

# FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE AT SCHOOL AND HOME

**Parent Academy**  
**presented by The Scholar Academy Team**  
**November 2016**

# WHY IS INDEPENDENCE IMPORTANT?

FROM: [HTTP://WWW.SMARTKIDSSCHOOL.COM/ITEM/2011/05/THE-IMPORTANCE-OF-TEACHING-A-CHILD-TO-BECOME-INDEPENDENT](http://www.smartkidsschool.com/item/2011/05/the-importance-of-teaching-a-child-to-become-independent)

Through independence children enhance their skills, learn right and wrong, develop their personality, and make decisions. To learn the ways of life, children need to experience life. This way, they will grow up strong, ready to take on life challenges, be emotionally secure, and be happy.

- Kids learn from their mistakes
- Kids gain confidence when they accomplish something independently
- Kids need to learn how to handle failure
- Kids need to practice decision making skills

*Our role as parents and educators is to support and encourage our children while providing them an appropriate amount of independence.*

# INDEPENDENCE BASICS

Building Student  
Independence



# SELF-ESTEEM

- 1. Discover and affirm your child's strengths**
  - a. Every child has qualities that make him/her special. Get to know and convey to your child your appreciation of his or her unique style (e.g. "I notice that people like to spend time with you. You pay attention and are kind to them.")
- 2. Help your child develop a passion for activities he/she can master**
  - a. Allow them to explore and follow their interests and support them in developing a sense of mastery. Feeling a sense of competence in one area means your child will be better able to withstand difficulties in another.
- 3. Avoid doing for children what they can do for themselves.**
  - a. It takes patience to teach children important skills, but they need to be able to contribute to their families and also gain a sense of competence when they can handle routine tasks.
- 4. Allow your child to make mistakes and experience the consequences**
  - a. If we always protect our children from hurt or defeat, they will never learn to cope on their own. Help children understand that in making mistakes we often learn new things and that your love is not contingent on their success.

# SELF-SUFFICIENT

**Teaching your child age-appropriate life skills is important for self-care and independence.**

## **1. Give your child responsibilities**

- a. Chores! An important way to teach your child to be responsible. Instead of saying “Go clean your room”, a non-specific task that might frustrate your child, give him or her exact instructions (e.g. “Put your dirty clothes in the hamper and put all your toys in the toy bin”). A visual checklist can be very helpful.

## **2. Behind the scenes prep work**

- a. If your child needs help completing a task or is too young to complete the whole task by him/herself; do some prep work, but do not do the task for your child. For example, if your child wants to make breakfast, but he or she can not reach the bowls, put the bowls out the night before somewhere your child can reach. Your child will feel proud and accomplished.

## **3. Teach problem solving**

- a. When your child comes to you with a problem you know he or she is capable of solving the problem on his or her own, offer clues not solutions. Help your child brainstorm!

# SELF-DETERMINATION

*The ability and opportunity to steer one's life in a direction that contributes to a personally satisfying life.*

- **Increases academic success.**
- **Children become more engaged in schoolwork.**
- **Children become a part of their own education and transition planning.**
- **Children have a higher quality of life with positive experiences.**
- **Teaches self-advocacy: speaking up and voicing opinions.**

From: <http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/RTI2B/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Self-DeterminationBrief-vs2.pdf>

# PROMOTING SELF-DETERMINATION CONTINUED:

- Choice/Decision making skills
- Problem solving
- Goal setting and attainment skills
- Self-advocacy and leadership skills
- Self-management and self regulation
- Self-awareness and self knowledge

TEACHING CHOICE

DECISION MAKING SKILLS



# IMPORTANCE OF CHOICE/DECISION MAKING SKILLS

Involves analyzing a situation to determine possible outcomes, choosing the best scenario for yourself at that particular time, and following through with your decision.

Children who are more self-determined will consider how their decisions affect themselves and others.

Decision making is especially important at the secondary level, when children are considering future careers and postsecondary pathways they will take in adulthood. Decision making involves consideration of all alternatives, positive and negative consequences, and what is the best for oneself. This collection of skills is important for everyday life situations—both in and out of school—where children will be faced with the need to make wise decisions.

