

The most prepared student: 5 ways to promote intentional self-discovery in learning



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Summary:

In today's age of accelerated change, which student is the most prepared to learn and thrive? Is it the student who takes advanced classes and participates in dozens of extracurricular activities? The student who receives the most extensive private tutoring? The student whose competitive parents pave the way for them, with some parents even participating in illegal activity to give their child a leg up? Or, is it the student who has received consistent guidance on learning *how* to learn, think, and act independently? In this article, ExQ® Founder and CEO, Sucheta Kamath, explains five key learning habits that promote intentional self-discovery and create the best prepared student for success in school and beyond!

Article:

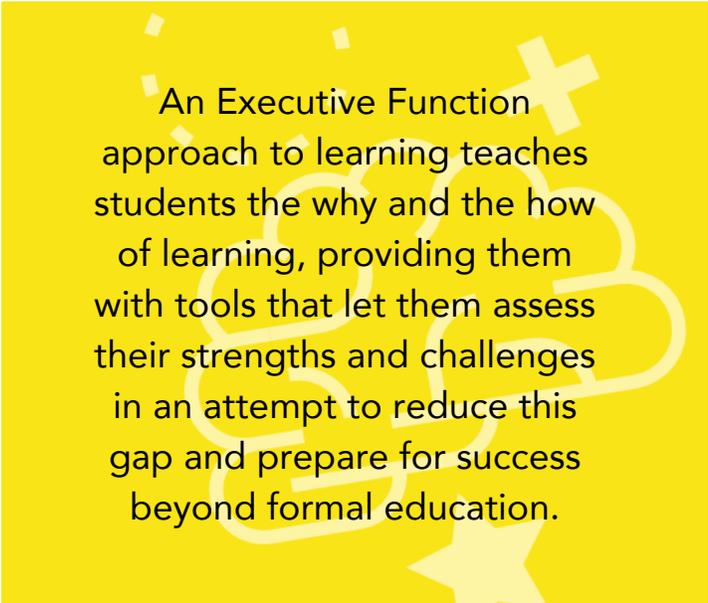
An integral part of preparing students for life-long learning is an explicit teaching curriculum that trains students to evaluate their own performance and learn how to create personalized strategies to achieve effective results. Students who leave high school having cultivated an aptitude for identifying their personal strengths and challenges are often in the best position to shape their future.

The mental skills that guide self-directed learning are collectively called Executive Function, and these skills allow the student to focus with intention, organize their ideas with clarity, prioritize goals, apply social understanding to the collaborative process, solve problems with flexibility, and envision their future self. But everyday educational practices seldom offer tools that teach *how* to acquire these skills, failing to offer systematic training or coaching that helps students understand the processes behind effectively managing their thoughts, emotions, and actions. Though these highly developed skills may be encouraged, it is rare that they are explicitly taught, and it is the absence of these skills that causes significant disruption to development of the independent learner.

Self-sufficient and prepared students are a joy to have in the classroom because they engage with enthusiasm, initiate and follow through with their actions, remember without reminders, and keep the big-picture of their personal progress in mind every time they make a decision. We may wonder if these habits are intrinsic to the student or stem from preparation. And if they are absent, whose responsibility is it to nurture and cultivate these skills?

Consider this story of Sam: “Where is your homework Sam?” asks his teacher, Mrs. Holland. Sam has no idea. Not only does Sam not have his homework, but Sam doesn’t even recall that he was assigned homework that was due today. Typically, this type of encounter ends with Sam either getting a zero on his assignment, or, if he’s lucky, Mrs. Holland giving him another chance to turn it in the next day. It’s easy to think that someone who forgets a simple thing like homework is either hopelessly forgetful or simply lazy. But whatever the perception of Sam may be, he doesn’t receive the necessary “training” or education to learn *how* to remember that he has homework and to turn it in on time without being prompted. This ability to remind oneself to remember a future task is a crucial cognitive ability known as *Prospective Memory*. Students who forget future tasks often suffer the consequences, but often they do not receive specific guidance to enhance their *Prospective Memory skills*.

