



AGENCY IN LEARNING

WHO CAN? YOU CAN...



Aim: To support all members of a learning community to explore where choice and agency exist in a shared learning space.

Included in the resource:

- Explanation of the big ideas about agency for teachers/parents
- Three open-inquiry posters about 'agency's' big ideas
- Three guided (pre-constructed) posters about 'agency's' big ideas
- Explanation of the big ideas for each of the target areas for sites of agency for teachers/parents
- Six open-inquiry posters about sites of agency
- Six guided (pre-constructed) posters about 'sites of agency'
- Six 'ideas for use' for each sites of agency target areas

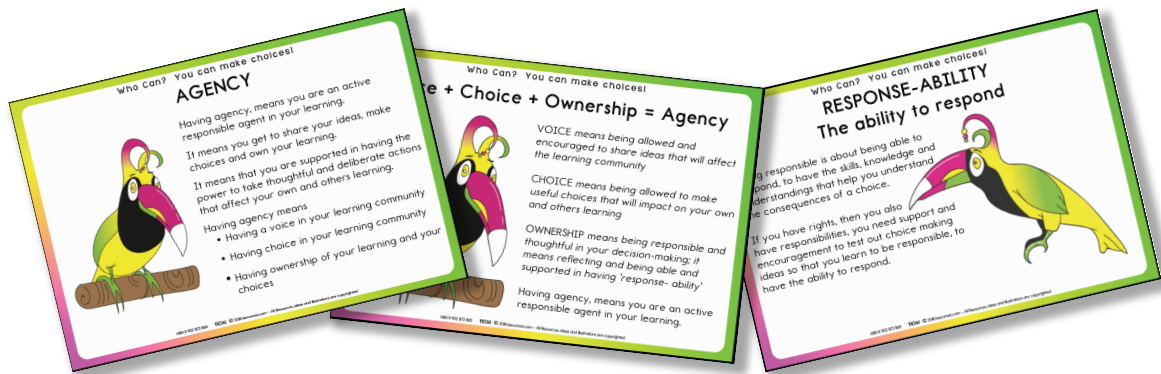
Teaching resources that move [Beyond Conventional Wisdom](#).

Our resources are designed to support learners choice, voice and agency. The resources are ideal for all teaching styles, but particularly suited to inquiry (*constructivist*) teaching. Our aim is to move beyond conventional teaching tools, consultancy and training by creating tailored resources, strategies and training opportunities that enable teachers/parents to implement supportive, differentiated, challenging and innovative learning experiences.

AGENCY RESOURCES

Exploring the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW of agency in learning

Three posters giving you and your class an overview or background about what agency in a learning community could look like.



These versions of the three posters have ideas and information based on experience and research about the current thoughts on scaffolding agency in a learning community. The ideas have been broken down as much as possible and can either be used to provoke discussions in staff collaborations to develop an agreed view of how agency might be defined in each school setting. Or they can be used as classroom discussion as a prompt to begin a class discussion on what the learning community thinks agency might be.



These versions of the three posters have images and headings that can be used as a starting point for any learning community or staff to add and develop their own ideas based on their own experience, perspectives and understanding. These are useful for a more open forum for inquiry into agency.

AGENCY

Having agency, means you are an active and responsible agent in your own learning.

It means you get to share your ideas, make choices and own your learning.

It means that you are supported in having the power to take thoughtful and deliberate actions that affect your own and others learning.

Having agency means

- Having a voice in your learning community
- Having choice in your learning community
- Having ownership of your learning and your choices



AGENCY



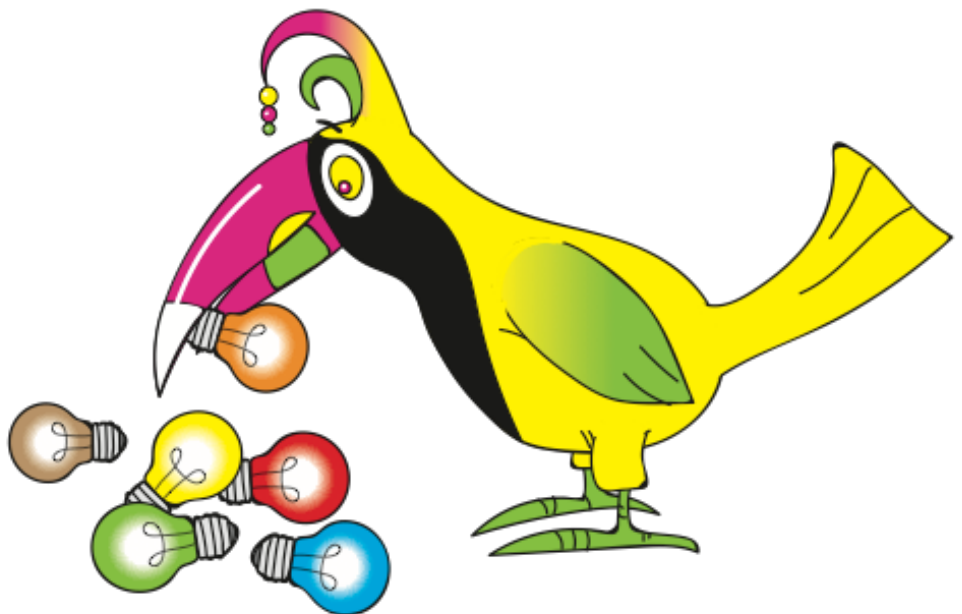
Voice + Choice + Ownership = Agency

VOICE means being allowed and encouraged to share ideas that will influence the learning community

CHOICE means being allowed to make useful choices that will impact on your own and others' learning

OWNERSHIP means being responsible and thoughtful in your decision-making; it means reflecting and being supported to have 'response- ability'

Having agency, means you are an active, response-abled agent in your own learning.



