

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:

You can ask your child about the relationship between Mr. Baker and Harry:

- “Why do you think they are friends? What do they have in common? How are they different?”
- “Do you have someone special who makes you feel excited about learning?”

Skill:

Learning is furthered through **trustworthy relationships**, which Harry and George certainly have, even though they are from different generations and backgrounds. When you discuss this friendship with your child, you are helping him or her understand the importance of relationships to learning.

Tip:

Ask your child to think about how Mr. Baker may have felt in going to school and learning to read at his age.

For example, say to your child:

- “Mr. Baker says that not knowing how to read is something that must be corrected. Do you think his attitude helps him learn to read? What helps you deal with learning something that is hard?”
- “Mr. Baker is a drummer. When he sounds out the letters, his fingers fly across his knees. Do you think that drumming helps him read? What helps you learn to read?”

Mr. George Baker

By Amy Hest

This book tells the story of a friendship between Mr. George Baker and his young neighbor, Harry. Harry thinks George is “a hundred years old, no kidding.” He can't read, but George says, “That must be corrected.” They wait together on Mr. Baker's steps for the school bus and we learn more about Mr. Baker, including the fact that he is a “drummer man, and some people say he's famous.” They go to school together where each learns to read, and, though “it's hard,” George believes “we can do it.”



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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Skill:

Learning involves challenges. When you help your child think about how the characters in the story **deal with challenges** and relate that understanding to his or her own experiences, you are promoting both attitudes and skills that will help your child address other learning challenges in the future. This back and forth interaction 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:

Mr. Baker has a learning goal—learning to read. You can share a story about a goal you once had in learning something new. Your experiences will be inspiring for your child.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning includes helping children **set goals, work toward those goals and be accountable for achieving those goals**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals. When you share your experiences about your own goal-setting, you are, in a real sense, creating a **learning community** with your child.

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