

# 'AGENCY'

## Agentic Educator enable Agentic Children

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In early childhood, children are not just passive recipients of learning. They are **rights-holders** who should be respected, listened to, and included in decisions appropriate to their age, stage of development, and communication abilities.

Each child has a right to express their views and have those views taken seriously. **Supporting agency is one practical way educators uphold children's rights every day.**

**Child agency** is connected to children's rights because children have the right to be listened to, respected, and involved in decisions that affect their lives. When educators support agency, they recognise children as capable rights-holders who can express views, make choices, influence their learning, and participate meaningfully in daily experiences. This includes noticing verbal and non-verbal communication and ensuring every child's voice is valued and responded to.

Supporting agency does not mean giving children unlimited control; it means creating safe, respectful and inclusive opportunities for children to **participate, make choices, and have their views considered** in ways that are appropriate to their age, development and individual needs.



### The Agentic Child

**When children are agentic, they are active, curious, and capable participants in their own learning..** They make choices, express ideas and preferences, explore interests, solve problems, and communicate in many ways. Their agency is seen through play, relationships, decision-making, independence, and their ability to influence the experiences and environments around them.

Child agency is closely connected to children's rights because agency is about children having a voice, choice, participation, and influence in matters that affect them.



# AGENTIC MOMENTS

I choose where, how, or with whom I want to play

I use words, gestures, movement, or play to express ideas

I follow my own interests

I make decisions about materials, roles, or activities

I want to do things for myself

I say 'no', to show preferences, or communicate discomfort

I have ownership over my own learning

I contribute to routines, rules, projects, or group decisions

I try to solve problems independently or with support

I ask questions and follow their own curiosity

I revisit ideas or experiences that are meaningful to me



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## How do Educators support Agency?

Agentic educators adopt a **strengths-based view** of young children. They support agency by listening attentively, recognising both verbal and non-verbal communication, providing meaningful choices, responding to children's interests, and creating inclusive environments where every child can participate and have an influence.

Agency does not mean children do everything on their own. Educators **facilitate, guide and support** in an environment where children are respected as capable learners whose voices and choices matter.



### Slow Relational Pedagogy

A slow relational pedagogy allows children the time and opportunity for repetition and revisiting experiences. By slowing the pace of routines, interactions, and explorations, educators create space for children to make choices and decisions and influence what happens next.

### Child-centred Documentation

Documentation based on the strengths, interests and needs of the individual child is central to supporting agency and child participation. The child's competencies are visible to them and they can revisit, reflect and shape new learning outcomes.



## An Environment that Invites Agency

Educators nurture agency when they:

- **Listen to children's voices** — including words, gestures, body language, play, behaviour, facial expressions, and silence.
- **Offer real choices** — such as choosing materials, activities, play partners, roles, spaces, or routines where appropriate.
- **Follow children's interests** — using children's questions, ideas, and curiosities to shape planning and learning experiences.
- **Encourage decision-making** — allowing children to contribute to classroom rules, routines, projects, and problem-solving.
- **Respect children as capable learners** — trusting that babies, toddlers, and young children can express preferences and make meaningful contributions.
- **Support independence** — giving children time and space to try things for themselves, while still offering guidance when needed.
- **Create inclusive environments** — ensuring every child can participate, including children who communicate non-verbally or need additional support.
- **Enable children to reflect on and revisit their own learning** through documentation.
- **Practice a Slow Pedagogy** - ensuring children have time to revisit, question and explore at a deeper level.
- **Reflect on their own practice** — asking, 'How can I give children more influence/choice/independence?'