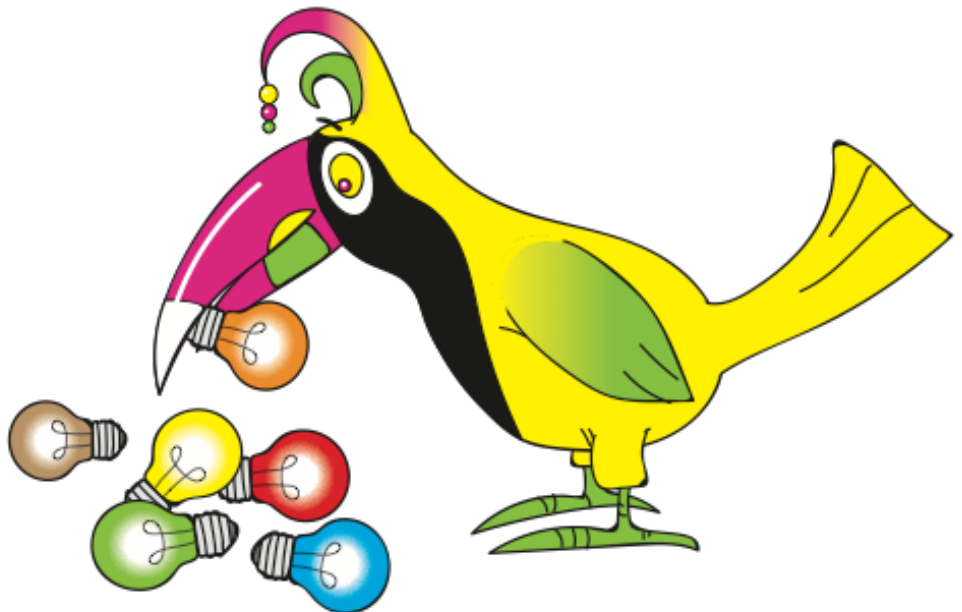
Voice + Choice + Ownership = Agency

VOICE is

CHOICE is

OWNERSHIP means

Having agency, means...

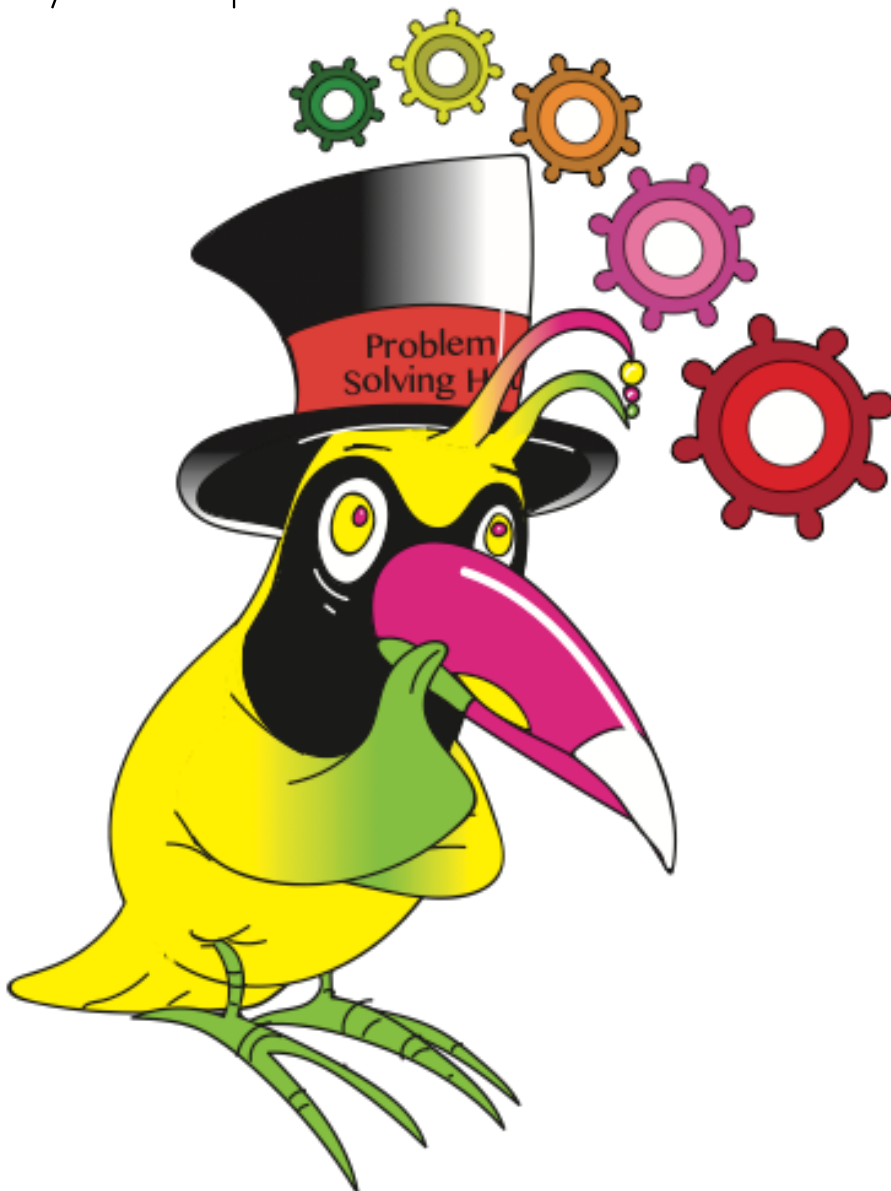


RESPONSE-ABILITY

The ability to respond

Being responsible is about being able to respond, to have the skills, knowledge and understandings that help you understand the consequences of a choice.

