

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 3-5

Tip:

Ask your child:

- “What can we do to make the world more beautiful?”

His or her ideas don't have to be planting flowers like in *Miss Rumphius*. For example, you can suggest that smiling or laughing can make the world more beautiful.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning involves **helping children apply knowledge**. When you ask your child to apply the ideas in the book to his or her own life in new ways, you are promoting this skill. This back and forth conversation you have with your child about the 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.

Tip:

Miss Rumphius had goals—to see the world and to live by the sea. Ask your child to think of a goal that matters to him or her now. Ask your child to begin to make plans to achieve that goal. In a back and forth conversation, you can also share a story of a goal you had and how you made it come true.

Skill:

One of the key principles of promoting Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is to help children **set and then be accountable for goals**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals. Sharing your own stories is another way to help your child understand the importance of goals.

Miss Rumphius

By Barbara Cooney

This is a story that spans the generations, beginning with a child named Alice Rumphius who wants to live like her grandfather—going to faraway places and living by the sea. Her grandfather tells her there is a third thing she must do: make the world more beautiful. Following in her great aunt's footsteps, little Alice has similar dreams.



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



Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. www.fbmarketplace.org.

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.

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Suggestions for Self-Directed, Engaged Learning for Ages 3-5

Tip:

You can ask your child:

- “Have you thought about a faraway place you would like to visit?”
- “Have you seen a picture of that place? What did you like about it?”
- “What do you think it would be like to visit or live there?”

See if you find additional information about that place in a book or on the Internet. What can you learn about this place together with your child?

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning includes **using your imagination**. It also involves **elaborating and extending children's learning**. When you encourage children to want to know more, you are helping them become learners for life.

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