

# Young Children's Development of Self-Regulation

Newsletter 3 – Fall 2016

**Over 150 children** in School District have been continuously enrolled in the Self-Regulation in Schools Study since 2014 (*see Table 1*). These children are helping teachers & researchers learn how children develop self-regulated learning (SRL) over time and how we can support their SRL in school.

**Teachers & researchers** have been focusing on “The Kindergarten Cohort,” a group of children who entered Kindergarten in 2014 and are now in Grade 3. Our goal is to foster skills that enable students to self-manage emotions, social interactions, and learning. We have been documenting these practices to share with the broader educational community.



**Across two school years** we have:

- ✓ Met regularly to plan for and share accomplishments related to SRL (*picture 1*)
- ✓ Conducted 190 classroom visits (*picture 2*)
- ✓ Collected 900 student work samples (*picture 3*) and 550 assessments of students' SRL; and
- ✓ Presented results from the research at national and international conferences (*picture 4*)

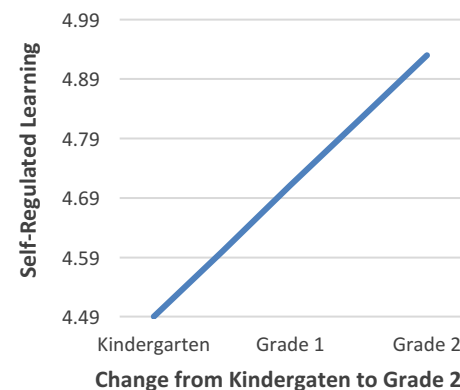
**Table 1 Participants in the Study**

Year	Children	Schools	Teachers	Classrooms	French Classrooms
K	201	7	20	15	4
1	193	7	21	20	4
2	156	6	23	18	2

- In each year the majority of children enrolled in the study were boys;
- Between 18 and 25% were enrolled in French immersion classrooms; and
- Participating children were members of 56 ethnic/cultural communities.

## Children are improving steadily in their self-regulated learning

**Figure 1 Students' SRL over time**



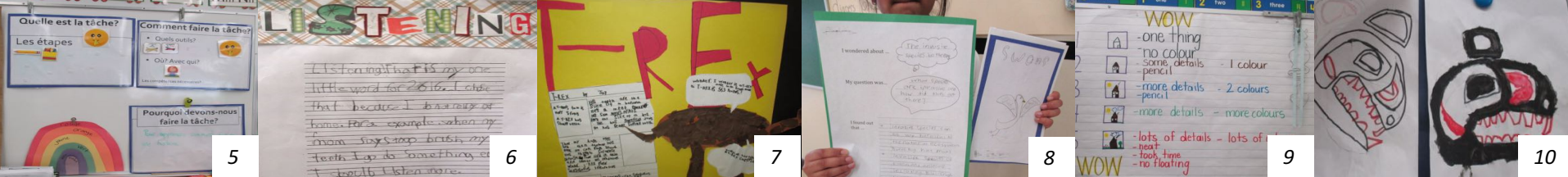
- ✓ These improvements are consistent for girls and boys, and across cultural groups (*see Figure 1*);
- ✓ SRL is associated with children's adjustment to and achievement in school through Grade 2; and
- ✓ SRL strategies are enhancing learning for children who are challenged by some aspects of school.

In general, SRL is an asset for teaching and learning.



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## Teachers are Expecting and Supporting Higher Levels of SRL as Children get Older

### Example 1: Goal Setting

- Involving students in goal setting prompts them to take responsibility for their learning, and to reflect on their needs and wants as learners.
- *Picture 5* shows goal setting in Grade 1. Students helped construct simple class goals, with the teacher leading the discussion. In Grade 2, teachers helped students make personal goals; think about why the goal was good for them; and how they could assess their progress in achieving it (*picture 6*).

### Example 2: Student-Directed Learning

- Having students direct their own learning (e.g., through inquiry projects), fosters autonomy, motivation for learning, and curiosity.
- In both Grade 1 & 2 teachers invited students to make decisions about materials, partners, and environments that addressed their learning needs in teacher supported tasks. In Grade 2 students also made higher level choices based on their growing awareness of personal interests and learning needs (*pictures 7 & 8*). By the end of the school year, teachers helped students to independently conduct and present research based on their own questions.

### Example 3: Student Self-Assessment

- Encouraging students to assess their own work helps them to develop awareness about themselves as learners and the learning process.
- Right from Grade 1 teachers invited students to assess their own learning (thumbs up/down, bookmarks, and rubrics; *picture 9*). Grade 2 teachers built on this by encouraging students to create multiple drafts of their work to practice their skills (*picture 10*); assess how well they were meeting their goals; and chose activities to improve skills that might need extra work.

## Parents and Teachers Agree on Student Strengths and Challenges

Table 2 Students' Strengths and Challenges

Theme	Strengths	Challenges	Agree
Executive functioning	Good memory	Following instructions, focusing, sitting	✓
Emotional regulation	Expresses feelings	Aggression, frustration.	✓
Motivation for learning	Eager to learn	Taking risks	✓
Temperament	Happy, outgoing, flexible, social	Strong willed, not always social	
Social responsibility	Caring, thinks of others	Cooperation, getting help	✓

### Parents can support students' SRL by...

- ✓ Talking with children about how they are learning as much as what they are learning;
- ✓ Encouraging children to set personal goals for learning, homework, health, etc.;
- ✓ Supporting them to make a plan and monitor progress as they work to accomplish their goals; and
- ✓ Involving them in family decision-making and rule-making.

## What's Next?

- We have renewed funding to follow the "Kindergarten Cohort" through Grade 6. No other study has followed children's development of SRL for so long.
- The study has expanded to include teachers, students, and researchers in Montreal, QC; London, ON; Cambridge, UK.
- New areas of focus include coordinating activities across classrooms and supporting children who are struggling in their development of SRL.