ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF EMPOWERING CHARACTERISTICS IN AMERICAN AND SWEDISH ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

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Empowering students to be lifelong learners is a foundational objective of both the Swedish and American education systems. Teachers in both cultures enact numerous strategies in their classrooms to empower students through social and academic avenues. Research has shown the effects of educational empowerment but has not clearly identified core characteristics for developing an empowering classroom. Therefore, this paper aims to answer the question: What is it about a specific activity that makes it empowering? This study reflects ethnographic observational vignettes collected as a student intern in an American first grade classroom and a Swedish second grade classroom. It seeks to unpack the concept of empowerment by identifying and explaining the underlying characteristics of empowerment through dissecting each vignette. By analyzing each of these vignettes and collaborating with teachers, it can be ascertained that self-regulation, authenticity, and perceived control and ownership are essential characteristics of empowering elementary school students.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

Chapter 1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
   Purpose ................................................................................................................................. 4

Chapter 2 Student Choice in the Curriculum ...................................................................... 5
   Inquiry-Based Learning ..................................................................................................... 5
   Engineering Process .......................................................................................................... 5
   Writer’s Workshop ............................................................................................................ 8
   Reader’s Workshop ........................................................................................................... 10
   Service Learning ............................................................................................................. 12
   Student Choice for Classroom Management ................................................................. 15
   Impact of Student Choice ................................................................................................. 17

Chapter 3 Student Self-Management ................................................................................... 18
   Positive Classroom Atmosphere ....................................................................................... 18
   Conflict Resolution Techniques ....................................................................................... 19
      Classroom Discussions and Restorative Circles ........................................................... 20
      Using Appropriate Language ....................................................................................... 21
   Student Responsibility ..................................................................................................... 22

Chapter 4 Goal Setting ....................................................................................................... 25
   Goal-Setting Conferences ............................................................................................... 25
   Student-Determined Goals ............................................................................................... 27

Chapter 5 Characteristics of Empowering Curriculum ....................................................... 35
   Self-Regulation ............................................................................................................... 35
   Authenticity ....................................................................................................................... 37
   Perceived Control and Ownership .................................................................................... 39

Chapter 6 Conclusions ......................................................................................................... 41

Appendix A Goal-Setting Attitude Survey ........................................................................... 44

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................................................................................... 47
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Self-Regulation Chart........................................................................................................16
Figure 2. Atudent Attitude Survey..................................................................................................28
Figure 3. Possible student goals.......................................................................................................30
Figure 4. Ways to work towards goals............................................................................................31
Figure 5. Goal-setting folder............................................................................................................32
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In both American and Swedish educational paradigms, empowerment is considered the paramount technique for developing life-long learning habits in students. Empowerment encompasses much more than simply the individual; it is a community setting in which both the individual and community benefit. Due to this dynamic interaction, empowerment theory is rooted in the works of community psychology. Researchers in community psychology work to discover paradoxes that arise throughout the community and develop proposed social explanations and reforms. For example, freedom and equality are both attributes of the idealized community but both cannot be maximized concurrently (Rappaport, 1981). Thus, empowerment theory has risen as a channel for explaining the social influence of individuals through community environments (Rappaport, 1987).

According to Zimmerman & Rappaport (1988) empowerment implements an individual’s strengths into social settings, through proactive behavior, to develop social change. Thus, for individuals to feel empowered by their community, they must feel supported by their environment while maintaining perceived control over their individual situation. This exemplifies the stratification of empowerment between three different elements: individual, community, and organization. Rappaport (1987) explains that empowerment “conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights” (p. 121). The multilevel development suggests that empowerment is the study of people in context.
In education, the organizational element is crucial to success because without the support of the governmental organizations, individual schools can not develop empowering practices in their classroom communities. This will make it incredibly difficult for an individual to develop self-regulation, authenticity, perceived control and ownership, and intrinsic motivation. Thus, the three levels are interwoven to manifest opportunities for empowering practices to arise in the classroom.

To develop an empowering community in education, students must first feel accepted and welcomed into the environment. If they do not feel supported and empowered by their environment, it will be increasingly difficult to develop individual empowerment. To enhance this perceived support, teachers are responsible for developing a dialogue of trust and care among students and all actors within the environment. When students begin to feel comfortable, then they can start to grow and explore strategies for developing academic and social success. Once this crucial foundation has been developed, teachers can implement strategies for empowering students to become life-long learners.

To understand empowerment for the purposes of this paper, the concept must first be analyzed in both the Swedish and American perspectives. To analyze a more comprehensive viewpoint, I chose to interview various Swedish actors in the educational setting of Sweden. One principal of an elementary school (who chose to remain anonymous) had great difficulty articulating her thoughts about empowerment because she said that it was so foundational to their educational viewpoint that it was difficult to separate the concept of empowerment from general education in Sweden. However, Ebby Walts, a Swedish elementary school teacher, offered the following insight about educational paradigms and empowerment:
Empowerment is key. To increase students' ability to develop and work independently I need to visualize the goal of teaching. The student must know what to learn, what I expect of the student and how it achieves its goals. This is really the backbone of all education. The theories behind this are Vygotsky 'proximal development zones'. Before I start with a teaching area I always make a plan that includes students’ interests, goals and approach at a level that students understand. I customize the content and requirements according to their different condition. This makes the students more independent so that they can take responsibility for their learning.

The competencies that she highlighted were affirmed by other Swedish education counterparts as the core elements of empowerment in Swedish elementary schools.

The United States of America has a similar perspective on the goals of empowering students in the classroom. The mission of the United States Department of Education is to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (United States Department of Education, 2016). From this mission, one of the paramount objectives of the educational organization is to develop life-long learners who have both the passion and drive to achieve educational excellence. From these two perspectives on empowerment, two major questions remain:

1. What strategies do teachers use to empower their students to develop life-long learning habits?

2. What is it about those specific activities that make them empowering?
Purpose

To gain an understanding of empowering strategies in both the Swedish and American educational settings, I researched both cultures using ethnographic methodology. As a student teacher in a Swedish second grade classroom for five weeks and student intern in an American first grade classroom for one year, I was able to experience and implement empowering strategies first-hand in the classroom. This research demonstrates vignettes of various activities in both environments imbedded with the current literature about empowering strategies according to the three main characteristics of self-regulation, authenticity, and perceived control and ownership. Each vignette is recorded observationally with analysis following about the purpose and empowering ability of the recorded interaction.

This paper reviews empowering classroom techniques that aid students in becoming life-long learners. If the goal of these two educational systems is to develop successful learners, previous research suggests that we need to aid students in organizing their work, setting realistic goals, and managing themselves (Zimmerman, 1998; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinex-Pons, 1988; Usher & Pajares, 2008). From my observational and literary research, I determined three categories that I believe are the most widely utilized strategies for developing life-long learning in elementary schools in Sweden and the United States of America. The empowering strategies are: student choice in the curriculum, goal setting and self-monitoring.

