PART 1: Portraits of Self-Regulated Learning

Chapter 1
What Is Self-Regulated Learning?

INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to serve as a resource for educators interested in learning more about self-regulated learning (SRL) and how to support the development of self-regulating learners. Toward these ends, Part One of this book engages readers with ideas, examples, and activities to help them construct a rich understanding about SRL and, correspondingly, the goals they need to set if they are to support SRL in their contexts. The present chapter is the first of four that make up this introductory part of the book.

Learning Intentions

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

LI 1 Define self-regulation and self-regulated learning (SRL) and the relationship between them.

LI 2 Identify key dimensions of self-regulation, including cognition and metacognition, motivation and emotions, and strategic action, as well as how those dimensions are implicated in learning activities.

LI 3 Imagine rich examples of SRL in your own and others’ learning experiences.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SELF-REGULATED LEARNING?

To anchor our consideration of SRL, an important first step is for you to articulate what you already know. To support you in that, we encourage you to record your answers to the questions in Activity 1-1. As you work through this book, you will have opportunities to consider how your initial understandings about SRL might be shifting or deepening through what you are reading and observing.

What you’ll notice is that the first two questions in Activity 1-1 ask you to identify what you know already about self-regulation and SRL, based on your previous formal learning and professional experience. We recommend that you keep your prior knowledge in mind as you read this book, noting when what you are reading is consonant with or divergent from your initial thinking. We also recommend that you reflect regularly about how what you are reading is advancing your understanding about the questions you are bringing to this book.

The third question in Activity 1-1 asks you to reflect on the photo at the opening of this chapter. Consider whether and how this picture captures your current understanding about self-regulation or SRL. What is consistent with your current thinking? What, if anything, about the picture is surprising or different than what you have been imagining?

A CLASSIC DEFINITION OF SELF-REGULATION

Barry Zimmerman is a world-renowned scholar who has been highly influential in conceptualizing self-regulation and SRL. In 2008, he provided a widely relied-upon definition of self-regulation as the ability to control thoughts and actions to achieve personal goals and respond to environmental demands. One key idea within this definition is that self-regulating individuals take deliberate control over their engagement in daily activities. Another key idea is that self-regulation is goal directed. When they self-regulate, individuals deliberately navigate activities so as to achieve their personal goals. The last key idea in this definition is that self-regulation is contextualized. When self-regulating, individuals are working to navigate activities as defined within the environments in which they are living and working.

Individuals self-regulate their engagement in all sorts of different activities, not just learning in classrooms. Models of self-regulation are often used to describe how students engage in academic tasks, such as reading a novel; learning from informational texts; writing stories, poems, or essays; solving math problems; and researching in classrooms. But individuals also self-regulate in all sorts of other activities both inside and outside of schools. For example, individuals self-regulate in workplaces whenever they strive to attain goals necessary for success in those contexts. Teachers are self-regulating when they plan a lesson to achieve goals for students. Physicians self-regulate as they try to determine...
what is troubling a patient. Individuals are also self-regulating when they drive or shop for groceries or make a plan with friends to go to the movies.

What, then, is the relationship between self-regulation and self-regulated learning (SRL)? In our view, self-regulation is a term that is more broadly applicable and can be used to describe an individual’s engagement in any sort of activity. In contrast, self-regulated learning (SRL) occurs in the subset of activities during which individuals are deliberately seeking to learn. In this book, we will focus primarily on how we can foster the development of self-regulating learners.

DEVELOPING SELF-REGULATING LEARNERS

The title of this book is Developing Self-Regulating Learners. We use this language very intentionally to emphasize that self-regulation is a process. It is not a stable trait that individuals have or don’t have or that they carry around with them from context to context. Self-regulation is what individuals do all the time to navigate day-to-day activities, albeit more or less successfully. It follows that fostering effective forms of self-regulation is a means to an end rather than a goal on its own. Our aim is to support the development of self-regulating readers, writers, researchers, or learners. Fortunately, there is much that educators can do to assist all students in learning how to engage in effective forms of self-regulation in all sorts of different activities.

