



Self-Directed Learning

FEBRUARY 2009

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Background...

- The term Self-Directed Learning requires that students take the responsibility for their own learning process, including acquiring the material and monitoring their own progress.
- This method of instruction originally begun in the education of adults and has only recently begun to be used in elementary and secondary schools.

Key Findings....

Self-directed learning is a collaborative process, the student must have the initiative to learn the material and the teacher must provide support and resources for learning. Students should never feel as if they are learning on their own.

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- Assessing whether a student is ready for self-directed learning is important.
- Teachers should be provided with training on self-directed learning.
- Teachers should teach students a variety of learning strategies and ensure they can properly use them.
- Teachers should teach students the value of revision and critical appraisal in their work.
- Teachers should encourage independence and a positive attitude toward learning.
- Teachers should investigate learners' needs and interests and how to support them.
- A tutorial and formal inquiry process should occur to allow students to discuss and make connections in their material.
- Control of the learning process should shift from teacher to student as the student gains more experience with the concepts of self-directed learning so that eventually students decide what they should learn and how to learn the material.
- Gifted and talented students have educational needs for daily challenge, opportunities for uniqueness and independent work, subject or grade based acceleration, opportunities to learn and socialize with other gifted and talented students and a differentiation in instructional methods such as pace, review etc.
- Being a self-directed learner teaches a student to be motivated, self-disciplined and persistent. Students also develop a confidence in their own abilities and become more goal-oriented while enjoying their learning.

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Teachers should make students aware of their role in their own learning and encourage each student to take initiative in their learning. Teachers must support students in their learning process by providing opportunities for help and discussion so students don't feel like they are working on their own.

BOTTOM LINE ACTIONABLE MESSAGE

Many articles were reviewed to prepare this BLAM. More information on some of the articles is provided below.

Recommended Reading:

- **“Self-Directed Learning” ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication Digest #169** (Mardziah Hayati Abdullah - ERIC)
 - This digest was published in December 2001 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link
<http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d169.html>.
 - This digest discusses the basic concept of self-directed learning in a K-12 setting as well as benefits associated with self-directed learning and what teachers can do to support students in self-directed learning.

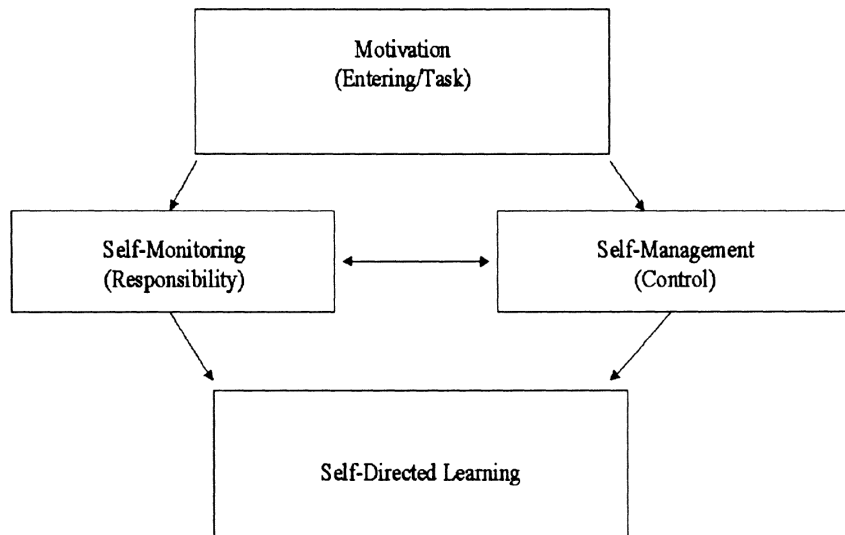
- **Lessons Learned About Educating the Gifted and Talented: A Synthesis of the Research on Educational Practice** (Karen B. Rogers)
 - A review of the literature completed in Fall 2007 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link
http://ft.csa.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/ids70/resolver.php?sesid=c040ad9bae85d32a516c08b5f4aa34ee&server=search1.scholarportal.info&check=9d706df18204e20262aa16dc42439727&db=sageduc-set-c&key=0016-9862%2F10.1177_0016986207306324&mode=pdf
 - This review synthesizes the literature in order to suggest five key components of educating the gifted and talented; need for daily challenge, opportunities for uniqueness and independent work, subject or grade based acceleration, opportunities to learn and socialize with other gifted and talented students and a differentiation in instructional techniques such as pace, review etc.

- **A systematic review of interventions aimed at improving the educational achievement of pupils identified as gifted and talented** (EPPI Centre)
 - This systematic review was completed in 2008 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link
<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=nR%2f1E%2fiYVtI%3d&tabid=2402&mid=4458&language=en-US>.
 - This systematic review covers the different methods of classroom-based techniques that are used with gifted and talented children and whether or not they are effective.