However, the purpose of this paper is to not to identify activities that are empowering but explain the characteristics of those activities to distinguish why and how the activity empowers students. The three characteristics that appear throughout each vignette presented are self-regulation, authenticity, and perceived control and ownership.
Chapter 2

Student Choice in the Curriculum

Student choice in the curriculum is one of the largest components of student empowerment because it enables pupils to take ownership over their own learning. When student choice is a part of a classroom environment, students often feel that they are a stronger sense of belonging in the classroom because their voice is being heard. They are more likely to take pride in their work when they feel that it is partially their choice to do so. When teachers can integrate elements of choice into their curriculum, they enable students to take ownership over their learning, which increases the probability for natural curiosity and fosters intrinsic motivation. The following vignettes support this claim.

Inquiry-Based Learning

Engineering Process

Teachers often choose to empower their students and foster intrinsic motivation by enacting student choice, within parameters, for specific curricular objectives. For example, teachers may choose to engage in inquiry learning in their classroom. When I was teaching pollination in a first-grade classroom, I rooted my lesson planning in inquiry-based learning and student choice to teach both the scientific concept of pollination and the engineering process. The following vignette demonstrates our inquiry process:
“Today we are going to be Engineers! Right now, in China, many bees are dying out and they are not able to pollinate flowers. So, we need to figure out a way to help them pollinate their flowers without insects!” I walked the class through the engineering process of making hand pollinators and prompted them to ask questions about the problem they were trying to solve. Then, I asked them to plan their hand-pollinators and think about which materials would be the best to include. Students used their baking soda with their hand pollinators to test how much “pollen” (baking soda) could be moved from one flower to another. They recorded the amount of pollen and then brought their results back to the whole group to discuss. Some students disagreed on which materials transferred the most pollen and they provided supporting evidence from their recording sheet.

James shared his evidence, “I disagree with that because I found the pom pom to be the best pollinator. It picked it up and dropped it off. The tape just picked it up.” I then asked the students to redesign their hand pollinators based on their results. I told them to think about the characteristics of the different materials and which ones might be best based on the class’ science talk. We then planned to re-test our hand pollinators and have another science talk about our findings.

In this vignette, students had choice in the materials they selected (pom-pom, eraser, pencil, aluminum foil, tape, and penny) which prompted disputes about which material was the best pollinator. Zembal-Saul, McNeill, & Hershberger (2013) argue that, “talking about their thinking requires students to process their understandings as they attempt to articulate their ideas” (p. 12). Through our whole-group discussion, students were able to grapple with their thinking and were challenged to articulate their ideas in agreement or disagreement with peers. I
guided them through providing evidence for their claims and then using the proper vocabulary for agreeing and disagreeing with their classmates results. By discussing our results, we were able to talk about the differences in data collection and develop our learning together instead of simply being provided with the “accurate results” from the beginning. This discussion would not have occurred without the foundational student choice throughout the lesson. Each partner set was able to choose his or her own materials, which presented varied results and allowed for an interesting discussion to arise.

However, this discussion did not result simply because there was time for it in the classroom – the entire lesson revolved around inquiry and student understanding in a bottom-up philosophy. The primary model for science teaching in the United States is currently hands-on learning (Zembal-Saul, McNeill & Hershberger, 2013), which is a more top-down philosophy where teachers tell students what to do and students simply enact the experiment through pre-determined steps. (Think about the scientific process.) Yet, allowing students to have choice through inquiry is what leads to deeper cognitive learning. The purpose of inquiry is to solve a problem and this process empowers students to find real solutions rather than simply completing worksheets. This higher-order thinking comes when students must articulate their thinking and support their learning, which the inquiry process prepares them to do. When learning is only hands-on, the importance of the big ideas and meaning making is minimalized and core state standards are not met (Zembal-Saul, McNeill & Hershberger, 2013). Even though students may be handling the materials, if they are not truly developing solutions and working out problems then they are not learning at their full potential. The Pennsylvania DOE Standards Aligned System identify that students should be able to, “Recognize design is a creative process and everyone can design solutions to problems” (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2016). If students
are simply presented with an experiment to replicate, the design and creative processes are absent in their learning and that higher-order thinking has already been done for them. Allowing students to take ownership over all parts of the experiment allows them to make mistakes and learn from them. This allows them to identify errors and learn *how* and *why* our world works in a certain way. It doesn’t just replicate what they know happens, it shocks them and allows them to re-design and re-apply their learning as they learn through their own choices.

By implementing inquiry in the classroom, teachers empower their students to develop their own thinking and articulate their learning. It allows students to struggle to develop understanding. In this vignette, students struggled when thinking about the underlying characteristics of *why* one material would be a better pollinator than others. Yet, with the chance to discuss, improve, and re-design, students were able to deepen their understanding of pollinators and gain an understanding of how to find a solution to a problem in the future. Although inquiry learning may include the hands-on characteristic of working with materials, the difference is the surrounding inquiry which empowering students to develop and discuss their choices and findings, creating higher-order thinking.

**Writer’s Workshop**

Another way to view inquiry based learning and student choice is that this type of teaching allows students to dictate exactly what the final output will look like while keeping the curricular input constant. For example, students may all write a paper with similar structure but the content may vary. This allows students to choose something that intrinsically motivates
them. The following example from a Swedish elementary school illustrates students having choice in the writing curriculum while accomplishing the same curricular objectives:

Ellen sat down to a paper with three prompts on it. She thought about what she was interested in and then finally wrote down Titanic. Then she read the next prompt which said, “Jag ska ta reda på fakta fenom att” which translates to “I’ll find out the facts by...” Since she had just read an article about the Titanic in a magazine, she wrote that down first. Then she began to think about other ideas and wrote down: library, google, talk with Elly. Then she moved on to the next question, “Jag vill veta” which translates to “I want to know”. Since she had finished reading the article, one thing was bothering her so she wrote, “Why didn’t they know the Titanic would sink?”. She was the first one done with her worksheet and the other students were still coming up with their topics and questions. As soon as she was done, she headed to the library to look up books, articles, and online resources that would help her answer her inquiry.

This is an example of student choice in Swedish curriculum and how teachers can scaffold their content to accomplish curricular objectives while also empowering students through intrinsic motivation and inquiry. At the beginning of this lesson, each student in Ebby’s classroom was looking at the same sheet. It articulated the main ideas of what they were to do, however each student took it in a different direction. Each student chose something that they were interested in, such as whales or the Titanic, and asked a question. Then they set out to answer this question and were able to choose their own resources based on what they thought each one would provide them. This helps students expand their genre appetite, a main curricular objective in Swedish 2nd grade, according to Ebby. Since the students were interested in learning more about this topic, they were intrinsically motivated to explore resources and construct their own writing to answer
their initial inquiry. This task fulfills all of the intended writing (and additional reading) objectives but also engages students in the curriculum because they are able to choose a topic of interest to them. Although they do not have complete choice in the initial informational writing objective, the teacher provided appropriate scaffolding for the project to present enough student choice so that students felt empowered to engage with the content in their own way.

