Learner Independence
Practitioner develops learner independence through intentional focus on growing learner skills, knowledge and understanding, and incorporating student voice in learning experiences.

**Key Method**
The practitioner provides opportunities for students to reflect on themselves as learners, their academic readiness, strengths, areas of growth, preferences, etc., and incorporates opportunities for students to use this information in developing their learning path.

**Method Components**

**Goals of Learner Independence**
An overarching goal of personalized learning is to develop learners’ skills, knowledge, and understanding so that they can succeed in the world long after they’ve graduated. Consequently, we need to give learners opportunities to make important choices and deal with consequences in ways that build decision-making skills.

By encouraging curiosity and a desire to understand, we can prepare learners to stay connected in a world that is rapidly changing. And by giving them opportunities to plan, build, and assess their own learning, we make them less dependent on others and on formal structures to guide their learning. In the end, our job as educators is to reduce learners’ dependence on us so that our roles are no longer crucial to their learning success.

Learner independence is the ultimate outcome for students (See Learner Independence Continuum on the Institute’s website: https://cesa1transformation.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/learning-independence-continuum/)

Through self-reflection and feedback and by utilizing tools to support understanding of themselves as learners, students develop their “capacity to learn.” Developing learner independence will allow for the transfer of skills and knowledge to be used outside of school and throughout the students’ lives.

**Changing Relationship Between Practitioner and Learner:**

**Legacy Model**
In a legacy model, the educators transfer their knowledge to learners as dictated by standards and the curriculum regardless of individual readiness. Under this model, if formative assessments show that students aren’t learning what’s been taught, teachers must do what they can to reteach aspects of their lessons while pushing ahead at a predetermined pace, ultimately administering a summative assessment and assigning grades and moving on whether all learners are ready to or not. Learning often is considered primarily the student’s responsibility rather than a direct reflection of the educators’ skills, approach, efforts, and partnership with the learner.

**Personalized Model**

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In a personalized learning model, the learner-educator relationship shifts. In this model, educators and learners work together to determine the order, pace, and assessment of learning to meet the dictates of standards and curriculum. Here the assumption is that teachers can only be successful if their students are. Consequently, they are positioned to be strong advocates for student learning rather than serving primarily as planners, presenters, and assessors.

Shifts some learners will encounter when implementing the honeycomb model:
- Skilled students → Skilled lifelong learners
- Minimal input into their educational path → Co-creating their educational path
- Compliant listeners → Committed learners
- “Delivered” instruction → Shared responsibility for instruction
- Summative assessments based on questions → Summative assessments that are demonstrations of mastery

Shifts some educators will encounter when implementing the honeycomb model:
- Planning lessons → Designers of learning
- Sole content providers → Curators of learning resources and experiences
- Judge and documenter → Advocate, coach, and learning partner
- Adherence to best practice → Engagement with effective practices
- Teaching as telling → Instruction as diagnosis, flexibility, and nurturing of learning

Shifts some administrators will encounter when implementing the honeycomb model:
- Demand compliance → Build commitment
- Skepticism → Lead with trust
- Focus on problems → Be alert for opportunities
- Focus on performance and practices of adults → Focus on the experiences of the learners

Administers will also
- Lead with “why,” be clear about “what,” and stay flexible about “how”
- Create urgency, build awareness, and support innovation

Suggested Guidelines for Supporting Learner Independence

- **Co-create Learning Experiences**
  Learner Profile – Students self-reflect on themselves as learners, incorporating their academic readiness, strengths, weaknesses, learning preferences, etc.

  Customized Learning Paths – Students develop learner independence by co-creating their learning path based on their learning readiness level and understanding of themselves as learners

  This can be accomplished by:
  - Co-creating customized learning paths based on the Common Core State Standards and other appropriate frameworks.
  - Codesigning learning experiences that support the relationship between motivation, learning, and personal satisfaction.

- **Developing Learners’ Self-Assessment Skills**
  Proficiency-Based Progress – Students develop learner independence through self-assessing their readiness level on identified learning outcomes and moving at a flexible pace.