A key idea that we will come back to over and over in this book is that individuals can take and feel in control over their learning and success if they deliberately and reflectively self-regulate their engagement in activities. Our job as educators is to assist students in taking deliberate control over their participation in the various kinds of activities they are engaged in both in and outside of school.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that self-regulating individuals are active agents in thinking through and managing their engagement (Bandura, 2006). It is they who have to understand and self-regulate their engagement in activities while working alone or with others. Teachers, parents, mentors, or peers can support an individual’s development of effective approaches to self-regulation. But supporting self-regulation is not the same as regulating others; our role is not to control or manage another person’s engagement. Our goal is to help individuals take control over their own engagement, so that they can be and feel empowered to understand and navigate environments successfully.

SELF-REGULATION ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Individuals are self-regulating all the time, albeit more or less effectively. Models of self-regulation describe how individuals engage in goal-directed action in all kinds of day-to-day activities. Self-regulation is something that starts in infancy, as young children learn through intentional action. It extends through early childhood, as preschoolers practise taking on different kinds of roles during imaginative play. Older children self-regulate as they learn to navigate the increasingly complex academic tasks set for them in school. In adulthood, we all self-regulate daily as we tackle professional responsibilities or undertake personal pursuits. Thus, our goal as educators is not to develop self-regulation in students per se. Rather, our goal is to support learners to learn how to engage in effective forms of self-regulation within different kinds of activities, including academic work.

Imagining Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in Schools

What does SRL look like in classroom environments? Consider two different students, Brigitte and Stewart, working in Mrs. Nyad’s class on the same assignment (see SR Vignette 1-1). Can you identify ways in which each student is self-regulating their learning by making choices to achieve goals within this environment?
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In SR Vignette 1-1 Brigitte and Stewart were working at the same grade level, in the same classroom, on the very same assignment. But how they reacted to and approached the assignment varied across many important dimensions. Models of self-regulation are powerful because they help us to think about the whole person and the many factors that influence how people interpret, react to, and engage in activities. In particular, models of self-regulation explain how an individual’s engagement in activities involves these key dimensions: cognition and metacognition, motivation and emotion, and strategic action (see Figure 1-1). In our description below, we define these dimensions and give examples of how each might be involved in learning activities like the one in Mrs. Nyad’s classroom.

More and Less Effective Forms of SRL

Brigitte and Stewart are two students in Mrs. Nyad’s Grade 5 classroom. Below are summaries of how each approached a multi-lesson activity for which they had to choose a topic, select and read texts to inform their thinking, write about what they found, and then share their learning with peers. How do their approaches reflect more effective or less effective forms of self-regulation?

**Brigitte.** As soon as Mrs. Nyad started talking about the assignment, Brigitte panicked and stopped listening to what felt like an overwhelming set of instructions. She worried about how she was going to manage it all. She had no idea what topic to choose or how to decide. Worst was that she realized she had to read. She knew she was going to do miserably and that it was going to take her forever. It was so embarrassing when her friends sailed on to the writing part of assignments while she was still struggling with the reading. So, to make sure she could keep up with her friends, she decided to pick a topic she already knew about and a book she knew would be easy. When writing, she copied as much of the language from the book as she could, since that really helped her with explaining and spelling. The only thing she looked forward to was talking about her topic with her classmates. On the day of her presentation, she was excited when she could stand up and tell her peers everything she knew about her topic. Once her presentation was over, she slumped down in her chair, breathing a huge sigh of relief, happy the project was over. She just hoped she wouldn’t have to face a similar project too soon.

**Stewart.** As Mrs. Nyad explained the project to the class, Stewart listened attentively, reading along with the written instructions to ensure he understood the assignment. Even so, once he started working, he realized he didn’t understand one point. So, he asked one of his peers about it, a friend of his who he knew would have the answer. He and his friend decided from then on to share ideas as they worked. He was excited that he could choose a topic he wanted to learn more about. He chose a book he knew was difficult because it contained a ton of great information. When he recognized information gaps in that reading, he sought out additional resources. As he read, Stewart organized his notes in categories, based both on samples his teacher provided and ideas he and his friend had generated. Then he organized his presentation around those categories, including the most important and interesting information. Stewart was generally happy with how his presentation went on the day it was his turn to speak. He had been quite anxious when he started to talk, but was pleased that he was able to calm down and focus once he got into it. It had been a good call to organize his information in categories, since that had really helped him stay on track and cover all of the topics he had wanted. Still, he decided that if he had a chance to do another presentation, he would practise more so that he could be less nervous at the beginning.