This is the challenge we face as educators, parents, coaches, and mentors, and it’s time to rethink the relationship between core academic subjects such as math, science, or language and a student’s ability to complete daily homework, evaluate how well they do on various assignments, plan out a long-term project over the span of many weeks, and implement strategies to teach themselves new vocabulary. The *Success Gap* is the gap that exists between knowing what’s expected and actually reaching that expectation, and this is a gap we need to better equip students to be able to bridge. An Executive Function approach to learning teaches students the *why* and the *how* of learning, providing them with tools that let them assess their strengths and challenges in an attempt to reduce this gap and prepare for success beyond formal education.



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In light of these systematic difficulties surrounding student preparedness, Sucheta Kamath outlines five important learning habits that help students gain personal knowledge, master process-specific skills, and seek out personal insights to better strategize for independent learning. Teaching students these five Executive Function

strategies will arm them with critical focus, planning, and problem-solving skills, leading to a heightened capacity for self-directed learning.

#1. Teach students to become self-reflective learners, which allows them to...

- Recognize their individual strengths and limitations
- Practice the art of self-reflection, and do so often
- Be able to incorporate multiple perspectives and different types of feedback to pursue personal growth

#2. Teach students to take charge of their attention, which allows them to...

- Understand the purpose of their learning by setting clear attentional targets
- Hone their focus to avoid self-distraction and self-interruption

#3. Teach students how to plan for the immediate and distant future, which allows them to...

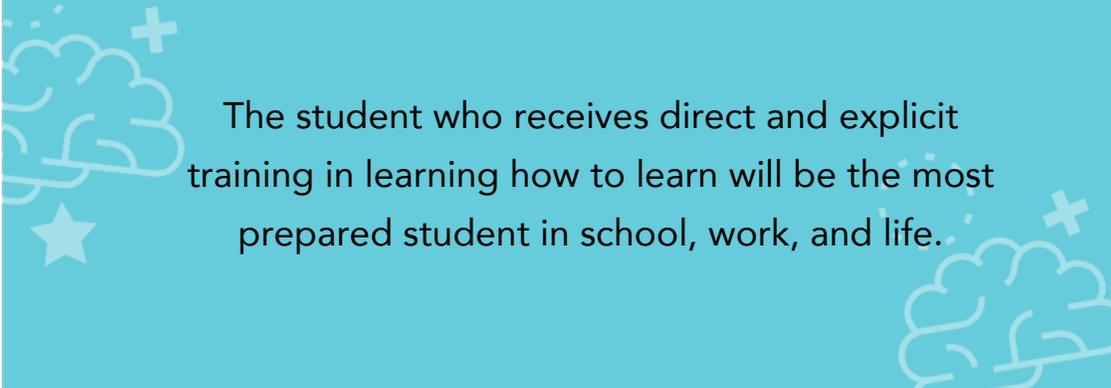
- Develop planning skills by practicing breaking down tasks into smaller, more achievable parts
- Visualize their future self, both in the short-term and long-term

#4. Teach students to be agile and flexible thinkers, which allows them to...

- Cultivate strategies for adapting to unfamiliar environments or situations
- Transition seamlessly from one task to the next
- Bounce back in the face of difficult roadblocks

#5. Teach learners how to learn from their mistakes, which allows them to...

- Evaluate and assess their own performance accurately
- Connect causes of errors to their corresponding effects, helping pinpoint areas of improvement
- Understand how school-related mistakes might extend beyond the classroom



The student who receives direct and explicit training in learning how to learn will be the most prepared student in school, work, and life.

When students learn to identify their personal strengths and challenges, match outcomes with expectations, alter their approach in anticipation of roadblocks, and bring intentionality to everyday action, they have gained mastery of skills that are central to learning and life optimization. A curriculum that focuses primarily on training Executive Function equips students with the mental tools that make navigating the unpredictable terrain of college education and adult life seamless. The student who receives direct and explicit training in learning *how* to learn will be the most prepared student in school, work, and life.



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About the Author:

Sucheta Kamath is a speech-language pathologist, TEDx speaker, graduate of Leadership Atlanta, and an entrepreneur whose new software ExQ® just launched in the Ed-Tech space. ExQ, is a patented research-informed system designed to enhance Executive Function through game-based personalized training. The exclusive ExQ curriculum prompts thinking to ignite processes essential for academic, emotional, and social well-being. Through the strengthening of Executive Functioning, ExQ develops skills core to your student's success in academics, in sports, in the arts, and in relationships. Sucheta's program of interactive games teaches students to learn HOW to learn, empowering the whole child to achieve their maximum potential in school, at home, and in life, and do it with all they've got.

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