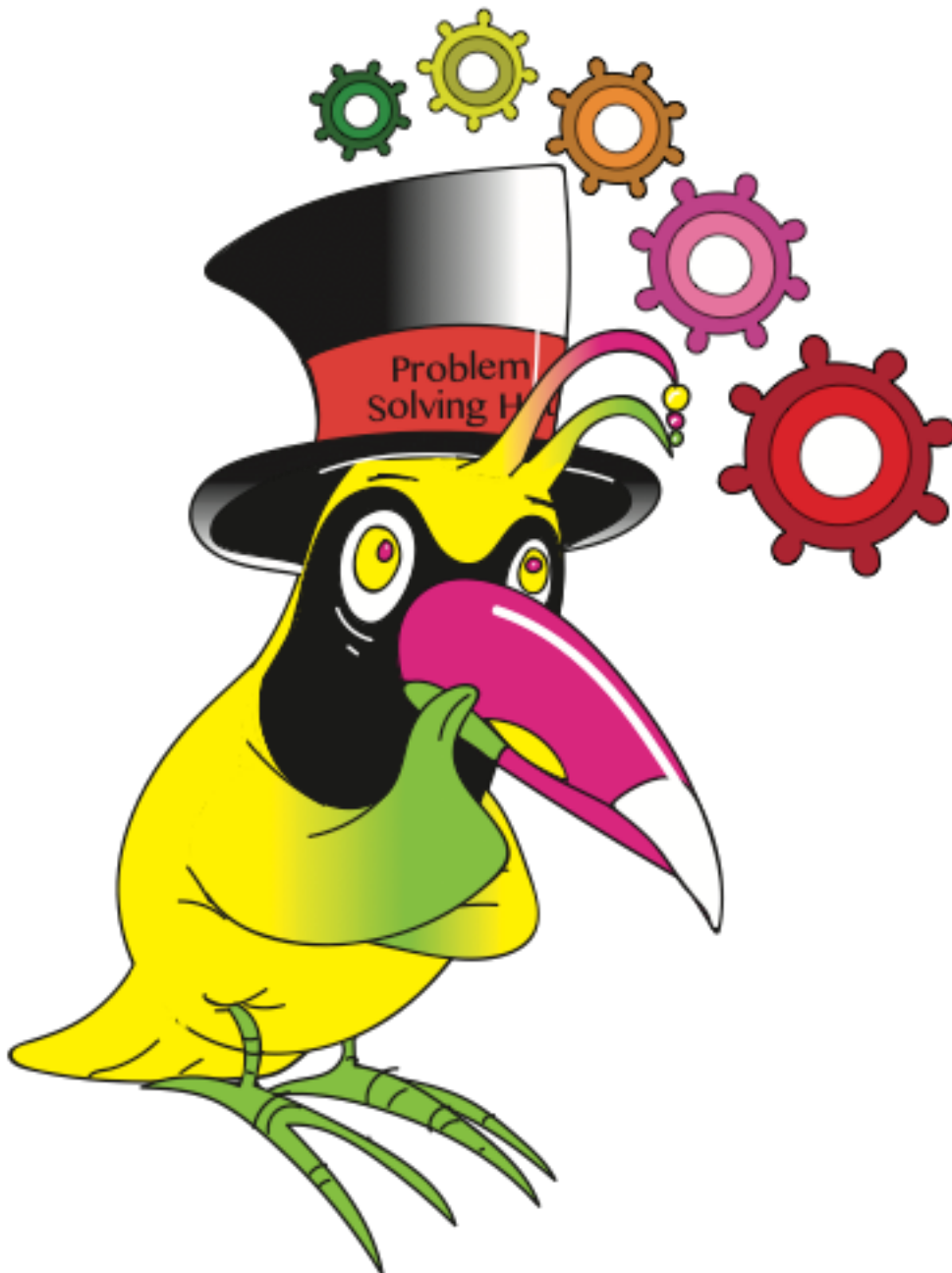
If you have rights, then you also have responsibilities, you need support and encouragement to test out choice-making ideas so that you learn to be responsible, that is to have the ability to respond.



