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# Opening Dialogues



## Welcome Address at the 27th International Dalton Congress



### Director Ni Tong Opening Speech

Ms. Ni Tong, Member of the Party Committee and Deputy Director of the Education Bureau of Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province.

## Introduction

Distinguished President Rohner, esteemed guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Today, we gather here to solemnly convene the 27th International Dalton Congress. First, allow me, on behalf of the Wenzhou Municipal Education Bureau, to extend a warm welcome to our friends from afar, as well as to all the distinguished guests and educational colleagues present here.

## An Introduction to Wenzhou

Wenzhou, renowned as the "City of Poetic Landscapes and Gentle Charm," stands as one of the three major central cities in Zhejiang Province. This city boasts a rich and profound history, with over 2,000 years of urban development. Wenzhou is celebrated as the birthplace of Chinese landscape poetry, the cradle of Southern Chinese opera, and as a nurturing ground for Chinese mathematicians. It is also recognized as a dynamic city full of innovation and entrepreneurial vitality and has been acknowledged by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization as one of the most vibrant



cities in the world.

## The Educational Landscape of Wenzhou

Wenzhou's education system is characterized by a deep respect for culture, etiquette, and the teaching profession, reflecting a long and rich history. The city is home to 2,360 schools at various levels, serving over 1.59 million students and employing 146,000 faculty members—representing roughly one-sixth of the educational scale in Zhejiang Province. In recent years, Wenzhou has made significant progress in educational modernization and in delivering education that meets the needs of its people, with a strong focus on improving both quality and equity. The city is committed to building the brand of "Wenzhou, a City of Learning," and has achieved remarkable progress in educational development, having comprehensively realized basic educational modernization.

## International Educational Exchanges

Wenzhou has consistently led the province in international educational exchanges. At the basic education level, six schools in the city offer international curricula, and 199 primary and secondary schools have established partnerships with 392 schools worldwide. Every year, hundreds of teachers and students participate in overseas learning and exchange programs. Through initiatives such as collaborative school operations, teacher-student exchanges, and overseas teacher training, Wenzhou has integrated advanced global educational philosophies, teaching methods, and management practices into its educational approach.

## Advancing Educational Quality and Internationalization

Innovative talent cultivation models and other initiatives have supported teachers' professional development and enhanced school quality, significantly promoting the internationalization of education. The theme of this conference, "The social and individual dimension of self-regulation: Navigating the



global challenge," is both forward-looking and challenging. It is relevant to the future of every individual and is especially significant for the growth and development of the younger generation.

## Dalton Education in Practice

Dalton education emphasizes student-initiated learning, focusing on cultivating qualities such as independence, responsibility, cooperation, self-reliance, and practical abilities. Wenzhou Dalton Elementary School remains committed to the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education, actively implements Dalton educational principles, and aims to develop students with self-discipline, autonomy, cooperation, and accountability. Through the dual drivers of holistic education and collaborative assignments, the school closely aligns with the development of self-regulation skills.

## Opportunities for Shared Growth

Today, we are privileged to hear insightful speeches from experts and scholars from various countries and regions, who will share the latest research findings and practical experiences in Dalton education. This event is not only an exchange of ideas but also a fusion of wisdom. It will inspire all participants to focus on the individual and societal well-being of children and encourage deeper reflection on the driving forces for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

## Conclusion

Colleagues, I hope that through this conference, all representatives will engage in meaningful sharing and reflection, gaining new inspiration and insights. May we reach greater heights, grasp the deeper spiritual essence of education, and work together to seize this valuable opportunity for exchange under such a significant theme. Let us draw from our diverse experiences and collectively create a bright future for education in Wenzhou.



## Chinese Version

# 国际道尔顿会议开幕辞

倪彤 浙江省温州市教育局党委委员、副局长

尊敬的罗纳主席，各位来宾，各位同仁，女士们、先生们，上午好。今天我们在这里隆重的举行第二十七届国际道尔顿会议，首先请允许我代表温州市教育局向远道而来的外国友人和与会的各位嘉宾，教育同仁表示热烈的欢迎。温州素有“诗画山水，温润之州”的美誉，是浙江省三大中心城市之一，它历史源远流长，有着 2000 多年的城市发展的历程，是中国山水诗的发祥地，中国南戏的故里，中国数学家的摇篮，同时温州还是一座充满着创新创业活力的城市，被联合国工业发展组织认定为全球最具活力的城市之一。

温州的教育历史悠久，底蕴深厚，崇文尚礼，尊师重教之风浓郁，全市现有各级各类的学校 2360 所，在校生有 159 万多人，教职员有 14.6 万人，教育规模在全省教育规模约占 1/6。近年来，温州围绕着实现教育现代化，办好人民满意教育这一总体的目标，聚焦了提高质量、触及公平两大重点，全力打响“好学温州”的品牌，教育事业发展成绩斐然，已全面的实现了教育基本现代化。

在教育国际交流的方面，温州也一直走在全省的前列，基础教育阶段，全市有 6 所学校开设了国际课程，199 所中小学与世界各国各地区的 392 所学校结成友好的学校，每年都有数百名的师生赴境外学习交流，我们也借助合作办学，师生互访、海外师训等方式，引进并吸收世界先进的办学理念、教学方法和教育管理。



创新人才的培养模式等，同时也助力教师专业发展，提升学校的办学水平，来大力的推进教育的国际化进程。本届的大会主题是“自我调控的社会与个人层面，应对全球挑战”，这一主题是极具前瞻性和挑战性的，它关乎着我们每一个人的未来，尤其对年轻一代的成长和发展意义重大。

道尔顿教育注重学生的主动学习，着力培养学生的独立、责任，合作的精神品质，以及无畏向前的创新精神、可实践能力。温州道尔顿小学坚持立德树人这一根本任务，积极的践行道尔顿教育的理念，将学子的特质培养目标定为自律、自主、合作、担当。通过整理教育和合作作业双轮驱动，与自我调控能力的培养紧密呼应。

今天我们将有幸聆听来自不同的国家和地区的专家学者的精彩演讲，来共同分享道尔顿教育研究的最新成果和实践经验。这不仅是一次思想的碰撞，更是一次智慧的交融，并将激发所有与会者对儿童自身和社会的关注，促进我们深入思考构建人类命运共同体的动力源泉。同志们，希望通过这次的会议，各位代表能够分享与反思，并从中获得新的启发和灵感，从而登高望远，洞见教育更深层次的精神本质，让我们携手共进，利用我们这么好的一个主题碰撞交流的机会，能够吸取更多的经验，来共创温州未来教育的辉煌。



## XXVII International Dalton Congress Opening Speech

Roel Röhner, President Dalton International

### Welcome Address

It is an honour for us to welcome you to the XXVII International Dalton Congress. It is a genuine pleasure to see so many of you gathered here in Wenzhou.

You have travelled from all corners of the globe to share the latest knowledge and developments in the field of self-regulation.

### Congratulations to Wenzhou Dalton Elementary School

Congratulations are due to Wenzhou Dalton Elementary School and all its members for organising this remarkable Dalton celebration. When the School was established in 2017, there were just 268 students and 73 teachers. Today, the school has grown to encompass 862 students and 120 teachers. This is a truly outstanding milestone—one achieved thanks to the inspiring vision of the founding directors, Mr. Huang Weili and Mrs. Bai Lili.



### Dalton Innovations and International Collaboration

Through the remarkable Dalton innovations introduced at your school, you



have provided your pupils with the opportunity to reach their full potential. By developing scaffolding tools in collaboration with experts from Dalton International, you are continuously enhancing Dalton education at your school. Since we began our partnership in 2019, we have been delighted to host your delegation in The Netherlands, guiding you through Dutch Dalton Schools and sharing our experiences. These visits marked the beginning of our cooperation and friendship. Today, you are an integral part of the Dalton International Family, making significant contributions to our global community.

That is something of which you can be justly proud.

### **The Netherlands and Global Dalton Leadership**

The Netherlands is recognised as a leader in the development of Dalton education worldwide. This success is largely the result of our close collaboration with you and with outstanding partners from across the world. During our study and working visits to your school, we have had the opportunity to meet education leaders from the city, as well as your teachers and management team. Everywhere we go, we hear the same message: that international connections are absolutely vital, both in your city and in your school. This is equally true for us. By blending your culture with the Dalton educational approach, we are stronger together.

### **Celebrating Success and Facing Future Challenges**

There is every reason for us to come together to celebrate your success.

At the same time, I hope that you will take the opportunity to discuss the significant challenges that remain. While much has been accomplished, there is still a great deal to be done.

### **The Importance of Self-Regulation in Dalton Education**

The development of self-regulation—both individually and socially—is crucial to achieving success in Dalton education. Today, we will explore how self-



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regulation operates within human behaviour, connecting this concept with the vision of Helen Parkhurst in both individual and social contexts. Together, inspired by the vision of your director, Mrs. Zhang, we have achieved remarkable success. A testament to this achievement is the book being launched today—the result of years of dedication from your mentors, teachers, and management team.

### Looking Forward

I look forward to engaging with many of you in greater depth later today. I am also eager to witness presentations from Dalton schools around the world, all addressing the theme of self-regulation.

The Dalton world unites here today in Wenzhou.



## XXVII International Dalton Congress Speech

Dr Agata Röhner  
Executive Director of Dalton International

### Introduction

Today we have gathered to provide an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various Dalton educational fields, with cross-disciplinary interests, to bridge knowledge gaps, promote research excellence, and advance the evolution of Dalton pedagogy.

If you want a self-reliant, independent child—one who can plan, organise, and reflect on their work—you must prepare them. It may sound like a simple everyday activity, but as we all know, preparing children in today's world is filled with challenges and obstacles. Let us pause to reflect on this. Think of the child in today's fragmented world, a world full of conflicts and global issues. The great unifying force of Helen Parkhurst's philosophy is that it is for all children, and it works.

It began more than one hundred years ago, in the summer of 1904, at the Elementary Public School in Waterville. Parkhurst had pondered deeply that summer, and the idea arose to “do it all differently.” She wanted to change course, experiment, and teach in a way that students would truly enjoy. That





year she introduced assignments, learning tasks, rearranged her classroom, and created corners to stimulate socialisation among students. That year, in Waterville, self-regulation in Dalton education was born. It was the first impulse to prepare children for a wholesome life of peace and harmony within a community, society, and the wider environment.

The motto of this Congress is selfregulation in both the social and individual dimension. With this motto, we hope to form responsible human beings—individuals accountable for their own lives, but also for the lives of others. We aim to provide education to all children, not only those with privilege. Yet inequity, exclusion, and an unsustainable world continue to impact young people, preventing them from being fully prepared for responsible and independent lives.

At the outset of this Congress here in Wenzhou, organised by the Dalton International community in China, let us reflect on what “experiencing Parkhurst” really means. What does it mean to educate a self-reliant child who can think independently? Of course, parents and teachers aspire to raise resilient, adaptable human beings capable of facing life’s challenges. In International Dalton Schools, under the umbrella of Dalton International, educating children to live in harmony is our everyday mission and vision. Our President and founder, Roel Röhner, established this foundation more than twenty five years ago with love, passion for education, and care for people. He created an international “family” of Dalton schools, academic members, associations and departments across the world.

We in Dalton International recognise that there is still much work ahead—and that is a good thing. Perhaps we face more challenges today than twenty years ago, such as global crises, but we can draw inspiration from Helen Parkhurst’s own resilience, pragmatism, and vision. We are proud and honoured to carry forward her mission in a constantly changing reality, adjusting educational



practices to modern conditions and challenges.

All of this brings me to a brief welcome: selfregulation—the theme of this meeting—in both individual and social dimensions. We will discuss scaffolding tools, scientific theories, and practical models such as curricula for Labs, Houses, family programmes, contracts, and assignments. But the essential question remains: what is our contribution, as Dalton educators and pedagogues, to the selfreliant development of every sphere of a child's life?

My own philosophical roots in Poland, particularly the Korczak philosophy, remind us that we are most fully human in good relations with one another. Family values are of great importance. As we say in Poland, "*Wieżi są najważniejsze*"—a person is a person through other people. Preparing children for an unknown future must always be accompanied by positive, meaningful relationships and good feelings. While spreading Helen Parkhurst's mission and vision, we must remember that Dalton is synonymous with grace, empathy, respect, trust, kindness, inclusiveness, and love. Only in this way can we prepare our children for the unknown.

Let us continue this Dalton journey together.

Thank you.



## The Family Lab: How Parents Can Become Catalysts for Children's Self-Regulation.

Zhang Li

Principal of Shenzhen Dalton Xinhua School

I am Zhang Li from Shenzhen Dalton School.

### The Journey of Shenzhen Dalton School and the Importance of Family Education

Time passes quickly, and it has now been more than eight years since Shenzhen Dalton School was founded under the guidance and leadership of the Dalton International Association. Today, I feel greatly honored to stand here in the beautiful city of Wenzhou, joining fellow Dalton educators from around the world. Together, we are united in our mission: to explore how the Dalton Plan can be used to develop children's self-regulation skills, empowering them to face the many unknowns and challenges the future may bring.



### The Role of Family Education in the Dalton Plan

The focus of today's International Dalton Conference is primarily on school-based practices within the Dalton education system. However, I wish to take our conversation a step further—to look beyond the boundaries of the



school and emphasize a critical aspect of education: family education. In our holistic and comprehensive view of education, we recognize that various societal factors, directly or indirectly, contribute to a child's growth. It is the collaboration between school, family, and society that forms a complete educational experience. In China, the introduction of the Family Education Promotion Law in 2021, along with the more recent launch of the "Education Consortium" for collaborative nurturing among schools, families, and communities by 17 ministries including the Ministry of Education, highlight an important reality. As educators in schools, we not only guide and assist, but also collaborate with families in the educational process. Among the three main forces in education—school, family, and society—family education often plays a more crucial role than school education, and is frequently the source of the unspoken challenges we encounter in our work.

