

# SELF-REGULATED LEARNING FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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*How do I help students manage their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions?*

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## **In Summary: Self-Regulated Learning in PreK and Kindergarten**

The earliest years of schooling are when students begin learning to control not only their behavior but also their emotions. They start to shift from primarily external control (Vygotsky's Stage 1) to primarily internal control (Stage 3). But even as students internalize rules and norms, the environment remains a powerful force. Lay the foundation for future academic success by providing a supportive adult relationship; modeling appropriate language and behaviors; and scaffolding students' play, conflict resolution, and pursuit of learning goals.

## **Self-Regulated Learning in Elementary School**

Children transition from the less formal learning environment of preK and kindergarten to the more formal expectations of grades 1–5 with varying levels of self-regulation. Because we expect these students to conform to routines and complete tasks that have more steps and directions to follow and require more memory control, self-regulation can be a struggle. Some elementary students still require the kinds of support covered in the preK and kindergarten section; the others need help navigating the new challenges they face.

steps are completed, journals or forms for keeping track of progress).

□ **Celebrate the achievement of short-term goals.**

Acknowledge when students have attained their goal, focusing on the effort and strategies they used to do so. Reaching a goal—even an intermediate or short-term goal—can do a lot to motive students to pursue the next one.

### **Supporting Performance (Grades 1–5)**

As students proceed through elementary school, they begin to take on more responsibility for their own learning. But what should students do when they run into a problem or assignment that they can't complete on their own? Enter *adaptive help-seeking*, in which self-regulated learners “monitor their academic performance, show awareness of difficulty they cannot overcome on their own, and exhibit the wherewithal and self-determination to remedy that difficulty by requesting assistance from a more knowledgeable individual” (Newman, 2002, p. 132).

Your less self-regulated students may not know the best ways to approach the task or which goals are most appropriate, particularly when they are encountering unfamiliar topics. Sensitivity to social comparison factors in as well. Around 1st or 2nd grade, children begin to worry about how their classmates might judge them for asking for help, which can inhibit them from using that essential self-regulated learning strategy.

### What to Do: Encourage Adaptive Help Seeking

Students need to understand that it is not only OK but necessary to ask for help with work they cannot do on their own. You can support this behavior by making sure all students know

- When they need help
- That others can help
- What questions to ask to get the help they need
- That it's OK to ask for help

There are also certain grading practices and learning activities that can encourage students to seek help.

#### *Ideas to Try Now*

□ **Post lists of “help triggers” and “help alerts.”** The help trigger list provides a reminder of when students should seek help (e.g., when they don't how to get started, when they have been trying to solve a problem for more than 5 minutes, and when they are tempted to guess). The help alert list should include tips on how to indicate help is needed (e.g., raising a hand, holding up a red card) and what to say (e.g., “I am confused about \_\_\_\_.”).

□ **Use criterion-referenced grading.** Basing assessment on learning objectives and grading rubrics that students have seen and can understand helps create a classroom environment where content mastery is more important than “looking smart” or getting good grades. In these environments, students are more likely to ask for help when they need it. Objectives and rubrics also give students a clearer sense of



## SELF-REGULATION FAQs

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**Q** What is the difference between self-regulation and behavior management?

**A** While the terms are interrelated and are often used interchangeably, self-regulation and behavior management are two different things. *Self-regulation* is an internal process in which an individual uses a multifaceted set of emotional and cognitive skills (e.g., motivation, persistence, attention) to regulate his or her own behavior. Within educational literature, the term *behavior management* refers to external processes or rules that are imposed on students to manage their behaviors. When teachers support self-regulation skills, students learn to regulate their behavior on their own, decreasing the need for behavior management from a teacher or other adult.

**Q** How can I foster self-regulation with a young student who acts out physically (hitting, biting, etc.)?

**A** The very young need help learning how to inhibit inappropriate actions. The first step is to understand why the child acted out. After every incident, ask yourself the following questions: