

# MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

## Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF):

### Self-Directed, Engaged Learning

It is through learning that we can realize our potential. As the world changes, so can we, for as long as we live—as long as we learn.

#### Principles of Self-Directed, Engaged Learning

- Establish a trustworthy relationship with your child.
- Help children set and work toward their own goals.
- Involve children socially, emotionally and intellectually.
- Elaborate and extend children's learning.
- Help children practice, synthesize and generalize.
- Help children become increasingly accountable.
- Create a community of learners.

## Suggestions for Self-Directed, Engaged Learning for Ages 9-12



### Tip:

While reading this book with your child, you can ask questions about what the children are experiencing. For example, you can ask:

- “How do you think the characters are ‘seeing’ the Pteranodon fly? Does imagining help you when you are reading books?”



### Skill:

One of the principles of Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is involving children socially, emotionally and intellectually. Books can create an imaginary world where you are fully engaged.



### Tip:

Ask your child:

- “How are Jack and Annie learning about the prehistoric world? How do they use a book, their own experiences and their past knowledge? How do they figure out how to survive the Tyrannosaurus Rex? How do they discover how to get home again?”



### Skill:

One of the principles of promoting Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is the importance of elaborating and extending knowledge. As you help your child understand the process of problem solving, you are promoting their Executive Function skills.



### Tip:

Ask your child if he or she thinks *Dinosaurs Before Dark* is a good story. Why or why not? Ask him or her to think about what makes a story really good.



### Skill:

Storytelling is a good way to help children learn.



### Tip:

You can ask your child about something he or she loved learning and what your child wants to learn next.



### Skill:

Truly engaged learning is self-directed. When Jack and Annie say they can't wait to go back in the woods to see what happens next, it shows how involved they are.

## Dinosaurs Before Dark

By Mary Pope Osborne

In the first book of the popular Magic Tree House series, siblings Jack and Annie discover a book that can take them to other places and times—in this case, to the time of the dinosaurs—where they learn about science and history through their adventures



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You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: **Serve and Return** and **Executive Function** skills.

**Serve and Return**, like a game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning.

**Executive Function** skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals.

They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control.

Find more about *Mind in the Making* at [www.mindinthemaking.org](http://www.mindinthemaking.org).