This type of teaching also empowers students to be able to answer their own questions when they are not in a school setting. By scaffolding them to think about the possible resources and not simply providing them with the answers, they will be better equipped to develop possible solutions later in life. Had the teacher simply answered all the questions, the students would only have learned that the teacher knows a lot more than they do. However, these students are beginning to develop a toolbox for solving their own problems without the need of assistance from an adult. A teacher’s main job is to facilitate learning which means empowering students to learn on their own. This vignette demonstrates a teacher encouraging students to explore their own wonderings to develop a deeper understanding about the world around them and to become less reliant on asking adults for the answers.

**Reader’s Workshop**

Incorporating student choice into reading can be an incredibly valuable technique since reading is one of the most important skills that students will use for all facets of their lives. When providing choice in the reading curriculum, teachers allow their students to experience the joy of reading. Students are able to read about topics that interest them and begin relating to characters that are facing similar problems to them. This natural joy of reading is a necessary
prerequisite for later learning which relies heavily on their ability to comprehend text passages.

To incorporate choice into reading, Mrs. Ozone’s U.S. class had the following system:

> Each morning, students came into the classroom and made their selections for reader’s workshop time. Anna came in and went up to the board. She put her card in read to self for the first block, then listened to reading (iPad) for the second block. Then she paused and looked at her choices. She knew that she had to have guided reading with Mrs. Ozone during her third block but her fourth and fifth blocks were still open. She couldn’t decide whether she wanted to do read to self again or if she wanted to do one of her required “work on writing” stations for the week. She knew she had to pick this station three times per week. She chose to do work on writing for her fourth station and then another read to self for her last station.

This vignette displays the amount of choice the students in this class have in their reading. They are self-regulating to figure out what they need to complete based on parameters set by the teacher. By having one rotation fixed for each student (guided reading) Mrs. Ozone can ensure that each student has guided reading time daily. However, she allows them a choice for the remainder of the selections with assigned guidelines, such as choosing work on writing at least three times a week and read to self every day. This choice allows students to gain responsibility for their own learning while still gaining the direct instruction mandated by the district curriculum. This model puts the responsibility of learning in the child’s hands by allowing them to make choices about their work. It helps students learn the foundation of self-regulation and managing time by having the students select their own activity for the different rounds of Daily 5. It also helps reader’s workshop time run much more smoothly.
When reading time came, Anna went right over to the board and looked at her first choice. Then she went over to her book bin and started reading to self. Each rotation was 12 minutes and when the timer went off, Anna knew exactly where to go since she had already made her choice in the morning. She met her guided reading group at Mrs. Ozone’s table during her third rotation but that was the only time that she ever talked with the teacher. She knew exactly what she was supposed to be doing and was on task for almost the entire work period.

This type of student choice allows reader’s workshop to have increased time on task because students have pre-selected their stations so that they know where they are going next. It also empowers students because of their perceived control over the situation. Students play an assertive role in their own learning through this technique by controlling their resources and their own decisions. Although there is structure, having perceived control increases students’ willingness to accept and participate because students understand the purpose of the activity (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Service Learning

Engaging students in life-long learning practices is one of education’s major paradigms. Student choice is a major component of showing students that they can take ownership over their learning and engage in learning practices during all parts of their lives. The previous examples have articulated how teachers can develop certain subjects and projects to include student choice but teachers can also choose to completely alter their curriculum to be driven by student choice and student wondering. This choice and student voice is the foundation for service learning –
students engage with civic participation and curricular objectives. Service learning “connects school-based curriculum with the inherent caring and concern young people have for their world” (Kaye, 2004, p. 8). This pedagogical practice allows, “students [to] benefit academically, socially, and emotionally; develop skills; explore numerous career options; and may come to appreciate the value of civic responsibility and actively participate in their community” (Kaye, 2004, p. 2). Therefore, service learning is a major support in empowering students to see their opportunities and provide them with the tools to make wonderings, inquiries, and change a reality. Student choice is at the heart of service learning because this strategy of teaching is based on the initial wonderings of students and is then connected to the curricular objectives that match student interests.

This form of learning not only engages children in the curriculum but also teaches them how to be social activists in their community. For example, Donnan Stoicovy, the principal of an American elementary school, allowed student voice to guide the entire school through a zero-waste initiative.

*A student asked Ms. Stoicovy one day in Small-School, “How can we become a zero-waste school?” Ms. Stoicovy took this student’s initial wondering and urged the student to investigate. This initial inquiry lead to an entire school initiative that started with Penn State staff conducting a waste audit of the school and two Penn State students diagraming the school’s waste infrastructure. From there, a Zero Waste Team comprised of students, parents, staff, and custodial staff was formed to review all of the information gathered. Students started making a difference as they learned more about the impact they could make by recycling. Student groups visited classrooms to talk about waste items, show where the containers were located, where different items go and the*
purpose of recycling. Individual classes inquired into the amount of paper towels wasted when students used more than they needed. One class put together a presentation for an all-school gathering that included visuals representing the amount of waste created simply through excess paper towel use (Adapted from Stoicovy, 2016).

Each of these student learning opportunities arose because the building principal listened to the wondering of a single student. By allowing the student to investigate his inquiry, she fostered authentic learning and empowered him to extend his learning beyond the traditional classroom. One of the major units in the primary grades is the “Going Green Unit” which discusses reducing, reusing, and recycling. This service learning opportunity allowed these students to authentically learn about the Three R’s and put them into action in their community. Not only did they learn about how and why we can recycle, they actually promoted it and worked to make a change based on real data that was collected. When students are allowed to explore and inquire into solving a problem or question that they create, they are automatically more engaged in the curriculum. Students can see the purpose for the work they are doing and they are motivated to continue working so they can find a solution.

This is an opportunity that was afforded to Park Forest Elementary because teachers allowed the curriculum to be student-centered and fluid based on student interests. Curricular standards were still met, but they were integrated into this service learning project which empowered students to be able to take social action in the future.
Student Choice for Classroom Management

Student choice is also a classroom-management technique which encourages the development of life-long learning habits. Teachers can create a basin of multiple activities from which students are able to choose the one that intrigues them the most. In Ebby’s Swedish classroom, when a student finished the designated task, they were able to independently continue academic progress through student-choice independent charts. The following describes this process:

When Frida finished her math worksheet, she knew exactly what to do. She pulled out a colored sheet of paper that demonstrated her options for “free-time” activities (See Figure 1). She had four columns as seen in the picture below, that were labeled with each activity: Ipads, extra-book (creative thinking workbook), reading, and crossword. She chose her first activity, which was reading, and after 10 minutes she colored in a block. Then, she left her chair and picked up an iPad in the back of the room and played a math bingo game. A few days later, Frida completed this chart and she made a new one with different activities, although she kept iPad and reading as options because those two were her favorites.
Each student had an independent self-regulation chart that was based to his or her interests; students chose from approximately 10 educational activities to create their charts and then used them whenever they completed a task earlier than other students. Other options for students to add to their charts included Legos, writing, and an English book. By allowing students to take ownership over their independent time, Ebby was purposefully fostering life-long learning habits. She could have given them a specific activity to do when they were done, however, this system allowed the students to have choice in what they would do. Students were responsible for regulating themselves and only taking 10 minutes for each activity. This system allowed students to take on the responsibility of filling their individual time with educational activities.
This system empowered the students to learn to manage their time and take these activities and make them a part of their daily routine in becoming life-long learners.

