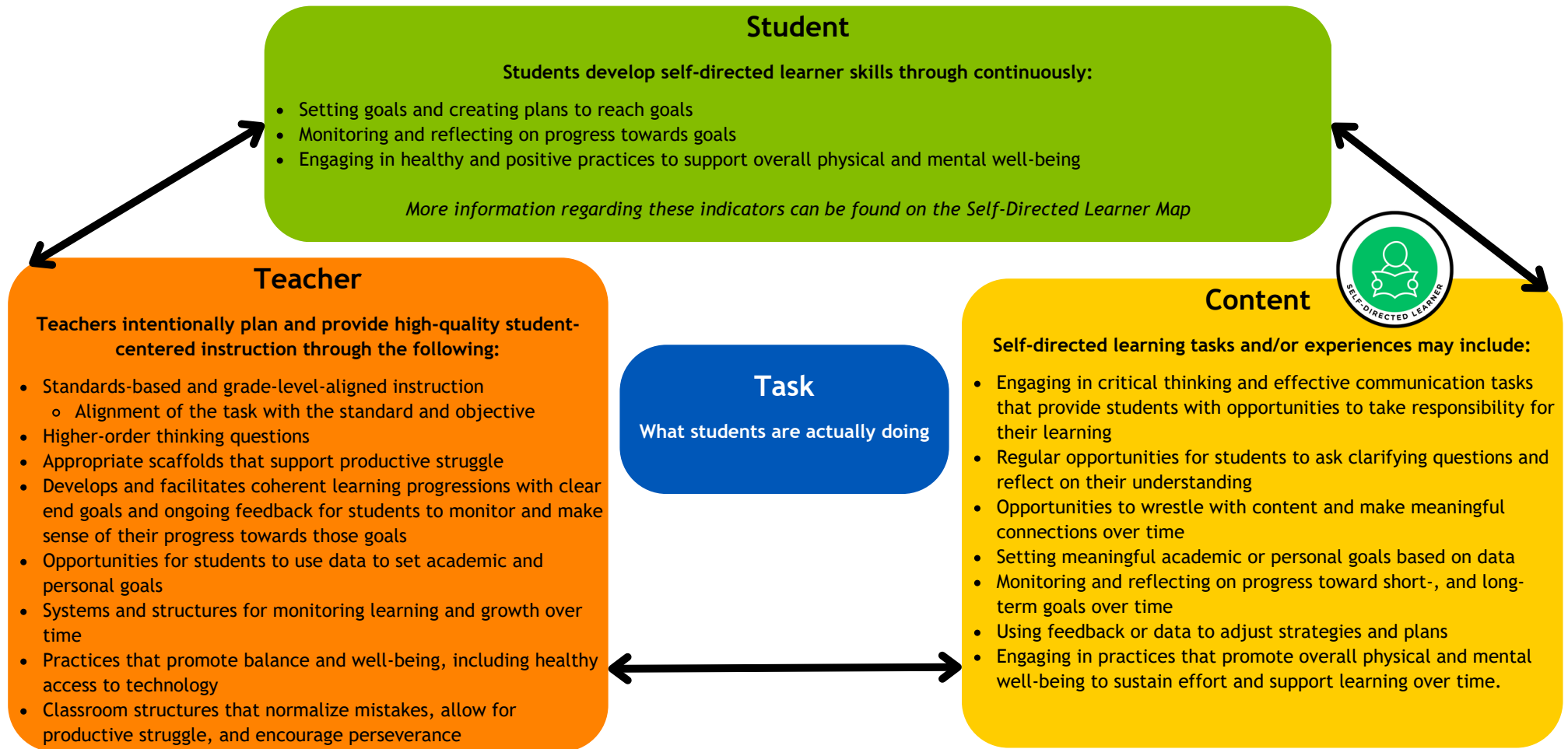


Norwalk Public Schools Self-Directed Learner Theory of Action

If we intentionally and systematically embed goal-setting, reflection cycles, and practices that support physical and mental well-being into daily instruction, then students will take increasing ownership of their learning by monitoring their progress with clarity and purpose, adjusting their approach based on feedback and reflection, and building habits that support long-term academic success and well-being.*



Critical Thinker and Effective Communicator Connection: When learning environments and experiences cultivate ownership and agency alongside high-quality learning opportunities, students strengthen their ability to think critically, communicate clearly, and manage their own learning. This self-direction, in turn, deepens authentic engagement in critical thinking and communication learning opportunities.



Norwalk Public Schools Self-Directed Learner Map



Students become self-directed learners through taking ownership over their learning by setting short- and long-term academic, career, and personal goals, developing plans to reach their goals, monitoring their progress, and evaluating the extent to which their plans and strategies were successful while engaging in practices that support their holistic well-being.

The three indicators of a self-directed learner described below are further detailed in the accompanying Self-Directed Learner Map, which outlines specific criteria across grade bands.

Indicators			
Criteria	Sets goals and creates plans to reach goals.	Monitors and reflects on progress towards goals.	Engages in healthy and positive practices to support overall physical and mental well-being.
	a. Sets meaningful short- and longer-term goals grounded in data, strengths, aspirations, and interests.	a. Monitors progress through data and by noticing patterns and factors related to reaching goals.	a. Demonstrates self-awareness, confidence, and self-advocacy to support learning.
	b. Develops plans to reach goals.	b. Reflects on progress to make sense of outcomes, strategies, and learning.	b. Engages in practices that promote balance and holistic physical and mental well-being.
	c. Takes action and maintains effort to persist through challenges and achieve goals.	c. Adjusts strategies, plans, or goals based on reflection, feedback, and new information.	c. Demonstrates resilience by learning from mistakes and continuing forward after setbacks.



Norwalk Public Schools Self-Directed Learner Map

This document outlines what a self-directed learner looks like across grade-level bands, serving as a resource for educators and leaders. It aims to build clarity around the progression of students' self-directed learning skills, grounded in child development research, social-emotional learning research, and social-emotional and academic standards.



Sets goals and creates plans to reach goals

Monitors and reflects on progress towards goals

Engages in healthy and positive practices to support overall physical and mental well-being

PK-K

- a. With prompting and support, expresses what they want to try or work toward based on interests or needs.
- b. With prompting and support, follows simple steps to complete a task and routines.
- c. With prompting and support, attempts tasks, persists when the task becomes difficult, and uses strategies to stay engaged.

- a. With prompting and support, notices when a task feels easy, difficult, or unfinished.
- b. With prompting and support, talks about what they did and how it went.
- c. With prompting and support, tries a different approach to complete a task or solve a problem.

- a. With prompting and support, identifies feelings or needs and asks trusted adults for help; approaches learning tasks with growing confidence.
- b. With prompting and support, participates in guided routines and activities that support physical well-being, emotional regulation, and a sense of safety and care.
- c. With prompting and support, tries again after making a mistake and continues to participate in learning with a positive sense of self.

1-2

- a. With prompting and support, sets short-term, task- or routine-based goals connected to data, areas of strength and/or growth, classroom expectations, or interests.
- b. With prompting and support, co-creates a simple plan by identifying steps and materials needed for a task.
- c. Follows a task to completion, even when it is challenging, and maintains effort with increased independence and minimal support.

- a. With prompting and support, monitors progress by noticing when a task is going well or becoming challenging and recognizes when help is needed.
- b. Reflects on a task by naming what helped and what was difficult.
- c. With prompting and support, makes simple changes to how they approach a task or a short-term goal based on feedback.

- a. Independently identifies feelings or needs and asks trusted adults for help; approaches learning tasks with growing confidence.
- b. With prompting and support, practices routines, and builds habits that support physical health, emotional well-being, and readiness to learn.
- c. With prompting and support, learns from mistakes or frustration and keeps trying with growing confidence.



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Sets goals and creates plans to reach goals

Monitors and reflects on progress towards goals

Engages in healthy and positive practices to support overall physical and mental well-being s

3-4

- a. Co-creates short-term, task- or routine-based goals connected to data, classroom expectations, areas of strength and/or growth, or interests.
- b. Creates a plan with teacher support that outlines steps and resources (including age-appropriate digital tools when helpful) to complete a task or reach a short-term goal and adjusts the plan with guidance when challenges arise.
- c. Demonstrates persistence by sustaining effort and using multiple strategies when engaging in productive struggle.