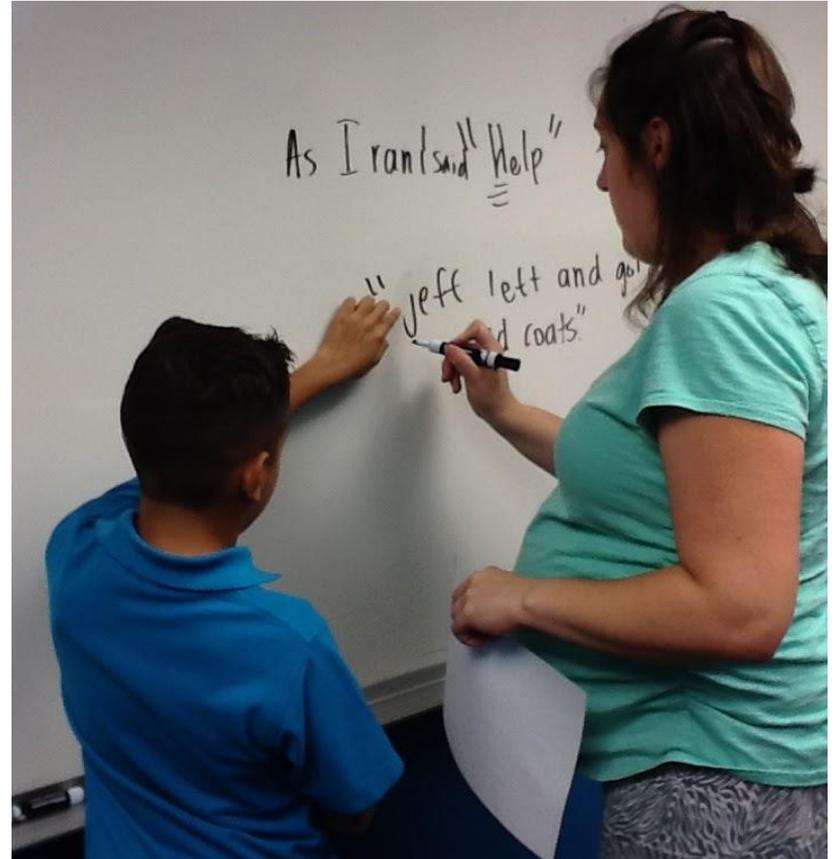
# ACTIVITIES FOR DECISION/CHOICE-MAKING SKILLS

Give your child a choice, this enables him/her to develop and demonstrate responsibility and control. It helps your child identify his/her interests and express preferences. Choices teach your child to analyze the situation/options and corresponding outcomes to determine the best decision/choice.

Examples:

- Provide your child with two options when making a decision and let him/her choose for him/herself.
- When making family decisions let your child be involved.
- Model decision making by thinking out loud when you are making a choice.

# TEACHING PROBLEM SOLVING



# IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEM SOLVING

Refers to the capacity to identify a problem, generate possible solutions, evaluate the effect of each alternative, and ultimately choose the best option.

Often, children use problem-solving skills during activities, tasks, or situations that do not have an obvious or pre-determined solution.

Problem solving skills are especially useful as children encounter situations requiring independence and competence in school and community activities. Further, these skills can assist children in community-based and work settings, where they often are expected to engage in tasks independently. Problem solving can also help children navigate social difficulties with peers, teachers, family members, or other members of the community.

# HELPING CHILDREN SOLVE PROBLEMS

FROM: [HTTP://WWW.SCHOLASTIC.COM/TEACHERS/ARTICLE/HOW-YOU-CAN-HELP-CHILDREN-SOLVE-PROBLEMS](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/how-you-can-help-children-solve-problems)

- Step back and watch your child's independent problem solving. Do not intervene right away.
- Create accepting environments where children feel free to express their ideas without fear of being wrong or of not being taken seriously.
- Give children opportunities for open ended play activities in long periods of time. Create opportunities for children to initiate and solve their own problems and plenty of time to test out possible ideas and solutions.
- Watch for times when children are engaged in problem solving and interject provocative questions to propel them into new ways of thinking.
- Emphasize the vocabulary of problem solving. As you speak with children, use the words problem, think, ideas, and solve. Children will begin to use the vocabulary of problem solving to define and describe their own thinking.
- Be willing to make mistakes in front of children. It is reassuring to children to discover that adults make mistakes too. So let children see some of the mistakes you make, then ask them to help you solve the resulting problems.

# TEACHING GOAL SETTING AND ATTAINMENT SKILLS



# IMPORTANCE OF GOAL SETTING & ATTAINMENT SKILLS

Requires children to identify something they wish to work toward and develop a plan to reach that particular objective.