**Impact of Student Choice**

One of the major paradigms behind student choice is allowing the students to be at the forefront of curricular decisions. Teachers must be willing to adapt their curriculum to include topics that interest students as well as allow them to explore those interests. Across inquiry-based learning, service learning, and managing their own needs, students take increased responsibility in the classroom. With increased student choice, students are responsible for solving their own problems. They are responsible for managing their own time to take ownership over their learning as well as solving the real-world problems such as how to make the best hand pollinator. Thus, they are authentically learning how to solve their own problems in academic and social settings. By increasing the authenticity of learning through student choice, I believe teachers can increase the positive transfer of students’ learning to other facets of their lives. This aids in developing life-long learners which is one of the fundamental goals of educational empowerment.

The next chapter continues to examine how students can take ownership over their social needs and resolve conflicts to solve their own social problems. This chapter mainly focused on student choice in academics and briefly highlighted one student choice example for self-regulation. The following chapter will discuss many more tactics for empowering students through self-management.
Chapter 3

Student Self-Management

Positive Classroom Atmosphere

Students can be empowered by having a democratic voice in their classroom. This can come through many avenues. Teachers may choose to include students in developing classroom rules or a classroom constitution. Alleman & Brophy (2006) explain how creating and agreeing to rules as a class can aid students in developing a positive relationship to their peers and a sense of belonging in the classroom. The following example demonstrates democratic learning in a U.S. classroom:

*Mrs. Watson read the book *No, David!* to her class to introduce the idea of rules and how they are used in the classroom. She then asked her class, “What rules from this book do you think would be good to have in our classroom?” They responded with various ideas from “No Chewing Gum” to “Respect our classroom”. Mrs. Watson recorded each child’s idea until there were about 10 ideas. She then posted these in the classroom for all students to see.*

This action of group rule setting empowers students to take responsibility for their own behavior and holds their peers accountable for following the rules. Alleman & Brophy (2006) pose additional examples of rules “that might be ‘voted on’ [which] include: take responsibility for your own behavior; take responsibility for your personal possessions; respect one another’s personal and physical space; and respect individual differences (ability, personal interests, family
membership, etc.)” (p. 18). They also emphasize the importance of having students agree to these rules and agree to consequences. Since this is student-directed, it is more likely that students will follow the rules and hold others accountable than if rules that the teacher developed are simply posted on the first day of school. Increased psychological empowerment develops from this scenario because, “involvement with others, increased responsibility, and organizational problem solving are also expected to contribute to one’s sense of empowerment” (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, p. 726). This process is empowering because it allows students to use the inquiry process in their social lives as students attempt to solve their problems one way, evaluate their technique, and then re-design a new solution.

However, the example of Mrs. Watson’s classroom rules could have increased student responsibility if each student had pledged to agree to these rules and hold others accountable. One idea is to formulate these classroom rules in the structure of a Constitution which all students sign. This can be connected to “Constitution Day” content to apply and assess student understanding, integrating behavior management, community building, and curricular objectives into one empowering lesson.

**Conflict Resolution Techniques**

Although classroom constitutions and rule setting can develop foundational empowerment of students, school children also need a positive way to solve conflicts and take responsibility for their actions. This correlates to Zimmerman & Rappaport’s (1998) idea of developing organizational problem solving mentioned previously. This can come through “I Statements” and restorative circles. Through this research, I have witnessed many classrooms
where students are rewarded for positive behavior and punished for negative behavior. Teachers are generally the ones to enforce these systems by having students fill in star charts for positive behavior or losing recess time for negative behavior. Although these initiatives can be beneficial for some students, they are often not as powerful as empowering students to solve their own issues because they are teacher-directed and extrinsic. This system can actually reinforce tattling behavior to adults because the teacher is viewed as the behavior manager. However, by changing this power hierarchy, each pupil can become responsible for the classroom behavior management. By engaging in discussions about behavior and providing students with techniques for solving conflict, teachers can empower students for future conflicts.

**Classroom Discussions and Restorative Circles**

One medium for having these classroom discussions is classroom meetings. Leachman and Victor (2003) discuss the importance and empowerment of classroom meetings by saying,

> Student-led class meetings provide a way to grab students’ attention and expand their sense of responsibility. Because students facilitate the meetings and struggle with solving issues important to them, they are more willing to access the results of their decisions. The process is theirs; they have ownership. (p. 66).

The following is an example of how restorative circles can be used in an American first grade classroom:

> Ms. Johnson’s first graders returned from lunch and recess exhausted and irritable. They tattled, complained, showed bruises, and sought endless comfort. It was hard to get them focused on math or reading, impossible to begin a group activity. “Recess is
supposed to be fun, but everyone looks mad when they come back from the yard,” Ms. Johnson observed to the group. Using a class meeting, she helped the group describe “fun” and “not fun” games. She helped them recognize and name the current activities. While stopping a current, unsafe chase game, she also helped them find new games and new ways to rotate the job of game leader. With more structure and guidance, recess improved. (Story told in Charney, 2002, p. 278).

These restorative circles and classroom meetings empower students to discuss their feelings and thoughts to solve a classroom difficulty. The purpose of a classroom meeting “is to provide a constructive format for students to contribute to their classroom by helping each other” (Charney, 2002, p. 279). Therefore, this practice does not reinforce tattling behavior or having the teacher punish students based on their behavior but empowers students to discuss their feelings/challenges and take action to improve the situation. For this technique to work, “we must also give permission for children to say what they really think, not what they think we want to hear” (Charney, 2002, p. 280). This should be a student-centered practice and a medium for students to learn how to resolve conflicts and explore controversy by empowering students to manage their own challenges.