## **Rethinking Family Education within the Dalton Model**

Within the Dalton educational model, how should we approach family education? How can we support parents in building the kind of educational environment we all aspire to? These are questions that have been at the heart of Shenzhen Dalton School's thinking since our founding over eight years ago. Two years ago, we set forth a three-year strategic goal: to build a "Three-High" school—High-Adaptability Education, a High-Value School, and High-Engagement Relationships. We believe that pedagogy is, at its core, the study of relationships. It is only when healthy relationships are in place that meaningful education can occur. With this in mind, we have closely examined four key educational relationships, both within and beyond the school environment: the teacher-student relationship, peer relationships, the school-family relationship, and the parent-child relationship within the family. Our belief is that these four relationships determine whether the education our children receive becomes



a harmonious synergy or a struggle between opposing forces. Today, I will use these 15 minutes to share Shenzhen Dalton's reflections and practices in family-school collaboration. My topic is "The Family Lab: How Parents Can Become Catalysts for Children's Self-Regulation."

## Defining the ‘Family Lab’ in Dalton Education

For those who may not be familiar with the Dalton Plan, the word "lab" might bring to mind images of complex scientific instruments. However, in Dalton education, the meaning is well established. Even so, the idea of a "Family Lab" might still feel new. To clarify, think of it as a Family Education Lab. Our Dalton founder, Helen Parkhurst, once explained the use of the term "laboratory": "I admit the term 'laboratory' may seem inappropriate to some, as it has so far been associated primarily with scientific experimentation. But for me, it is meaningful. I considered carefully before insisting on its use. We regard it as a place which, like life itself, is filled with all the conditions and influences of society. It is a place where children experiment, not a place where children are experimented upon." I believe the most important message is in that last line: our goal, whether in a School Lab or a Family Lab, is to create an environment where children are not experimented upon, but rather are given the support they need to become the directors of their own growth and learning—a place where they can conduct their own experiments as they grow. Our "Family Lab" follows this very principle.

## The Purpose and Structure of the Family Lab

To be clear, the "Family Lab" is not a place for parents to conduct experiments on their children in the name of family education. Rather, it is a place where parents provide the necessary environment and support for children to carry out their own experiments in growth. At our school, we utilized a "3W1H" analytical framework to design the Family Lab. However, due to time



constraints, I will focus today on the final part—the “How.” Specifically, I will discuss how to understand self-regulation, why it is necessary to build a Family Lab, how parents can become catalysts in developing children’s self-regulation, and how to construct this “Family Lab.”

## **Understanding the Value of Self-Regulation**

While many experts have thoroughly defined the concept of self-regulation, my focus here is on understanding its value.

## **The Importance of Self-Regulation in the Present and Future**

First, let’s consider the present and the future. We are currently living in what is known as the VUCA era—a time that is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous. In 2021, an American futurist introduced an even more advanced framework: the BANI era, which stands for Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible. This suggests that our world has evolved beyond VUCA. In such times, it is crucial—for both our children and ourselves as adults—to have strong self-regulation skills. Self-regulation may well be the most essential core competency and competitive advantage we can nurture.

Second, facing the opportunities and challenges of the AI era, what is the value of self-regulation? The wave of digital society is here, and the fourth technological revolution driven by AI is rapidly unfolding. Reactions vary from excitement to apprehension. Regardless of stance, there is consensus: educational transformation is inevitable, and innovation is urgent. In this environment, we see more clearly the foresight of the Dalton Plan in cultivating personalized learning, ubiquitous learning, and lifelong learning. Therefore, as the AI era dawns, we should walk more firmly on the path of Dalton education, as it offers our children more opportunities for personalized, self-directed development and growth. We believe Dalton-educated children will confidently



embrace and utilize AI.

As the founder of Khan Academy said, "What defeats you in the future may not be AI itself, but those who are proficient in using it." In this context, the value of self-regulation becomes even more apparent. In Education on the Dalton Plan, Helen Parkhurst also stated: "When the child begins to meet the problems of his youth and growth, his childhood must have strengthened his power to meet them. Only as education is designed to give him such freedom and responsibility as will permit him to deal with them independently and for himself, can he arrive at that point." Isn't this a most fundamental interpretation of self-regulation? The book also mentions \*"the fearless human being" —isn't this precisely the kind of person educators strive to shape? Life needs them, the world needs them, for such people are always in short supply. They are rare; they plan for the future with vision, and \*they know what to do. I believe this phrase, "they know what to do,"\* is both the starting point and ultimate goal of our work as educators.

Given the immense value of self-regulation in the present and future, why should families focus on its cultivation beyond school, and why propose building a Family Lab? Because we believe the role and responsibility parents hold in a child's growth are vital and irreplaceable. Parents play at least four key roles:

1. The child's lifelong mentor. We often say parents are a child's first teachers; in truth, they are also their lifelong teachers.
2. The provider of role models.
3. The child's strongest emotional supporter.
4. The child's crucial learning partner and co-learner —a role many parents may not fully realize.

From the school's perspective, parents are our educational partners and allies. For the child, their value in the educational journey is even more irreplaceable.



Precisely because of these roles and responsibilities, parents can play a pivotal role in fostering self-regulation, primarily in four aspects:

1. Providing a safe environment for the child's growth and the development of self-regulation.
2. Maximizing respect for the child's individual needs.
3. Helping the child construct their cognitive system.
4. Fostering a sufficiently safe and healthy learning atmosphere.

In Education on the Dalton Plan, Helen Parkhurst wrote: "The Dalton Laboratory Plan does not need to advertise a fictitious authority. Such advertisement is repressive, not educative. It does not make for order, but provokes disorder." Similarly, from the student's perspective, the process of socializing into adulthood is essential. We cannot let children grow merely by submitting to arbitrary authority and inflexible rules. Holding this belief provides a solid platform for building the Family Lab and establishes common ground. So, how do we proceed? How can parents become catalysts for their children's self-regulation? We have practiced an eight-step process, closely aligned with the core traits we cultivate in Shenzhen Dalton students: Independence, Responsibility, Cooperation, and Reflection.

How can parents build an effective Family Lab aimed at cultivating these Dalton traits?

1. Respect Independence
2. Establish a Contract
3. Listen to Needs
4. Identify Emotional Triggers
5. Take Responsibility
6. Dialogue and Cooperate
7. Resolve Conflicts
8. Reflect and Adjust



By providing parents with this framework or process, the seemingly abstract "lab" becomes demystified. Most parents can follow this "contract" to successfully establish a lab at home that effectively nurtures their child's self-regulation. Let's briefly explore these eight steps.

Step 1: Respecting Independence involves laying an independent foundation for the Family Lab. We help parents understand how to foster, not suppress, independence through building respect, acceptance, and trust. Our school's "School-Family 1+1 Reading Alliance" is a major brand for home-school collaboration, recently winning an award in Nanshan District. The first book we read was Education on the Dalton Plan; the second was The Awakened Family. In the latter, we find resonance with the Dalton view of the student: Children do not need us to lead them to awakening because they are already awake. Our task is to strengthen their innate wakefulness and provide soil for it to blossom. How do we strengthen it? Through respect, acceptance, and trust.

Step 2: Establishing a Growth Contract. At school, we use behavioral agreements and learning contracts to promote self-regulation. At home, how can we help children create their own unique growth contract? We focus on two core elements: Goal-Setting (using appropriate goals to spark intrinsic motivation) and Choice (providing options to enhance a sense of efficacy). By granting goal orientation and choice, we place the child in the subject position—conducting their own growth experiments—rather than the parent using the child to test their own educational methods. This process naturally enhances the child's intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, awakening their self-regulation awareness and ability.

Step 3: Listening to the Child's Needs. Effective listening requires more than just ears; it has standards and techniques. We advise parents on four requirements for listening:

1. Be emotionally present.



2. Withhold judgment, commentary, and labeling during the entire listening process.
3. Learn to decode the child's language—verbal, written, and body language—as there is often a core need behind their expression.
4. Provide effective responses—ones that encourage the child to think and speak further toward their goals.

Again, from The Awakened Family : "An awakened family commits to each member showing up as their authentic self, paving the way for children to discover and express their inner voice. The right to express their true selves is vital for them to become resilient, strong individuals in the present and future." This leads to Step 4: Identifying the Child's Emotional Triggers in the Family Lab, a key part of supporting self-regulation. We suggest three sub-steps:

1. Identify factors that trigger the child's emotions.
2. Analyze the reasons behind the emotional fluctuations.
3. Help the child record the frequency and intensity of these triggers and link them back to the causes.

Why identify triggers? Because emotion and behavior are closely linked. In developing self-regulation, emotions trigger behaviors. Emotions themselves aren't good or bad, but behaviors can be beneficial or detrimental. Therefore, we need to: Judge the emotional influence behind behavior. Most importantly, "press the button" to initiate self-regulation. A key point is identifying whether, in the self-regulation process, it's more effective to regulate the behavior or the emotion first, and respond accordingly.

Step 5: Taking Responsibility involves helping children analyze and bear the consequences of their actions: identifying consequences, analyzing impact, taking responsibility, and adjusting strategies.

Throughout, we must maintain a dialogue and cooperative relationship

Step 6: with the child, upholding a collaborative stance and open dialogue



to build stress-free communication. However, conflict in parent-child relationships is inevitable.

Step 7: Resolving Conflict involves:

1. Discovering and defining the conflict (identifying the root).
2. Providing opportunities for expression and listening, allowing effective emotional release.
3. Seeking solutions through finding common ground while respecting differences, aiming for "no-lose" outcomes where both parent and child find an acceptable balance or compromise.

Finally, Step 8: Reflection and Adjustment. We provide frameworks for reflection, encourage children in self-reflection and self-adjustment.

Through these eight steps, we complete the process of helping parents become catalysts for their children's self-regulation within the Family Lab.

Lastly, how does the school assist? I'll share two reflections and one challenge.

Two Reflections:

1. In building the "Family Lab," the school can strengthen the trunk by supporting children's growth and cultivating self-regulation at school.
2. The school can nourish the roots by supporting parents.

One Challenge: The common pain point in home-school collaboration faced by many schools today. Without detailing student support, in supporting parents, we strive to:

Go the extra mile to build consensus and reduce information gaps.

Do a bit more to construct highly engaged relationships.

Our school has extensively explored the frequency and methods of home-school communication and the diversity of parent activities. We also employ both online and offline methods—Parent Lectures, the "School-Family 1+1 Reading Alliance," "Cloud Talk" live streams—to bridge the gap with parents and build consensus. Importantly, in our Reading Alliance, we've transitioned



from teachers to parents taking the lead as speakers. This term, we are collectively reading PET: Parent Effectiveness Training. We also offer a series of parent growth courses, looking at education from a broader perspective. Just yesterday, we had a session. Here are notes from our parents—meticulous and application-focused. On the right, I have a screenshot from last weekend where a middle school parent successfully applied a Family Lab method learned from the alliance to address a challenge with their child, with excellent results.

I would like to conclude my speech with this thought: In the "Family Lab," let us help children light the lamp within, dust off the doubts, ignite passion, anchor the soul, navigate the storms of growth, and steer the ship of life fearlessly forward.

Finally, I end with a quote, which is also the title of the preface in the Khan Academy founder's latest book on AI in education: "Starting Today, Let's Write a New Story Together. " Thank you.



## Chinese Version

# 家庭实验室： 家长如何成为孩子自我调节的催化剂

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我是来自于深圳道尔顿的张莉。不知不觉我们深圳道尔顿在国际道尔顿教育协会的支持领导下，已经走过了8年多的办学历程。今天，非常荣幸能够来到美丽的温州，与全球各地的道尔顿教育者们共同探讨，在道尔顿制教育下，如何通过培养孩子的自我调控能力，以应对未来太多的未知与挑战。

在今天的国际道尔顿大会上，我们主要探讨的是道尔顿制教育之下的学校行为。但是，接下来我想跟各位一起立足校园，又走出校园，去关注我们教育不可或缺的一个重要组成部分——家庭教育。事实上，在我们完整的、广义的教育中，社会各相关因素都对一个孩子的成长发挥着直接或间接的作用。而在这个过程中，我们的学校、家庭与社会相互作用才能构成完整的教育。对于中国教育来说，2021年出台《家庭教育法》，近期，教育部等17部委又共同出台了家校社协同育人的“教联体”，这些政策的引领都向我们揭示着作为学校的教育从业者，我们其实还兼具着家庭教育的指导者、协助者、合作者这样重要的身份。而我们知道，在这三大教育因素中，家庭教育恐怕比学校教育起着更加重要的作用，也往往会产生我们教育的一些不可言说之痛。

在道尔顿制的教育模式中，我们该如何看待家庭教育，又如何帮助我们的家长朋友们构建我们期待的那种教育样态呢？这就是我们深圳道



尔顿建校8年多来始终在思考的问题。在两年前，我们提出了打造“三高”学校这样的一个三年规划目标，即打造高适配性教育，高性价比学校和高黏合度关系。我们认为，教育学，首先是关系学，只有良好健康的关系才有好的教育。我们也认真剖析了校园内外重要的4种教育关系，即师生关系、朋辈关系、家校关系和家庭内的亲子关系。我们认为这4大关系决定着我们作用于孩子身上的教育是合力还是博弈。所以今天，我将用15分钟的时间和各位一起来分享我们深圳道尔顿在协力家庭教育方面的所思所想。我的主题是《家庭实验室——家长如何成为孩子自我调控的催化剂》。

如果我们不熟悉道尔顿制教育，可能会常常有一个这样的困惑，那就是，一提到实验室，我们脑海中浮现的，可能都是一些精密的仪器，是吧？但是在我们道尔顿制教育中，我们就非常清楚它的含义。但是，家庭实验室这个概念仍然对大家来说是一个陌生的话题，那我们不妨把它说得再具体一点，那就是家庭教育实验室。关于实验室的概念，我们道尔顿教育创始人海伦女士有这样的一段话，她说：“我承认可能在一些人看来，‘实验室’一个词不太恰当，因为迄今为止，人们往往把它仅仅把它与科学实验相结合，但是对于我来说这个词非常有意义，我是仔细考虑过后才坚持这么做的，我们把它看作是这样一个地方，这里就如同人生本身一样，它充盈着社会的各种条件和影响，这是孩子们做实验的地方，他们在这里可以做各种尝试，而不是孩子们被用来做实验的地方。”我想在这段话中，最关键的一句话是最后的一句话，我们要打造的，无论是学校实验室还是“家庭实验室”，都不是孩子们被用来做实验的地方，而是我们提供足够的环境支持，让孩子们去成为成长的主人，学习的主人，自己做实验获得成长的地方。所以我们的“家庭实验室”也不例外。