**Food for Thought 1-1**

**Imagining More or Less Effective Forms of SRL in Classrooms**

As you read SR Vignette 1-1, what did you notice about Brigitte’s and Stewart’s approaches that reflect more effective or less effective forms of SRL, at least from their teacher’s perspective? What kinds of goals did each student set? Why?

What dimensions of self-regulation did you notice in how they engaged in the activity (e.g., emotions, motivation, and learning processes)?
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Cognition and Metacognition

From an SRL perspective, cognition and metacognition are implicated in most activities. **Cognition** refers to how individuals think when performing activities, such as reading to learn, solving math problems, planning a route to get from A to B, or gathering thoughts for a presentation. Most activities require cognitive processes to achieve task requirements. For example, for Mrs. Nyad’s assignment, Brigitte and Stewart engaged in cognitive activities when they read and made meaning from the books they chose, took notes on what they were reading, and prepared a presentation for their peers. But did you notice differences in the cognitive strategies they used to accomplish key task requirements? When taking notes, Brigitte’s strategy was to copy points from her reading, while Stewart read for main ideas on particular topics. To structure their class presentations, Stewart organized his ideas in advance around key categories, while Brigitte brainstormed everything she knew about her topic when speaking.

**Metacognition** refers to individuals’ knowledge about and orchestration of their cognition (Butler, in press; Borkowski, 1992; Brown, 1987; Flavell, 1976, 1987). A key aspect of metacognition is the metacognitive knowledge individuals bring to an activity. **Metacognitive knowledge** is reflected in the understandings individuals bring to activities about the following:

- themselves and their strengths and challenges;
- activities and what they typically require (i.e., what they are being asked to do and what is required to be successful); and
- strategies they might use to accomplish different activities or bridge the gap between what they already can do and what they need to learn.

For example, Brigitte and Stewart brought different kinds of metacognitive knowledge to Mrs. Nyad’s assignment. Stewart recognized his strengths as a reader and built from relatively well-developed metacognitive knowledge about research projects and about reading, writing, and presentation strategies. For instance, he knew that if he took notes in categories while reading, it would help him plan for his writing and presentation. Brigitte was acutely aware of her reading struggles, which strongly influenced how she approached the assignment. But she did not have strong metacognitive knowledge about the activity (e.g., what...
makes a good presentation) or about strategies she might use to overcome her reading challenges or how to engage in research, take notes, or organize her writing and presenting.

From a self-regulation perspective, cognition and metacognition are both very important to engagement. In order to deliberately manage their engagement through tasks, individuals need to build from rich and productive metacognitive knowledge about themselves, tasks, and strategies to guide their thinking and learning (i.e., their cognition).

**Motivation and Emotion**

Many models of self-regulation emphasize the importance of children learning to take more deliberate control over their motivation and emotions (e.g., Boekaerts, 2011; Shanker, 2013; Zimmerman, 2011). These dimensions of self-regulation are very important, because it is certainly hard to participate in activities effectively when one is disinterested, stressed, anxious, frustrated, or unhappy.

**Motivation** is a broad term used to describe what drives individuals’ willingness to invest and engage in activities. For example, when highly motivated, students may choose to take up an activity, set activity-related goals, and persist in the face of challenges. Stewart is a good example of a student motivated to take up Mrs. Nyad’s assignment. He chose a topic he cared about, tackled a challenging text because it was the best for his learning, and demonstrated considerable initiative (e.g., choosing to work with a peer, defining categories beyond those suggested by his teacher). When he encountered challenges, he found ways around them. In contrast, Brigitte was motivated enough in Mrs. Nyad’s classroom to work on each part of the assignment. But she was more motivated to avoid frustration, keep pace with her classmates, and look competent among peers. Consequently, she chose a topic she already knew a lot about and an easy, familiar text she could read quickly. Her personal goal focused more on getting through the task than on learning through the activity.

