

Summary

Self-regulation is the process of taking control of one's learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating. High potential learners may struggle to develop self-regulation due to a lack of consistent challenge. This advice sheet is aimed at teachers and other educators so that they can support learners in this area.

Introduction

Self-understanding is important for individual learners' future development, as well as their academic performance. Without good self-understanding, high potential learners are at risk of being too hard on themselves, not performing to their potential and of giving up too easily.

In order to gain greater self-understanding, high potential learners need to be working at a level that challenges them so that they can build self-regulation skills. Tasks that encourage self-regulation are ones that enable the learner to estimate their performance before commencing, and to review their performance afterwards. Naturally, there needs to be the possibility for the individual learner to fall short of performing perfectly in the chosen task, which therefore requires appropriate challenge.

Clear and detailed criteria for performance, explicit and prompt feedback, as well as examples of standards of work at the highest level will all encourage self-regulation in high potential learners.

Some Basic Principles of Self-Regulation

- Self-regulation skills can be taught, learned, and controlled.
- In order to self-regulate, learners must learn to self-compare their performance (rather than comparing their performance to their peers) and become proactive learners.
- There are three phases of self-regulation: planning, monitoring and reflecting.
- Some of the important self-regulation skills for learners are goal-setting, time management and organisation, study and learning strategies, and exam strategies.

What Teachers and Educators Can Do to Promote Self-Regulation

Below is a structure to help learners learn how to self-regulate. The exact nature will depend on the stage of the learner, the subject area and the nature of the task.

1. Helping learners to plan

- The requirements of the task need to be clear so that learners can estimate what the level/grade of their performance will be.
- Explain how the task will be assessed: 'out of 10', national curriculum levels, GCSE/GCE grades.
- Provide clear criteria of what is required; but be cautious in maintaining the balance between providing examples and being too prescriptive (difficult when teachers may be working to set assessment criteria); encourage high potential learners to problem-solve and create for themselves based on the performance criteria and examples of work.
- Encourage them to look at their past achievement, completed homework, and what they have learnt from it.
- Be aware of the self-perceptions of your learners: are they loath to take risks or excessively self-critical (this may lead to lower self-assessment); or overly confident (leading to higher

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self-assessment)? They may need more practice and guidance to self-regulate their learning.

- Provide the environment and guidance for learners to ask themselves:
 - What is the task?
 - What do I want to achieve?
 - What is the timescale?
 - What are my goals?
 - What feedback I have received will help me improve my performance?
 - What are my realistic expectations? By when?
 - How will I approach the task?
 - What resources do I need?
 - When will I start?
 - How will I start?
 - Where will I be able to work best on this task?
 - What will help or hinder me?

2. Helping learners to monitor

- Dependent on the task and the length of time anticipated for its completion, ensure learners are monitoring their progress; build monitoring into the criteria for the task.
- Make opportunities available for learners to share their monitoring strategies with each other.
- Provide the environment and guidance for learners to ask themselves:
 - Am I approaching the task as I had planned?
 - Am I staying focused?
 - Is anything distracting me from reaching my goals?
 - Am I developing any bad habits?
 - Is my strategy still working or do I need to adapt it?
 - Do I have all the resources I need?
 - Am I accomplishing what I had hoped in the timescales I set?
 - Is it taking more time than I thought?
 - Am I demonstrating resilience?
 - When and where do I work best?
 - How can I encourage myself to stick with it?

3. Helping learners to reflect

- Provide prompt and explicit feedback to help learners reflect whilst the task is still fresh in their minds (not easy for teachers with competing demands and time pressures, but essential to help learners develop good self-regulation skills).
- Some tasks might benefit from feedback part-way through; promoting re-assessment by the learners either to alter their estimated performance level (especially if it was unduly low or high), or to help them consider whether they need to change their approach.
- Provide the environment and guidance for learners to ask themselves questions relating to 'what worked well' and 'even better if'. Use prompts such as:
 - In what ways did the planning and monitoring help achieve the goals?
 - Did I set goals which were challenging yet realistic?
 - Which self-monitoring strategies were most helpful and why?
 - When and where did I work most effectively?

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- How well did I manage the timescale?
- What have I learnt about the way I learn?
- What strategies did I use when I felt stuck or demotivated?
- What would I do differently next time?

The Skills Learners Need to Develop

It takes time and practice to embed good habits. The self-regulation skills that are usually used by successful learners fall into three categories: personal, behavioural and environmental. They will probably use a mixture of all three. Teachers and other educators need to encourage these skills in high potential learners. To help, the skills could be available visually on display, included in a PowerPoint presentation when introducing a new task, or provided in a check list for learners when they are planning their approach to a new task.

Personal: how the learner organises and interprets information

Organising the information:

- Outlining, summarising, rearranging information, highlighting, flashcards, pictures, charts, mind maps, venn diagrams, Plus Minus Interesting charts

Goal setting and planning:

- Sequencing, time management and pacing

Keeping records and monitoring:

- Note-taking, lists of errors made, record of marks, portfolio, keeping all drafts of assignments, keeping a blog

Rehearsing and memorising:

- Mnemonics, teaching someone else the material, making sample questions, using mental imagery, using repetition

Behavioural: what the learner does

Self-evaluating:

- Task analysis (What does the teacher want me to do? What do I want out of it? What skills do I need to develop?), self-instructions

Self-reinforcing:

- Strategies for staying on-task and up-to-date, strategies for making the learning important and motivating

Environmental: how the learner seeks assistance and arranges the physical environment

Seeking information:

- Library, internet, text books, review cards, journals and specialist publications, speaking to experts

Environmental structuring:

- Selecting or arranging the physical setting, eliminating or minimising distractions, breaking up study periods and spreading them over time

Seeking social assistance:

- From peers, from teachers or other adults, emulating exemplary models

Good Practice for Teachers

Five common practices for teachers that are effective in helping learners learn self-regulation are:

1. Guiding learners' self-beliefs, goal setting and expectations

- Teachers help learners frame new information or feedback in a positive rather than a negative manner e.g. "keeping track of your homework assignments will help you manage this course successfully," rather than "if you don't keep track you will fail"
- Teachers provide specific cues for using self-regulatory strategies

2. Promoting reflective dialogue

- Teachers model reflective practices (think aloud)
- Learners are encouraged to practice reflective dialogue
- Group discussions are planned so that learners can think through problems/cases (collaborative learning)

3. Providing corrective feedback

- Performance targets are clear and perceived as attainable
- Feedback (positive or an area to develop) is phrased as a statement about the task of learning, not about the learner

4. Helping learners make connections between abstract concepts

- Teachers use case-based instructions or examples that learners come up with themselves
- Teachers use hands-on learning activities
- Teachers help learners learn to separate relevant from irrelevant information i.e. help them know where and how to focus their attention; guide their reference standards

5. Helping learners link new experiences to prior learning

- Teachers use experiential learning activities
- Teachers focus on application of knowledge in broader contexts
- Teachers integrate real-life examples with classroom information

Further Information

S312 Self-Regulation Learner Resource	This advice sheet gives two learner resources that ask questions to prompt learners to plan how they are going to approach a task, as well as check their effort and their progress in meeting challenges and developing self-regulation in regards to their learning.
University of Connecticut's Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development	US website with more information and examples of self-regulated learning
Self-Regulated Learning Literature Review	A research document from the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning from the Institute of Education, University of London, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2009

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