

Educationally Speaking
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In my April column, I shared information from Daniel Pink's book called *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*; the conclusions were that we have the internal need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better for ourselves and our world. I indicated that one of the implications is that we will have to change the emphasis from teaching students what to learn to how to learn. I have received inquiries asking how parents can help their students be more self-directive and better understand how to learn. The following synthesizes some of the research and literature.

Understanding the Task – Students need to understand the task or expectation accurately in order to implement appropriate learning strategies they can use to produce a positive outcome. As a parent, ask your student questions that will help your student understand. For example, what is the problem or assignment that you are trying to address? What was the guidance your teacher provided to you?

Trigger Questions - Learning is enhanced when students are able to make connections of new concepts with their prior knowledge about the topic. As a parent, you can model this behavior for your student and then enable your student to transition into making his/her own connections without needing your prompting. Sample questions may include: What have you been studying or learning during the previous day or days on this topic? How does what you are trying to learn related to prior instruction? What do you already know about this subject or problem?

Resource Help – Many students struggle because they do not know where to turn to for the information they need to solve problems and answer questions on which their schoolwork focuses. Resource identification and access will help students. As a parent, you can assist your student in identifying relevant resources and the procedures necessary to obtain data from them.

Student Beliefs – What students believe about learning and studying affects their selection of study strategies. Supporting your students with understanding the task, trigger questions, and resource help can help build the confidence that students need in order to independently learn.

Successful independent learners are able to use available resources to connect new understanding to prior knowledge. As parents, you can model and facilitate these learning strategies so that your student can learn how to learn.

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