我们首先厘清一个概念，“家庭实验室”不是让家长把孩子用作实验品做家庭教育实验的地方，而是我们的家长提供足够的环境与支持，让孩子们自己做成长实验的地方。我们学校在进行“家庭实验室”的构



建的时候，采用了“3W1H”的分析法，但是因为今天时间的原因，我可能会重点在两个后 H 上做一个剖析，思考如何认识自我调控，建立家庭实验室的必要性，家长如何成为孩子自我调控能力培养的催化剂，以及建设“家庭实验室”。

关于自我调控的概念我们已经有多位专家进行了详尽阐述，我不再展开，我想要跟大家说的是如何认识自我调控的价值。

首先，我想带大家把它放在当下与未来的语境之下，去进一步理解自我调控的价值何在？我们当下面临着乌卡时代带来的挑战。我们对乌卡时代这个词可能都不陌生，它是 4 个英文单词首字母的缩写，它代表了：易变的、不确定的、复杂的和模糊的，它正是我们当下这个时代的突出特征。而在 2021 年，美国有一位未来学家，他更是提出了一个乌卡时代的进阶版，叫“巴尼时代”，他提出当下的世界，甚至已经超越乌卡，走向了脆弱、焦虑、非线性和不可理解。所以，在这样的时代大背景之下，我们的孩子具备自我调控能力就显得非常重要，当然包括我们成人，自我调控能力也是最重要的核心能力与竞争力。所以我们认为，自我调控能力的培养至关重要。

其次，是面对 AI 时代带来的机遇与挑战，自我调控能力的价值何在。数字化社会浪潮袭来，人工智能带来的第四次技术革命已在快速发生。为之欢欣鼓舞者有之，惊魂失措者有之。但无论持何种态度，都会有这样的共识：教育的变革将必然发生，教育的创新也迫在眉睫。而在这样的一个环境下，我认为，在这个过程中，我们更清晰地看到道尔顿制教育个性化学习，泛在学习，终身学习这种特质培养的前瞻性。所以当 AI 时代到来的时候，我们应该更加坚定地走在道尔顿教育的实践之路上，因为它能够给我们的孩子更多个性化、自发展、自成长的带来的机遇。我们这样认定，道尔顿培养的孩子，他们一定能够更加自信地去拥抱 AI、使用 AI。

大家都知道有这样一句话，是可汗学院创始人说的：“未来打败你的不一定是人工智能，但一定是能熟练使用人工智能的人”。所以在这



个背景下，我们认为，自我调控的价值将体现地更加充分。在道尔顿教育计划中，Helen 女士还提到，“在孩子开始面对他青年和成长的各种问题时，童年时代就必须加强孩子解决问题的能力。只有当教育被设计为给予他这样的自由与责任，并允许他为了自己而独立的处理这些问题，他才能达到这一步。”难道这不是对自我调控能力最朴素的解读吗？书中还有这样的一段话，“无所畏惧的人”，这不正是我们教育家力图塑造的那种人吗？生活需要它们，世界需要他们，因为这种人永远都不够用。他们是这样的难得，他们能高瞻远瞩的规划未来，他们知道自己该怎么做。我认为，这一句“他们知道自己该怎么做”，就是我们教育工作者培养孩子出发的原点和终极目标。

那既然自我调控能力在当下和未来具有如此重要的价值，学校给予孩子的相关教育外，家庭为什么要关注孩子自我调控能力的培养，而为什么我们又要提出家庭实验室的建设？是因为我们认为家长在孩子的成长中赋予的角色与责任是重要而无法替代的，他至少扮演着这样4个身份：

第一、他是孩子的终身导师。我们常说家长是孩子的第一任老师，其实，也是他终身的老师。

第二、家长为孩子提供着人生榜样示范的作用。

第三、家长是孩子们最强有力的情感支持者。

第四、这个可能是很多家长朋友没有意识到的，其实家长也是孩子非常重要的学习伙伴，共同学习者。

站在学校角度，家长是我们的教育合伙人、联盟军。对于孩子来说，在教育成长中的价值与作用则更加不可替代。正是基于家长有这样的角色和责任，所以在培养孩子自我调控时，我们的家长朋友从第一重要的作用，那么他们至少可以在这4个方面作用发挥作用。

一、为孩子的成长和自我调控能力的形成提供安全的环境。

二、最大化的尊重孩子的个性需求。

三、帮助孩子构建认知系统。

四、营造足够的安全的健康的学习氛围。



道尔顿教育计划中，海伦女士有这样的一段表述，“道尔顿实验室的计划不需要去标榜那些虚假的权威，这种标榜是压制性的，而不是教育性的，它不能促进秩序性，反而引发了无纪律性。”所以，从学生角度出发也一样，学生走向成年，社会化的进程是不可缺少的。在这个过程中，我们不能让孩子仅靠受制于专断权威和不可更改的条款与制度而成长。既然有了这样的一个理念，我们其实就为家庭实验室的建设铺建了一个很好的平台，我们达到了这样的共识。那么接下来就是怎么做，家长应该如何成为孩子自我调控的催化剂呢？我们实践了八个步骤。它完全紧扣我们深圳对道尔顿学生四大特质培养的核心词，即独立、责任、合作与反思。

家长应该如何构建一个良好的家庭实验室，指向对孩子道尔顿特制的培养呢？首先，尊重独立；第二步，制定契约；第三步，倾听需求；第四步，识别情绪；第五步，承担责任；第六步，对话合作；第七步，解决冲突；第八步，反思调整。

当我们为家长构建良好的家庭实验室，提供了一个这样的支架或者流程时，其实对于我们的家长朋友来说，听上去很玄妙的实验室就不再神秘，其实我们的绝大多数家长都能够按照这份合同或者说契约，顺利地在他的家中构建起一个能够很好的培养孩子自我调控能力的实验室来，那么下面就让我们逐一去了解这八个步骤。

首先，我们如何尊重独立。那就要奠定一个家庭实验室的独立的基础。我们将通过尊重、接纳与信任的构建，帮助家长朋友们了解如何促进孩子的独立，而非压制孩子的独立。我们深圳道尔顿的家校 1+1 读书联盟是学校一个非常大的家校共育品牌，刚刚获得了南山区育人项目奖项。我们的家校读书联盟读的第一本书就是《道尔顿教育计划》，读的第二本书是《家庭的觉醒》，在《家庭的觉醒》中我们看到了这样的一段话。在这段话中，我们能够同样看到我们道尔顿教育中对学生定位的影子，孩子不需要我们带领他们觉醒，因为他们本来就是觉醒的，我们的任务是巩固它们天生的觉醒意识，为他提供可以开花结果的土壤，我们怎么



样去帮他们巩固？无外乎尊重、接纳与信任。

第二步，制定成长契约。我们在学校中，会通过行为公约和学习契约去促进与激励学生的自我调控行为。那么在家庭中，我们如何帮助孩子去制定一份独属于他的成长契约呢？我们认为，抓住两个核心要点，一是确定目标，一定要用适度的目标感去激发孩子的内驱力。二是选择权，一定要为孩子提供选择权，去提升他的效能感。当给予孩子目标感和选择权，我们就把孩子放在了自己去做成长实验的主体地位，而不是家长用孩子来做实验验证自己地教育方式能力。在这份成长契约的制定和实践过程中，必然伴随着孩子内驱力与自我效能感的提升，也会带来他自我调控意识的觉醒和能力的形成。

第三步，我们如何去倾听孩子的需求。其实倾听不止是提供耳朵，真正有效的倾听是有标准的，也有一些小的诀窍。我们向家长提出了这样的4个倾听要求，你们在倾听孩子需求时，第一，要投入情感。第二，要保障在完整倾听过程中，对孩子地表达不评判、不表态、不贴标签。第三，我们要学会解读孩子语言的密码，无论是他的口头语言、书面语言还是肢体语言，因为大部分孩子的语言的背后都一定有他真正的核心诉求，所以家长要学会解读密码，当然这里的每一步它都有一个比较清晰的流程或者具体的做法，我今天就不展开讲了。第四，要做有效回应，什么是有效回应？它一定是反过来促进了孩子能够接着往下想、往下说这样的一个达成目标的回应，才叫有效回应。

同样在《家庭的觉醒》这本书中，作者是这样说的：一个觉醒的家庭会致力于让每位成员都表现出真实的自我，从而为孩子拥有发现并表达自己内心的声音铺平了道路，让孩子培养起与自我和他人连接的能力，表达真我的权利，对他们当下和未来成为坚韧的坚强的人至关重要。

这样我们就到了下一步，家长如何在“家庭实验室”中识别孩子情绪的触发点。这也是家长如何协助支持孩子形成自我调控能力的重要环节。我们也有三个步骤去完成它，第一步，我们要识别孩子情绪被触发的因素。第二步，我们要去分析孩子产生情绪波动的原因。第三步，我



们要帮助孩子自己记录情绪被触发的频率和强度，然后再回到第一点与因素建立联系。这个过程都是家长帮助孩子或引导孩子去做。我们为什么要去识别孩子的情绪出发点，是因为情绪与行为是密切相关的，在孩子自我调控能力形成的过程中，都是情绪触发了行为，而情绪本身没有好坏，但是到行为本身就有优劣了，就有利弊了。所以我们有这样的几步，第一，判断行为后面的情绪影响，最重要的是打开自我调控的按键按钮。这个过程中很重要的一点，就是我们要识别孩子在自我调控过程中，是更利于调控行为还是调控情绪，我们据此去做相应的回应。下一步，怎么让孩子承担责任，我就不具体解读了，让孩子帮助孩子分析并承担行为的后果，我们主要识别行为的后果，分析行为的影响，承担相关责任和调整应对的策略。

在这个过程中，我们要始终坚持与孩子是一个对话合作的关系，坚持合作的立场，开放式对话，帮助孩子构建无压力沟通，但是无论怎样，在我们的亲子关系中冲突都是不可避免的，所以，如何解决冲突？第一步，发现与定义冲突，也就是识别冲突的根源。第二步，提供表达与倾听的机会，让孩子有效释放情绪。第三步，是用求同和存异的方式来寻求解决方案，这个方案可能是多元的，但我们要追求没有输家，只有赢家的结果，就是家长和孩子共同寻找能接受的平衡与妥协。通过这样三个步骤解决合作。最后就是事实的反思与调整，讨论反思的支架，我们可以从哪些方面做反思。鼓励孩子自我反思、自我调整。这样，我们就通过8大步骤完成了家庭实验室中让家长成为孩子自我调控能力的催化剂。

最后就是学校如何助力，我在这里也和大家说一说我们的两个思考和一个困惑。我们的两个思考是，学校在“家庭实验室”的构建方面，可以通过助力孩子的成长，帮助孩子在校内培养自我调控能力来稳固主干。同时还要通过对家长的助力来滋养根基。当然我们也有一个困惑，就是当下可能很多学校都面临的家校共育之痛，采取了这样的一些措施，助力学生我就不讲了，在助力家长上我们采取了多走一步，达成共识来减少信息差，多做一点构建高粘合度的关系。



我们学校在家校沟通的频次，家校沟通的方式，家长活动的丰富性上做了大量的探索。同时在开设家长讲堂，家校“1+1”读书联盟，“说三道四，云上直播间”等线上线下齐发力的方式，拉近与家长之间的关系，共同重要的是构建共识也是，我们学校家校“1+1”读书联盟的图片，这是我们每一期家校“1+1”读书联盟的海报，从这里能看到我们已经逐渐由老师做主讲人，转为家长做主讲人，我们这个学期联盟共同读的一本书是《PET 父母效能训练》。这是我们的家长成长系列课程，从这里我们能看到我们跳出教育看教育，为家长朋友们构建了很多是的课程，就在昨天下午还进行，这是我们家长朋友参加家校读书“1+1”联盟的读书笔记。我们能够看到我们的左边我们的家长朋友，他们在读自需型成长非常的仔细是吧？一看就知道这是一个理工男，这是我们的家长做的读书笔记，右边是我截取的，正好上个周末我们的一位初中家长朋友在周末回家后，运用了联盟中所教授的这个家庭实验室的方法来解决孩子面临的一个问题，效果非常好。

最后我想用这样的一小段话来结束我今天的演讲：“在“家庭实验室”中，让我们帮助孩子点亮心灯，擦拭灰尘，燃起激情，安放灵魂，穿越成长的风浪，驾驭生命的航船无畏向前”。

最后，想用一句话结束我今天的分享，也是可汗学院的创始人在他最新的一本书《人工智能怎么教怎么学》中序言的题目：从今天起，让我们一起写个新故事”。谢谢各位！



# Metacognition and Self-Regulation at Ascham School, Sydney

Dr. Joanne Manning,

Director of Curriculum and Learning at Ascham Sydney, Australia

## Introduction

I am Joanne from Ascham School in Australia, the only Dalton school in the country. Our community is shaped by the Dalton philosophy, which guides our approach to teaching and learning. I want to thank Dalton International for inviting me to speak and extend my best wishes to the Dalton International family in the Netherlands.



## Our School and Dalton Philosophy

Our campus resembles a village, with buildings acquired over the years since our beginnings in a single room 135 years ago. Located in Sydney's eastern suburbs, close to the beaches, we recently celebrated 100 years of the Dalton approach, hosting Mr. Roel Röhner, Agata Röhner and Rene Berends for the occasion in 2022.

We educate 1,300 students from Kindergarten to Year 12, embedding Dalton principles within our curriculum and daily activities. The approach, originally focused on student willingness, mapping, and assignments, remains committed to the growth of students, staff, and the wider community. We value our



independent status, maintaining alignment with university systems and other schools in New South Wales, while integrating well-being with curriculum to ensure all students participate in diverse activities and practices.

## **Dalton Vocabulary and Community Engagement**

We are developing a shared vocabulary centered on patience and growth to explain our practices and principles, particularly in self-regulation. It is important for us to articulate these values both within and beyond our school community.