Using Appropriate Language

Another facet of learning to resolve conflicts is mastering the use of appropriate language. Students must understand that to resolve their own challenges, they cannot simply blame the other person. Therefore, the use of “I statements” are highly recommended to teach students appropriate language. These statements are in the structure of “I feel ___________
when ____________”. This language places the emphasis on the student talking and their feelings rather than accusing and blaming another student. Charney (2002) explains that, “We want children to understand that they can take ownership of their behavior even if they can’t control what others do.” (p. 284). I-statements can be used within restorative circles or on their own. They should be the first tool that a child has to solve their challenges. The following is an example of how an American teacher reinforced the use of I-statements to empower students:

_Terry (a third grader) ran up to Miss Wing at recess telling her, “Joey told me that I’m stupid and that I can’t play with them”_. Miss Wing responded, “I’m sorry he said that, did you try an I-statement to tell him how it made you feel?” Terry immediately turned and ran back to the football game and went up to Joey. He said to him, “Hey, Joey, when you told me I couldn’t play with you it made me feel sad and left out.” Joey responded, “I’m sorry, there was an odd number so we didn’t want to have another player.”

The boys were then able to resolve their conflict and come up with a solution for subbing into the game so that everyone in the class could play. Although this solution may not always fix the problem as it did in this situation, it is a good first step to help students reach a resolution. The goal of these strategies is to eliminate the need to seek adult intervention (although some situations will obviously require this) and empower students in undertaking their own challenges.

**Student Responsibility**

The Swedish school in which I observed had a very different strategy for management than I have witnessed in American schools. There was an element of informality between the
students and teachers. For example, each teacher in the school was called by his or her first name. When I first experienced this, I was surprised and thought that these students were highly disrespectful. I had been socialized in the United States to believe that the way you show respect to elders is to call them by their last name. However, in Sweden, by having students call teachers by their first name, teachers are actually showing respect to their students. The adults are dismantling power hierarchies and allowing the classroom to become a shared learning space between people of all ages. Ebby explained this principle to me and I was intrigued how this element of informality actually entrusted the students with more responsibility and respect.

A further example of this philosophy can be the trust that teachers place in their students to take care of their personal needs. The following example demonstrates this trust:

*While Ebby was teaching a whole-group history lesson, Marcus stood up and walked out. Ebby did not respond, she just continued teaching her lesson and Marcus returned about 4 minutes later. He had gone to the bathroom and gotten a notebook out of his backpack before he came back to his seat and continued participating in the lesson. A few minutes later, Frida left the room too. She returned on her own accord, just as Marcus had done.*

In this classroom, there were no group bathroom breaks or group trips to the hallway; each student was responsible for his/her own behavior and leaving the classroom only when necessary. When asked specifically about this element, Ebby explained that she was surprised that anyone would do it differently. She explained that they simply trusted the students to take care of their own business and that doing it any other way would seem to result in a loss of instructional time.

The students appeared to respect this trust that they had from the teacher and left to take care of their business and then returned to engage in the instructional activity. This informality
in management of the classroom allowed for increased responsibility by the student, which actually empowered the student since they were the one responsible for managing their own behaviors. Through trial and error, they are learning how to manage themselves and manage their time efficiently by balancing their biological or personal needs with their educational needs. Although this may not seem as large of an empowering component as student choice in the curriculum, this responsibility is a real-world challenge for the students. Helping students learn about self-regulation is a crucial part of developing their life-long learning (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Students need to learn how to self-assess so that they can learn from their failures and make better choices the next time. Student choice in the curriculum allows students to do this with their academic learning but increased responsibility for actions allows them to learn how to manage their feeling, conflicts, and relationships. The school system cannot empower students academically without teaching them to self-regulate and self-manage their social needs as well. The following chapter discusses goal-setting which is another tactic to authentically explore self-management for social or academic needs.
Chapter 4
Goal Setting

Goal-Setting Conferences

Helping students determine their own goals and supporting them to work towards them is an important part of empowering their learning. This aids their development in becoming lifelong learners and empowers them to become responsible for their own progress in academics. The following examples demonstrate the three-way goal-setting conferences between parents, teachers, and students in both Sweden and the United States. This is an example of a conference I observed in Sweden:

Ebby handed the parent an official grading report and quickly reviewed it with them for about five minutes. Then, Ebby quickly moved on to the “progress pathway” which put the official grading report into observable and student-friendly terms. The sheet resembled a board game with the student coloring in spaces of objectives they had completed to move through the standards of second grade. For each objective, Ebby would read it and ask the student to talk about what it meant. Then she asked the parents to talk about what they have seen. Finally, she discussed her thoughts and what she was seeing in the classroom and told the student whether or not they could color in the space. Occasionally, the spaces were colored in halfway to indicate progress was being made, but the student had not entirely completed the goal. The conferences ended with showing the student what they had to work on for next time, a quick handshake with the parents, and then continuing on with the day.
Each conference in the Swedish school was about 15 minutes and they occurred 4 times throughout the year. Ebby said that it was incredibly important to meet with the students and parent(s) together so that they could all be on the same page about school. She further elaborated that the student should always be there because it is about their learning and they are the most important part of the triad. I began to wonder, how can you empower someone to take ownership over their learning when the “adults” are the ones meeting about their progress and what they need to change?

Conferences in the United States often occur without the student present; although, this trend is beginning to change as some progressive schools are including the student and identifying traditional “parent-teacher conferences” as “three-way goal-setting conferences”. The State College Area School District is one of those places and the following vignette outlines how it can be enacted.

Two days before the goal-setting conference, Mrs. Watson sat down with small groups of students to talk about their learning. She gave each student a checklist for students to rate on their behavior and learning thus far in the school year. She read aloud the statement and then said “Now if you think you always do that, put a check here; if you think you do it sometimes, put a check here; and if you want that to be a goal, then put a check here”. Mrs. Watson waited for each student to put a check mark down and then moved on to the next box.

Mrs. Watson also identified student goals, mostly based on academics, and had the parents fill out a reflection/goal paper as well. Then, at the conference, Mrs. Watson reviewed all three papers with the student and parent so everyone could see what the goals were. She started with the student’s paper and occasionally moved their
checkmarks based on what she thought to be true. She then shared her checklist of academic progress and goals/next steps for the students before ending with sharing the parent’s reflection and goals for their student.

Again, this vignette highlights the importance of student voice and having them take ownership over their own learning. However, this takes it one step further than the previous example and actually has students set their own goals as part of their review of learning. It is important to allow students to review where they currently are and where they want to be in the future. This allows them to understand the foundation of self-reflection which is the first step in setting goals. It is reminiscent of the characteristics of student choice in the curriculum; when students can choose based on their individual interests, they are generally more engaged and more committed.

**Student-Determined Goals**

One of the most important parts of goal setting is that students must be motivated to work towards them. Goal-setting is a self-regulated and individual process that a community can support but students must take ownership over. Cleary and Zimmerman (2004) define self-regulation as “self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are planned and clinically adapted based on performance feedback to attain self-set goals” (p. 538). They affirm that self-regulated learners are proactive learners who can self-analyze through the self-regulation process. The goal of this process is to be able to self-evaluate yourself and to understand what you need to improve upon. The initial step is selecting one goal to work towards.