When learning how to set and attain goals, children should be faced with challenging yet feasible objectives that are aligned to their likes and dislikes.

Learning how to set and attain goals may enable children to better understand and work toward what is most important to them. The attainment of these goals may be encouraging to children as they seek direction and independence in school and life endeavors.

# ACTIVITIES FOR GOAL SETTING AND ATTAINMENT

Work with children to develop plans that include steps to reach a goal and any necessary resources. It is important to support children in considering the process of reaching the goal and not narrowly focusing on only the end result.

Help children set manageable and realistic goals that can be met in a short time period (e.g., a single class period, a day at school, or over the weekend). For example, a child might set a goal of reading a certain amount of pages in a 30-minute block of silent, sustained reading. The child can learn to track progress and adjust her goal over time.

Display your child's academic and personal goals publicly and positively, and have frequent discussions about the progress being made to reach the goals.

Encourage children to set goals they might find less interesting or preferable (e.g., academic or organizational goals) in order to encourage the development of a work ethic.

**S** SPECIFIC

**M** MEASUREABLE

**A** ACHIEVABLE

**R** REALISTIC

**T** TIMELY

*My* **SMART GOAL**

I want to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_

so I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to meet my goal.

My Goals by \_\_\_\_\_

My Goal is: \_\_\_\_\_



My Target Date is: \_\_\_\_\_



To Reach My Goal I will do these 3 things:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

I will know I've reached my goal because:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 things that will help me stick to reaching my goal are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# TEACHING SELF ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS



# IMPORTANCE OF SELF ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Involves having the ability and confidence to stand up for oneself, as well as having the knowledge of what to advocate for in achieving one's goals.

Requires children to be assertive and negotiable, communicate effectively, and utilize interpersonal skills.

These skills are important as children seek to promote their interests and goals in post-school employment and community involvement. As children communicate with peers and community members, their self-advocacy and leadership skills may assist them in being understood and supported by others. Further, learning to work in teams, either as the leader or a cooperative member, may be beneficial in school settings.

# ACCOMMODATIONS

Your child can find accommodations to work effectively in his/her classroom and can draw on personal strengths.

Accommodations can also continue at home.

The best accommodations allow children to draw upon something they are good at in order to overcome a situation that does not focus on their strengths.

Talk to your child about what Accommodations are most helpful to him/her.

Utilizing advocacy skills will be very important in obtaining these accommodations.

From: <http://eyetoeyenational.org/about/resources.html#parents>

# SELF-ADVOCACY

The skill of self-advocacy can be broken down into a few key elements:

- Your child *understands* his/her needs. (This is part of self-awareness.)
- Your child *knows* what help or support will address those needs, like tutoring or a classroom accommodation.
- Your child can *communicate* his/her needs to teachers and others.

A child who exercises self-advocacy can:

- Find solutions to challenges his/her parents may not be aware of
- Build self-confidence in his/her ability to learn
- Create a sense of ownership over learning
- Develop independence and self-empowerment

Instead of feeling powerless and dependent on others, he/she can feel ready to take on life's challenges.

From: <https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/self-advocacy/the-importance-of-self-advocacy>

# PROMOTING SELF-ADVOCACY IN KIDS

Because self-advocacy is so important, you may want to take specific steps to help your child build this skill. Here are some ways to help your child develop self-advocacy:

- Talk with your child about his/her strengths and weaknesses.
- Remind him/her that asking for help is a good thing.
- Praise him/her for speaking up when she needs help.
- Teach your child about his/her legal rights and how to talk about them in a positive, constructive way.
- When a problem arises, give your child a chance to solve it before stepping in.

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/self-advocacy/the-importance-of-self-advocacy>

# SELF ADVOCACY TAKES TIME AND PRACTICE

Self-advocacy isn't easy for many kids. Children may feel awkward or even guilty about asking for help or for an accommodation. That's especially true if a child feels embarrassed about her learning or attention issues.

As with any valuable skill, practice can help your child learn self-advocacy. Practice can also help her feel more comfortable about asking for help.

The sooner your child gets started, the more natural it will feel.

Teaching self-advocacy can be an important part of caring for your child. Self-advocacy skills can help your child deal with his/her current challenges and the ones she'll face in the future.

From:  
<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/self-advocacy/the-importance-of-self-advocacy>

# LEADERSHIP

Developing self-advocacy skills helps foster the critical thinking and “growth” mindset needed to function in leadership roles.