**Emotion** refers to individuals’ affective responses when presented with or engaged in an activity. How individuals experience and respond to emotions is central to how they engage in activities. For example, students like Brigitte who struggle with reading may feel demoralized when facing a reading task, and get frustrated quickly. In contrast, Stewart was excited about the opportunity to engage in research and so dove into the project enthusiastically. Furthermore, although Stewart found speaking in front of his peers to be stressful, he was able to settle in once he got rolling with the help of his carefully prepared notes. If individuals do not have knowledge and strategies that enable them to manage their emotions during activities, they are likely to avoid the activity altogether or give up quickly when faced with obstacles.

**Strategic Action**

Finally, self-regulating individuals engage in cycles of strategic action. **Strategic action** includes (1) interpreting tasks and setting goals, (2) planning, (3) enacting strategies, (4) monitoring, and (5) adjusting. For example, to be maximally effective, self-regulating learners in Mrs. Nyad’s classroom would take time to interpret the demands of the activity and set goals aligned with activity expectations. They would then make a plan for how to tackle a task and choose a topic, resources, materials, and strategies best matched to accomplishing their goals. They would enact strategies for reading, writing, and presenting. Throughout the task, they would monitor how they were progressing and make adjustments to goals and strategies as needed. Once finished, they would take a moment to reflect on what did and didn’t go well, and think ahead about what they might do differently the next time.

In SR Vignette 1-1, both Brigitte and Stewart were engaged in forms of goal-directed strategic action. For example, Stewart worked hard to interpret activity expectations by listening attentively to instructions, following along with a written description while his teacher was explaining, identifying what he did not understand, and asking a friend for clarification. The goals he set for himself were well aligned with his teacher’s hopes and expectations.
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When planning, he chose a topic and text that would advance his learning. The strategies he chose and enacted were ones that supported him to grapple with ideas and communicate effectively. While reading his chosen text, he monitored whether he had enough information on important topics. When he recognized gaps, he adjusted his approaches by seeking additional information. After his presentation, he judged that his organizational strategies had helped him convey exactly what he had hoped, but concluded that he might have been less nervous at the outset had he practised just a bit more. Ultimately, his approaches enabled him to successfully achieve the goals envisioned by his teacher.

In contrast, while she was excited about talking with peers about her topic, Brigitte did not focus much on interpreting expectations. Instead, she considered how she could achieve her personal goal to get through the task quickly without being embarrassed. When planning, she chose a topic she already knew about and an easy, familiar reading. She also chose and then enacted strategies designed to get through the assignments quickly and bypass anticipated frustration with reading and spelling. When completing the task, she monitored how quickly she was moving through the activity in relation to peers rather than focusing on what she was learning. After her presentation, she was relieved for having “got through” the assignment. While her approaches were successful in achieving her personal goals, the cost was that she did not take advantage of opportunities to build capacity in challenging areas, engage richly with ideas, and/or learn new skills and strategies for reading, writing, or communicating.

MODELS OF SELF-REGULATION: AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Researchers have been investigating self-regulation in the context of all sorts of different activities for well over two decades (for a helpful overview of this history, see Zimmerman, 2008). They have generated different models of SRL, rooted in varying theoretical perspectives (e.g., cognitive, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, constructivist, socio-cultural, or socio-constructivist; see Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). Interested readers might like to learn more about the models of self-regulation developed by Boekaerts (2011), Butler and Winne (1995), Corno (1994), Winne and Hadwin (1998), and Zimmerman (1989, 2002, 2008). In our work, we have certainly been informed by these perspectives. In this book, we also draw directly from the socio-constructivist model of self-regulation developed by Butler and Cartier (Butler & Cartier, 2004; Cartier & Butler, 2004).

Whatever the theoretical stance adopted, most researchers agree that the dimensions outlined above, including cognition and metacognition, motivation and emotion, and strategic action, are integral aspects of self-regulation that intertwine before, during, and after any given activity (e.g., see Zimmerman, 2008). Thus, in this book, we draw from across contemporary models and research to offer one integrative framework that pulls these dimensions of SRL together. While this integrative perspective can be applied to describe engagement in a variety of activities within and outside of school, in the sections to follow we illustrate our main points using the example of students’ self-regulating learning in classrooms (see Figure 1-2).

In addition to showing how important dimensions of self-regulation interact within an activity, a strength of this integrative framework is that it helps to explain more specifically...
how self-regulation involves individuals navigating contexts. That is, Figure 1-2 depicts how SRL in classrooms is shaped by an interaction between what learners bring to a context (left side of the figure) and the learning environment in which they are working (top of the figure).