I chose to take goal-setting one step farther than the former vignettes and allow students to begin this self-regulation process to take ownership over their own learning. However, one of
the most important aspects of goal-setting is that students set appropriate goals so that they can be successful. Gross, Duhon, Hansen, Rowland, Schutte, & Williams (2014) emphasize that “goal setting has the potential to increase academic performance by teaching students to focus effort, but goals that are too high or too low will lead to decreased performance” (p. 556). Thus, I enacted a gradual release of control to develop an understanding of appropriate goal setting techniques so that our students could set meaningful goals. The following is a short vignette of what I did with the class:

I passed out a survey to each first grader and asked them to fill it out. (See below and Appendix A.) “How do you feel about morning meeting?” I asked the group of students as they circled their response. After reading through each question, I asked them to list one or two things they thought they were good at in school and a few that they wanted to work on.

![Figure 2. Student Attitude Survey](image-url)
Then, I called each student up to conference with me.

Michelle: “You said that you don’t always feel good about math even though you think you’re good at it, can you tell me a little more about that?”

Tina: “I just don’t think I’m very fast in math but I get it in the end.”

Michelle: “Is there something specific that you want to learn?”

Tina: “I think I could do more IXL and that would help me learn.”

Michelle: “Okay! Well, we can put that as one of our goals to work towards! Is there anything else that you want to work on?”

Tina: “Um, sometimes I don’t really like reading to self.”


Tina: “Yeah, I never really know what book to choose!”

Michelle: “Okay, let’s put that as another goal!”

I had a conference with each student about what they were thinking that they wanted to work towards. I discussed with each student the general responses to how he/she felt during different subjects in school and I asked specific questions regarding why they felt that way. This allowed the student and I to collaboratively take his/her general feeling towards a subject and turn it into a specific goal. I was astonished by how much students know what they wanted to work on, even students who appeared to understand the majority of the content had a goal that they wanted to accomplish. By simply asking them what they wanted to work on, we were able to determine the first step towards becoming self-regulated learners.
The next day, we continued our goal-setting. I wrote a personalized goal sheet for each student. I took their feedback and wrote 3-5 goals for each student. This example shows Tina’s 4 goals:

| I want to get better at IXL |
| I want to have more books in my book bin. |
| I want to stay focused during read-to-self. |
| I want to control my talking when I am on the carpet. |

Figure 3. Possible student goals.

We talked through these to pick the one that she thought was the most useful. We also discussed ways in which she could accomplish her goals.

Michelle: “Let’s read through these goals! Which one do you think you want to work on the most?”

Tina: “I think I need to work on talking less.”

Michelle: “Do you think that’s specifically on the carpet like this goal says or should we write a new one?”

Tina: “Yeah, it’s on the carpet. I need to work on talking less.”

Michelle: “Wonderful, what are some ways that you can work towards that goal?”
Tina and I talked through ways that she could work towards her goal and made a list to include in her goal-setting folder:

![Image of a note with handwritten text:]

- try to sit next to new people
- eyes on speaker
- save all questions w/ friends for recess, snack time, lunch

**Figure 4. Ways to work towards goals.**

We then put all of these pieces together and created our goal-setting folders. Each student created an individual folder that had his/her goals written on the left side and the ways that he/she can work towards the goal listed underneath. The right side of the folder had a sticker chart for all of the possible times in the day that students could complete their goals. For example, since Tina’s goal is in regards to the carpet, she cannot earn a sticker at lunch or recess because we do not sit on the carpet at these times. Tina’s goal sheet is shown below:
By creating goals for the students based on their feedback, I was able to show students how goals can be relatable to their lives and also provide them with possible goals that they can create. We worked with these goals for the next few weeks. Throughout the day, students would assess themselves and put a sticker on their goal sheets if they thought they had accomplished their goal as a preliminary self-assessment similar to what Cleary and Zimmerman (2004) emphasized. Often when students decided that they earned stickers, I briefly conferenced with them as to why they thought they had earned a sticker. For example:

Michelle: “That is so great that you earned a sticker for today during morning meeting! What did you do to earn it”

Tina: “I sat next to a new friend that I knew I wouldn’t want to talk with and I tried to listen to the sharers and ask them questions.”

Michelle: “I’m so proud of you for choosing to sit next to new friends on the carpet. I think that you are doing a wonderful job working towards your goal!”
Tina: “Yeah, but I didn’t earn a sticker for social studies [unit] today because I was talking to Maggie a lot.”

Michelle: “That’s okay, that’s why we have goals. We all have something that we can improve upon. Try to earn a sticker for unit tomorrow!”

By self-assessing and putting on their own stickers, students were responsible for assessing their own progress. It is important for students to self-assess as part of goal setting as well. If they are able to choose their own goals and identify their own weaknesses, they should be able to identify their own progress too! This process of learning to set and achieve goals is empowering because they have the ability to self-assess and identify what they still need to work on to be able to achieve their goals. I was worried, at first, that the first graders would forget to put stickers on when they earned them and that this physical representation of their progress would not show student progress. However, students added stickers to their charts at all times of the day because they wanted to document their progress towards their goals. As a class, we discussed appropriate times to record our progress, such as snack time or the brief independent work periods before and after lunch. Although students needed gentle reminders to record stickers, they were able to make conscious decisions about when they did and did not earn stickers. It was also very important to use the vocabulary of “earned” because this showed that the students understood that when their behavior was appropriate, they were rewarded with a sticker. By charting their progress, many students internalized their goals and were able to articulate their progress. When I conferred with Tina only two weeks after starting her goal-setting folder, she said to me,

*I really think that I am trying to keep my hands to myself on the carpet. That wasn’t even one of my goals but I’ve noticed that when I’m trying to control my talking on the carpet, I usually am moving my hands too. I’ve been working on not doing either of those things.*
I think I’m better at listening to directions now. I even listen better to them when I’m sitting at my desk.

By working towards her goal, Tina realized the true reason she was distracted on the carpet. By self-reflecting, she noticed that she needed to keep her hands to herself as well as control her talking on the carpet to help her focus. If Tina had not been afforded this opportunity to partake in guided self-reflection, she may never have noticed the underlying reason that she had difficulty concentrating on the carpet.

This goal-setting strategy allowed students to set goals and self-regulate their progress. Students achieve their greatest potential when they set goals that are attainable, they are supported with feedback and scaffolding, and are actively engaged in a reward procedure that is self-regulated (Gross et al., 2014). This empowering process of developing self-regulation can help develop life-long learning due to the structured perceived control that students attained.
Chapter 5

Characteristics of Empowering Curriculum

Each of the previous chapters has outlined strategies for empowering students in the classroom. Goal setting, student choice, and self-management are three different techniques for empowering students in the classroom implementing pedagogy that values certain underlying characteristics. Through my experiences, I found the major characteristics to be: self-regulation, authenticity, perceived control and ownership, and intrinsic motivation.