## **Focus on Self-Regulation and Metacognition**

Our focus today is self-regulation. We encourage students to be explorers— independent, community-minded, resilient, and deeply engaged in learning, which is central to their well-being.

The Dalton structure provides protective factors that foster self-regulation. Graduates embody a vision that is highly valued by the community, universities, and workplaces. We remain vigilant in ensuring that our beliefs and values—especially the child-centered approach—remain uncompromised and that our students' development is protected.

## **Challenges to Self-Regulation**

We observe societal changes where respectful debate is often replaced by extreme viewpoints, resilience is challenged, and anxiety around learning is high. Technology use has contributed to decreased self-regulation and memory capacity, with a growing preference for entertainment and instant gratification impacting concentration and reading engagement.

## **Dalton Principles as Protective Factors**

Despite these challenges, Dalton students are equipped with principles that counteract social upheaval. We work daily to enhance students' concentration,



self-efficacy, and metacognitive awareness, helping them navigate life's complexities and fostering self-determination.

Research in Australia and globally highlights the importance of systemic approaches for growth in schools. We carefully design structures that support students while allowing them the freedom to make decisions within those structures.

## **Well-Being, Values, and Learning**

Adults at Ascham prioritize learning for well-being and emphasize the importance of loving and valuing the learning process. We strive to nurture responsible, curious citizens who work to develop themselves and their peers. Our values and motto—"With heart and soul, strength and courage"—are central to our well-being framework. The fig tree, once the centerpiece of our playground, remains a symbol of our heart and motivation, even after its replanting.

## **Self-Regulation, Motivation, and Metacognition**

It is difficult to address self-regulation without considering motivation, which provides energy and purpose to sustain these behaviors. We use Andrew Martin's motivation model from the University of New South Wales to enhance self-regulation within the Dalton framework. This model is taught explicitly and integrated into well-being and learning-to-learn lessons, providing students with the vocabulary and practices needed to develop self-regulation.

Martin's model identifies positive motivation and engagement factors, such as self-belief and valuing school, as well as detractors. Self-belief starts early, with children encouraged to be brave and courageous. Our junior school playground is designed for measured risk and challenge, and students are taught a growth mindset, learning from mistakes and viewing them as essential to progress.



Self-belief is reinforced through reflection and feedback. Regular feedback helps students evaluate their work and respond positively to growth. Reflection and mentoring—through form teachers and senior executives—enable ongoing development of self-belief. We use language that values delayed gratification, reframing thoughts, and integrity, which builds a sense of self and supports self-regulation. Even in discussions about responsible AI use, students are encouraged to trust themselves and consider the consequences of their decisions.

## **Valuing School and Deep Engagement**

Valuing education leads to greater engagement. Students are taught to appreciate the relevance of their learning, contributing to humanity and citizenship. We foster gratitude for learning and well-being by celebrating teachers and hard work, maintaining high standards for all students, and providing support for those who struggle. Rather than reducing workloads or removing exams except in rare cases, we emphasize mastery of skills and knowledge over mere completion or competition.

Direct instruction ensures students have a clear understanding of material, and self-regulation begins with clear expectations and behaviors. Our teaching and learning framework sets out detailed roles for teachers and students, establishing a foundation for excellence.

## **Dalton Assignments and Student Choice**

Dalton assignments are central to our learning focus and enhance self-regulation. Assignments are provided in advance, allowing students to see the trajectory of their learning. Our structure supports strong teacher-student relationships, with flexible timetables enabling students to choose which teacher to see and when. In senior school, labs and studies are vertically structured and student-driven, requiring students to regulate their goals, time,



and attention.

Students manage dual timetables and engage in evidence-based viewpoints, sharing opinions and collaborating. We guide students on effective use of their study time and foster persistence, resilience, and goal-setting through language and assessment policies.

## **Time Management and Study Skills**

Planning and monitoring are embedded in lessons and assemblies, emphasizing goal setting and achievement. Students learn diary organization and time management, planning and tracking their progress. We recommend specific hours for homework and adjust workloads based on individual needs, helping teachers set realistic expectations.

Students break down tasks to meet submission deadlines, building efficiency. Exceptional students may do more work, while struggling students receive adjusted workloads. This approach provides a guideline for teachers and supports diverse learning needs.

## **Managing Technology and Distractions**

While student choice is encouraged, technology distractions remain a challenge. We educate students about the costs of multitasking, noting that switching between devices and platforms diminishes concentration and learning quality. Research shows that social media use correlates with lower grades, and our own findings indicate that half of Year 12 students spend 45 minutes daily on Instagram, with those keeping phones nearby earning lower grades. Regular surveys, alumni talks, and peer mentoring help students regulate their technology use.

## **Fostering a Reading Culture**

We have developed a strong reading culture to counteract declining interest, particularly in senior school. Teachers researched benefits of reading, leading



to initiatives like "battle of the books," writers' breakfasts, book clubs, book boxes, bookmarks, and videos promoting reading. These activities boost literacy, social capital, and engagement.

## **Addressing Negative Motivation Factors**

High anxiety can undermine concentration. We address emotional management through consistent teaching and a supportive curriculum. Fairness is prioritized, especially around deadlines and extensions. Learning communities encourage collaboration, empathy, and emotional articulation, helping students navigate challenges and build citizenship.

Fear of failure can result in procrastination. We teach growth mindset, reflection, and feedback, encouraging students to "fail fast," learn from mistakes, and move forward. The ABC model—Action, Belief, Commit—guides students in defining and achieving their goals.

Uncertain control, or a lack of belief in one's influence over outcomes, is mitigated by mentoring and structured programs like "I Think," which promote self-awareness, integrity, empathy, and reflection, helping students step out of their comfort zones and understand their potential.

We help students identify their response styles—denier, owner, or blamer—encouraging ownership of actions and focusing on controllable factors. This language shift is continuously reinforced.

Self-sabotage, such as procrastination or unrealistic goal setting, is addressed by focusing on positive behavior change. We encourage students to make new habits obvious, attractive, easy, and satisfying, following James Clear's model for habit development.

## **Building a Culture of Self-Regulation**

By integrating positive motivation factors and mitigating negative ones, we greatly improve student motivation and self-regulation. This gives students the



language and tools to reflect and regulate their behavior. Educators and parents can use this framework to identify areas for support and implement strategies that foster a productive learning environment. Understanding the language of motivation and learning increases self-regulation.

## Conclusion

Dalton International schools can drive transformative change for students and communities. We should prioritize strategies that enhance learning and well-being, valuing self-regulation and the ability to describe our learning processes. Create a vision for an uncompromising learning culture, remove obstacles to learning, and provide temporary supports that foster determination. Each community should develop its own vision, research, and approaches to create a responsible Dalton environment.

Thank you to Dalton International and everyone present. I wish you all the best for the conference and hope to see you at the next one.

# Practical Contributions



# Self-Directed Learning at Public International Daltonschool ‘t Gijmink: Dalton Education in Practice

## Introduction

At ODS ‘t Gijmink, education is more than simply transferring knowledge from teacher to pupil. Our approach centers on developing essential skills that will prepare students for the future. Self-directed learning is a central component of this philosophy, empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning process. This aligns with the core values of Dalton education: responsibility, independence, cooperation, effectiveness, and development. In this setting, teachers act as coaches, guiding students where necessary and supporting them in achieving their learning goals.

### What is Self-Directed Learning?

In self-directed learning, students are given the autonomy to decide how they wish to learn. They have the freedom to choose their own workspace, whether that is in the classroom or in the learning square—a space where collaboration with others is encouraged. This freedom to make choices is closely linked to Dalton’s core value of responsibility. Through these choices, students learn to make decisions about how and where they work most effectively, discovering what learning methods suit them best.

Additionally, students decide how they want to process subject matter. They may choose to ask the teacher for clarification, collaborate with classmates, or conduct independent research. This approach ensures that students actively shape their own learning journeys and take responsibility for their results.



### **The Teacher as Coach**

Rather than following a traditional teaching model, the teacher's role is to guide students throughout their learning process, fostering the value of independence. Reflection questions are used to help students become more aware of their behavior and progress. By regularly reflecting on their approaches and choices, students learn how to make improvements, which promotes independence and deepens their understanding of their own learning.

In addition, "child talks" are held, during which teachers discuss with students what they still want to learn and what goals they have set for themselves. These conversations stimulate ongoing development—another key Dalton value. Through regular reflection on what they have achieved and what they still wish to accomplish, students gain a clear sense of their personal growth.

### **Planning Boards and Group Targets**

Self-directed learning begins in our youngest groups. From groups 1 to 8, we use a planning board to help students organize their day or week. This tool teaches students to make decisions about the order and timing of their tasks, supporting the value of effectiveness. By learning to plan, students make effective use of their time and develop efficient work habits that will benefit them in the future.

Group goals are also set collaboratively with the class, which strengthens cooperation among students. By setting and working toward goals together, students learn to support and consult with one another, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for learning.

### **Inquiry-Based Learning: Discovering Together**

In the senior years, inquiry-based learning becomes a prominent part of the curriculum. Students are encouraged to choose topics that interest them, formulate questions, conduct experiments, and share their findings with the class. This process highlights the importance of independence and cooperation,



as well as effectiveness—students learn to effectively use their time and resources to achieve meaningful results.

### Dalton Core Values in Practice

At ODS 't Gijmink, Dalton's core values serve as the foundation of our educational approach, and these are reflected daily in the practice of self-directed learning:

- **Responsibility:** Students take ownership of their learning by making choices about their workplace, pacing, and approach.
- **Independence:** Students work independently and are encouraged to reflect on their learning through reflection questions and child conversations.
- **Collaboration:** Students collaborate in the learning square and work together to set group goals.
- **Effectiveness:** Through the use of planning boards and self-managed tasks, students learn to manage their time efficiently and work productively.
- **Development:** Ongoing reflection and child talks support continuous personal growth and development.

### Prepared for the Future

At ODS 't Gijmink, our goal is to prepare students for a future where



independence, cooperation, and responsibility are vital. With self-directed learning and the Dalton core values as our foundation, students learn not only what they need to know, but also how to learn effectively. Teachers stand beside students as coaches, helping them take meaningful steps in their development.

By incorporating reflection questions, planning boards, group targets, and child interviews, we help students become increasingly aware of their learning process and able to take more control. In this way, we equip them to meet the challenges of tomorrow.



## Towards the Future: Becoming SelfRegulated Learners

Zhang Binyan

Principal of Dalton Elementary School, Wenzhou, China

### Introduction

Dalton Elementary School is a young, fullday private primary school in Wenzhou, China. Founded under the vision of Ms. Lili Bai, we practice the study lab education model and integrate the principles of Dalton International organization. In just seven years, we have grown into a “window school” for future education, aligning our bold vision with the national reforms of *double-reduction* and *double-new* (New Curriculum Standards and New Textbooks).

At the heart of our mission is the construction of a support system for independent learning, guided by the principle of *autonomous human development*. This system rests on three dimensions:

- Physical space
- Inner spirit
- Mode of operation





## A Story of Transformation: Little A

In 2022, we welcomed a boy—“Little A”—the youngest in his class, often perceived as “slow.” He lacked foundations in English, pinyin, and even rope skipping. Physically weak and struggling with literacy, he would have been considered a “headache child” elsewhere.

Two years later, Little A became a class leader: guiding peers in assemblies, drills, meals, and afterschool routines. His transformation reflects our student characteristic training, which cultivates selfdiscipline, independence, cooperation, and responsibility.

His mother described him as “the most inconspicuous seed” that, through Dalton’s nourishment, grew into a strong, responsible learner—an embodiment of our growth mindset philosophy.

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## Cultivating Student Character

Inspired by General Secretary Xi Jinping’s call to nurture youth with ideals, capabilities, and responsibility, we defined the Dalton student profile:

- Selfdiscipline
- Independence
- Cooperation
- Responsibility

Implementation follows a closedloop cycle:

1. Monthly theme introduced at the start.
2. Continuous followup midmonth.
3. Reflection at month’s end.

This spiral process helps children recognize strengths, identify shortcomings, and adjust behaviors to become better versions of themselves.

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## Learning Modes Supporting Independent Learning

### 1. SubjectBased Autonomous Classroom

Process:

- Set goals: What do I learn? Why do I learn?
- Plan and selfstudy: How do I learn? What strategies do I use?
- Reflect and evaluate: Did I learn well?

Teachers provide objectives, while students choose tasks of varying difficulty and strategies. This model respects differences and empowers students to learn at their own pace.

### 2. FourStage Study Lab Class

Stages:

1. Smooth your mood for study.
2. Make a study plan.
3. Selfstudy (zerohelp period → mutualhelp period).
4. Reflection.

Students use diverse spaces (classroom, resource rooms, corridors, balconies) and adopt four learning styles:

- Selfdirected learning
- Partner support
- Mentor appointment
- Projectbased learning

Teachers intervene only when problems remain unsolved after selflearning and peer collaboration, ensuring students construct meaning themselves.

### 3. ProjectBased Learning

Implemented across all subjects, projects cultivate core literacy and encourage students to “think and create like experts.” Examples include:

- Spokesperson for Traditional Culture (language and culture integration)



- Cardboard Lifeboat (science and engineering)
- Board Game Design (mathematics revision through creativity)
- Supersubject Project on Su Shi (Year 6 students exploring life through poetry)
- Convention Project (Year 1 students learning social conventions)

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## Tools for Independent Learning

### Assignment Contracts

Developed with Dalton International experts, assignment contracts enhance initiative and selfplanning. They exist in two forms:

- Homework Contracts
  - *Wholesubject contracts* (lower grades): guided by pictures and moral reflections.
  - *Singlesubject contracts* (upper grades): unitbased, with integrated planning sheets.
- Learning Contracts
  - Designed for specific courses, interdisciplinary projects, customized programs, and holiday study.

Contracts give students the right to negotiate tasks, plan, execute, and reflect. They integrate academics with moral, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, fostering holistic growth. Weekly reflections and homeschool interaction columns strengthen communication among students, teachers, and parents.