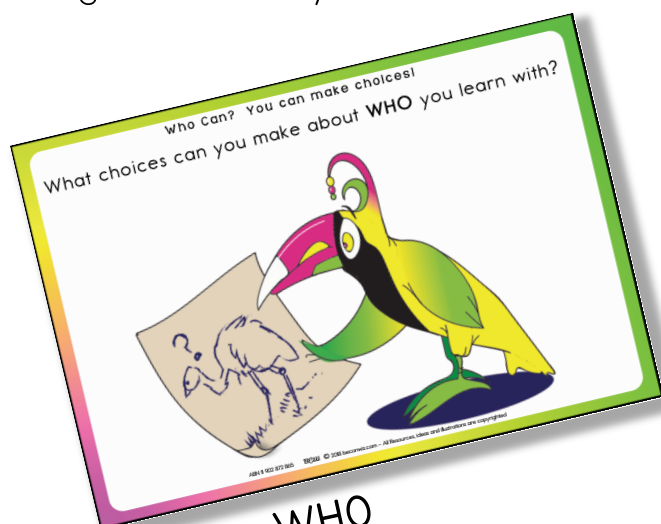
RESPONSE-ABILITY

The ability to respond

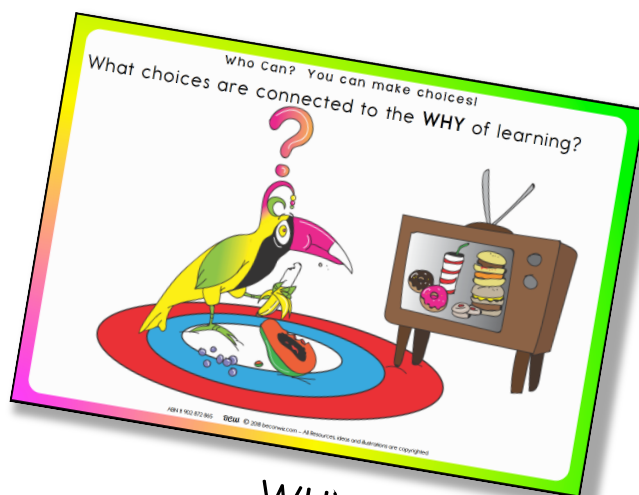
Being response-abled means...



There are posters connected to the different aspects of agency in a learning community.



WHO



WHY



WHERE



WHEN

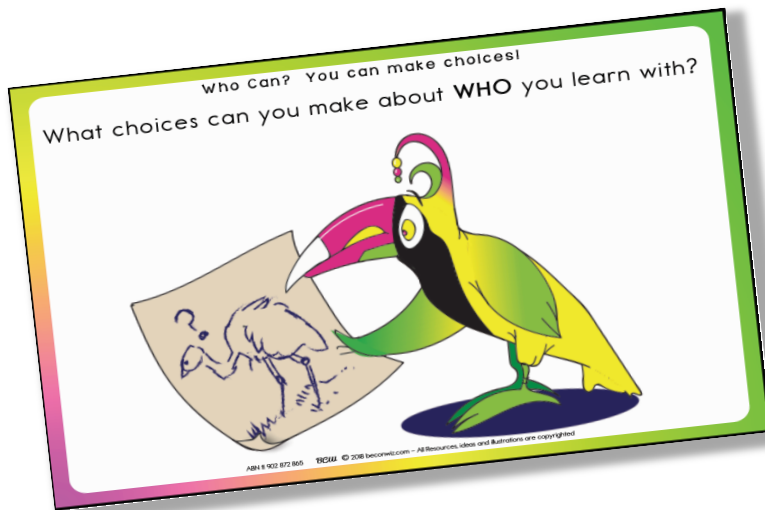


WHAT



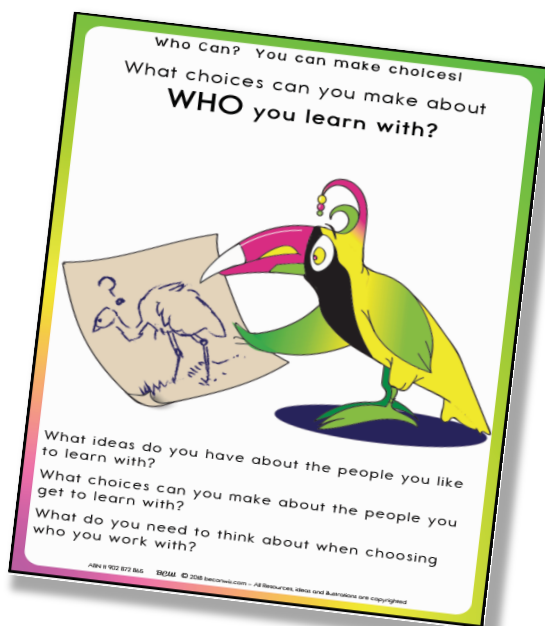
HOW

Each one of the aspects of agency about learning has two poster versions.



There will be a version like this that has a picture prompt and a guiding question.

Ideas for use -open inquiry: Display these posters in the classrooms and as learning develops over time, use reflection to add the sites of agency learners have discovered they have in relation to each area. *E.g. I can choose my own reading buddy, I can choose where I sit to learn, I can choose what learning tools I need, etc.* learners can then refer to these reflections to help them make future decisions



There will be a version like this that has a picture prompt and a leading question and three more specific questions about the choice, voice and responsibility aspect of agency.

Ideas for use- more guided inquiry: Display these posters in the classrooms then before a lesson or inquiry starts, work as a learning community to collaboratively construct a list of choices available thus making visible what sites of agency there are in any given learning task. This will also involve listing the responsibilities that sit alongside the sites of agency.

IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARENTS/TEACHERS

Remember to share and make visible any non-negotiables with the learners, don't try and covertly move them to a position you are hoping for or that the home/school requires of you and them; learners aren't silly they can spot this game a mile a way and will disengage very quickly.

Each one of the aspects of agency has a page (or two) with ideas and suggestions how teachers/parents might find, think about or make available spaces for agency in the learning community.



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHO** you learn with?



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHO** you learn with?



What ideas do you have about the people you like to learn with?

