

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:

Pauline and her little brother John-John have a goal to have a lemon-limeade stand, even though it's winter. Nothing stops them from working toward their goal—including their parents' warnings that nobody will want cold drinks in the middle of winter.

Ask your child how important it is to have goals, even goals that other people say are undo-able. Have them think about their other experiences as well as the story in this book.



Skill:

One of the principles of promoting Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is **helping children set and then work toward goals**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals.



Tip:

When the children don't sell much, they come up with many new marketing ideas. Ask your child what else might Pauline and John-John have done to sell their lemon-limeade.



Skill:

Another principle of promoting Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is to **elaborate and extend** what children do.



Tip:

Ask your child:

- "What did Pauline and John-John learn about money from this experience?"

Include how much they spent and how much they earned.



Skill:

Still another principle of promoting Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is helping children **practice, synthesize and generalize**.



Tip:

You can share a story or ask your child to share a story about a time he or she had fun and worked well with someone else.



Skill:

The brother and sister created their own **learning community by working together and learning from each other**.

Lemonade in Winter

By Emily Jenkins

Two siblings are determined to set up a lemonade stand ... in the middle of winter. Their determination and willingness to do the math and the leg-work involved (and to brave the elements!) pays off as they realize their lemonade stand dream.



High-quality books and educational resources from First Book supporting research-based Life Skills from *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky



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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.