

Tools for Student Self-Management in the Classroom

Adapted from:

Andrew Miller. (2016) Tools for Student Self-Management. *Edutopia*.

Students should be invited into the process of self-managing in the classroom. Here are some tools many teachers have used to empower students to self-manage.

Team Operating Agreements

Agreements or contracts created or co-created with students can be a great tool to help them own their challenges when it comes to self-management. While you might have class or school norms, students may not find a true attachment to them. When students create norms, they are more likely to follow them. In addition, students can create norms and agreements that are personalized. While one team might need an agreement about keeping their hands and feet to themselves, another might need one about the free expression of ideas. Norms and agreements should meet the needs of students, not simply be imposed upon them. When students help create the norms, it's more likely that they will meet the students' needs.

Task Lists

In addition, students may need scaffolds to organize their thinking, planning, and overall work. They can use task lists to assign tasks to specific team members. Sometimes these sheets have places for teachers, team leaders, and others to sign off when tasks are completed. Scrumby is an online tool I have used with students to organize their work -- it functions as an interactive planning tool. Task lists are also great tools for assessment and conversations on equitable collaboration.

Checklists and Rubrics

Of course, rubrics and checklists are tried-and-true tools for self-management. There is nothing new here, but it's a good reminder that assessment tools are also great management tools. They promote reflection and goal setting, as well as ownership of the work. Checklists and rubrics are more powerful when they are co-created with students, as students tend to understand and take ownership of expectations. Keep checklists and rubrics available to students and plan intentional time for students to use them to assess themselves and their peers, to help manage projects, and to keep constant momentum in the learning process.

Time Management Logs

Using time management logs, students document how long they spend on specific tasks, assignments, or collaborative work. They can do this over the course of a week or longer. The intent is to document and then reflect upon the time they spend learning and working. The log may surprise students and inspire them to use their time more efficiently.

Flexible Seating and Spaces

I'm a big fan of classrooms that have a variety of places for students to work. Some students need quiet zones while others need collaborative tables. Some students work well with exercise balls as seats while others prefer standing desks. There are many possibilities for meeting students' needs in classroom seating and arrangement. Meeting those needs can promote student ownership of how and where they work and learn. As the teacher, you can coach them through the process of selecting appropriate spaces to work and learn, and students will learn to self-manage this choice as well.

Reflection and Goal Setting

All of the tools above are completely ineffective unless they are paired with reflection time. Just as we take time to reflect on content learning, we also need to take time to reflect on the learning process. All of the tools above provide great opportunities for students to reflect on how they have learned in targeted ways and to set goals. Learning logs are a great tool for this as well, as they promote the process of learning, not just the product. Don't forget reflection on self-management -- it's critical.

Remember, the greatest tool for management is engagement. Even when our students are engaged, they still need tools to manage themselves. Different tools work for different students, so try experimenting with a mix of the tools above to have students take more ownership of managing their learning process.