Additional steps to help build leadership skills include:

**Mentorship:** Exposure to colleagues, teachers, faculty, or other figures with strong leadership skills and who work in an area of interest of your child can provide support, answer questions, and be an overall positive role model.

**Socialize:** A leader also requires being able to work with a team and using effective interpersonal skills. Engage them to join clubs, after-school activities, and camps that interest them and/or have them plan and host a party or social gathering wherein they have to greet guests, introduce them to each other, and serve any needs.

# TEACHING SELF-MANAGEMENT AND SELF-REGULATION SKILLS



# IMPORTANCE OF SELF MANAGEMENT & SELF REGULATION

Involves children monitoring and assessing their own behavior, time management, and learning.

These skills build upon the competencies of children in the development of choice making, decision making, problem solving, and goal setting.

As children progress through school and prepare for life in the community, they should turn less to teachers and others first and instead become more self-directed.

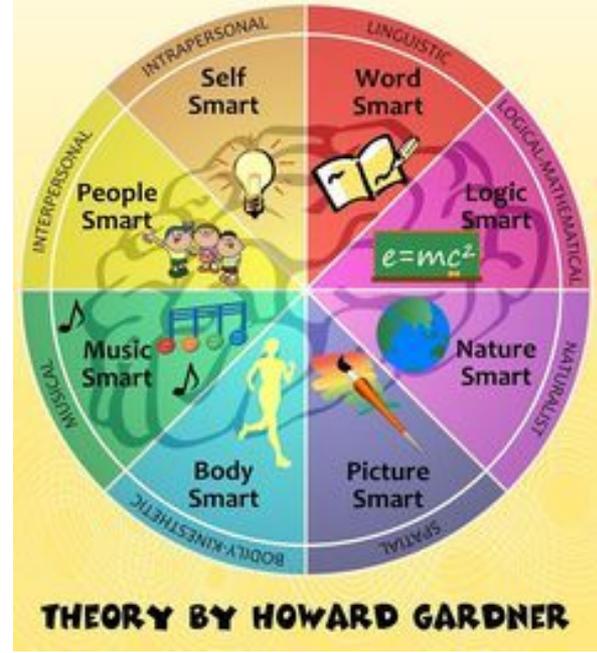
By learning to manage and regulate their daily activities, children may achieve more positive and productive outcomes, such as academic success, job retention, and employer satisfaction.

# ACTIVITIES FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT & SELF REGULATION

- Help children learn how to reflect on their behaviors by having them create a journal of their daily academic, behavioral, and social goals. This allows children to explicitly set their own daily and weekly goals. Children should be encouraged to effectively manage and regulate their own behavior to meet these goals.
- Offer supportive feedback when children are correctly self-managing their learning or social behaviors. When children are struggling to manage themselves, offer limited support until he/she is able to independently correct their actions. For example, if a child is continuously talking to her neighbor during an assignment, offer reminders of the importance of staying on-task and not preventing others from learning.
- Provide instruction to children on how he/she might best deal with various behaviors and emotions, such as anger or sadness.
- Support children in directing their own academic progress by reflecting on their learning preferences, academic strengths and areas for growth, and academic goals.

# TEACHING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF KNOWLEDGE

## MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES



# IMPORTANCE OF SELF-AWARENESS & SELF KNOWLEDGE

Children who possess self-awareness and self knowledge recognize their own strengths, limitations, and abilities. Moreover, they can apply this understanding to improve on their previous experiences and accomplishments.

Children should gain increasing awareness about how they best learn, communicate, and appropriately deal with their emotions. When faced with difficult situations in school, professional, or family settings, they may utilize these skills to focus on their strengths and achieve success.

# META-COGNITIVE SKILLS

Research on resilience and success shows that meta-cognitive skills, the ability to know how one learns, is one of the most fundamental skills to lead a successful life.

Facilitate conversations with your child about learning styles and help him/her develop an asset-based understanding of their learning. Start with his/her Multiple Intelligence strengths!

Ask your child how he/she likes to learn. Observe when he/she is most engaged. Help him/her develop language that describes how he/she likes to learn new things and then help him/her tackle new tasks by drawing on the ways he/she likes to learn best.

From: <http://eyetoeyenational.org/about/resources.html#parents>

# RESOURCES

Vanderbilt University: Promoting Self-Determination

<http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/RTI2B/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Self-DeterminationBrief-vs2.pdf>

[www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)