- a. With prompting and support, monitors progress toward a short-term goal by using data and noticing what is working and what is getting in the way.
- b. Explains why certain strategies or actions helped or made learning more difficult.
- c. With prompting and support, makes intentional changes based on reflection or feedback, including trying a different tool or resource when helpful.

- a. Identifies strengths and challenges and self-advocates to support learning.
- b. Makes choices and follows routines that support physical health, emotional well-being, and healthy access to technology during learning and daily activities.
- c. Learns from mistakes or setbacks and continues forward with independence to reach short-term goals.

5

- a. Co-creates short- and longer-term goals informed by data, areas of strength and/or growth, or interests.
- b. Develops a plan to reach goals or complete multi-step tasks by breaking work into manageable steps, using appropriate resources and tools (including digital tools), and anticipating possible challenges.
- c. Perseveres through challenging, multi-step tasks by applying strategies to maintain effort and momentum.

- a. Monitors progress using data, feedback, or benchmarks; notices patterns in effort, strategies, and habits that help or hinder progress.
- b. Reflects on progress to explain what strategies helped, what did not, and what was learned from the experience.
- c. Adjusts strategies, plans, or goals based on reflection, feedback, or changing circumstances, including changing tools or supports to strengthen learning or task completion.

- a. Uses awareness of strengths, challenges, and learning preferences to self-advocate to support learning.
- b. Builds and maintains routines that support physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being, including healthy access to technology.
- c. Reframes mistakes and setbacks as part of learning while maintaining confidence, and resumes effort with increasing independence towards short- and long-term academic and personal goals.



Norwalk Public Schools Self-Directed Learner Map

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Sets goals and creates plans to reach goals

Monitors and reflects on progress towards goals

Engages in healthy and positive practices to support overall physical and mental well-being

6-8

- a. Co-creates meaningful, short- and/or longer-term academic and personal goals informed by reflection, data, identified areas of strength and/or growth, emerging values, or interests.
- b. Independently develops and carries out plans that sequence steps, uses appropriate resources and tools, and adapts to challenges as they arise.
- c. Sustains effort over time by staying focused and engaged through productive struggle, even when tasks become complex or less motivating.

- a. Regularly monitors progress over time using data, routines, or tools and notices patterns in effort, strategies, and outcomes.
- b. Reflects on progress to explain how strategies, decisions, and effort influenced outcomes.
- c. With guided support, revises strategies, plans, or goals based on reflection, feedback, and new information, including adjusting how they use tools or technologies to better meet goals.

- a. Demonstrates growing self-efficacy by naming strengths and needs, respectfully advocating for support, and using available resources to improve learning.
- b. Uses routines, habits, and wellness strategies to manage stress and energy, and maintains healthy access to technology.
- c. Learns from setbacks, stress, or disappointment while maintaining confidence and perspective, and continues forward towards both short- and long-term academic and personal goals.

9-12

- a. Sets meaningful, short-, and/or longer-term academic, career, and personal goals grounded in data, reflection, identified areas of strength and/or growth, values, or interests.
- b. Designs and evaluates plans for complex goals by selecting and leveraging appropriate tools and technologies, weighing pros and cons of possible approaches, and adapting plans across contexts.
- c. Maintains effort across short- and long-term goals despite setbacks and competing priorities.

- a. Consistently monitors progress across goals and contexts using data and feedback and notices patterns in strategies, decisions, and outcomes.
- b. Reflects on progress to explain how strategies, decisions, and effort shaped outcomes and what this indicates about their learning process across contexts.
- c. Intentionally adjusts strategies, plans, or goals across contexts based on reflection, feedback, and new information, including refining tool or technology use to improve learning and performance.

- a. Applies a well-grounded sense of self (strengths, values, and needs) to proactively self-advocate for academic needs.
- b. Maintains and adapts wellness routines, including balanced, intentional use of technology, to support sustained physical health, mental well-being, and performance over time.
- c. Navigates setbacks, stress, or failure, while maintaining confidence and perspective, and continuing forward toward both short- and long-term academic, personal, and career goals.