous Learning and the Third-Party Stakeholder*

| What the research says...   | What my school does...   | What I recommend...   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Autonomous learning strategies help prepare students for the world that we live in.</p> <p>Autonomous learning contributes to skills that help the learner understand the way that they learn.</p> | <p>Tacoma Public Schools supports learning through different levels of student discourse.</p> <p>Where I work as a science teacher at Giaudrone Middle School students are encouraged to engage with</p> | <p>There are different aspects of an autonomous learning environment. When supported by the instructor, students are able to learn from each other in a way that is different from traditional teaching and learning methods.</p> |



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| <p>A sense of autonomy seems to have a positive influence on student learning (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, and Soenens, 2005).</p>   | <p>the content through the development of their own understandings rather than being the receivers of information from the teacher.</p>  | <p>Autonomous learning strategies be defined and supported by the school as early as possible in the K-12 learning environment.</p>  |
| <p>Metacognition involves the learner’s process of planning, creating, recording, identifying, and altering their learning to improve one’s performance (Hart, 2014). Through these practices, students can transform the learning that takes place in the classroom to become more meaningful and retainable.</p>  | <p>Currently at the school that I work for, the science curriculum is developed to enhance the student’s learning through metacognitive practices. OpenSciEd promotes student learning through investigating questions that they have, putting the pieces together through that investigation, and then problematizing the next set of questions to investigate. This generates a continuous learning process through enhancing inquiry skills.</p>  | <p>Adapting curriculum to best support the autonomous learning practices of students. Enhancing ways to drive metacognitive practices into the classroom and providing opportunities for students to develop these vital skills.</p>   |
| <p>Some of the essential features of putting learners at the center of their own educational experience is ensuring they are actively attempting to solve their own problems, make relevant connections, formulating and answering questions, brainstorming, and discussing learned material, and working within teams for positive independence (Chowdhury, 2021).</p> | <p>Through the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Giadrone Middle School, students are encouraged to explore their learning through different learner profiles. These include being balanced, knowledgeable, open-minded, inquirers, thinkers, communicators, principled, caring, and risk takers. Through teaching and learning that is inquiry-based, concept-driven, contextualized, collaborative, differentiated, and informed by assessment, students can enhance their learning while making connections to their lives.</p> | <p>I would recommend that my school continue to develop a curriculum that is supportive of the IB learner profile. Teaching and learning through different avenues support autonomous learning practices because autonomous learning practices are based on practicality and application to a student’s real life.</p> |

**Effective Strategies for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers**

Table 2 highlights the research gathered throughout this piece relating to effective strategies for parents, guardians, and caregivers. Although many students experience a homogenous experience of learning within school walls, there is a significant number of experiences to had by students in their home environments and within unique learning locations. Throughout this project, research indicates a positive correlation between parental or home-based engagement and student success with autonomous learning practices. Although social barriers, frameworks, and stigmas exist and persist throughout the world that we live in, there are strategic ways to engage even the most marginalized home support networks. This portion of the action plan discusses tangible ways in which families, caregivers, and guardians can be met with a balanced and authentic relationship with the school community that their child is in. Specifically, this portion of the action plan will focus on three different parts. Overall, these parts follow the same organizational structure as Table 1: (1) what the research throughout the paper indicates, (2) what practices my school uses, and (3) what my current recommendations are on this topic. The table acts as a snapshot of effective strategies that parents, guardians, caregivers, and other home-based stakeholders can use to increase the autonomous learning practices of their student(s).

**Table 2**

*Effective Strategies for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers*

| What the research says...   | What my school does...   | What I recommend...   |
|---|--|---|
| High quality and frequent communication between parents and teachers make a huge difference in the construction of collaborative school-home partnerships | Some ways that my school reaches out to families are by sending weekly and monthly newsletters via email. These newsletters have a small passage from all subject areas that highlight the work that | Communicating regularly with families about student concerns and celebrations in class. This communication can come in the form of a digital message, through |

