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Developing Self-Regulating Learners

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Dedication

To all educators who strive to foster the development of self-regulating learners.

This book would not have come to fruition without the considerable patience, goodwill, and insights of our spouses. Thank you Teresa, Trevor and Phil for your support and wisdom.

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Preface

WHY MIGHT YOU READ THIS BOOK?

What might attract you to reading this book? Perhaps you are interested in learning more about highly effective teaching and learning practices, and wonder where *self-regulated learning (SRL)* fits in? Or, perhaps you already know something about self-regulation, but want to learn more, for example, about why *self-regulation* is so essential in *learning*, what SRL looks like in classrooms, or how you can design classroom practices to support the development of *self-regulating learners*? If you have questions of this sort, this book is designed for you! Our goal is to engage educators in considering the nature of SRL and how to support it in classrooms.

If you have not yet thought about why you might read this book, we invite you to take a moment to consider that at the outset (see *Food for Thought* below). What specific questions do you have about SRL? What goals might you have that could be informed by this reading? You will get the most out of a resource like this one if you bridge what you are reading with what you are seeing in practice. To that end, we encourage you to consider how and why reading this book might help you achieve your goals for your own professional learning.

Food for Thought

Your Goals for Reading this Book

1. What do you already know about self-regulation and self-regulated *learning*?
2. What do you wonder? What do you already do to foster self-regulated learning in your context?
3. What do you wonder?

WHY FOCUS ON SELF-REGULATED LEARNING?

In the introduction to his 2013 book, *Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation*, Stuart Shanker makes a persuasive case for prioritizing attention to self-regulation. He argues that,

> We are in the midst of a revolution in educational thinking and practice. Scientific advances in a number of fields point to a similar argument—how well students do in school can be determined by how well they are able to self-regulate. Some theorists believe that self-regulation should now be considered a more important indicator of educational performance than IQ (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). (Shanker, 2013, p. ix)

Like Shanker and the other colleagues he cites, we are convinced that fostering self-regulation, and, more specifically, self-regulated *learning*, is an essential aim if we are to support students to succeed in school. We would add that it is also abundantly clear that students have to know *how to learn*, not just while in our school systems, but also through the next 70 to 80 years of their lives (Gerber, 2001). If students are to thrive in our current fast-paced, ever-evolving societies, we cannot rely on teaching them content they can count on for the rest of their lives or careers. Our students need to become lifelong learners who can find, generate, and think critically with ideas that we haven't even thought of today. They must be prepared to seize opportunities and overcome challenges we can't yet even imagine (Dumont, Istance, & Benavides, 2012).

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By fostering the development of self-regulating learners, we can empower students to succeed, not just during the school years, but also into their lives long after.

What characterizes successful, lifelong learning? Barry Zimmerman, an American Psychological Association lifetime achievement award winner, argues that lifelong learners are *self-regulating* (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-regulating learners know how to read situations, determine goals, and take deliberate control over action. They persist in the face of obstacles and persevere through difficulty. They engage in iterative cycles of deliberate, strategic problem solving over time to achieve their goals. So, why should we focus on fostering the development of self-regulating learners? Our response is that because in so doing we empower students to succeed, not just during the school years, but also into their lives long after.

ORGANIZATION: UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

We wrote this book to serve as a resource to educators interested in understanding and supporting SRL. The book is organized into three parts that combine to achieve this purpose.

Part One of this book presents "portraits of SRL" designed to help educators define self-regulated learning (Chapter 1), consider why fostering SRL is so important (Chapter 2), and see relationships between SRL, social-emotional learning, and executive functioning (Chapter 3). Then, building from those three opening chapters, we identify goals important in fostering SRL (Chapter 4). You should come away from this first part of the book with a clear vision of goals essential in fostering rich forms of SRL by learners in your context.

Part Two of this book describes and illustrates SRL–promoting practices. We launch this part of the book by describing how educators can establish safe and supportive learning environments necessary for learners to engage in rich forms of learning and SRL (Chapter 5). Then, we offer guidelines educators can follow when building opportunities and supports for SRL into those environments (Chapter 6). Next, we elaborate on how educators can design activities and tasks that create opportunities for rich forms of learning and self-regulation (Chapter 7), build supports into activities that nurture the development of effective forms of SRL (Chapter 8), and structure assessments and feedback to inform and empower learning (Chapter 9). After reading this second part of the book, you should be able to identify important principles and practices you can use to foster the development of *self-regulating learners* in your context.