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## Home–School–Community Collaboration

Education thrives through cooperation among school, family, and society. At Dalton, we established:

- Parents' Volunteer Union ("Partners in Education")



- Open Days and storytelling sessions for parents
- Parent schools to promote scientific family education
- Parents' classrooms and social resources to enrich collaboration

Dalton International further supports us with academic leadership, foreign study activities, and educational visits, broadening our teachers' and students' perspectives.

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## Conclusion

Our independent learning support system is reshaping the learning structure. Though still evolving, it has already propelled us to the forefront of educational reform.

In an era of rapid change—accelerated by innovations like ChatGPT—the future is here. We cannot wait passively. We must embrace the winds of transformation and run towards the future, unafraind.



Chinese Version

## 向未来：培养独立自主学习者

张滨雁

温州道尔顿小学校长

大家好！我是温州道尔顿小学校长张滨雁。我们是一所年轻的民办全日制小学，学校践行创校校长白莉莉女士原创性整理教育思想，融合全球顶尖教育品牌——国际道尔顿教育。在短短七年间发展成为一所面向未来的窗口学校。不得不说，我们是幸运地在“双减”和“双新”的时代之轮上，印刻了我们对于未来教育图景的大胆畅想。

我们构建了以“人的自主发展”为核心的自主学习的支持系统。这个系统分为从物理空间、内在精神和运行模式三个维度。由于时间的关系，今天我重点挑选其中的几点来分享我们学校的做法：

A同学，2022入学一年级，他是8月份的小男孩，也是别人眼中的“慢小孩”，因为“慢”热，和同年级的同学相比，身心发展也“慢”一拍。英语0基础，拼音0基础，跳绳0基础，体能弱，手部肌肉发育晚导致写字吃力，识字少无法自主阅读。可能在别的其他学校，小A就是老师眼里的“问题少年”。道尔顿两年的学习和滋养，小A不仅各方面学业都进步神速，而且成为了路队长。带领全班晨会、跳操、跑操、用餐、放学，成为了一个独立自主且有责任感的好少年。

他为什么在短短的两年时间里，就有了这么的蜕变呢？这有赖于我们学校这个系统中“学子特质”的培养。

### 一、构建“学子特质培养”的育人体系

根据习近平总书记提出的培养时代新人“三有”要求，结合学校特色，学校提出了道尔顿学子形象“自律、自主、合作、担当”的未来引领者。



朝着这一目标，我们制定了非常详细的分年龄段、分学期学子特质培养的具体描述。为了更好的落实，实施过程中我们一月一主题，月初启动，月中全程跟进，月末与学校特有的学子特质整理相结合进行月反思，形成一个的闭环。就这样在循环反复、螺旋上升，孩子们在认识到自己的优势，也看到自己的不足，不断调整自己的行为，成为更好的自己。

正如小A妈妈所说：道尔顿就像是一片敢于探索、勇于尝试的试验田，小A就像是一颗最不显眼的小种子，两年来的滋養，让这颗种子有了令人欣喜的生长与变化，体现了学校注重的潜能挖掘和特质养成，学校所倡导的“成长型思维”，让孩子们爱上自己做的事——即使面对困难也会继续热爱。

回到这张自主学习支持系统，在“物质”与“精神”双重力量共同作用、互相影响下，逐渐形成了系统的运行模式。下面我来介绍其中学习模式和学习工具。

## 二、支持“自主学习”的学习模式

首要的学习模式一定发生在课堂上。大家看这张图，我们现在构建的新型自主型课堂，分为四个阶段，从课堂比重上看，学生的独立学习部分是课的主体。我们认为学习这件事，需要学生去经历、去实践，而学生之间有差异，只有充分尊重差异，让每个孩子根据自己的节奏和方法去完成，学习才可能真正发生。

### 1. 学科自主型课堂：

自主型课堂，基本流程：确定目标、制定计划、独立学习、反思与评价。讲授阶段确立课堂目标：我学什么、我为什么学？独立学习阶段以学生的自主和合作活动为主导：我怎么学、我有什么任务和策略？评价与反思指我学得怎么样、我学会了吗？如英语单词学习课，老师利用学历案，会设有不同层级目标，每一个目标下会有不同难度的任务，完成任务的方法策略也不同，学生可以根据需求去选择完成。现在数学、语文科学都有类似学历案的尝试。

自主型课堂模型做得更加到位是我们的学生每天最后一节的整理课。



大家看图片，整理课的模型几乎与自主型课堂模型完全吻合。

## 2. “四段式”整理课

整理课设置了四段式模型：整理心情、整理规划、整理学业、整理评价。其中，学业整理分为两个时段：零帮助时段、互助时段。“零帮助时段”可理解为延迟满足时段。当教室处于该时段，学生面对学习问题，首先需要自己面对和尝试独立解决，教室里有许多可视化“求助指南”，为学生提供了各类问题的解决策略。整理课上学生利用开放的“六度空间”，班级教室、学科资源室、走廊和阳台，采用“自我指导、伙伴支持、预约导师、项目化学习”四个学习方式开展学习。

当然学生的自主学习与教师的集中讲授式教学并不完全矛盾。但应该遵循一条原则，即一切教学内容都要经过学生的自主学习，在学生合作讨论也不能解决问题的情况下，教师才能集中讲授。只有如此，才能实现学生对学习意义的自主建构。请大家来欣赏一下我们学校孩子平时呈现出来的学习状态。（图片）正如大家看到的，自主型课堂把学习责任赋予孩子，让孩子发挥学习的主动性和责任感，而非用老师的教学责任来霸占学生的学习责任，此时，学生爆发出来的能量和热情是让人惊喜的。

对于我们学校而言，还有一种重要的学习模式是项目化学习。

## 3. 项目化学习

项目化学习在我们学校是面向每一位孩子、在全学科中常态实施的。我们重点关注学科核心素养的培育，我们在坚守学科立场的同时，也尝试整合多个学科的知识技能共同解决一个真实的问题。我们已经形成比较完善项目化学习资源库。

举例：

- “我是传统文化代言人”：简单的识字单元变为我是传统文化代言人项目
- “纸板救生船”
- “桌游”（数学）：以“桌游设计”的方式进行数学知识整理（复习）



### ●超学科：六年级苏轼项目（思考人生）一年级公约项目；

在以上新型学习模式的运行中，我们必然需要研发支持自主学习的工具。“合同作业”就是其中非常重要的一个工具。

在国际道尔顿专家的引领下，从创校开始，我们集全校之力，由学校顶层设计构建“合同作业”体系，培育学生的自主学习能力。

合同作业是一份契约作业。是以学生自我规划能力培养为目标，由教师和学生双方达成契约合同，由学生自主规划和管理完成作业的时间和内容，整合一个周期内的各项作业任务的一份材料。

合同作业的设计可以分为两大类，一是作业合同单，它是学生自主规划和完成各学科课后作业的导航单。低中年级学生使用每周一份的“全科作业合同单”，低段的孩子识字不多，主要以图片作为行动指南。中段逐步培养学生会整理、会选择、会规划的能力。给予更多的规划和反思的空间。

高年级由于学科难度提升，我们设置了基于单元整组教学，以一周或两周为时间单位的作业设计。每个单元一份的“单科作业合同”并配合“全科规划单”。进一步培养他们的规划能力。

第二类是学习合同。学习合同是为某一课程或者某一个学习项目设计的自主学习的指南手册。比如我们有英语课程的学习合同，配合跨学科项目的学习合同，私人订制课程的学习合同和寒暑假的合同。

不管是哪种合同，在作业发布之初，学生享受与老师协商作业的权利，对作业具有发言权、选择权，最终签名与老师达成的共识，践行契约精神。而实施的过程都会有规划、执行、反思。我们赋予了学生完成作业的权利和责任，很多合同作业还具有助学导航系统，帮助学生更好地完成作业，培养其独立自主性。

我们的合同作业是对道尔顿计划中合同作业的迭代，除了学业部分的内容，我们还有指向学子特质培养、运动、劳动等多方面规划。因为我们深知教育本质是育人，而非只有分数，所以我们积极践行五育并举，让孩子全面地规划自己的生活。同时还增加了周反思和家校互动栏，通



过一份合同，架起家长和学生，家长和老师的沟通桥梁，促进学生更好地发展。

除了合同作业，我们仍然会研发其它很多支持自主学习的学习工具，用以满足学生的需求，既有程序支架，又有思维支架，既支持自主学习模式的正常运行，又突破自主学习的思维难点，更为学习评价提供充分地表现性依据。

最后，我要简单介绍一下学校在“家、校、社”协同育人方面的努力。

### 三、形成“家、校、社”协同育人机制

教育从来不只是学校的事情，需要得到家长的支持，需要家庭、社会的的协同配合，形成互信互助的协同育人共同体。

我们成立了家长志工联盟，我们称家长为“教育合伙人”，通过家长会的宣讲，学校与家长达成共识，让“打造一所让师生念想一生的幸福校园”的愿景成为大家共同的愿景。打开校园，积极开展各年级的家长开放日，邀请家长参与一年一度的故事会，让家长了解学生的成长，传播科学教育理念和方法。

同时开设多种类型的家长学校，加强学习，树立科学的家庭教育观念，提升家庭教育水平。当然我们也充分利用社会资源，邀请家长和社会人士进课堂，营造良好的家校社协同育人的环境。

在这里也特别感谢国际道尔顿给予我们的支持和帮助，不仅是学术上的引领，更是在国外研学活动、教育访问等方面给予了很大的协助。这些体验，让我们的师生在拥有家国情怀同时，更具有国际视野。

总之，在我们看来，自主学习支持系统的建构对于未来学习结构的变革有着重要的意义，虽然这一系统仍在不断完善中，但我们已经迈出了探索的步伐。随着技术的不断进步，我们坚信，教育的未来已在不远处。我们不应等待未来的到来，而应积极地迎接变化，拥抱未来。



Jasper Kok MA

Managing Director

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Speaker, Educational Trainer, and Writer



## Catering the Needs of Highly Gifted Children Within Dalton Education

Maia (4) listened to the story about Frog and his friends, dealing with the flooding of their houses due to heavy rainfall. While the teacher read the story, she wondered why the dams next to the riverbanks didn't hold up. Were they dried up? How did they collapse? The last time she walked on them, they were high and looked strong! Didn't people die during the flooding?

She remembered an item on the news she'd seen, where cars were floating away. She was pretty sure the newsreader mentioned people had drowned...



She remembered the newsreader saying the flooding was caused by an earthquake in the sea that had pushed up the water and caused the flooding. Maia raised her finger and when the teacher allowed her to speak, she asked: Did the volcanic eruption in the sea also create an island where Frog and his



friends can live safely after the flooding?

This article aims to provide information, inspiration, and building blocks towards developing an integrated approach for offering highly gifted children exactly what they need within (primary) education. In this article the focus is on providing information about what being highly gifted is, how to recognize it and contains a section about underachievers.

## **24/7**

While working as a teacher, headteacher, and currently as a managing-director for more than 25 years in primary schools in the Netherlands, I had the pleasure to work with many gifted and highly gifted children. While the always-present caring reflex of most teachers turns their attention automatically to children who experience difficulties with learning, they find it more challenging to deal with the children who need more than the standard educational program the school offers.

Yet, these children need to be challenged and to be addressed at their own level. If not, these children run the risk of becoming underachievers or lose the developmental lead they have upon entering primary school. In many schools, initiatives are being taken to organize activities for highly gifted children, like a two hour highly gifted class with fantastic, challenging activities. The trouble is, these children aren't highly gifted for just two hours a week, they are highly gifted 24/7.

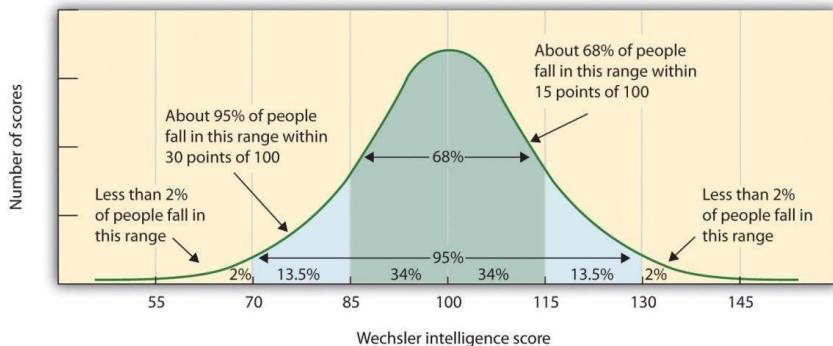
What is needed is a school-wide supported vision, resulting in an integrated approach that has an impact on every hour a highly gifted child spends at school. Is that difficult and time consuming to organize? I would be thrilled



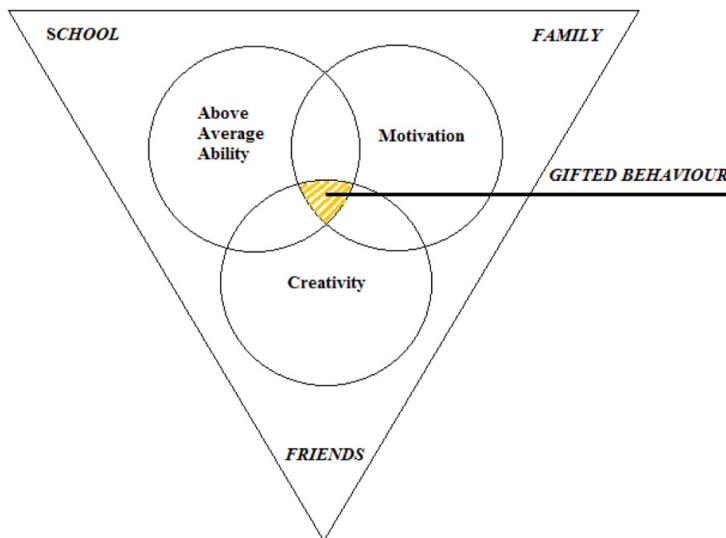
if I could answer this question with a firm no. I cannot, but it is an absolute necessity that schools and teachers act towards achieving this. For starters, it might help if highly gifted children in your school are seen as special educational needs children as well.

### What is highly gifted?

The most important characteristic of giftedness is high intelligence. Below you can see the normal distribution of intelligence. Over 15% of people are more gifted or highly gifted; 13.5% and 2.3% respectively. If translated into educational practice, this means that in a group of thirty children there are four gifted children and possibly one highly gifted child (Gerven, 2008).