What choices would you like to be able to make about the people you get to learn and work with?

What do you need to think about when choosing who you work with?

Ideas for teachers/parents about agency and the WHO of learning

- Look for opportunities when learners could have a choice and voice in grouping situations
- Have a flexible seating situation rather than designated seats so learners can change and move according to need, interest and learning task demands
- Provide opportunities for learners to reflect on what makes a good learning buddy in different situations
- Be prepared for learners to make mistakes and discover opportunities by letting them make choices about who they learn with
- Respect and value the learners who prefer solo learning spaces, find opportunities for them to get relief from group or paired work
- Ask the learners to help develop and share grouping strategies for different learning tasks and find a way to support yourself if this moves you out of your comfort zone. Remember all learning opportunities, even those that don't work so well, provide possibilities for exploring and reflecting on choice making



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHEN** you do different parts of your learning?



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHEN** you do different parts of your learning?



What ideas do you have about how you can organise your learning time?

What choices would you like to be able to make about when you do different parts of your learning?

What do you need to think about when organising your learning time?

Ideas for teachers/parents about agency and the WHEN of learning

- Look for opportunities when learners could have a choice and voice how they organize their time for tasks
- Have flexible opportunities for learners to choose what learning cycle/process they use (*e.g. reflecting first, then testing, then recording: OR testing and idea, then reflecting, then recording*)
- Provide opportunities for learners to reflect what strategies and order of processes best help them manage and understand their learning in different situations
- Be prepared for learners to make mistakes and discover new opportunities when experimenting with different ways of organizing themselves and learning time management skills
- Find ways to support learners who are either quick to finish, or slow to start, or who require a longer time to process and develop ideas. Have discussions with them about their preferred ways of working, what these ways makes possible and what they find frustrating about them.
- Ask the learners to help develop organizing strategies for different learning tasks and find a way to support yourself if this moves you out of your comfort zone.



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHERE** you do your learning?



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHERE** you do your learning?



What ideas do you have about how you and your learning community can organise the learning space?

What choices would you and the learning community you work with be able to make about how your learning space is organised?

What do you need to think about when organising your learning spaces?

Ideas for teachers/parents about agency and the WHERE of learning

- Try leaving the room as open and 'empty' as possible at the start of the year (or if you feel brave at the start of each inquiry unit). This way the learners can examine and discuss and help set up the learning spaces to suit them and learning tasks that will be undertaken.
- Encourage and use flexible seating and groupings
- Think about the location of displays and how much agency the learners have in adding, adapting or changing the displays as inquiries develop- What is the purpose of your displays?
- Are there ways you can include quiet spaces and co-operative spaces for learners who prefer solo or group work?
- What can the common meeting area look like? Who's had a say in the creation of this and other spaces?
- How much choice do the learners have in creating shared ownership in the learning spaces? (this includes digital spaces as well as physical spaces)
- Ask the learners to help plan and develop how to organize learning spaces to suit different learning tasks.
- Try and have a flexible learning space that can be quickly adapted to suit different groupings or learning task needs



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

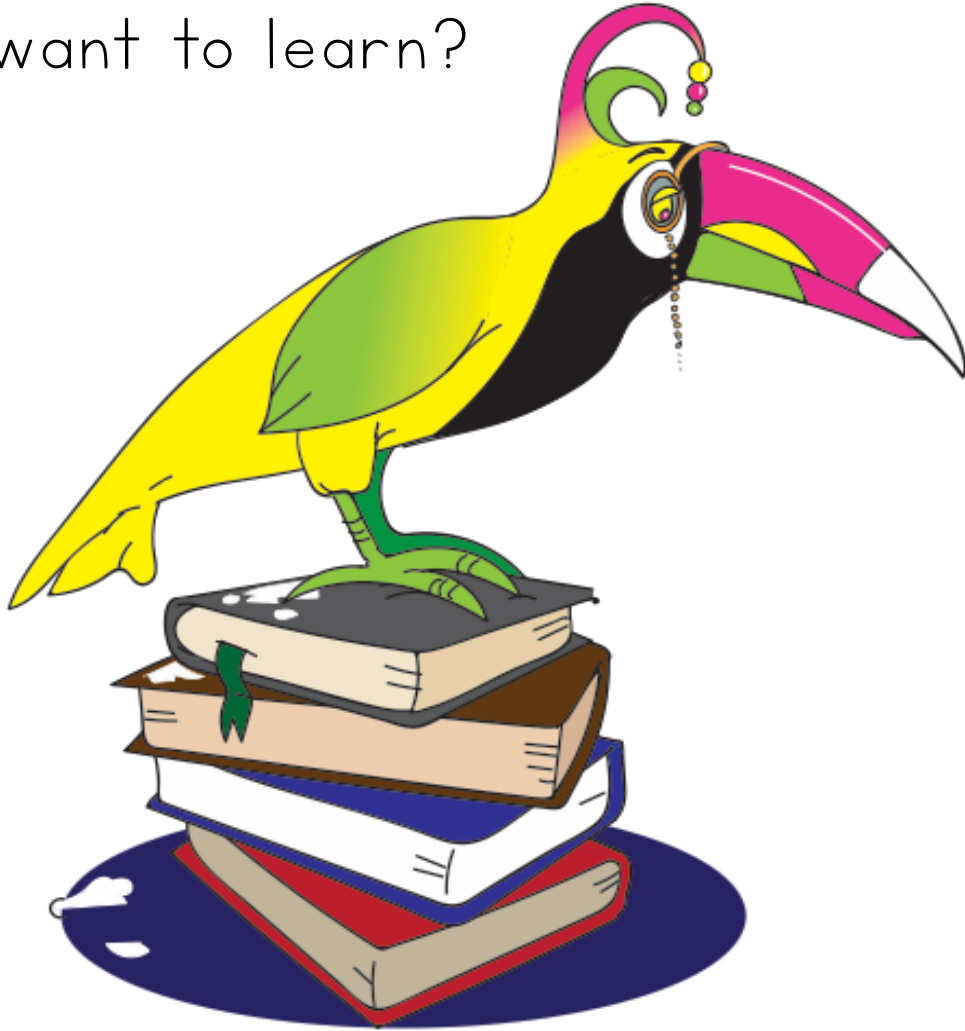
Do you have any choices about **WHAT** you need or want to learn?