Part Three deepens the discussion. In this last part of the book, we pull together ideas presented in Parts One and Two to give rich examples of how and why supporting SRL can assist educators in meeting the needs of diverse students (Chapter 10); motivating and empowering learners (Chapter 11); and, ultimately, empowering 21st-century learning (Chapter 12). Our concluding reflection invites you to consider how you might build from the ideas introduced in this book, on your own or collaboratively with others, to support the development of self-regulating learners both within and outside of schools (Epilogue).

THIS BOOK AS A RESOURCE TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND INQUIRY

In our work with preservice and in-service educators, we often use an *inquiry* framework to support their professional learning. We expect that this book will be a valuable resource to any educator wishing to learn more about SRL and how to support it. But we also imagine it as a particularly useful resource for individuals or teams of educators engaged in inquiry with the goal of developing SRL–promoting policies and practices in their particular contexts.

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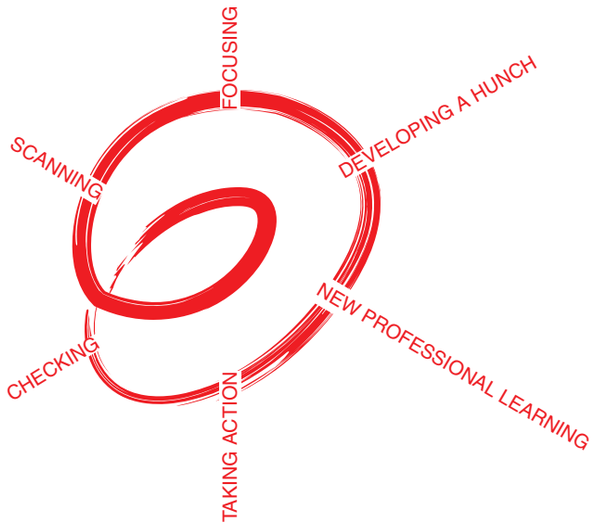

Figure A Spirals of Inquiry

Source: Halbert, J., & Kaser, L. (2013). Spirals of inquiry for equity and quality. British Columbia (BC): BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association.

What does *inquiry* look like? Based on their extensive professional development leadership, Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser (2013) recently described *inquiry processes* as unfolding in spirals (see Figure A). In their model, inquiry often begins when educators *scan* their current context to identify pressing questions, challenges, or goals; decide to *focus* attention on a key priority; and *develop a hunch* about what might be happening. Inquiring educators then deliberately engage in *new professional learning* to inform their practice development. They *take action* based on what they are learning, reflectively *check* on what happens, and then refine inquiry questions and processes based on successes and challenges. Research suggests that engaging in iterative cycles of inquiry is a powerful way for educators to structure and sustain their on-going professional learning (see Timperley, 2011).

In our own research on inquiry-based professional learning, we have documented the power of inquiry-based professional development frameworks for both teachers and students (e.g., see Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Butler, Schnellert, & Cartier, 2013; Perry, Brenner, & Fusaro, 2015; Schnellert, 2011; Schnellert & Butler, 2014). We have also shown that an important condition for teachers' learning and practice change is that they have access to rich resources that can inform their engagement in inquiry cycles.

However, as we worked with teachers, we realized we needed *a resource specifically crafted to inform teachers' inquiry about self-regulation in relation to learning*. We wrote this book in order to meet that need. Our hope is that this book will be useful to educators wishing to inquire about SRL, whether they are just developing their identities, knowledge, and competencies within a preservice program or are practicing professionals seeking to learn more about these topics (e.g., on their own, within a graduate-level program, in collaboration with colleagues).

What Kinds of Questions Have Teachers Been Asking?

