

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 6-8

Tip:

Ask your child how it feels not to understand what others are saying and have your child recall an experience when this happened to him or her. Then talk with your child about why it was meaningful for the Patino family to learn English.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning means **working toward relevant and meaningful goals**. Executive Function skills are driven by goals.

Tip:

Ask your child to recall an experience when he or she had to learn something that was hard. What helped him or her do this?

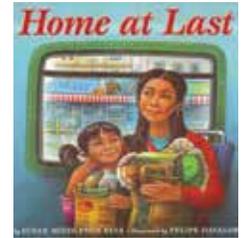
Skill:

Learning involves **dealing with challenges**. When you help your child relate the story to personal experience with overcoming challenges, you are promoting both attitudes and skills that will help your child address other learning challenges in the future. This back and forth conversation you have with your child about this book is what researchers call “**serve and return**.” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

Home at Last

By Susan Middleton Elya

Ana Patino's family moved to the United States from Mexico when she was eight and her twin brothers were babies. Papa goes to work at a canning factory and Ana goes to school, where she is one of two non-English speaking students. Her mother runs into problems because she does not speak English. Ana suggests her mother could learn English, but her mother says it's impossible, until she finally agrees to try.



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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.