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **WHAT** you need or want to learn?



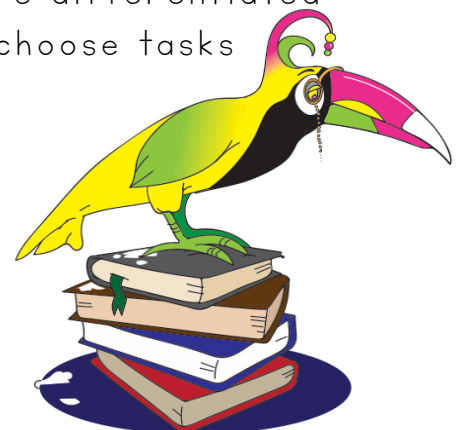
What ideas do you have about how you might find wider connections to the learning you have to do?

What choices would you like to make that are connected to an interest and related to what you are learning?

What do you need to think about when making choices about what learning tasks you choose to do?

Ideas for teachers/parents about agency and the WHAT of learning

- Look for opportunities where learners could have a choice and voice in the type of research they do connected to the class inquiry topic
- Can you adapt literacy or math centers to let the learners choose the order they progress through certain tasks? Use opening guiding questions and group reflections at the end of a task to collate and record ideas developed in the range of tasks undertaken.
- Can you make visible the big ideas, knowledge and skill outcomes connected to a unit so that learners have an opportunity to see and think about what they are learning about?
- Involve the learners in a library hunt for literacy resources they think are connected to the unit. This can be part of the provocation for any inquiry
- Is there a place in the classroom where learners can create a display or share the action taking, research, problem posing or solving that they initiated during the inquiry?
- Do you have the support of the school to incorporate strategies such as iTime or maker-spaces as a regular and valued feature of your learning time?
- Ask the learners to help plan and share ideas, wonderings and questions about a given unit, that can be followed up as part of reading, writing or research opportunities in literacy times. Thus reading, researching, and presenting take in real life connections
- Try and have learning opportunities/ tasks that are differentiated but cover the same content, so that learners can choose tasks that interest or engage them. Use opening guiding questions, and group reflections at the end of a task to collate and record ideas developed in the range of tasks undertaken.



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **HOW** you need or want to learn?



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices about **HOW** you need or want to learn?



What ideas do you have about the learning tools and skills you and others can choose to use?

What choices would you like to make in connection to skills, strategies or tools you will use in this learning task?

What do you need to think about when making choices about how you learn?

Ideas for teachers/parents about agency and the HOW of learning

- Think about upcoming inquiries and select the materials (special math or science tools, art supplies, books connected to the unit, etc.) you need. Place them in a central area in the classroom. Clear shelves of unwanted tools and resources. Have the learners come in and sort through the tools and resources. This will engage the learners' ideas and prior knowledge and make them curious about what might be going on in the next inquiry. With the learners, sort the materials into groups that will make them easy to locate, then as a community decide on the location and placement of resources in the classroom. This will give the learners a good idea of where they can find things and what is readily available for them to use, thus giving them agency to select and find resources as and when they need them.
- A smaller or micro version of the above idea, is to create baskets of materials and tools related to specific learning tasks and encourage the learners to make choices about what tools from this selection they might use when solving problems or researching ideas
- Encourage and have learners share the variety of ways they approach research, problem solving, experimenting, etc. so that everyone in a learning community can see that there are multiple approaches to any given learning opportunity. Math chats are a great way to start modeling this process.

- Is there a place in the classroom where learners can create a display or share their ideas about the processes, strategies and tools they are finding useful in this inquiry? It could become a mentor center where other learners can go and look for someone to share their knowledge's about the HOW of learning.
- Use part of any reflection time to have the learners share HOW they approached or worked through their learning. This offers them opportunities to act as mentors/consultants and become reference points for help in future inquiries.
- As teachers/parents, we often have a familiar, comfortable way when approaching different learning tasks, but our thinking style and approach may not be relevant or useful to learners who think about things in different ways. Encourage experimentation and testing of ideas when it comes to processing ideas or solving problems. If the process or strategy doesn't work, use this opportunity to revisit ideas with the learners and give learners permission to learn from the mistakes. Encourage learners to be risk takers and adapt what they now know to develop new understandings.
- Provide learners with the opportunity to decide or determine the order their learning might take. For example will they reflect first, then test ideas then record, or is there another order, a different step they need in their learning in order for it to make sense to them? As all learners come to learning with different experiences, ideas, perspectives and attitudes to topics, problems and possibilities, they need the chance (even if it is only every now and then, but hopefully more often) to determine their own learning path.