In Table A, we summarize themes underlying some of the inquiry questions new and experienced teachers have been asking within our professional learning projects. These themes reflect questions being taken up by preservice teachers in a university-based teacher

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Table A Questions Educators Are Asking about SRL

- Is there a difference between self-regulation and self-regulated learning?
- How can we create a safe and supportive early primary classroom that fosters SRL?
- How could changes to the physical learning space in an intermediate classroom support a community of self-regulating learners to engage in deep forms of inquiry?
- How can I support cultural diversity in an SRL–supportive classroom and community?
- How can educators make learning meaningful for Aboriginal students while focusing on SRL?
- If students learn to recognize, use, and evaluate strategies for managing emotions, will their focus and reading improve?
- How can I motivate students to engage in SRL and active learning?
- How can kindergarten teachers support self-regulation through play?
- How can I integrate supports for SRL into inquiry-based or research projects?
- How can I promote self-regulation to support students' organizational abilities?
- If we explicitly teach and model SRL strategies, will students take ownership over learning?
- How can formative assessment help in developing SRL among middle school students?
- How does feedback affect student progress and development of SRL?
- How can co-regulation between peers be an effective strategy for teaching self-regulation?
- How can I work with parents to support SRL by students?

education program, practicing teachers working within collaborative learning teams, and graduate students enrolled in masters-level courses. Whatever the context for their professional learning, these educators have shared an interest in connecting their learning about SRL with practice or policy as relevant to their contexts.

We invite you to imagine whether any of these questions might be meaningful in your work with students. If so, we hope you will take this opportunity to pick up on one or more of these themes. Certainly, as you work through this book, you will be invited to advance your professional learning in relation to questions that are most meaningful in your context.

FEATURES: SUPPORTING YOUR INQUIRY INTO SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

As you read this book, you will notice that we include pedagogical features designed to support your engagement in inquiry processes, should you wish to take up this model of professional learning (see Figure A). Across chapters, whenever we describe strategies and provide concrete examples, inquiry-oriented activities will assist you in considering how to refine practices, take action, check on progress towards goals, and/or imagine next steps for ongoing practice and learning. For example, tools are provided to support you in *scanning* for evidence of SRL in action (Chapter 1), *focusing* on the needs of learners in your context and developing a *hunch* about what might be needed to support them effectively (Chapter 4), and *taking action* and *reflecting* on implications (Chapters 5, 7, 8, and 9).

We also include many pedagogical features designed to support your active learning about SRL and how to support it in your context:

Activities
Activities will support you to work with and apply key themes from each chapter.

SRL Vignettes
We present extended "SRL Vignettes" to help you imagine SRL in action both within and outside of schools. These boxes are designed to help you make connections between theory and practice.

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Starting Small
In our Starting Small feature, we offer examples of how other educators have taken first steps in building SRL–promoting practices into their own teaching.

Food for Thought
Our Food for Thought feature will provoke your thinking about key ideas in relation to your own learning, practice, or inquiry.

SRL Planning Tools
Many chapters contain a "SRL Planning Tool," a template designed to help you consider how to integrate SRL–promoting practices into your own work with learners.

Links to Resources
Links to Resources will direct you to accessible sources of additional tools, examples or information.

Other Features

- **Learning Intentions** are listed at the beginning of each chapter to signal what you should be able to do after engaging with the material.
- **Key Terms** are bolded when first introduced and are defined in the Glossary.
- **Margin Notes** are provided to help you in focusing and reflecting on key points.
- **Recommended Resources** are provided at the end of each chapter to identify related readings you can access for further information.

While this book is ideal for supporting educators engaged in inquiry-based professional learning, it is certainly not necessary for you to take that approach to profit from this publication. Whether or not you choose to adopt an inquiry framework, your learning through reading this book will be enhanced if you use it as a resource for learning about something you care about deeply and that you think will make a significant difference for students. Based on overwhelming research evidence coupled with practice-based insights developed in collaboration with teachers, we are convinced that supporting SRL is something worth caring about deeply. SRL is hugely consequential in students' success, not only during the school years, but into adulthood. Through engaging with this book and the various kinds of learning supports embedded within it, we hope that you too will have the opportunity to appreciate and witness the power of SRL as a framework for advancing students' learning in classrooms and beyond.

Links to Resources

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