**What Individuals Bring to Contexts**

Individuals bring to contexts all sorts of experiences, strengths, challenges, metacognition, knowledge, and beliefs that influence their engagement. For example, in some school districts over 100 languages are spoken. Some learners may have started their schooling in a very different cultural context, while others may never even have attended school. How might these prior experiences shape students’ learning in North American classrooms? What kinds of metacognitive knowledge might these students have constructed in other educational systems about what schooling is about, about the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students in classrooms, or about classroom routines and activities common in North American schools? Can we assume that all of our learners share our perspectives about teaching and learning in classrooms, understand the nature of the activities we assign, or have knowledge about strategies for completing them? If not, what can we do as educators to help students construct understandings about learning in school and their roles as students, and about the activities we give them and strategies for completing them?

Even in supposedly homogenous classrooms, students bring to their learning a constellation of experiences, strengths, challenges, knowledge, and beliefs that are hugely influential in shaping how they self-regulate their engagement in activities. For example, Brigitte brought to Mrs. Nyad’s classroom a history of reading challenges, prior knowledge about the topic she chose, very low self-perceptions of competence in reading, and limited metacognitive knowledge about research activities and strategies. These combined to influence the goals she set and the choices she made about how to engage in a complex, multi-step research activity. In contrast, Stewart built from more successful past experiences, his strengths in reading-related processes, and well-developed metacognitive knowledge in ways that led him to set learning-related goals, build on his personal interests, access resources, and engage in richer forms of reading, writing, and learning processes.
Environmental Influences

In Figure 1-2 we also depict how the environments in which individuals are working influence their self-regulating processes. For example, in classrooms, learners’ approaches to SRL are influenced by the nature of activities and tasks assigned, the resources and supports provided (e.g., instruction, scaffolding, modelling, texts or other resources, and opportunities to learn with peers), and assessment practices and feedback.

Research suggests that productive forms of SRL can be inspired, supported, or undermined by these kinds of contextual features. For example, multi-step activities that unfold over time, like the research project in Mrs. Nyad’s class, create opportunities for SRL because students need to apply their knowledge and skills in making decisions, setting goals, planning, enacting strategies, monitoring learning, and adjusting approaches as needed. Complex, multi-step activities also create more opportunities for teachers to build in supports for students’ development of effective forms of SRL. In Part Two of this book, we come back to this integrative framework to identify and illustrate in detail how educators can construct learning environments that support students’ development of effective forms of SRL.

For now, it is important to recognize that, as we saw in the case of Brigitte and Stewart, not all learners respond to an environment in the same way. Instead, how students self-regulate learning is the result of the interaction between the learning environment and what the individual brings to it. For example, given her past struggles with reading, low self-perceptions, and limited metacognitive knowledge, Brigitte perceived Mrs. Nyad’s complex, multi-step activity to be overwhelming. The result was that she set personal goals focused more on finishing and avoiding embarrassment than on learning. In contrast, given what he brought to the classroom, Stewart responded much more enthusiastically to the same activity. The result was that he set learning goals and engaged in more academically effective forms of self-regulation.

Pulling It All Together

By focusing on individuals working in context, the integrative model of SRL presented here helps in relating the different dimensions of self-regulation to one another. At the heart of Figure 1-2 is a learner’s engagement in cycles of strategic action, which includes interpreting tasks and setting goals, planning, enacting strategies, monitoring, and adjusting. The framework shows how students’ strategic action is shaped by the experiences, knowledge, and beliefs (including metacognitive knowledge) they bring to an environment. The framework also identifies how individuals’ cognition is influenced by strategic action cycles. For example, the cognitive strategies Brigitte and Stewart used (e.g., for taking notes) were linked to the personal goals they set and plans they made on how to navigate an assignment. Finally, Figure 1-2 depicts how emotions and motivation are foundational to learning. For example, emotions and motivation influence how individuals set goals, plan, choose strategies, and monitor success. Indeed, Stewart’s and Brigitte’s ways of working were influenced by emotions such as excitement, stress, and frustration and by their varying motivations (e.g., a focus on learning versus finishing quickly, respectively).