➤ **Self-Directed Learning: Toward a Comprehensive Model** (D.R. Garrison)

- This paper was published in 1997 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link
http://ft.csa.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/ids70/resolver.php?sesid=uu4u8fkgldr0hpm6mco74i79n2&server=csaweb104v.csa.com&check=2046b2c5ae8520e06880b790b5a9d452&db=sageduc-set-c&key=0741-7136%2F10.1177_074171369704800103&mode=pdf
- This paper provides a self-directed learning model (see below) based on three different dimensions

Dimensions of Self-Directed Learning



➤ **Towards Active and Self-Directed Learning: Preparing for Lifelong Learning with Reference to Dutch Secondary Education** (Bolhuis Sanneke)

- This was published in April of 1996 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/14/8e/61.pdf
- This article presents five steps to the self-directed learning model:
 1. **Orienting/Preparing** - Setting goals about what you want to learn and what you already know
 2. **Strategic Decisions** - Deciding where and how to start.
 3. **Executing learning activities** - Reflect, study, experiment etc.
 4. **Evaluating** - Assessing your progress and how close to your goals you are.
 5. **Regulating** - Going back to the previous 4 steps and making changes or drawing conclusions as required.

➤ **Self-Direction** (Mark K. Smith)

- This is an informal site last edited October 2008 and information was used in an effort to obtain insight and another viewpoint of Knowles model, retrieved January 2009 from the following link <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-selfdr.htm>
- This webpage provides an excellent background of self-directed learning that is easy to understand.
- It also details Knowles 5 step self-directed learning model
 1. Diagnosing learning needs
 2. Formulating learning needs.
 3. Identifying human material resources for learning.
 4. Choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies.
 5. Evaluating learning outcomes.

➤ **Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed** (Gerald Grow)

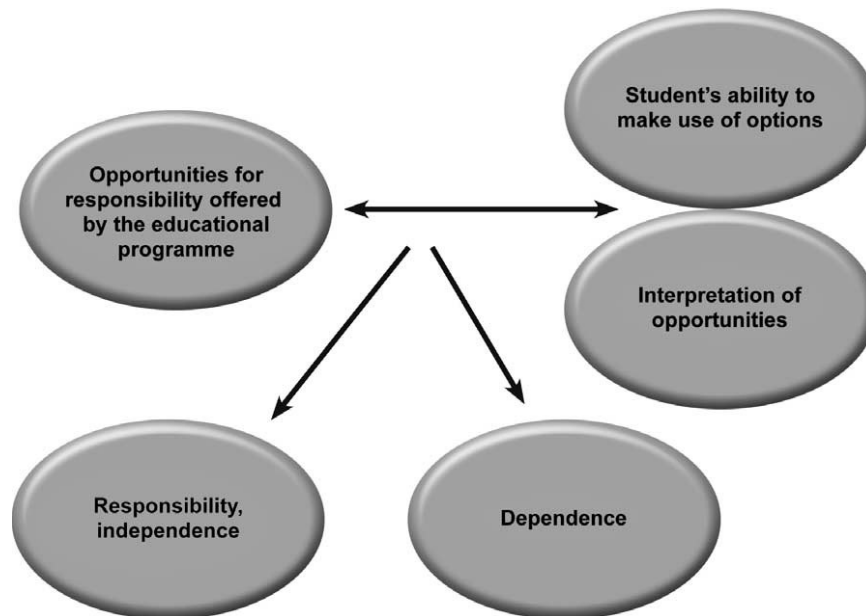
- This article was written in 1996 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link <http://www.longleaf.net/ggrows/SSDL/SSDLIndex.html>
- This article provides an interesting model of the different stages of self-directed learning that a student can be in (see below) and suggests that a teacher's role should be to help students advance to further stages.

The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model

	Student	Teacher	Examples
Stage 1	Dependent	Authority, Coach	Coaching with immediate feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance.
Stage 2	Interested	Motivator, guide	Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.
Stage 3	Involved	Facilitator	Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.
Stage 4	Self-directed	Consultant, delegator	Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.

➤ **Self-directed learning – a learning issue for students and faculty!** (Charlotte Silena and Lars Uhlin – ERIC)

- This article was written in August 2008 and retrieved in January 2009 from the following link
http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/99882_770885140_794502981.pdf
- This article discusses a deeper meaning of being a self-directed learner and puts forth the following model to demonstrate a students responsibility for their learning and their independence



- This article also posits that the inquiry and tutorial processes are essential in self-directed learning.

Additional References:

- **Self-Directed Learning: Present and Future** (Roger Hiemstra and John Burns)
 - This paper was delivered at the First World Conference on Self-Directed Learning in September 1997 in Montreal and was retrieved in January 2009 from the following link <http://www-distance.syr.edu/montrsdsl.html>

- **Self-Directed Learning: Myths and Realities No. 3** (Sandra Kerka)
 - This article was retrieved in January 2009 from the following link http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/15/f2/bc.pdf

- **Learning Technologies in Support of Self-Directed Learning** (Gerhard Fischer and Eric Scharff – Centre for Lifelong Learning and Design)
 - This article was retrieved in January 2009 from the following link <http://www-jime.open.ac.uk/98/4/fischer-98-4-paper.html>

- **Problems of Measuring Self-Directed Learning Readiness** (Gerald A. Straka)
 - This article was retrieved in January 2009 from the following link http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/14/6b/54.pdf.