- Provocation to explore the differences in the HOW of learning; Take the learners to a local playground or even the school's sports field (It works better if there are obstacles or play equipment set up in the place you and the learners are in).
- Ask the learners to find what they call a 'start place'. They will look a bit lost and may ask for guidance, but remind them that you trust they will be able to find a good start place.
- Ask them to think about how they might move to another part of the playground/field that they will call 'the end' and then let them go and do it. Every child will approach the space and move from a to b differently, they will all find the 'end place' that they identified and move quickly or slowly, in pairs, groups or solo to that point. Some will go over the obstacles, some will go around them, some will change the obstacles to different places.

Now gather them together and explain that X is now the start point and that they are to move to a new end. Repeat this moving from A to B, to C a few times as learners will become more adventurous in how and where they move.

Find a way to record their actions and choices as they move to each new 'end place'.

Come back to your learning space and have the learners brainstorm and reflect on how they identified the beginning and end, why they moved there and why they made the choices they made on their way to the 'end'.

Ask them to reflect on why they think everyone did it differently or even repeated what others did- this will give you an idea about how they think 'moving/learning' might be approached.

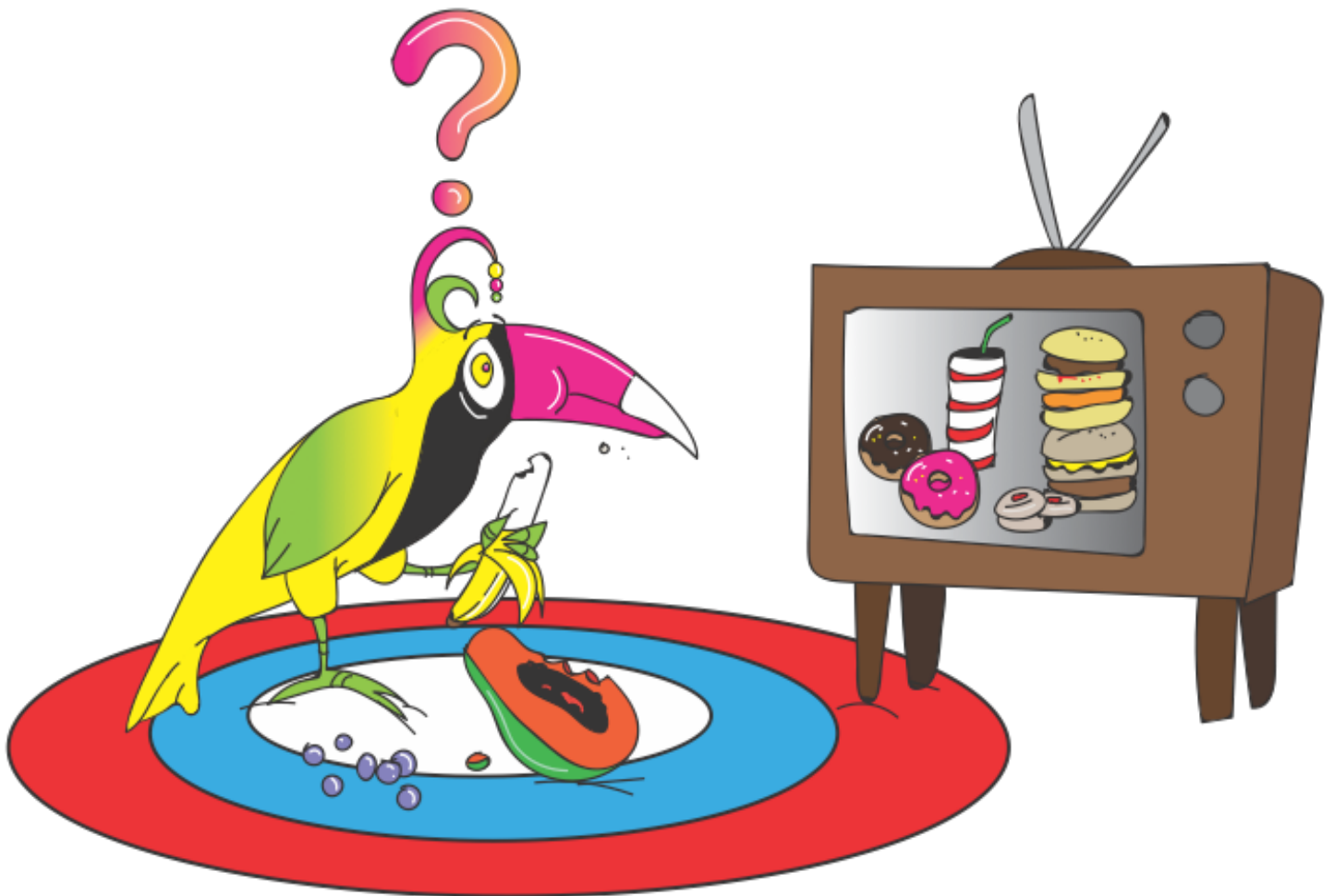
- Introduce the idea that learning is not about following the same path; it can be done in different ways. Just as they identified different start points, every time you begin a learning engagement everyone has a different start point because of the prior knowledge, perspective, etc. that they bring with them. Everyone will move from that point to another point and that will become the start point for something new. That in this class, learning is about finding ways for things to make sense, so the learners must have agency or a say in how the learning journey will and can look. This idea must be followed up with action, where the learners can test and try their own way of determining their learning processes.



