

## How Can Student Choice Help Learning?

**Directions:** Review these two ideas with your mentee and discuss how these can contribute to the community of learning environment in the classroom.

### 1. Creating a Sociogram

Teachers use small groups and partners often and can figure out who are good matches and where there are issues with behavior. This tool is one way to find out what students actually think about who can help them learn in the classroom.

The sociogram is described as an emotional map of the classroom from the students' perspectives. You can find the directions for creating a sociogram by searching the web. I encourage the use of the sociogram to ask the students "whom would they prefer to work with" so the teacher can build partners and groups effectively.

Letting students choose partners is not a bad idea, but it often leaves some students out. The sociogram will show you who the "isolates" are in the classroom. These students need special attention from the teacher to include them in the classroom. As teachers we often think we know who these students are, but we may not be correct in our assumptions. This is a powerful tool. It must be used in the strictest confidence and the teacher must never reveal the result to the students.

### 2. Student Choice in Day-to-Day-Learning

Students know how they learn best and when given choices they can produce quality work that demonstrates their learning. Discuss how choices in the following areas can be integrated into a classroom.

- Choosing a homework assignment from three options the teacher has given. The options could represent different learning styles (i.e., draw a picture, write an essay, memorize, etc.).
- Choosing a book from 10 acceptable choices.
- Choosing the type of test—essay, multiple choice, verbal presentation, etc.
- Creating a test or a quiz with the answers.
- Working alone, with a partner, or with a group.
- Using the computer or paper and pencil.
- Integrating art, music, or other skills into an assignment.

Check in with your mentee to see if he includes choice in his classroom.