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| (Karsenti, Lrose & Garnier, 2002).  | that content area is working on for that week.   | phone call, or through scheduled in person meetings.   |
| Parental involvement has a significantly positive effect on educational outcomes, and higher parental academic achievement is associated with higher levels of parental involvement (Mena, 2011). Research has shown that there is a positive correlation with parental engagement and student academic performance. School community and family partnerships are built through communications between teachers and parents, caregivers or other guardians (Arapi, 2020). | The PTA at the school I work at dissolved shortly before the pandemic, and no attempt has been made to reestablish it. Parent involvement does not have a particular place at the school other than if it is directly initiated by the teacher or the parent, and usually this is in a place of concern or celebration. There are many students whose behavior does not warrant a negative or positive phone call or communication home, but they should have opportunities to be actively involved. | I recommend that the Family Outreach Committee at Giaudrone create an opportunity for parents and caregivers to become classroom and school volunteers. The process involves a background check with the district and having that information ready and available in the newsletter may help families become more actively involved with things like lunch duty, becoming a class volunteer, or becoming a reading buddy for students. |
| Systemic frameworks that shape the way our educational systems are run make it challenging for all families to build extended and trustworthy relationships with school systems.  | As a school, Giaudrone introduces the counselors to incoming elementary students. This is an effort to familiarize students with counselors and school support staff. There are student conferences in the fall that are arena style where parents can meet the teachers. There are nights that support specific areas of student learning such as IB night and CTE (Career and Technical Education) night.  | I recommend that there be more opportunities for teachers and school communities to connect with parents and caregivers. Through an expanded PTA, library support system, and through fundraisers that promote students' athletics, leadership and more relationships can be strengthened. There is no way to tell if the relationships will be restored, but the efforts can be extended.   |

**Teacher Strategies that Support Autonomous Student Learning**

Table 3 is centered around the theme of teacher strategies that support autonomous learning. Traditional classroom roles are challenged and reassessed with the concept of

developing student autonomy in the classroom. By using self-regulatory strategies as a teaching strategy, teachers can improve student’s beliefs in their own ability to master complex tasks (Mickwitz, 2021). Teachers shift from the keepers of information and knowledge and assume a more facilitative role as they help guide their students into the learning experience. According to the constructivist learning theory, learners have the potential to develop their own zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1980). This theory is in contrast with the behaviorist theory: a theory that treats learners as more of a passive participant in the learning environment. (Vasu, 2013) Strategies that teachers can take to overcome fewer effective ways of teaching are explored in this portion of the action plan. Table three indicates specifically what can be prioritized in the classroom to ensure an appropriate level of inclusion for all students, cultural relevance, and accommodations for various systemic barriers students will inevitably face within their educational journey. Overall, this section includes three parts: (1) what does the research say about teacher strategies that have been known to support autonomous learning in the classroom, (2) what does my own school do to support or suppress these research-based practices, and (3) what do I recommend as a next step towards implementation in my own practice.

**Table 3**

*Teacher Strategies that Support Autonomous Student Learning*

| What the research says...   | What my school does...   | What I recommend...   |
|---|--|---|
| A strategy that can be used to make this happen is to construct a project-based learning environment, or a PBL environment. Within this environment, students learn by creating knowledge | As an everyday practice, I would say that my school does not engage in a PBL positive environment. For long term goals and practices, the IB curricula is in support of the PBL learning | I recommend that more of the projects throughout the day to day reflect pieces of the PBL model so that when it comes time to practice this model and have students use it be a |

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| <p>and meaning making through acts of asking questions, learning actively, sharing ideas, and reflecting on what they know (English &amp; Kisantas, 2013).</p>  | <p>environment because all the learning throughout the middle years ends at the end of eighth grade when students are responsible for assembling a community project that addresses the different areas of learning.</p>  | <p>familiar task that students are aware of.<br/>These PBL environments can be set up to develop student inquiry and expand on prior knowledge. Stations that enhance student learning are effective ways to enhance their PBL learning.</p>   |
| <p>Instructional practices that teachers may utilize in support of increasing autonomy in and out of the classroom include promoting collaborative group learning, maintaining the choices of their students, building on the funds of knowledge of students, having designated checkpoints for understanding, accountability amongst students and teachers, building a sense of collective responsibility, and positioning students as experts (Marshall, 2022).</p> | <p>The instructional practices that are embedded within the OpenSciEd (OSE) curriculum promote collaborative group learning through building the questions that guide inquiry and scientific investigations, the choices of the students have a large part in guiding the curriculum to be lead a certain way. The different checkpoints that exist within the content include activities such as completion of progress trackers, different formative assessments, and benchmark initial and final assessments to see where the learning growth happened. Positioning the students as experts in also a large part of the OSE curriculum allows for students to use their funds of knowledge and notice and wondering to drive their learning.</p> | <p>I recommend that more schools make the shift towards these practices to be present throughout lower grade levels. Initially when introduced to this type of instruction, the sixth graders that I teach are unfamiliar with this type of inquiry-based learning. Sixth graders were more used to instruction that was performed by their teachers where they were the receivers of information. Participation in the process of learning is new to students. They seem to receive it well, which leads me to believe that students would benefit from this learning model from even an earlier age.</p> |
| <p>Teaching data literacy to students throughout their K-12 educational journey is to teach an enduring skill that will prepare them for the data driven world that we all inhabit. Data literacy not only sets students up for future employability, but it also allows for students to develop their perception of quality</p>  | <p>Data is embedded throughout the curriculum and throughout the school day in the school that I work at. To successfully navigate through the curriculum is to be able to understand many sets of data. When this skill is unsupported or underdeveloped, students at my school have a difficult</p>   | <p>Increasing data literacy through the exposure of data would be an important recommendation that I have for my school. Students should have opportunities to be exposed to, grapple with, understand and interpret different sets of data so that they are more able to navigate the data heavy world that we</p>  |