However, intelligence is not the only condition for being highly gifted. The triadic interdependence model of Renzulli and Mönks shows that the great intellectual potential must go hand in hand with two essential personality traits (creative thinking and motivation) to be able to speak of high giftedness (Drent & van Gerven, 2007).



Environmental factors (family, school, and friends) are of great influence on the development of giftedness and the extent to which the pupil can achieve gifted performance.

The difference between giftedness and highly giftedness is first determined by IQ. A highly gifted child has an IQ  $>130$ . A gifted child has an IQ between 115 and 130. In addition, highly gifted children, to a greater extent than gifted children, exhibit several specific personality characteristics, such as great language skills, great ability to make causal relations, great problem solving and analytical abilities, preference for abstraction, creative thinkers, perfectionistic urges, strange sense of humor and a high amount of concentration. It is difficult to talk about the characteristics of gifted children because each one of these children is unique.

### **How to recognize a child being highly gifted at a young age?**

This is a question without an easy answer, for IQ tests exist for children at a



young age do exist (for example the WPPSI-IV, which is an innovative measure of cognitive development for preschoolers and young children), but the results are less viable than IQ tests with older children, because their development is incremental, rather than linear.

What plays a role as well, is that many children, most of whom are thought to be gifted, give unusual answers to questions. Those answers are not necessarily wrong, but cannot be considered correct, because they are not mentioned in the scoring manuals of the used tests! This may explain why many professionals in the fields of psychology and education still fail to recognize and serve highly gifted children.

A promising, relatively new, screening instrument is Zoov+ ([www.sqalix.com](http://www.sqalix.com)). This is a digital tool for identifying potentially gifted and more gifted students. The instrument can be taken in class, is adaptive and provides a reliable objective estimate of a cognitive developmental advantage within fifteen minutes. In contrast to other monitoring instruments, a teacher does not (yet) need to have knowledge of behavioral characteristics and the instrument is completely independent of school results, so that it is easier to identify adapters and underachievers.

### **Beyond IQ**

It is important to realize that being highly gifted goes beyond IQ. For example, the role of creativity plays a big role, in the form of generating novel ideas, thinking flexibly and out-of-the-box.

Therefore, with young children, asking them to make a human figure drawing (HFD) in the first week after starting school, can provide great information about a child being gifted. As a teacher, you can score these drawings according to the norms of Goodenough. The total sum can give you information about the



potential of the child. However, it is important to not only look at the total sum but also at the exceptional items children have drawn.

Yet, there are some strong arguments not to use an HFD as a tool to measure intelligence; although the reliability can be judged as good or excellent, they appear to be less valid than desired concerning measuring intelligence, because identifying giftedness goes beyond measuring intelligence.

Finally, listening to the child, the parents, and for example pre-school teachers is essential. The child might display high language level skills or ask amazing questions. As a teacher, if you listen well, you might notice these signs of possible giftedness.

Yes, an above-average number of parents might (wrongly) claim their child to be highly gifted, as a teacher, taking all parents seriously is of great essence. For no highly gifted child should slip through the mesh of the net.

*“It isn’t hard to be highly gifted, it is hard that not everybody else is.” — Jason (9)*

## **Underachievers**

An underperformer is a child who performs less for a long period than may be expected based on his capacities. The child can underperform across the board, but also on one or more subjects. There are two types of underachievers:

### **Absolute underachievers:**

These are (highly) gifted children who not only perform below their level but also below the group average. Often this form goes hand in hand with behavioral problems and a negative self-image.



### Relative underperformers:

These are (highly) gifted children who perform (far) below their capacities, but who always stick around or just above the group level. This is the most common form of underperformance. These children are difficult to recognize because they often strongly adapt to the group across the board and make themselves almost invisible (Verlinden, 2014).

It is important to detect underperformance as early as possible, as it can be the cause of psychological and physical complaints, work posture, and behavioral problems. Many positive and negative signals are known, which may indicate an underperforming gifted child.

### **Organizing highly gifted education within Dalton Education**

It is a challenge to organize education in such a way that it matches the needs of all children and maybe an even bigger challenge to organize it according to the needs of highly gifted children. Dalton Education offers great opportunities to meet the needs of the children.

The main reason for this, is that Dalton schools offer students more freedom, which allows them to make their own choices and develop an active learning attitude. This is essential for highly gifted children; the need to be trusted. Also for these children, it doesn't mean that everything can and may be done just like that.

It is a teacher's job to provide a structure for each student to learn to handle freedom within limits – and set challenges suited to the needs of each individual students. Students are given space to explore and experiment, but at the same time are confronted with the relationship between what they do and what it produces. Within Dalton schools, this is a gradual learning process for



students, in which self-knowledge and self-judgment play a major role. Autonomy and trust is key. If a child excels in a regular subject, it is possible to compact it. By compacting the regular subject matter, time is freed up for gifted children. This time is filled with enrichment activities. It is important that the enrichment material does not pre-empt the regular curriculum, but that it is deepening or broadening. It helps when schools have a wide range of enrichment materials available. The teacher, in consultation with the child, draws up an enrichment program for about eight weeks, so that the child has enough time to broaden or deepen in a particular subject.

When drawing up the periodic enrichment program, the following can be taken into account:

- Time spent per week,
- Topics in the method or projects,
- Learning goals (make them SMART),
- Interest of the child,
- Variation in the program
- Cooperation possibilities with other gifted children.
- A (digital) portfolio can be used for this purpose.

Suitable enrichment work meets one or more of the following characteristics:

- Contains open questions
- Has a high complexity
- Contains assignments with a problem-oriented character
- Enables multiple solution strategies
- Appeal to creativity
- Exceeds the didactic level of the child
- Fits the interest of the child



The eight-week program can be broken down into weekly tasks. It is of great importance to set learning goals with the child, the enrichment work should not be without obligation. Precisely these children need to be challenged intellectually, must learn how to learn, learn to deal with difficulties, and learn to ask questions. The shared responsibility for learning in close cooperation with the learning environment of the child that is created within Dalton schools provide excellent opportunities to cater the needs of highly gifted children within education.

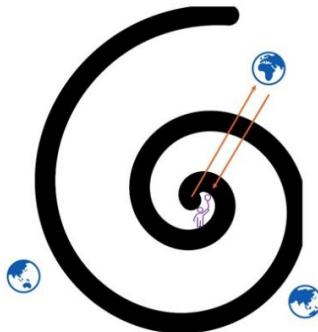


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## Shaping Education of the Future:

### The Spiral Approach

All school visions proclaim that education starts with the child. But rarely this is the case. Most of the time, education starts with the book, chapter one, lesson one. What if we really would start with the child, in connection to the world? What if we start preparing children for their path of life, instead of prepping the path they must walk?



The Spiral Approach aims to provide an answer to these questions, and puts the child at center of education, always connected to the world. Within this approach education, like the Fibonacci spiral—a symbol of growth, progression, and natural order—unfolds in patterns that connect individual learning to the big issues in this world. Just as each number in the Fibonacci sequence builds upon the one before, education uses multiloop learning,



enabling children to expand their knowledge while staying connected to themselves.

In shaping the future of education, we must integrate this spiraling growth into the classroom, bringing global challenges to children while giving them the essential basic skills they need to thrive and live a happy life!

### **Bringing Global Issues into the Classroom**

The future of education lies in creating a meaningful, two-way learning experience that prepares children for life, not just exams. By bringing global issues into the classroom and at the same time equipping children with foundational skills, we can shape a future where every student is prepared to find their place in the world and achieve lasting happiness. This multiloop learning approach not only addresses the challenges of the modern world but also ensures that education is strongly focused on the well-being and fulfillment of each individual.

The overarching concept of this vision is meaningful learning. Each lesson, like each point on the Fibonacci spiral, connects children to the broader world. When children learn in a way that ties classroom content to real-world issues, the learning process mirrors the spiral's growth—continuous, connected, and expanding in complexity. Exploring global challenges, such as climate change (SDG 13) and social inequality (SDG 10), can be embedded in lessons across all age groups, helping children understand their place within these challenges and how their actions can influence change.

### **An example**

One of the big issues is the plastic soup. Within the Spiral Approach, this



big issue needs to be broken down into suitable lessons with the frames of references of different age groups in mind. The quality of the teacher is critical here, it requires creativity, skill, and knowledge about the children in the class.

For example, with four-year-olds, a teacher may decide to go to the forest and collect as much plastic waste as possible, the main message being that it is harmful to the animals. With the eight-year-olds a teacher might do the same, but then clean and melt the collected plastic into tiles that can be used as decoration or flooring. For children at the age of 12, it is possible to not only melt the plastic but to create tiny plastic balls that can be used in a 3D printer. The children can design and sell the objects made from the printer, the profit going to the WWF. Sixteen-year-olds can learn how to write a business case together with their peers on creating sustainable fashion - partially - made from waste plastic.

The Spiral Approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge, where subjects are not only taught in isolation but as part of a greater whole. Lessons on sustainability or ethical decision-making can engage young children through simple, relatable activities, gradually expanding into more complex discussions and projects as children grow older. Like the Fibonacci sequence itself, each step builds on the previous one, leading to ever-widening perspectives.

### **Equipping Children for Life: The Two-Way Stream of Learning**

Education is increasingly seen as a two-way stream. On the one hand, educators must bring the big issues of the world into the classroom, framing these global challenges in ways that are relevant and age appropriate. On the other hand, children need to be equipped with foundational skills - such as literacy, numeracy, social skills, and the ability to discover and nurture their unique talents—to find their place in the world and pursue a fulfilling life.



This dual focus ensures that children not only engage with global challenges but also develop the basic competencies they need to thrive in any context. For example, learning to communicate effectively in both their mother tongue and in English gives children the tools to engage with diverse communities and contribute to global discussions. Mathematics provides them with the problem-solving skills they will need to tackle complex issues. And perhaps most importantly, social skills and self-awareness help children discover their passions and talents, which are crucial for personal happiness and professional success.

### **The Dalton Connection**

Multiloop learning embodies the spirit of Dalton's values, promoting mutual growth through constant engagement, critical reflection, and shared responsibility. As children explore global challenges—much like traversing the endless loops of the Fibonacci spiral—they are encouraged to think critically, to question, and to collaborate with their peers and teachers. This dynamic approach prepares them to face the evolving complexities of their future with confidence.

Dalton's emphasis on freedom allows children to also engage with topics connected to their interests and talents, making learning a deeply personal experience. The collaboration aspect fosters teamwork, where children learn to work together, share ideas, and engage in collective problem-solving. Meanwhile, responsibility instills a sense of accountability in children, teaching them to manage their learning and contribute meaningfully to both their (educational) environment and society.

### **Teachers' and Children' Parallel Growth**

An essential aspect of the Spiral Approach is that both teachers and children



learn in parallel. In this model, teachers are not the sole holders of knowledge. Instead, it is of great importance that teachers use the fact that they don't know it all as a foundation! Teachers need to continuously educate themselves about the big issues in the world, and at the same time learn about the children they teach.

By doing so they will be able to guide children through a learning process where both parties reflect, adapt, and grow together. This dynamic encourages a deeper connection between the teacher and the student and creates a learning environment where both are engaged in a continuous cycle of improvement and reflection. It supports Dalton's vision of creating a community where children and teachers are active participants in shaping their educational experiences. Teachers guide children, not as omniscient figures, but as co-learners exploring the challenges of the modern world.

### **Cultivating Happiness and Fulfillment**

Beyond academic success, the goal of education is to help children find their place in the world, where their skills, talents, and passions converge. Dalton Education's core values play a crucial role in this. By nurturing autonomy alongside collaboration and responsibility, Dalton offers a framework for children to discover and nurture their unique talents while contributing positively to the world.

True fulfillment comes from this balance - where personal strengths and social awareness come together. In the words of Aristotle, "Where the needs of the world and your talents cross, there lies your vocation." As children move through their educational journey, guided by the Fibonacci-like progression of connected learning, they develop the skills and confidence to navigate life's complexities. Education, in this sense, becomes not just a preparation for the future but a path to finding happiness and purpose in the present.



# The Critical Role of Social Learning in our Schools and Interpersonal Skills Development

Simone Reichenberger and Ruth Knox

## Introduction

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."  
— Benjamin Franklin

In today's dynamic educational landscape, we are uncovering the intricate tapestry of social learning, where interpersonal skills and self-regulation are beautifully intertwined. As we prepare students for the complexities of the 21st century, it's clear that academic prowess alone is insufficient. Our schools must transform into nurturing grounds for social competence, emotional intelligence, and self-directed learning.



## The Power of Social Interaction

Building on this, Martin Buber's insight, "Man becomes an I through a You," underscores the vital role of social interactions in shaping our personalities and enhancing our capacity to learn and grow. At the International Dalton Conference, our workshop will delve into how this principle can transform classrooms into vibrant communities of learners.

## Fostering Self-Regulation and Collaboration

Integral to this transformation is the integration of self-regulated learning



within socially rich environments, where students take charge of their education while being supported by peers and mentors. Fostering autonomy and collaboration turns students into active participants in their learning journey. Skills like conflict resolution convert challenges into growth opportunities, while active listening deepens understanding and respect among peers, nurturing a supportive and inclusive atmosphere. Empathy allows students to connect on a profound level, creating communities where effective learning thrives. These interconnected elements equip students with the tools they need to succeed both academically and personally.

### **Time Management in Social Learning**

Furthermore, time management skills gain new significance within social learning. It's not just about tracking minutes but optimizing their use, understanding the rhythm of collective learning, and recognizing how group dynamics influence productivity and engagement.

### **Transformative Strategies for Educators**

From innovative buddy systems to restorative practices, and from cultivating emotional intelligence to fostering respectful dialogue, it is our mission as educators to explore approaches that transform educational spaces. These strategies are not mere additions to our toolkit; they are essential for preparing students for a world that demands wisdom, adaptability, and emotional acuity.

