Fourth, to some extent autonomous teachers seek or create professional development that supports how *they* work in their new roles and with the students they serve. Those who have budget autonomy can and do design and participate in developmental activities beyond what is required by their states and school districts. When teachers at EOC noticed an influx of Hmong and Cambodian students, for example, they realized that they didn't understand the major cultural differences that caused friction between them. They sought diversity training for that specific issue and are now better able to support both groups of students well.

Expanding Students' Means of Learning

Autonomous teachers draw on learning resources far beyond what they and textbooks can convey. Students can use computers, software programs, the World Wide Web, and various search engines to access knowledge from all around the world in just seconds. Autonomous teachers believe that this opens enormous possibilities for learning, and they put students in the position to regularly draw on these resources for learning themselves, without waiting for guidance from a teacher.

In five of the eleven schools, for example, students learn via their own computers, situated at their own office-style desks. They use websites and software as tools that help them learn everything from algebra to simple organizational skills to more specialized interests such as architectural design and fashion design. Many autonomous teachers emphasize that realizing digital technology's potential has something to do with seeing themselves as coaches and advisors instead of instructors. Otherwise students would be learning to use technology as directed and not as a tool for directing their own learning, a skill they will need postgraduation.

But not all autonomous teachers see digital technology as the best means of engaging and motivating the students they serve. While digital technology tools are present in their schools, teachers at Chrysalis, High School in the Community (HSC), and Independence expand students' means of learning by exposing them to nature and other community resources, from weekly visits to community libraries to bird observations to biking trips along the C & O Canal.

Sarah Hoxie at Chrysalis said, "I teach kindergarteners, and they've got years of experience with technology already. My job is to get them in the dirt. When they listen to the birds and trees, they learn to recognize for themselves the infinite lessons they can learn from the environment. Those lessons are far beyond what I could convey to them in this classroom." Her colleague, Laura Bowie, who teaches students in grades 6–8, told a few

stories of students rushing into the rooms with nature artifacts in order to do their own research with microscopes or other science-learning tools, which they are free to use on their own.

HSC teachers choose to use discretionary funds to pay for a social worker who helps students to learn how to access social services (sometimes just to get basic clothing) and confront emotional issues that are preventing them from taking responsibility for their academic learning. Teachers said this investment gives students the help they need; the ability to address their own problems so they can commit to academics.

At all schools visited, teachers and students made use of parents and community members as learning resources. Some teachers require students to involve community members and professionals in their self-directed learning. Many schools host community nights or parent lunches where students present what they are learning.

These events, typically held at least once per quarter, are beyond typical "open house" or "science fair" events in which parents are passive observers. Teachers ask parents and community members to visit with many students about their learning, offering positive feedback as well as real challenges to encourage improvement.

SOME STUDENTS FIND THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ACTIVE LEARNERS IN ADAPTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IMMEDIATELY ENGAGING. THEIR MOTIVATION, HOWEVER, TAKES MORE TIME.

Autonomous teachers reported that some students are attracted to their schools and become immediately engaged because of the opportunity to be active learners in environments where their individual and cultural needs are accepted and acknowledged. Encouraging students' motivation, however, takes much more time.

Teachers said that many students really struggle as they discover what it takes to be active learners in an individualized learning environment. Many middle and high school students arrive with habits they developed as passive learners, and these don't work well in their new environments. Students come to find out, for example, that many of their autonomous teachers don't tell them what to do and how to do it.

Some students also need to feel safe before they are self-motivated to learn, teachers explained. Many students who are attracted to their learning environments believe they are atypical—they felt out of place and sometimes were bullied for being different from most students. It takes time for them to test and trust their new environments' culture of acceptance.