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| teaching performance (Yang, 2020). | time navigating through understanding different concepts. | live in. By increasing the different ways in which data is integrated in the various lessons of different content areas, the exposure could increase the comfortability and familiarity with reading data. |
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## Discussion

### *Purpose of the Discussion Section*

The following portion of the project will revisit the three themes discussed throughout the piece; highlighting the overview, limitations, and concluding thoughts of each theme. In this portion of the project, readers can connect what the research has said about autonomous learning through the different lenses of: definition, application of practices through home environments, and accommodating learning environments in the classroom. Following a revisit about what the research has said about the theme, there will be limitations discussed for each theme. These limitations are not meant to discount the connections that are made throughout the piece, but to provide a more holistic overview of different ways that the information throughout can be interpreted or understood. Lastly, each theme will include a final conclusive section that restates the importance of each theme and how it will be applied to my current and future practice.

### **Discussion of Theme One: *Autonomous Learning and the Third-Party Stakeholder***

#### *Introduction*

Autonomous learning practices enable the user to self-regulate their learning in a way that makes sense for them; empowering them to assume more of an active role in the learning process. In turn, this sets the student up for life to make sense of the world around them with

more tools in their toolbox. In theory, autonomous learning practices can set a person up to become a conscious lifelong learner with a firm grasp on different self-regulatory learning practices. When supported in a school or home environment, autonomous learning strategies can reshape and reform the way that students think about school, and they have the power to uncover valuable passion and excitement needed to accelerate learning of content and curricula.

Self-regulated learner strategies; such self-startedness, taking initiative, asking questions, digger deeper, and making connections; are all vital aspects of learner autonomy. “An environment that provides students more autonomy helps them to develop their self-regulated learning strategies effectively” (English & Kisantis, 2013). It is not just about a student having these skills or not having these skills, but a crucial part of the teaching and learning process involves the development and the application of these skills to better prepare students for what lies ahead in their educational journeys, careers, and lives. Autonomous learning practices are not designed for a student to master, but for a student to practice enabling connections to content and instruction to be made. While traditional roles of the stakeholders may need to be challenged or disrupted to accommodate for the inclusion of autonomous learning practices, the goal remains the same for all: to increase the academic, social, or emotional growth within that student in a myriad of different learning situations or environments.

### *Limitations*

Of course, like any strategy, there is no one-size-fits-all that will work undoubtedly every time in every classroom. There are drawbacks to introducing autonomous learning strategies in some situations, and the risks of increasing learner autonomy should be acknowledged. As mentioned before, this project is meant to serve as a supportive piece encouraging readers to better understand the different ways autonomous learning strategies can be implemented. This is

not a recipe for student success, but more of a guide to what autonomous learning strategies look like from the lens of different third-party stakeholders including parents, guardians, teachers, and other community members. In fact, the success that a student experiences because of autonomous learning practices are said to be a direct effect of understanding their own pattern of learning rather than being a result of being a mere witness to another's distribution of knowledge.