### **Conclusion**

In our ever evolving role as educators, we transcend the task of imparting knowledge to become facilitators of both academic and personal growth. As John Dewey wisely noted, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." By embracing the potential of social learning, we aim to nurture well-rounded, self-regulated learners who are equipped to face the challenges of tomorrow.

# Scholarly Discussions



## How your students learn more when you teach less

Roel Röhner

President Dalton International

The core idea behind effective teaching is not about doing more for students, but rather empowering them to take charge of their own learning. This approach is encapsulated in the notion that students often learn more when teachers step back and allow learners to become the driving force in their educational journey.

### The Relevance of the Dalton Plan

Several years ago, I reflected on the continuing relevance of the Dalton Plan, a framework that has influenced educational practice for decades.

Among my collection of Dalton materials, my favourite is the 1926 brochure authored by Helen Parkhurst, titled "An Explanation of The Dalton Laboratory Plan."<sup>[1]</sup> Parkhurst's vision remains strikingly modern, advocating for student autonomy and active involvement in the learning process.

### Challenging Traditional Assumptions

"To begin with, we must discard the delusion, so long cherished, that children do not like learning. In the past we have concentrated on the teaching of learning. It was assumed that the teacher's duty was to do the work and consequently the whole business of education was regarded from the teacher's





standpoint. Then it never occurred to anyone to look, as it were, under the machine, to drag out the young mechanic or to discover that he was actually equipped with a mind of his own which not only craved exercise, but which could, if given the opportunity, solve the problem of his education far better than we could solve it for him.”

### **Contemporary Perspectives: The Lazy Teacher’s Handbook**

My reflections on the Dalton Plan’s relevance resurfaced when I encountered “The Lazy Teacher’s Handbook” by Ian Gilbert. I borrowed its subtitle for the title of this article. When training teachers in Dalton methods, I encouraged them to step back from leading every aspect of the learning process and instead become facilitators or coaches. Gilbert captures this philosophy succinctly: “The combination of independent learners and lazy teachers is the outstanding combination that every school should be striving for.”

This sentiment echoes Parkhurst’s advocacy for a child-centred approach, rather than the traditional model of entire-class instruction.

### **Parallels Between Parkhurst and Gilbert**

Helen Parkhurst was equally provocative in her views on education. In 1926, she wrote:

“Under the Dalton Plan the teacher’s principal job is to instruct or teach by answering the questions asked by individual children or by groups of children.”

Ian Gilbert’s modern reflections could easily have been penned by Parkhurst herself if she were alive today. For example, Gilbert writes:

“Maybe if we spent a little less time teaching and gave students a little more time to learn, things would be different. Or, to put it another way, what if we worked less and they worked more?”

Parkhurst similarly asserted:

- “The curriculum is dead without the live motive power of the child, it must



work by boy and girl power. So we suggest that the curriculum, whatever its content, shall be offered to the pupil in the form of a job.”

- “I draw attention to the word ‘LABORATORY’, for it is significant of a place where a pupil research-worker experiments with and on his job.”
- “Pupils, they seek the teachers when they need them, so that the teacher no longer find it necessary to seek them.”

Gilbert further questions the traditional approach:

“Schools are full of dedicated and passionate teachers who see their job as doing all that is necessary to bring out the best in their students. But if teachers does ALL that is necessary, what’s left for the students to do?”

### **Strategies for Teachers: Facilitating Rather Than Instructing**

I often advise teachers to resist the urge to explain every detail of a new topic or problem. Instead, they should focus on teaching students the strategies to discover solutions themselves. This approach is particularly important given that less than 20% of students in any classroom may possess strong verbal-linguistic intelligence. Therefore, behaving more like a "lazy teacher" can actually benefit a wider range of learners.

Helen Parkhurst explained the teacher's role as follows:

“The teacher does not attempt to throw information into their minds as one shovels coal into a furnace, but rather studies their needs to discover what she can do and what she should know in order to help their own research. She might indeed be described as a hostess who attends to the wants of her pupil guests, living with them in a joyous, dignified way.” In essence, students learn more when teachers teach less. This historical perspective on Dalton is mirrored by modern educators like Ian Gilbert.

### **Whole-School Approach to Dalton**

The Dalton Plan, like any educational reform, must be adopted by the entire



teaching team to foster a new attitude among students and to establish a consistent pedagogical structure throughout the school. During seminars and visits to schools in other countries, we often observe Dalton principles applied only during specific 'Dalton Hours'. However, the Plan's true potential is realised when it transforms the whole school day and institutional culture:

"The Dalton Plan is more a sociological than an academic venture. It should inspire a better curriculum and indeed create a demand for it. Its aim is to transform, not a fragment, but the whole of the school day and the entire school as well."

While introducing Dalton Hours can serve as a starting point, it must be viewed within the wider context of school development. Only strong educational management and a clear structure can ensure the consistent pursuit of developmental goals.

### **The Value of a Facilitator Approach**

Ian Gilbert affirms the value of the Dalton Plan's philosophy:

"It saves you energy but also involves them in the process of learning in a way that is both motivational and effective when it comes to their own achievement. So be a professional teacher, be a committed teacher but, in everybody's interest, be a lazy one too and remember, as the Eskimo proverb says, If you sweat, you die."

### **Conclusion**

Empowering students by stepping back as a teacher does not mean abandoning them; rather, it is about enabling their independence and supporting their personal journey towards acquiring knowledge and skills. Both the Dalton Plan and contemporary perspectives like those of Ian Gilbert highlight the enduring importance of this approach for effective and meaningful education.



## **“Person-formation” as a solemn task of Dalton education**

René Berends, 2022, Newsletter NDV  
Board member of Dalton International

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After a period of discussions about how to increase educational outcomes, the question of the purpose of education has recently become a significant issue. Parkhurst has 'fearless human beings' in mind and in order to form such 'people with guts', we provide **broad person-forming education** in Dalton education. But what exactly do we mean by that? On March 16th. The World Citizenship research group of The Hague University of Applied Sciences organised a theme afternoon on personal development and the function of education. Speakers were professors Jan Masschelein and Gert Biesta and our former lecturer in Dalton education Piet van der Ploeg. In this longread, we try to learn from their introductions.



### **Person-formation, a confusing, debatable, meaningless and risky concept**

Biesta starts optimistically: "Nowadays we can look forward to the fact that personal development is once again part of the debate about good education. That has not always been the case. In the 'age of measurement', the quality of education was reduced to measurable results in a limited number of domains." However, the three of them note that there is a confusion, that personal



development as an educational goal is debatable and that it should only take shape in the school under very specific conditions. With irony, Biesta says that people talk about 'Biesta's three' (qualification, socialization and subjectification) without the concept of subjectification being properly understood and used. For Van der Ploeg, distinguishing between qualification and socialization on the one hand and personal-forming (subjectification) on the other is meaningless and risky, and Masschelein finds personal development a confusing, even a debatable concept. According to him, it leads to 'unschooling' of the school.

## **Recognizing the confusion**

In Dalton education we recognize the confusion, because what do we actually mean by person-forming education that should lead to fearless human beings? Do we mean subjectification, the person-forming, the formation and the development of personality? Are we in line with Kohnstamm's personalism? Is it about acknowledging and recognizing the uniqueness of the child or about the optimal development of talents and interests? Do we perhaps mean personalized learning, the pursuit of differentiation, or even individualization? You only have to look at a few vision documents from Dalton schools to read all these terms.

The confusion of concepts is broader. Biesta explains that psychology has been pushed into the pedagogical question of personal development. As a result, the wrong questions are asked and we talk about personality development and personal and emotional development, for example. As an example, he refers to a passage on personal development from the State of Education 2021 in the Netherlands. In it, the Inspectorate mentions just about everything that can be linked to the word person: personal development, talent development, critical thinking, career orientation, personality development. And the Education 2032

advisory report and the development around Curriculum.nu in the Netherlands also show that the discussion is fiddling. The law is also confusing, says Biesta. "Education is designed in such a way that the pupils can go through an uninterrupted development process. It is tailored to the progress in the development of the students." This text is about cognitive and developmental psychology, not pedagogy. If you base yourself on this, you can't make good education, says Biesta.

After all, person-forming education creates bottle necks, tries to chafe. On the contrary, pupils are interrupted and slowed down in their development process and addressed on their personhood.



### Interpretation of the concepts of person and education

Van der Ploeg discusses the concepts of person and education. He talks candidly about how he forgot to vote in the last elections, while he thinks citizenship and elections are so important. Apparently, different aspects of being a person are intertwined. He believes that democratic values are important, but forgetfulness and indifference are also part of him. To his point of view, being a person means that someone else can talk to you about it: "Pete, how could you have forgotten this?" So being a person is about your nature, but also about responsibility.

Biesta refers to Böhm. It says that it is not about the individual and his identity, but about the way in which the individual exists. Biesta also points to the etymology. In the ancient theatres, actors spoke from behind a mask. "Persōna" or "per·sonare" was not the actor himself, but the voice that



sounded through the mask.

Education and training are also difficult concepts, says Van der Ploeg. He prefers to speak of becoming a person, because when you think of formation you always think of something or someone who is forming, determining the form according to an ideal. And that is at odds with the freedom to want, think, feel and act for yourself.

### **Education is always personal**

Many teachers think that they are shaping the person of the student, by doing something new or different. However, Van der Ploeg argues that education has a person-forming effect in any case. In doing so, he gives a glimpse into himself. He was a rebellious and loud student and states that he became one because the school he attended was boring and authoritarian. This gave rise to a kind of obstinacy that he has never lost. Biesta agrees that all education has an impact on the personality of the student. If you know more and diverse things, you will form yourself as a person in a different way.

### **The Person of the Year**

Masschelein believes that the perspective in society, but also in education, has shifted too much to the person. That is why personal development is a debatable concept for him.

Who we are and how we shape our lives has become a personal endeavor. It contains choices that are experienced more or less attractively depending on whether they satisfy needs, provide value and require time investment. Masschelein states that we experience this project as the realization of our own unique personality, as self-chosen self-development: being happy by doing your thing. The message is: be yourself, develop your potential, choose your life form. You are in the world to be somebody. Space is limitless, opportunities are plentiful. It's all about your personal profile. In 2006, you were named



Person of the Year by the Times. Welcome to your world!

For such a life as a personal endeavor, we pay a high price psychologically. We feel obliged to take fate into our own hands. Due to the infinite number of options that are available, a playing field has been created with a frameless freedom that causes us to lose our footing: which life should we try? On a menu with so many options, there always seems to be a better choice. There is a fear of commitment, of missing options, of making wrong choices. Nothing really has more authority. There is no compass and that also leads to indifference. You throw yourself into things for as long as you enjoy it.

The authentic self is constantly visible today. Young people feel obliged to share life with others. They are in contact, have a social network. There they receive feedback on their self-image and seek legitimization, confirmation and reinforcement of their choices. In this way, a form of personalized socialization has emerged. It has greatly increased the need for comparison, social positioning and social recognition, even the fear of not being socially recognized.

The internet and social media play an important role in this. They enable self-representation and affirmation of one's own existence as meaningful. There is a duty to profile yourself digitally. They use the feedback and approval of their audience as a reward for the construction of a digital image of themselves that generates sufficient reliability and authenticity among the audience. And if the feedback is disappointing, the platform is wiped clean to present a new self-image.

### **Wanting to be a person**

Biesta takes the step towards responsibility. He points out that it's not about who or what you are, but about how you are. This also plays a role in pedagogy. The question of the person has to do with the pedagogical moment



in education. Biesta cites Benner. It states that no matter how different the mix may be between aptitude and environment, education is about the question of how an 'I' can emerge from that mix. The pedagogical moment is the moment when the will is addressed. It's about wanting to be a person; Not the question of yourself, but the demand for a self. And where we are a self, there is the question of where that happens in the world. Simply put, pedagogical action involves knocking on the door of our students with the question: Is anyone there?

## World-oriented, subjective education

The pedagogical question is therefore about an 'I' that tries to exist in and with the world. That is why pedagogically oriented education is neither subject matter oriented nor child-oriented, but world-oriented. The question of being a person is what you do when an appeal is made to you. Are you not giving at home or are you bringing yourself into play? And that's about something other than personal development or the formation of development of a personality. The insight of pedagogy is that the child is not a thing or object that develops, but that it is about the existential question of how I can arrive in the world, about learning to deal with the things I encounter on my life path. The term subjective education or subjectification gives this a place. There, the student's ego is not produced, but the student develops as a person because an appeal is made to him. And that does not come from the teacher, but always from a cause, a theme, from something that is on the table from the world and with which something can be done. That is why subjective education does not focus on the subject matter or the child, but on the world.

The question of being a person is therefore also at the heart of the curriculum. It's not just about the content. The subject matter must also have the character to appeal, if it wants to touch children in their personhood. Good didactics tries



to use the pedagogical aspect of the encounter to allow the student to give the content a place. And for that, we ask the pedagogical question: what does this require of you?

### **Three pedagogical qualities**

Biesta uses three concepts as pedagogical qualities in the design of subjective education: the interruption, time and sustenance.

Pedagogical oriented education that focus on subjectification offers interruptions in the form of bumps (bottle necks), which ensure that children are not only focused on themselves, but encounter things that surprise and disturb them, which they were not looking for. The pedagogical lies in the discomfort that is created in which the student discovers that there is something for him to do. School time is freed up space and time to encounter things on your path. It's about yourself in the world and about meeting yourself in relation to that world. Good education therefore does not lead from A to B as quickly as possible. Instead, it is about delaying: waiting for the moment when the student says, "There is something for me to do!" 'Sustenance' is a third quality. Teachers have a job to support and nurture students to endure with the world and with themselves in the world.

### **The rediscovery of the school**

Where Biesta, as a prerequisite for pedagogically sound personal education (subjectification) brings in three qualities, Masschelein first points out the danger of de-schooling. He sees the personalizing regime that prevails in society reflected in education. School is also about the uniqueness of the child, creating a personalized learning environment and about one's own choices to model one's authentic self. And for this, differences, comparisons and the permanent visibility of achievements and experiences are emphasized. For Masschelein, this is at odds with what makes the school 'a school' and it



ensures that the school threatens to 'de-school' more and more.