Self-Regulation

When self-regulation is encouraged in the classroom, students are challenged to undertake increased responsibility for their learning. Teachers who allow students to take on the responsibility of regulating their own learning often see positive results in which students take great pride in the work they are doing. For example, when students were setting their own goals in our classroom, we expected them to take responsibility and regulate themselves about whether they earned a sticker for meeting their goal or not. This was much more meaningful to the students and helped them internalize their goals because they were the ones responsible for not only earning stickers but recording their progress. This exemplifies how self-regulation empowers students to do things for themselves which not only makes it more meaningful to the students but actually allows them to positively transfer these skills to other facets of their life which promotes life-long learning.
Self-regulation is one of the key components of a Swedish elementary school. From my experiences, I noticed that students were incredibly independent and expected to be figuring things out on their own and regulating themselves as needed. This is as fundamental as regulating their own biological needs. Swedish students did not have to ask for permission to go to the bathroom, they were just expected to take care of their business and return when they were ready to learn. Students in Sweden also independently managed their free time through self-regulation charts. Although scaffolding was provided, students had the ultimate responsibility of regulating their time.

From my experience, I believe that this perceived responsibility is actually a result of informality and flexibility of the Swedish culture. At first I noticed that the Swedish classroom appeared to have less rules and be more care-free but then I realized that this is not a sign of lacking structure, it simply means that children are entrusted with more responsibility for their own learning. The expectations in the classroom are that students will regulate themselves and when they have finished their work for a particular subject, they move on to a free-choice activity (also structured but independently regulated). Although this could appear as disorganized to the unknowing eye, it actually allows students to take greater ownership over their own learning.

The culture of the United States, in my experience, is not as trusting as the Swedes’. Americans have difficulty allowing others to completely regulate themselves because they feel that they are giving away the control of the situation. However, in the goal-setting example of both Swedish and American conferences and goals, we can see how students are capable of self-assessment and self-regulation if they are provided the opportunity. We will never know what our students have the aptitude for if we don’t empower them to take ownership over their
learning. Self-regulation aids students in becoming life-long learners through learning how to self-assess and monitor themselves.

**Authenticity**

One of the major underlying facets of empowering students is being authentic in the classroom. When students are truly solving problems and answering their own questions, they will not only be more engaged but will also learn how to enact problem-solving skills in the classroom. I believe that authenticity is a major component of student choice in the classroom. Being honest with students and presenting them with real-world problems such as the pollination inquiry described earlier, provides them with a purpose for their learning. They are not just replicating an experiment and following explicit directions for creating a hand pollinator, they are truly being engineers and trying to solve the problem of how to pollinate flowers since the bees are dying in China. This simple hook at the beginning of the lesson provides an authentic connection to the activity in which students then have to solve the problem.

Additionally, by conferring with individual pupils about their own learning, teachers and parents are demonstrating authentic interest in the pupil’s success. Allowing students to set their own goals and work towards them provides an authentic learning opportunity in which students can self-regulate and experiment with managing their own needs and assessing their progress. This occurred in both the Swedish and United States vignettes, but I believe that the example from the American first grade classroom better exemplified how this can be an authentic learning experience for students. From what I noticed, the Swedes were very open to allowing student choice in the curriculum and classroom but the teachers did all the assessment. In both goal-
setting conference examples (Sweden and the United States), the teachers entertained
communications with parents and students about goal-setting, but generally the teachers already had
certain goals that they expected the student to be working on. I believe many teachers find it
difficult to provide authentic learning about self-regulation and self-assessment in the classroom
because teachers need to collect so much evidence to show parents and principals to support
decisions for grouping, grades, etc. However, when each student was provided with a goal-
setting folder that exemplifies an authentic learning experience, students were afforded the
opportunity to gain skills for self-assessment and self-regulation. It can be challenging to find
ways for students to evaluate themselves, but we can clearly see the impact it can have on
student learning and intrinsic motivation through the previous vignettes.

However, this authentic learning and authentic connection to self-regulation is not only
through goal setting. It can also be seen in self-management. When Ms. Johnson (see vignette
on page 20) used a restorative circle in her class to discuss “fun” and “non-fun” games at recess,
she was authentically teaching her students conflict-resolution techniques that empowered
students to solve their own problems in the future. Ms. Johnson most likely had increased
success with this discussion because all students understood the issue – they were living through
it! They were also engaged and determined to find a solution because none of the students were
happy at recess. Therefore, by discussing the actual problem at hand, instead of working through
pre-packed scenarios, students were able to gain conflict-resolution techniques and witness the
positive results in the classroom. This same authentic learning can come from the use of I-
statements in the classroom.
Perceived Control and Ownership

Throughout the analysis of each vignette, the word ownership has arisen. Thus, it is crucial and one of the core underlying foundations of empowerment. When students take ownership over their work, they begin to enact all of the things that we have previously discussed. They have increased responsibility, they are learning in an authentic way, and they are self-regulating their own work because they want to do a great job. The question becomes, how does this ownership develop?

Perceived control is one of the core facets of ownership because without students believing that they have the ability to take ownership over their work, they never will. Therefore, students must have choice in the curriculum and classroom. When they see themselves as a member of the classroom community, their perceived control of situations, especially learning situations, drastically increases.

Service learning is the paramount example of perceived control and student choice in the curriculum. One student’s question had the ability to spark years of recycling initiatives at this school. This student understood that he had the ability to change the environment around him. His teacher and principal were also willing to adapt their curriculum to allow this positive interest to flourish. The adults in his school allowed him to take ownership of his own learning and work to complete standards not simply to check them off but to authentically learn how and why things happened with recycling.

Additionally, the perceived control of reader’s workshop through the Daily 5 format allows students to take ownership over their reading. When students are able to choose activities based upon their own interests, they are more likely to engage positively in them. When students feel that they are forced to do something they may perform poorly or simply do it to be finished
(Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). However, this structure of allowing students to have choice in the reading organization provides increased responsibility and self-regulation that increases motivation for performance.
Chapter 6

Conclusions

Through this analysis, I have observed many empowering strategies in action in Sweden and the United States. Although there are many similarities between the two cultures, I believe that generally Sweden allowed more flexibility with student choice and students had greater perceived control over their learning. This comes from the informality that is valued in their culture. Students call teachers by their first names and were astonished to learn that I referred to all of my teachers throughout elementary school by their surnames. This informality transcends into the classroom in terms of various expectations. Students are expected to regulate their own needs and take responsibility for monitoring their own progress during free-choice activities. Students also self-regulated their own reading habits and very rarely had direct instruction on literacy techniques until they were older. This allowed them to gain a natural joy for literacy before learning more literary components.