Autonomous learning practices are not a cure for all classroom issues and are not a prescription for success of all students. These practices are set up so that the user can better understand the way that they learn, which enables them to become more engaged in the process of learning. Different aspects of autonomous learning practices just do not work for all students or teachers. The results that have been synthesized within this literature review illustrate the positive correlation between student learning outcomes and autonomous learning practices. The results within this literature review and action plan do not develop on the literature that exists to disprove any sort of autonomous learning. Within this work, the results have been consistent with existing educational research, and the findings demonstrate that these strategies can build upon learning practices of students in the modern world. Twenty-first century employability is measured in a person's ability to problem-solve, be creative, communicate – oftentimes through various languages – and by the person's ability to possess some aspect of cultural awareness (Luka, 2019).

Results within this paper may have been generalized to not include or expand upon the teaching and learning of special populations. Some of these may include multi-language learners, students enrolled in special education programs, or those enrolled in highly capable programs. If more research was done on the topic of effective strategies to promote autonomous learning



practices, I would like to see it done in these fields of specialization. For instance, it would be beneficial to my present and future teaching practice to engage in more literature that looks at the relationship between autonomous teaching and learning strategies for parents, caregivers, teachers, and school communities as it relates to multi-language learning or for students of different learning abilities.

### *Conclusion*

Understanding one's role in a student's educational journey is the first part to understanding what it means to be a third-party stakeholder. For instance, I am both a parent and an educator. This means that I can simultaneously occupy two different supportive roles for different people in my life. Whether you are a parent, a caregiver, a community member, an administrator, or teacher you have some sort of a connection to a student whose academic journey is influenced by you in some way. Stakeholders in the student's educational journey are either invested financially, academically, morally, or familiarly to the student in some way. As stated, many times throughout this project, the motivations of these stakeholders vary depending on the local, regional, communal, and cultural context but the goal can be assumed that the stakeholders benefit when the student exhibits success in some way academically or socially in a school setting.

## **Discussion of Theme Two: *Effective Strategies for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers***

### *Introduction*

The parental and teacher roles that I occupy throughout my life allow for certain decisions and reflections to be made. These roles dominate my perspective most of the time and they have an influence on the choices that I make when I am called to support the different

people in my life. Being both a parent and a teacher, I am aware of the responsibility that I must acknowledge the impact that I have on a person's socio-emotional wellbeing. Everyday interactions can influence the way that that individual is able to navigate through situations with social and emotional understanding. The management of intrapersonal and interpersonal social and emotional experiences in ways that foster one's own and others' thriving is a person's level of social emotional competence (Collie, 2020).

Success can be supported or suppressed to students knowingly or unknowingly by family members, caregivers, and guardians. Some researchers have looked at parents' involvement as an interaction with their student at home, and some research has defined parent involvement through the lens of their participation with the student's school community (Katz, 2011). Whether the support from the parent is given to their student at home or through the school community in some way, it is assumed for the purpose of this project that the intent of the support is positive. What parents and caregivers may not realize is that their strategies of support for their students either suppress or support autonomous learning practices. When a parent or a caregiver is in support of their student demonstrating and practicing autonomous learning, the parent uses supportive methods of intervention with their student. These may include overseeing homework completion, providing open-ended questions for their students to respond to, employing authentic opportunities for real-life connections to learning from the classroom and more. These methods all contribute to a student's ability to manage their learning, see where that learning is happening, and build upon learned ideas.

Autonomously motivated parents include parents that are motivated by the effects of self-efficacy. When these feelings are repeated consistently by parents and caregivers, positive feelings of self-efficacy can be felt by the child or the student. In fact, parents who are motivated

by autonomy when it comes to supporting their student find more success with developing their child's ability to plan, strategize, and problem solve (Moe, 2017). By better understanding the ways in which families can engage in a healthy way with the school community while also honoring their unique boundaries and needs, students can benefit academically and socially through increased engagement and connection. Throughout the project, parental involvement included support for their child's autonomy through participating in their decision making, encouraging choice, and their independent decision making (Moe, 2017). While no amount of research can fully describe or explain the different nuances that these support networks experience when interacting with school communities, research does show that the connections that families have with their student's schools can always be strengthened through healthy communication and by having a goal that is tied to the mental, physical, emotional, and academic success of the student.

### *Limitations*

There are limitations within this project as it relates to parent and caregiver strategies used to support autonomous student learning. For example, much of the data that was collected within the scope of this project was based on self-surveys that the parents and caregivers were able to complete. Self-surveys can be influenced by environmental factors, emotions that the person was feeling at that time, and more. Other limitations of this research are that the results are broadly sourced from the world at large rather than from a regional or local context. For the purposes of an action plan specifically, the regional or local parent or caregiver voices would have been extremely beneficial.

