AGENCY AND CHOICE

Agency is the capacity to influence what happens. Choice is one way agency can be experienced, but choosing between adult-selected options is not the same as shaping an experience.

WHAT MEANINGFUL AGENCY CAN LOOK LIKE

INITIATE	Learners introduce an idea, question, game or direction of inquiry.
INFLUENCE	Their suggestions genuinely change the materials, roles, pace or direction.
NEGOTIATE	Learners work with others to decide rules, solve disagreements and share decisions.
REVISIT	They can return to an idea, change their mind and develop it over time.

CHOICE IS NOT ALWAYS AGENCY

A learner may choose a colour, partner or activity while the adult still controls the purpose, process and outcome. Meaningful agency involves some real influence, within boundaries that protect safety, inclusion and learning.

Ask yourself: Which parts of this experience are genuinely open to learners — and which have I already decided?

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AGENCY AND CHOICE

REFLECTING ON OUR PRACTICE

Think about a recent classroom experience. Use the questions below to notice where learners have influence, and where more room might be possible.

WHO SETS THE DIRECTION?

Who decides what the experience is about? Can learners introduce questions or ideas?

WHAT CAN CHANGE?

Can learners alter materials, rules, roles, timing or the way a problem is approached?

WHOSE VOICES COUNT?

How do non-speaking, hesitant or marginalised learners influence what happens?

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

When learners take an unexpected direction, do we explore it or return them to our plan?

A SMALL AGENCY AUDIT

Choose one upcoming learning experience. Mark who currently makes each decision.

Purpose or question	Adult / Shared / Learner
Materials and approach	Adult / Shared / Learner
When to revisit or stop	Adult / Shared / Learner

One change I will make:
Identify one decision learners could genuinely influence, and notice what happens when I make room for it.

Remember: Agency is not the absence of boundaries. It is having a meaningful voice within them.

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