

## I-2: Convince students that they want academic success (“I Want”)

### Provide Students with Academic Choices

Teachers develop students’ desire to succeed by infusing significant choice and responsibility into their classrooms to increase ownership of learning. In order for students to fully embrace the importance of their goals and the significant impact of *their own* hard work and good choices, students need to have some control over their learning (which, research confirms, enhances intrinsic motivation).

Try to avoid endless scenarios where students have no choice but to do what the teacher asks of them. Resentment and disinvestment will quickly arise if you fail to acknowledge students’ need for self-assertion.

### Strategies for Providing Choice

<p><b>Determine student interests at the beginning of the year</b></p>	<p>Get a glimpse of your students’ curiosities.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year offer a list of general topics you’re considering teaching and ask students to choose the 10 that interest them the most. (By doing so you offer them an empowering opportunity to shape their own learning, and convey to them the active role they will play in your classroom.)</p>
<p><b>Determine student interests prior to a unit</b></p>	<p>Get a sense of what your students want to learn and what they care about.</p> <p>You might find it helpful to use interest questionnaires or student surveys like the example below this table, KWL charts (see the I-2 Tools page), or similar tools.</p> <p><a href="#">Interest Questionnaires or Student Surveys</a></p> <p>KWL charts (read more about these on the Tools page)</p>
<p><b>Offer multi-product option assignments</b></p>	<p>Let your students regularly choose amongst multiple product assignments to ensure that their interests can be pursued. Let students choose the method through which they can express their knowledge.</p> <p>Meaningful choice is more intricate than simply offering three different essay questions from which to choose. Substantial choices for exploring a topic could include:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Writing and performing a play</li> <li>▪ Creating a newsletter complete with photos and articles</li> <li>▪ Creating a multiple-choice exam</li> <li>▪ Writing a letter</li> <li>▪ Developing a mural with labels</li> <li>▪ Creating and singing a rap explaining a scientific process</li> <li>▪ Interviewing older students who have already studied the topic</li> <li>▪ Planning and delivering a lesson to introducing the topic to younger students</li> </ul>
<p><b>Give multiple content options within an assignment</b></p>	<p>Let students select from different content choices.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Ms. Prasad incorporated the principles of student choice when covering content standards on labor laws and unions. She planned to focus on the organization and purpose of unions and labor laws, but she knew student interest in the topic would vary. So she decided to give a general overview of unions and allow students to explore a labor union of their own choosing.</p> <p>She developed a list of unions that would appeal to a broad group of students, including the Pullman Porters, United Farm Workers, American Federation of Labor, Screen Actors Guild, sporting unions, the American Federation of Musicians, the American Federation of Teachers, and a couple of local unions with which her students might have a personal connection. She gathered information and collected resources for each of these groups to ensure students could engage in meaningful research. She briefly introduced each union to the students, and let them review the information that night so they would be prepared to make an informed selection the next day.</p> <p>The following day students chose the topic they would research. She presented the expectations for their work along with a timeline. Their projects would allow for an exploration that would determine how the union historically used or currently uses its power, influence and resources to obtain rights and privileges for its members.</p>
<p><b>Provide process options for student engagement of material</b></p>	<p>Offer a variety of activity options to enable students to master the content. Let students choose between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interest centers that encourage students to explore subsets of the class topic of particular interests</li> <li>▪ Meeting with small groups</li> <li>▪ Independent work</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide multiple materials</b></p>	<p>Textbooks should be treated as one of many resources. Whenever possible present a selection of primary source documents from which students can choose.</p>

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	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Historic and current newspaper articles</li> <li>▪ Letters to the editor discussing an historic or timely controversy</li> <li>▪ Print or television advertisements</li> <li>▪ Screenplays</li> <li>▪ Famous artwork</li> <li>▪ Unique software</li> <li>▪ Public records</li> <li>▪ Historical documents</li> <li>▪ Experts in their field</li> <li>▪ Political comic strips</li> <li>▪ Non-fiction books</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empower students with participatory democracy, when possible</b></p>	<p>Encourage student input on classroom decisions. Periodically let them choose their own work partners. Consider letting them choose their own seat assignments when possible. Take class votes about collective decisions that need to be made.</p>
<p>Note: “Choice” does not equal “permissiveness” (letting students do whatever they want) Rather than actually leave all choices up to students, successful teachers set up a context in which any choice students make will be on the path to the Big Goals and thereby increase their sense of autonomy and responsibility.</p>	

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Sample Interest Questionnaire:**What Do You Want to Learn About the Civil Rights Movement?**

Here are some options for what we might study during our exploration of the Civil Rights Movement. Which topics interest you the most? Put a 1 next to topics that you are most interested in, 2 next to topics that you are somewhat interested in, and 3 next to those topics don't interest you at all.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Civil Rights Leaders
- \_\_\_\_\_ Civil Rights Speeches
- \_\_\_\_\_ Racial Violence & the KKK
- \_\_\_\_\_ Segregation in America
- \_\_\_\_\_ Civil Disobedience & Boycotts
- \_\_\_\_\_ Important Court Cases
- \_\_\_\_\_ Civil Rights Legislation (Laws)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Role of U.S. Presidents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Famous African-Americans who broke barriers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ in music      \_\_\_\_\_ in politics      \_\_\_\_\_ in sports      \_\_\_\_\_ in science
  - \_\_\_\_\_ in Hollywood      \_\_\_\_\_ in art      \_\_\_\_\_ in literature      \_\_\_\_\_ in business
  - \_\_\_\_\_ in other
- \_\_\_\_\_ Affirmative Action & the Legacy of the Movement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (tell me specifically what you would like to study):