  This can be accomplished by:
- Helping learners recognize and adapt to changes in learning pathways to maximize learning and engagement.
- Regularly guiding learners toward independent monitoring of progress and demonstration of mastery.

**Provide Guidance and Feedback**
- Create menus of multiple work options to assist learners in planning active, autonomous, authentic learning.
- Regularly guide learners in developing, selecting, and utilizing learning strategies, methods, and tools to attain personalized learning goals.
- Mentor learners, offering guidance and feedback according to the diverse needs and goals of each learner.
- Serve as a guide, drawing on others’ knowledge and experience, including students themselves, to encourage and sustain learner engagement.
- Regularly supports learners in “on track” deep interest in a topic in the absence of tangible rewards.

### Supporting Research


### Resources

**Learner Independence Continuum**

- Learner Independence White Paper https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6A80mT6nthPeUlMZ19pZnJaVVU/view?usp=sharing

- Learner Independence Blog Post Series (summary of white paper)
  - Overview of Learner Independence https://cesa1transformation.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/learning-independence-continuum/

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Moving Students Along the Learner Independence Continuum

- Student Motivation, Engagement and Achievement [Link](http://bit.ly/2pCgUto)
- 21 Simple Ideas to Improve Student Motivation [Link](http://www.teachthought.com/teaching/21-simple-ideas-to-improve-student-motivation/)

Additional Resources

- The Keys to Learner Agency [Link](http://bit.ly/2pRBKBx)
- Learner Agency: The Missing Link [Link](http://institute4pl.org/index.php/2015/09/14/learner-agency-the-missing-link/)
- Three Strategies to Promote Independent Thinking in Classrooms [Link](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/3-strategies-promote-independent-thinking-margaret-regan)
- Independent Learning: What role does the teacher have to play? [Link](http://www.creativeeducation.co.uk/blog/index.php/2011/05/independent-learning/)

**Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria**

*The items in this following section detail what must be submitted for evaluation. To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1 and 3 and a "Yes" for Part 2.*

**Part 1. Overview Questions**

(200-word limit)

- **Process:** Describe the process you went through in developing learner independence with students in your learning experience.
  - **Passing:** Reflection must include information on how you help students develop their skills, knowledge, and learning capacity so that they succeed without depending excessively on external structures and direction.

**Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts**

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following:
• An artifact that demonstrates how you provide opportunities for students to reflect on themselves as learners, their academic readiness, strengths, areas of growth, preferences, etc. Artifacts can be written (200-word limit), recorded (2-3 minutes), or student examples, etc.

• An artifact that demonstrates how you provided opportunities for students to use the above information in developing their learning path. Artifacts can be written (200-word limit), audio/video (2-3 minutes), or student examples, etc.

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<th>“Yes”</th>
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| Artifacts (2) include information on how the practitioner provided opportunities for students to reflect on:  
  - themselves as learners  
  - their academic readiness  
  - their strengths  
  - areas of growth  
  - preferences, etc. | Artifacts (2) did not include information on how the practitioner provided opportunities for students to reflect on:  
  - themselves as learners  
  - their academic readiness  
  - their strengths  
  - areas of growth  
  - preferences, etc. |
| AND | AND |
| Submitted artifacts demonstrate how practitioner provided opportunities for students to use the above information in developing their learning path. | Submitted artifacts did not demonstrate how practitioner provided opportunities for students to use the above information in developing their learning path. |
| | Artifacts did not meet the required word limit and/or time limit. |

**Part 3. Practitioner Reflection**

Provide a written reflection on at least two of the following (500-word limit):

• What was successful about intentionally focusing on the development of learner independence? What were the challenges you came across?
• What are four to five learner “look fors” you would see reflected in a learning environment because of a focus on learner independence?
• What was the role of the learner? What was your role?
• What will you refine as you move forward with intentionally focusing on the development of learner independence?
  - **Passing:** Reflection clearly discusses at least two of the following: success and challenges, four to five learner look-fors, role of the learners and role of the educator, and plans for refining the focus on development of learner independence.