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices that are connected to **WHY** this learning might be connected to your life outside the classroom?



RESPONSE-ABILITY

Who can? You can...

Do you have any choices that are connected to **WHY** this learning might be connected to your life outside the classroom?



What ideas do you have about the why people might need to learn this? How does it connect to the real world?

What choices would you like to be able to make that helps you use these ideas in the real world?

What do you need to think about when making choices, thinking about how this learning may impact on you or others?

Ideas for teachers/parents about agency and the WHY of learning

- Asking learners to engage with ideas about the WHY of learning helps them see learning as portable, useful and relevant in their lived lives outside the classroom.
- Supporting and scaffolding learners as they identify and connect to the WHY of learning gives learners the opportunity to become agents in their own learning. As they engage with ideas and practices that they see as useful, meaningful and relevant regarding problems and possibilities that they will also engage with outside the classroom. It invites them to see that their prior knowledges, perspectives and experiences, etc. are relevant and useful, thus giving them a stronger place to stand as they engage with new ideas. It can also invite them to share their expert, insider knowledges, skills etc. in class learning with their peers

Value and try and find time for learners to:

- Engage with problems and possibilities and develop ownership of learning
- Explore the connections learning has with the real world and vice versa
- Use reflection strategies and displays that allow learners to add real life connections, personal wonderings, books, artifacts, images, etc., that they see as relevant to the inquiry
- Develop an 'I can' board, where learners can record skills, knowledges, perspectives, etc. that they hold and can share with other learners to access and call on if they need to explore or reflect on ideas with a peer.

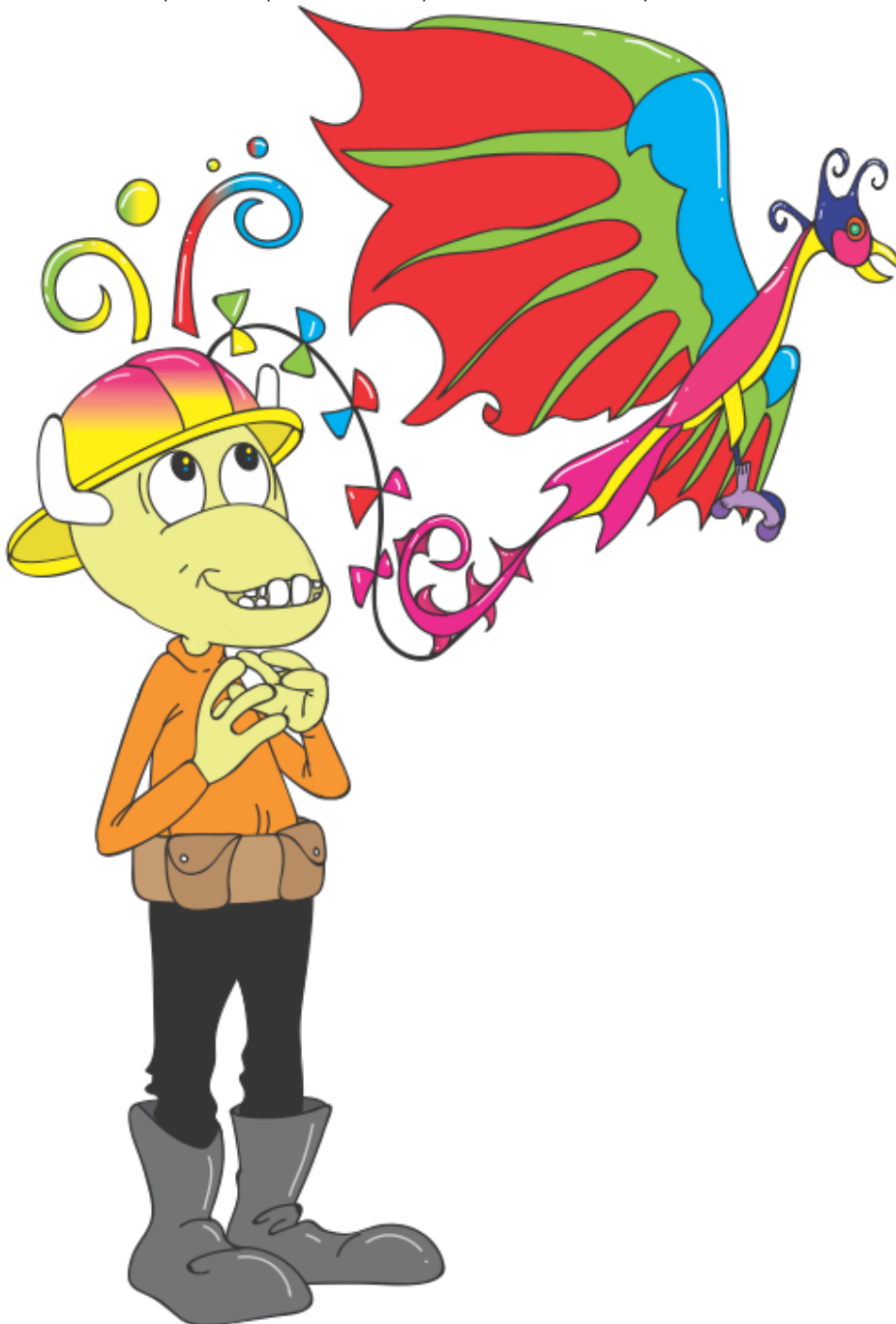


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