The results from the survey may have been overgeneralized, as they represent large longstanding feelings from marginalized populations rather than individual feelings that may

exist from family to family or from ethnic group to ethnic group. The findings that are represented within this piece are consistent with the research that has been done on the subject, and there are also some new theories that are explored as they relate to supporting the autonomous learning practices of students in home and school environments. If I were to inform future researchers on what they could further develop collective understandings in, I would want to see more quantitative research on the academic outcomes that students have when they engage in autonomous learning practices from various ages. I believe that my teaching practice would benefit from educational research that focused on diverse ways that parents can engage their children in autonomous learning practices at home from an early age and if there were strategies that worked for learners of different abilities.

### *Conclusion*

Students that populate the school and community that I serve all have a unique perspective on who the supportive people are in their life. These perspectives are shaped by countless interactions, familial expectations, cultural beliefs and values, and more factors that are influenced by the world we all live in. While it may not always be possible to maintain healthy and beneficial relationships with family members and guardians of the students we work with due to visible and invisible social structures, it may be possible to provide the resources that families may need to support their students' autonomous learning in home environments.

## **Discussion of Theme Three: *Teacher Strategies that Support Autonomous Student Learning***

### *Introduction*

How much does a teacher have to ensure their students are successful in their class? Educational institutions and school communities are placing an increased amount of value on

autonomous learning practices even if current teaching models do not fully support autonomous learning practices (Webster, 2019). How does a student apply their understanding of what they learned to their own life in a practical way, and what are supportive strategies that the people in the school community can use to promote student success? These are the questions that comprise most of my thoughts when I reflect on how to better my practice as a secondary science teacher. Ideas surrounding what it means to complete my role as an educator are constantly changing because the needs of the community I serve are changing as well. Because of this, it is essential for students and teachers to increase the ways in which students can exercise their autonomous learning practices for them to increase their intended school outcomes.

When thinking about the different stakeholders that engage students with supportive strategies to better their educational outcomes, it goes without saying that the teacher would be involved in that group. Teachers may spend most of their careers in search of effective and engaging ways to support communities of students academically. However, this is not all those teachers do and this job is not just limited to certificated staff within the school community. Supporting students academically is an important part of what teachers do but they are also responsible for reflecting upon, improving upon, and growing their instructional practice as research emerges revealing strategies to best engage different generations of students. Accommodation is also a large part of a teachers' role in the classroom, as they are required to make the required instructional material accessible on a myriad of different platforms and access points for all students in the classroom.

By examining the effective teaching strategies that increase the students' ability to work autonomously, teachers can move more towards the role of facilitator in the classroom rather than beacon of knowledge and understanding. This paradigm shifts in the way that knowledge is

handled in the classroom and school communities can award teachers opportunities to improve their practice while simultaneously setting their students up for current and future success.

Autonomous learning practiced are generated as skills that learners can acquire, and those skills can help them to navigate through challenging and rigorous course content throughout their educational careers. The skills learned and accessed through autonomous teaching benefit the teacher by providing multiple avenues for student voice, feedback, and self-reflection to drive instruction.

### *Limitations*

The results in this project indicate that there are different teacher strategies that can be used in the classroom to support autonomous student learning. Limitations to these studies are that they do not address potential drawbacks in introducing autonomous teaching strategies. These may impact the way that teachers traditionally plan, the amount of time that they are required to put into preparing these activities, and the ways that they navigate around the classroom. This can significantly impact the ways that teachers are used to teaching.

### *Conclusion*

In the world of education, there is always room to reflect on and improve your practice because there are so many different opportunities to receive valuable pieces of feedback from students, staff, administrators, and others within the school community. Shifting and adapting teaching practices to better meet the needs of the classroom of students in front of you while also recognizing that those practices may need to change is part of what being a culturally and behaviorally responsive teacher is all about. The needs of my students today may in fact look different than the needs of my students in the future, and luckily the employment of autonomous

teaching strategies in my classroom will help my students better handle whatever learning is to come for them.

If I were to inform future educational researchers about what they should continue to investigate I would ask for more information about differentiation that teachers in the classroom provide for their students as it relates to autonomous learning. When working with different populations of students with diverse needs, teachers are aware that strategies that work for some students may not work for all. To better inform my teaching practice and the myriad of needs that my students present to me daily, I would like to be able to refer to empirical research that shows connections between the ways that teachers can adapt their teaching practices to fit needs of specific populations. The results from this research indicate that a lot of the responsibility of teaching autonomy starts in the classroom, therefore, a lot of the work to be done in advance is to be by the teachers. Teaching autonomy may require much frontloading of skill development in order to achieve more of a collective learning experience in the classroom overtime. It would be great to be able to refer to research that supports or suppresses these theories.