However, this informality did not transcend into the core curricular components of math and reading. Math was generally worksheet-based and when students completed their worksheets, they were then granted the self-regulated, free-choice time. Writing incorporated student choice in the foundational stages of choosing a topic but then each student worked on the same general project. I was intrigued to find this project to be very similar to research projects that are completed in the United States. It was very structured and required a certain amount of facts that corresponded to specific prompts. This helped me realize that the same difficulties of rescinding power from the teacher and empowering the students to be creative and develop their
own thinking is faced in multiple countries. It is quite challenging to allow students to have complete responsibility for developing their own projects. It is true that they need structure, but teachers need to be cautious to not provide too much structure. The structure needs to be flexible enough that students can “Recognize design is a creative process and everyone can design solutions to problems” which is a core standards according to the Standards Aligned System (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2016). Although there will be a general structure, having perceived control increases students’ willingness to accept and participate because students understand the purpose of the activity (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

If the only true choice they have is the topic, is this really going to be an empowering activity for the students? Is it authentic? Are they self-regulating? Do they have perceived control? Are they taking ownership over their work? These are the questions that should be used to guide each activity and see if it is a powerful and empowering activity that will enhance student learning.

Both the United States and Sweden hold empowerment as one of the core values of their education systems. We need to be sure, as educators, that we are providing our students with the best curriculum to meet those objectives. It is not as much about the culture that you are in as much as the innovation and care that you have for your students. This is not a comparison of which culture is more empowering, it is an analysis of the strategies that can be used to empower students in the classroom, regardless of the culture of which they are a part. Naturally, some techniques will lend themselves to one culture or another but the core characteristics of self-regulation, authenticity, and perceived control/ownership remain the same across cultures. Be sure, as an educator, that you are questioning your curriculum and classroom environment to see
if these characteristics are present. If they are not, empower yourself and your students to help make a change.
Appendix A

Goal-Setting Attitude Survey

How do you feel about morning meeting?

How do you feel when you write in school?

How do you feel when you read to self in school?

How do you feel when you pick a new book in school?

How do you feel when you listen to reading?
How do you feel when you do math in school?

How do you feel when you do IXL or play a math game on the iPad?

How do you feel when you go to lunch?

How do you feel about your friends in the class?

Do you feel like you control your body?

Do you feel like you follow directions?
What is one thing you think you’re really good at in school?

What is one thing you want to work on in school?


**Academic Vita**  
**Michelle Hart**

**EDUCATION**

The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College University Park, PA  
May 2016

Bachelor of Science in Childhood and Early Adolescent Education (PK-4)  
English as a Second Language Certificate, Minor in Special Education  
Dean’s List Honors - Eight Semesters

Chosen as one of 56 Penn State University Elementary Education majors to participate in a collaborative 185 day, full time elementary student teaching internship in a K-4th grade setting in the State College Area School District (Pennsylvania). This nationally recognized program received the 2011 Spirit of Partnership Award and the 2009 Award for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement from the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS), the 2004 Holmes Partnership Award for the best partnership between a university and a school district, and the 2002 Distinguished Program in Teacher Education Award from the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE).

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Intern Teacher, Professional Development School (PDS)**  
August 2015 – June 2016  
First Grade Intern, Park Forest Elementary School, State College, PA  
Partner Classroom: Third Grade

- Prepared and implemented developmentally appropriate lessons in social studies, language arts, math, science, and community building with integrated practice for 22 students in accordance with the Pennsylvania State Standards.  
  - Differentiated instruction in an inclusive environment to meet needs of Title I and Learning Support  
  - Assessed students’ performance with a variety of formative and summative methods  
  - Participated in goal setting conferences with students and their parents

- Reflected and analyzed own teaching practices individually and within a group of colleagues  
- Attended primary division meetings, faculty meetings, data meetings, parent-teacher conferences, in-service days, and professional development workshops  
- Cooperated as a team with mentor teacher, paraprofessionals, guest teachers, school counselor, support staff, and other educators in the primary division  
- Observed and participated in the teaching process in a third grade partner classroom on a weekly basis  
- Conducted a teacher inquiry project on the use of individual student goals to improve effort and accountability with schoolwork and raise their intrinsic motivation and achievement levels in all subjects

**Teacher-Student, Swedish Teaching Placement**  
March 2015-May 2015  
Second Grade Teacher-Student, Tenhultsskolan, Jönköping, Sweden

- Prepared and implemented English, social studies, mathematics, and skill-based lessons for 18 students in accordance with the Sloverket Swedish National Agency for Education standards  
- Observed and participated in grade-level meetings, faculty meetings, and parent-teacher conferences  
- Collaborated with a team of second and third grade teachers to prepare interactive lessons about growing up in the USA  
- Conducted observational field notes comparing student empowerment strategies to typical USA practices

**Summer ESL Camp Teacher**  
July 2014-August 2014  
Co-Teacher for 10-12 year Spanish-speaking students, Otavalo University, Otavalo, Ecuador

- Prepared and implemented integrated English and Science lessons according to the sheltered English model  
- Collaborated with a co-teacher to plan, implement, and reflect upon all lessons  
- Lived with a Spanish-speaking host family with two English-learning children

**RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Krause Innovation Studio, University Park, PA**  
Fall 2014-Spring 2016  
Innovation Consultant

- Supported small groups of university students and professors in using technological resources including interactive whiteboards, dual screen mirroring, and iCoda data collection  
- Consulted with faculty members to review current learning goals/outcomes for the technological affordances of the space  
- Assisted in developing data collection techniques, improvements, and analysis for Lean Lab Classroom
LEGACY Together Project, University Park, PA

Research Assistant

- Worked as part of the LEGACY Together research team which aims to promote citizenship, skills, and positive youth behavior through improved afterschool programs
- Helped train afterschool staff members on the Good Behavior Game which focuses on developing community and empowering children
- Conducted extensive research as a co-author of an Educational Theory chapter of the APA Handbook of Community Psychology
- Performed data collection and input based on previous and current cohort data

LEADERSHIP

- College of Education Student Council Executive Board, 2013-2014
- Education Ambassadors Co-Founder, 2013-2016
- Penn State Lion Ambassador – Student Ambassador for Alumni Association, 2014-2016
- LJS Keep Calm and Be A Kid Service Project Co-Founder, 2012
- Homecoming University Relations Captain and Competition Captain, Spring 2013-Fall 2014

HONORS & AWARDS

- Schreyer Honors College Academic Excellence Scholarship, 2012-2016
- Evan Pugh Scholar, 2015 and 2016
- Awarded to top 0.5% of the junior and senior classes for the university
- Phi Kappa Phi Study Abroad Grant, 2014
- Young Women of Distinction Award Finalist, Greater Rochester Area, 2012
- Pi Lambda Theta Student Support Scholarship, 2015-2016
- LeaderShape Institute, 2014
- Mortar Board Honor Society, 2014-Present
- The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, 2014-Present

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Fluent in use of the OS X operating system for Macintosh computers
- Proficient use of iPad tablets
- Use of iMovie to produce original films
- Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel)
- Use of document camera and projector to display classroom resources
- Video analysis software as reflective teaching tool and data collection of student learning and behavior