

Agency

An Empowering 30-Lesson Curriculum for High School Students

We are pleased to introduce Agency, a 30-lesson high school curriculum that equips students with the knowledge, character, and confidence to make wise choices, live with purpose, and contribute to their communities. Rooted in the ideas of Ian Rowe’s book, *Agency*, the curriculum defines agency as the force of one’s free will, guided by moral discernment, and invites students into rich conversations they rarely encounter in a standard classroom. Developed with research support from the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy, Agency is written for ninth-grade students but designed to serve learners across what we call “the deciding decade” (age 14–24).

A Flexible, Modular Structure

Agency is organized into seven self-contained units, and each lesson is designed for a 50-minute class period. Schools and districts can adopt the full program or select the units that best fit their existing scope and sequence. Educators can adapt pacing to fit a variety of school schedules and instructional calendars, including short-term, semester-long, and yearlong implementation models. The curriculum can also be used in multiple formats, including targeted unit integration within existing courses.

1. **AGENCY**—Exploring Agency in Terms of Choices (Lessons 1–10)
2. **FAMILY**—Those We Were Given and Those We Choose (Lessons 11–14)
3. **RELIGION**—Meaning, Purpose, and Community (Lessons 15–18)
4. **EDUCATION**—Knowledge for a Lifetime (Lessons 19–22)
5. **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**—Partnering Healthy Risk-Taking with Responsibility (Lessons 23–26)
6. **VIRTUE**—Identifying and Cultivating Behavior That Reflects Moral Goodness (Lessons 27–29)
7. **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**—Exercising Agency in Everyday Life (Lesson 30)

We understand that the Religion unit may raise important questions for some districts. Unit 3 explores religion as a human experience—how people across cultures find meaning, purpose, and community—presenting a range of beliefs and encouraging critical thinking and open dialogue without promoting or endorsing any belief. Districts that prefer to omit this unit can do so without disrupting the integrity of the remaining six.

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Supporting Alignment with National Standards

Agency supports alignment with several major standards frameworks, making it straightforward to integrate into existing health, English language arts, and social studies programs:

- **SHAPE America’s National Health Education Standards**—through lessons addressing personal health concepts, decision-making, goal-setting, and advocacy
- **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: Reading; Informational Text (Grades 9–10)**—through close reading, evidence-based discussion, and written reflection
- **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: Literacy in History/Social Studies (Grades 9–10)**—through engagement with primary and secondary texts on agency, meaning, and civic life

What Students Gain

Across the seven units, students will

- **Understand themselves and their choices**
- **Build resilience and learn from setbacks**
- **Develop healthy relationships and empathy**
- **Explore meaning, purpose, and diverse worldviews**
- **Pursue knowledge and excellence**
- **Think entrepreneurially and solve problems**
- **Cultivate virtues that lead to a flourishing life**

Coming soon: For those who implement all seven units, a brief pre- and post-assessment will help teachers tailor instruction by identifying students’ prior knowledge and misconceptions and allow students to see their growth over the course.

We would welcome the opportunity to share more about Agency, including pilot opportunities and sample lessons. Please feel free to reach out at FREEInitiative@AEI.org.