

[Increased Student Ownership = Elevated Student Achievement]

By: Robert Crowe

As teachers, we all want the same thing—students achieving more and to a higher degree. We know that this is accomplished through our teaching. But are we teaching everything we should? Aside from core subjects, what else is there?

It is clear from the research that equally important to teaching core subjects is teaching students how to take ownership of their learning. There is only so much we can “teach” if the student doesn’t recognize he’s supposed to “learn.” The most effective way to get them to understand their role in education is to get them to take ownership of their learning.

With increased student ownership comes increased student achievement.

What does student ownership mean? And how do we accomplish this? Student ownership means students have the authority, responsibility, and the capacity to own their learning. And we accomplish this by delegating to students the authority, responsibility and the capacity to own their learning.

Give students the authority: We hand over the power to make decisions. This doesn’t mean that students decide what they want to learn solely based on their interests. This would not prepare them to explore content they have never been exposed to. This means that as students are learning something new they have the authority to determine what they need to master that skill—frequency of practice and types of practice, opportunities to authentically apply learning, opportunities to transfer learning into new situations. It is our role as teachers to ensure that students have the authority to make decisions about how they will grow and learn.

Give students the responsibility: We empower students to be accountable for their learning. This doesn’t mean that they alone drive their instruction. This means that students are part of the plan. They know what they are going to learn, how they will be taught it and how they will demonstrate their understanding. It is our role as teachers to ensure that students have the responsibility to be part of their own learning plan and understand their role in the plan.



Give students the capacity: We provide students with the ability or power to experience or understand something. This doesn't mean that students only need skills and knowledge in order to learn to mastery. It means students are provided with the skills necessary to succeed by knowing what these skills are, why they need them, and how they will use them in their current and future learning. It is our role as teachers to ensure that students have the capacity to analyze and reflect on their own growth.

Is fostering student ownership easy for a teacher to do? Yes. But it does mean that the teacher needs to be open to the challenges of learning from mistakes, modeling the skills needed to succeed in college and career, explicitly teaching how to master the skills of ownership and, most importantly, be willing to give up some of their authority, responsibility, and capacity to the students.