Food for Thought 1-3

Pulling It All Together

Have you seen the dimensions of SRL at work in your context? Have you noticed differences in how learners engage with the same activity? What individual and contextual factors combined to shape these different reactions?
SEEING DIMENSIONS OF SELF-REGULATION IN DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

Figure 1-2 relates important dimensions of self-regulation in one integrative framework, showing how cognition and metacognition, motivation and emotion, and strategic action are interdependent and rooted in context. How, then, can we apply this model in order to see dimensions of self-regulation in different kinds of activities?

To imagine how dimensions of self-regulation might interact within a day-to-day activity, imagine Mike, a father of two, doing the week’s grocery shopping. Mike might self-regulate his engagement in grocery shopping by doing the following:

- considering his strengths and weaknesses as a shopper (e.g., he tends to buy too many unhealthy items if he shops when he is hungry),
- clarifying his goals for this shopping trip (e.g., finishing within 30 minutes, buying just what he needs without forgetting anything essential),
- pre-planning (e.g., eating a snack before shopping, making a shopping list, and choosing the best store for buying all of those items),
- enacting his shopping strategies,
- monitoring how his shopping is going (e.g., whether the store is out of something key, whether he is moving through the store efficiently, whether he is getting frustrated), and
- making adjustments to his goals or strategies if things are not going as planned.

In this example, Mike is taking deliberate control over his engagement in an activity (grocery shopping) within a given context (a particular store). The dimensions of self-regulation (cognition and metacognition, motivation and emotions, strategic action) can be seen functioning together to shape how he approaches the activity.

Earlier, we differentiated between self-regulation and SRL by associating SRL with activities in which individuals are deliberately seeking to advance their learning. We complicate that a bit here by noting that we are actually learning all of the time as we engage in activities, whether we are trying to or not. For example, Mike learns every time he goes grocery shopping. He elaborates his thinking about himself as a shopper, about potential shopping pitfalls, and about the best store for different kinds of products. He builds better grocery shopping strategies and brings his developing metacognitive knowledge about shopping forward to further shopping adventures. He also learns about when and why he is likely to get most frustrated as a shopper (e.g., when stores are very busy and crowded) and to avoid shopping in those situations.

That said, Mike’s learning and growth are likely to be richer if he is purposeful and reflective in how he approaches his grocery shopping experiences. In other words, there are times when individuals can focus very deliberately on learning through an activity. In these cases, we can see dimensions of SRL in how individuals take control over learning. For example, Mike could engage in strategic action by setting a goal to learn to grocery shop more efficiently or economically. He could plan to visit a different store each week or try out what it’s like to shop at different times of the day. He could take a minute to reflect on lessons learned after a given grocery shopping experience. As another example, imagine Sofia, who has chosen to take golf lessons so that she can keep up with her friends who are avid golfers. To advance her learning, Sofia might schedule her practice around her work and lessons, manage her frustration as she masters a difficult new skill, sustain her motivation through challenges, and find ways to practise with a purpose. Or imagine how dimensions of self-regulation would be apparent in the activity of Sofia’s three-year-old daughter, who is working hard to figure out how to use the telephone to call her grandparents across the country.
Self-regulated learning (SRL) occurs any time individuals take deliberate control over their own learning in the context of an activity. Mrs. Nyad likely hoped that Brigitte and Stewart would take deliberate control over their learning about a topic they cared about as they engaged in research and shared their learning with their peers in her classroom.

**IS SELF-REGULATION THE SAME THING AS WORKING ALONE?**

A common misconception about self-regulation is that it is focused on how individuals work alone, or independently, to accomplish activities. This is an understandable inference given the term self-regulation. Models of self-regulation do focus centrally on how individuals take control over their participation in environments. In fact, models of self-regulation are so powerful because they describe how individuals interpret and navigate environments rather than thinking of them as passive recipients of or responders to circumstances. As such, these models align with a focus on empowering 21st century learners to be active, critical thinkers and drivers of their own learning processes. But models of self-regulation also describe how individuals navigate activities that are rooted in social contexts while working alone and with others.