## **Conclusion**

### **In the Beginning**

I've always known that I wanted to be an educator in some capacity. It was not until I occupied space in the classroom as a teacher that I was able to reflect on problems within the practice itself. For example, the curriculum being offered to me as the student's science teacher did not always match the cognitive and social needs of students. The administration, which is led by Tacoma Public Schools, continuously encourages teachers to teach in ways that provide opportunities for rich student discourse to occur. Professional development sessions encourage

teachers to become more of a facilitator in the classroom rather than a sole distributor of information. Yet, when I present these learning opportunities to my sixth-grade students, the time is often spent catching up with each student individually on what they should be working on.

The basics of working autonomously as a student are rooted in self-startedness and problem solving that is based on an awareness of one's own learning process. However, the students that I serve do not inherently possess these skills. In the beginning I saw that the need for skill development was there, and the need for covering a certain amount of curriculum was there as well. Finding the balance between scaffolding students to become more independent learners and thinkers while still honoring the learning processes they had occupied was my challenge. Studying the effective ways that teachers, parents, and other third-party stakeholders in a student's education could increase the autonomous learning practices of students was the long-term goal of this project, and the results and findings were consistent.

### **What I Learned**

To successfully develop autonomous learners in and out of the classroom, different strategies need to be employed by third-party stakeholders. Autonomy in the classroom is not something that is inherently within each student. The skill requires development and practice, and a stakeholder in a student's education can provide opportunities for the development of this skill. Sometimes there are parallels that exist between what the overall goals of autonomous teaching and learning practices are with what is being offered throughout the required curriculum. In this case, there needs to be more done to support the overall goal of autonomy for students when the twenty-first century workplace and higher education demands that these skills be developed.



The research that I found related to autonomous learning was tremendously overwhelming. Similarly, when I started research on ways parents and caregivers can provide support to their child students, the research was also overwhelming. I learned that autonomous learning practices could be defined on their own, and that the definition could be paired with the different types of stakeholders that exist throughout the student's educational journey. Research also allowed me to develop an understanding of research formats, different research methods, and ways in which empirical research is analyzed for the purpose of generating data. Before this project, I was familiar with the process of locating and citing sources for a particular purpose, but while creating this project, I was able to use the different research that I found to fuel a journey to find specific missing links to my paper. I learned that my role as an educator differs from my role as a parent, although the goal remains the same.

I also learned that there are specific strategies that can be used to better increase autonomous learning practices such as providing opportunities for students to reflect, respond, create, and navigate through their own learning processes. This can happen at home or at school and can greatly impact the ways that students can navigate complex learning throughout their lives. I learned also that there is a shift in education that is currently happening, and this shift is from a behavioralist approach to a more constructivist approach. This shift is felt at each level of the school community, but mainly seen in the classroom as teachers shift from the role of distributor of information to facilitator of learning.

Something that I already was aware of but learned more in depth about were the inequities that exist for parents and families of marginalized populations. The historical and systemic impacts of racism and out casting have had a ripple effect on the way that marginalized populations generally communicate with the school communities. The relationships are impacted

because in general, families may feel that they do not have a voice or a strong presence still in the school community. Some families feel as if they occupy two distinctly different worlds; one that is reflective of the world in which they live, and a world that is reflective of what they know culturally. I see this in my population of students that I serve with Tacoma Public Schools. Student diversity is high, and communication with student families is sometimes challenging due to language barriers, levels of comfort with communicating with school staff, and other visible and invisible barriers.

### **Next Steps**

Developing the curriculum that exists for my taught content area is where I will go next with this project. I have learned a lot about the different strategies that can be implemented to promote a sense of autonomy in students, and I believe that now I just need to find ways to make autonomous learning part of the daily classroom experience for my students rather than have these opportunities for student discourse exist in a vacuum or as a novelty. Using formative and summative assessment, task specific rubrics, and keeping in mind the NGSS Science standards will be what is helping to guide this shift in my practice, and I am confident that the results will result in students that have higher levels of perceived competence when completing any task that involves, they inquire, delve in, or think deeper.

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