**Responding to Socially and Culturally Defined Expectations**

There are at least three ways in which models of self-regulation recognize social influences on individuals’ learning and performance. First and most broadly, to be successful, individuals need to recognize and respond to socially and culturally defined expectations. Imagine, for example, international students coming to learn in Canada. To be successful, these students need to be aware of and negotiate the expectations of a Canadian cultural context, their new local community, and a particular school. To succeed in a new educational system, they may need to take on new and unfamiliar roles as students in relation to teachers and peers. They may need to recognize and respond to the requirements of new kinds of academic activities or curricula. They may need to adopt new behavioural norms when interacting with peers in the schoolyard.

An important caveat here is that self-regulation is not equivalent to complying with expectations. Success can arise when individuals effectively interpret and achieve expectations as defined in a particular context (e.g., the assignment expectations of a particular teacher). But self-regulating individuals may also achieve goals by negotiating new expectations (e.g., asking for an extended deadline for submitting a project) or even leaving an environment (e.g., quitting a job with an unreasonable work schedule). Still, one way or another, self-regulation depends on individuals successfully reading and navigating expectations as defined in socially and culturally rooted environments in a deliberate, strategic way.

**Knowing How to Work with Others**

A second way in which self-regulation must be social is that successfully navigating environments requires individuals to know how to work with others. In the workplace and in schools, individuals are expected to work collaboratively and cooperatively with others to achieve goals. Self-regulating individuals need to build knowledge about themselves and others if they are to participate in social relationships successfully. They also need to learn and apply strategies for collaborating effectively.
Social Influences on Engagement

Finally, models of self-regulation are socially rooted because they explicitly consider how individuals scaffold or shape each other’s engagement in activities. Researchers have identified different ways in which social interactions work to shape self-regulating processes within activities (e.g., see Hadwin, Jarvela, & Miller, 2011; Hutchinson, 2013; Perry, 2013; Volet, Vauras, & Salonen, 2009). For example, researchers have described the following ways in which regulation is influenced through social interaction:

- **Co-regulation** involves giving and receiving support that is instrumental to the development of effective forms of self-regulation.

- **Socially shared regulation** occurs during collaborative activities, when two or more individuals engage together in an activity by co-constructing understandings about tasks and pooling their respective resources to achieve goals.

- **Socially responsible self-regulation** occurs when individuals self-regulate in prosocial and socially competent ways to achieve personal success or foster success in others.

In everyday learning and practice, these forms of regulation are often hard to disentangle. For example, when working collaboratively in a workplace, colleagues may move dynamically between self-regulation, co-regulation, socially shared regulation, and socially responsible self-regulation. But, one way or another, our key point here is that individuals’ engagement in self-regulation can be heavily influenced by their interactions with others.

**Summary: Self-Regulation Is Social**

In sum, in this section we have argued that, because models of self-regulation focus on how individuals navigate activities in social environments, they cannot just focus on individuals learning independently. Instead, they are particularly useful for describing how individuals learn to engage with others within the communities they must navigate as part of their day-to-day worlds.

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**Activity 1-2**

**What Are You Learning about Self-Regulation and SRL?**

After you have read this chapter, we recommend that you record your thinking on the questions below. This will help you to build on the ideas, insights, and questions you are identifying as we move through the rest of the book. To that end, you might consider creating a reflective journal to record your thinking and learning over time, particularly as you engage with activities here and in upcoming chapters.

1. After reading this chapter, how would you define self-regulation? Can you imagine an example of self-regulation in your own experience or context? What do you still wonder?
2. After reading this chapter, how do you now think self-regulation applies to learning? Can you imagine an example of self-regulated learning (SRL) in your own experience or context? What do you still wonder?
3. What are the key dimensions of self-regulation? Can you generate an example of how each of these dimensions might be implicated in SRL in a particular activity in your own experience or context?
4. If you were to scan for SRL in your context, what would you look for? Can you start to imagine goals you might need to take up in order to foster more effective forms of SRL?
5. Given what you have read so far, can you imagine how you could foster the development of self-regulating learners? What are you doing already? What else could you do? What do you wonder?
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In this first chapter, we introduced quite a bit of information about self-regulation and SRL. In coming chapters, you will have opportunities to grapple with examples and exercises that will bring these ideas to life and, hopefully, bring additional clarity to your thinking about SRL and how to support it. For now, we encourage you to take a few moments to work through Activity 1-2 to assist you in consolidating your thinking so far.

**Recommended Resources**


Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice, 41*(2), 64–70. [Published online in 2010, see http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2]