In that context, Masschelein understands the desire of children to want to go back to school after the lock-down phase. It was a longing to see friends again, but also a longing for school as an opportunity to connect with the world. It's about a different kind of freedom and a different experience of meaningfulness: the experience of being able to start something and become proficient and a meaningfulness that is about a common exposure to the world through schoolwork in a school context. Masschelein conveys this school message with three terms: try, try again and try this.

Try is an invitation to become competent. It also presupposes a ability and the ability to experience it. You will become a student if you accept the invitation. To be a student is to experience the ability to start something. Trying is focused on the will: the willingness to try, to make an effort. If the school functions as a school, it provides a safe space for it, where effort, study activity and practice are meaningful in themselves. This does not require constant visibility and the consistency that should lead to results. What is at stake here is schoolwork as a form of indeterminate work of freedom, which is not defined by input and output.

The try again expresses optimism, a belief in the abilities. It also expresses patience. Trying again means offering space and time for a new opportunity with a pedagogical equality for all students. That differs from personalizing approaches that start by making children unequal because of backgrounds and by redefining them in terms of talents and aptitudes. Try again is not exactly a definition. It's de-definition.

The invitation shows that the school is not about the person or the world of the student. It's the invitation to try something new. That is why the school opens up worlds of meaning, and in such a way that those worlds begin to speak. Students become interested ("inter-esse" literally means: standing



between things) and that has a formative effect. The experience of meaning is determined in the study and trial of schoolwork from the world that appeals and invites through its enigma or beauty. In this way, a child also experiences that he can participate in that world. Schoolwork is formative when it allows the world to speak, gives it authority, and when it provides a source of meaning and bonding. It does not acknowledge the child in its uniqueness but offers the child attention, care, time and space to try and practice. Time at school is about time made available (scholé literally means: free time) for transferring and sharing knowledge and skills. School time (i.e. not learning time!) is a time that slows down and intensifies transfer. There is something on the table to study and to talk about. Then there is always interruption, not a frictionless transfer of learning material. In this way, it is possible for newcomers to appear as a new generation and there is a pedagogical freedom that can also renew the world.

### Personal development: not a matter of a project or a lesson

Biesta argues that teachers are reluctant to act when it comes to personal development. They want to do something with it, but don't know what and how. Van der Ploeg agrees. He argues that if you follow discussions and pleadings, if you read literature, if you follow the developments at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science where the question is asked whether personal development should become part of legislation and regulations, you will discover that there may be twelve ways in which it is being worked on. He mentions (1) working on soft skills, (2) behavioral conditioning and management, (3) social-emotional learning, social and social-emotional development, (4) moral education, (5) citizenship education, (6) working from ownership, (7) talent development, (8) development of creativity, (9) identity formation, (10) learning to think (critically), (11) "Bildung" and (12)



subjectification.

According to Van der Ploeg, all these variants can be at odds with what pedagogically responsible personal development is, if it is at the expense of the growth of the students' self-responsibility. Pedagogically sound personal development is not a specific field of training, not a project or a learning pathway, but can be understood as the development, growth and maturation of responsibility.

## New School Movement

For Masschelein, a new school movement is needed, where the focus is not on the child, but on the world, where students become part of worlds and which they do not lock up in a personalized world. It's not about learning to swipe through the world, but about letting students experience freedom and giving them the opportunity to relate to that world. Masschelein is concerned with the reinvention of the school as a school without personalizing, accelerating logics and learning platforms, where pedagogical justice is done to the next generation to take care of the world. It's not about: welcome to your world! It's about: welcome to the world! Masschelein refers to Hannah Arendt, who argues that school is all about presenting worlds.

## Conclusions: Person-forming Dalton education

If we, as Daltonians, want to pursue a broad person-forming education, then the conclusion is justified that we have to deal with the confusing, debatable, meaningless and risky nature of the concept of 'personal development' to which the three of us point out.

First of all, we will have to recognize that education always has a personal effect whatever you do and that it is certainly not the intention or necessary to pay extra attention to specific training areas, projects or to learning pathways for additional learning content. It can be understood much more as



the development, growth and maturation of responsibility. And in doing so, person-forming Dalton education gives a powerful impulse to our core value of freedom in bondage or responsibility.

Person-forming education (subjectification) is not about the individual and his identity, not about self-chosen self-development. It is about how an 'I' comes to the fore when we put the world on the table and when, through the pedagogical interruption and the search for delay, we let children discover that there is something for them to do in the world and when they experience that an appeal is made to them.

When it comes to pedagogically oriented education, we do not work primarily in a subject matter or child-oriented way, but in a world-oriented way. And that's about the heart of the curriculum. In addition to the question of the 'what', the question of the 'how' must also be addressed. Pedagogically sound education pays attention to how the learning content appeals to the student. Do we offer him the chance to give at home? Do we give him a chance to bring himself into the game? It's about offering you the pedagogical freedom to relate to the world and to ask yourself what that world asks of you. In this way, the student also becomes a cultural innovator and is offered the opportunity to help shape the renewal of the world.

Person-forming Dalton education should therefore be about acquiring knowledge and skills, practicing thinking and understanding and practicing one's own decision-making and judgments, in order to learn to bear an ever-increasing responsibility. And that is not about who or what you are or become, but about wanting to be a person, about how you are.

Person-forming education rebels against the “Zeitgeist”, which is “the spirit of the age” with its personalizing regime. It doesn't require constant visibility. Nor is it about frictionless transfer of learning material. Instead, it is education where children are allowed to try, to make mistakes, to start over, to try new



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things. It is a form of education that interrupts, slows down, that creates 'bottle necks', that surprises children with dilemmas, where questions are asked, different approaches are chosen, multiple perspectives are given: education that tries to chafe and that appeals to children about their personality; Education where children encounter things that surprise and disturb, that make them think, where they discover things they were not looking for. It is also education where they discover that there is something for them to do.

Such personal Dalton education does not focus on the individual child in its uniqueness, but on the world. It makes the school a school again. It provides kids with school time to practice and try. There, schoolwork is a form of indeterminate work of freedom, which is not defined by input and output. There is space, time and patience to let children develop into a person-wanting-to-be.



## Self-regulation at Dalton Schools in the Netherlands

Vera OttenBinnerts

Board member of Dalton International

From a historic view, Dalton education was adopted in England by Lynch and his colleagues. He emphasized interaction of group life and individual work. The Dutch were inspired by this and adopted the Dalton Plan as well. To do individual work you have to develop a certain degree of independence, which is why this has become a core value in the Netherlands. Nowadays Dalton education in the Netherlands is based on five core values: freedom/responsibility, independence, cooperation, effectiveness/efficiency, and reflection.

We have started to use the core value of independence increasingly broadly: from self-reliance, autonomy as a basic need (Deci & Ryan 1985; 2000) to working independently, self-responsible learning to self-management and self-regulated learning (Sins, 2019; 2023). Dalton education in the Netherlands aims to teach children to take (more) responsibility for their own lives, their own work and therefore also for their own learning. In developing knowledge about one's own learning, processes such as planning, monitoring, and reflecting on learning play an essential role (Sins, 2019).

“Learning is not something that happens to students; it is something that happens by students” (Zimmerman, 2001).





According to Pintrich (2000), self-regulated learning is the process in which students actively direct and control their own learning process by setting goals, monitoring their progress, choosing and using strategies, and adjusting their behavior and cognition to achieve their learning goals. Self-regulation in learning includes cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes. But self-regulated learning does not come naturally to students (Vrieling, 2014; Sins, 2019; 2023). This means that it is not enough to just give children the opportunity to learn independently. Strategies for cognition and metacognition, motivational strategies and regulation strategies for behavior and the use of materials and space must be taught intentionally and explicitly. Self-regulated learning means that as a student you know which tools you can use to help you learn better. And that you can regulate that process. Consider, for example, applying prior knowledge, organizing the learning material, and planning and controlling the learning process. We know from research that children who have mastered this do better at school. They learn this best if they receive explicit instruction (Sins, 2019; 2023).

With self-regulated learning, students ultimately manage their own learning process. Ultimately, because someone first has to show them. Most students do not learn this by just trying something out themselves. As a teacher you first have to explain this to them explicitly and demonstrate a lot (by modeling). We now know better and better which interventions we use to teach effectively and support students in learning. However, there are also many tools that students can use to plan, monitor, evaluate and adjust their own learning (Surma et al., 2019). We give students autonomy, but we do not provide instruction on how to use that autonomy. In addition, students often, and almost always (see Dignath and Veenman, 2021), receive unfocused training – no explanation is given of what strategies are, when and how to apply them, or why they are important. So, what should we do in the Dalton class? How can we stimulate this self-



regulated learning (Sins, 2019)?

## Effective learning strategies

Research indicates that various learning strategies contribute to improved learning outcomes. Some of these strategies include: activating prior knowledge, planning and organizing learning activities (set goals, manage time, and use resources effectively), self-monitoring assessing and adjusting one's own progress as needed (this fosters self-awareness and helps in achieving learning goals) (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007), and reflecting on learning experiences (it helps students identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning process). It promotes the development of self-regulation by encouraging students to think about what went well and what could be improved (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It's about the active role of the learner in regulating both the cognitive and motivational aspects of learning (Pintrich, 2000). Pintrich (2000) identified four key phases in the self-regulated learning process:

1. **Forethought phase:** This involves setting goals, activating prior knowledge, and selecting strategies to achieve learning objectives.
2. **Monitoring phase:** In this phase, the learner actively monitors their progress, such as evaluating their understanding of the material or checking the effectiveness of the strategies used.
3. **Control phase:** Here, the learner adjusts strategies or behaviors if they notice that the current approach is not effective.
4. **Reflection phase:** In this phase, the learner reflects on the learning process and the outcomes, leading to conclusions about how to improve in the future.

## Explicit instruction

The ability to engage in self-regulated learning is crucial for students' long-term success. This section will focus on explicit instruction, a teaching strategy that provides clear, systematic, and sequential guidance to students on how to perform a task or learn a concept. Explicit instruction is characterized by its directness and its focus on the explicit teaching of skills and knowledge. It typically involves the teacher providing clear, step-by-step directions, modeling the task, and providing opportunities for students to practice and receive feedback. This approach is particularly effective for students who need explicit guidance and support to learn new concepts or skills. Explicit instruction can be used in various settings, including classroom instruction, individualized learning, and self-directed learning. It is a key component of effective teaching and learning, and its use can lead to improved student outcomes and increased engagement.



term academic and personal development. Research highlights that self-regulated learning does not occur spontaneously but must be taught through explicit instruction (Pintrich, 2000; Vrieling, 2014; Sins, 2019). This raises the question: how can we effectively teach students to become self-regulated learners? Explicit instruction has proven to be an effective approach for guiding students in learning strategies. This approach includes:

- 1. Modeling:** Demonstrating learning strategies by the teacher. Research shows that modeling is a powerful way to show students how to apply a strategy, such as thinking aloud during problem-solving (Dougherty, 2009).
- 2. Explanation:** For older students, it is important not only to explain how to apply a strategy but also to provide underlying reasons for its effectiveness. This helps students understand the utility and application of the strategy better (Rosenshine, 2012).
- 3. Step-by-Step Instructions:** Providing detailed, step-by-step guidelines for applying learning strategies. This supports students in systematically and independently practicing new skills (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011).
- 4. Feedback and Reflection:** Providing targeted feedback on the use of learning strategies and encouraging reflection on their effectiveness. This helps students adjust and improve their learning strategies (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Promoting self-regulation occurs in a certain sequence, with a shift from explicit to implicit instruction in a learning environment that promotes autonomy and in which students are given the opportunity to learn independently (Sins, 2023).

### **Implementation in research and practice: iSelf**

In 2014, the research group for reform education at Saxion University of



Applied Science in Deventer and Thomas More University of Applied Sciences in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) entered into a partnership with education professionals from eight Dalton schools. From this partnership the iSelf project emerged. A key component of this project is the professional development approach known as iSelf. This approach is based on scientific research about how to effectively promote self-regulated learning and how you can effectively professionalize teachers. iSelf educates teachers how to handle knowledge related to self-regulated learning by providing strategies to practice and integrate self-regulated learning into their own lessons. The pillars of iSelf are: (1) explicit instruction on self-regulated learning, (2) integration of self-regulated learning instruction with the curriculum, and (3) individualization.

### **Pillar 1: Explicit instruction in self-regulated learning**

Teaching self-regulated learning requires explicit instruction in (meta) cognitive and motivational strategies, which is a core component of iSelf. This involves clearly stating that you will teach a specific strategy, outlining your objectives, and explaining when and why the strategy is being introduced. Demonstrate how the strategy is applied, discuss its benefits, and provide examples of its effectiveness in various situations (Zimmerman, 2002). For instance, when teaching planning, illustrate with a concrete task how setting goals and planning before starting helps in learning (Pintrich, 2004). Show how you determine what you know about the task, set achievable goals, and use planning to guide the learning process. Explain that planning helps track progress and maintain motivation by providing clear goals and a roadmap for what remains to be done (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008).

For example: If you want to give explicit instruction on ‘applying prior knowledge’, it might look like this: “I’m going to talk to you about the strategy ‘applying prior knowledge’. I first think about what I already know about a



topic or task. Today I'm doing that with additional sums. What do I already know about this? I put that in a word web, for example. Latest information that I collect while doing the sums can be linked to what I already know about it in this way. Handy! Now my latest information has been given a place right away. I do not have to learn everything again, because I already know some things."

## **Pillar 2: Integration of self-regulated learning instruction with the curriculum**

An integrative approach is essential. This means incorporating self-regulated learning strategies directly into regular lessons, rather than teaching them separately (Boekaerts, 1999). This approach allows students to apply strategies within the appropriate context. As a teacher, you start from your own lesson/instruction and choose a strategy that you teach explicitly to promote self-directed learning. (Sins et al., 2019).

## **Pillar 3: Aligning with the individual**

In addition to explicitly and integratively teaching self-directed learning, it is also important that you learn to manage differences between students and adjust your teaching accordingly. Differences between students determine whether and to what extent certain interventions influence their self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 2004).

Effectively supporting self-regulated learning involves tailoring instruction based on a careful diagnosis of the student's knowledge and skills (Shuell, 1993). Moreover, it is important that the support changes as the student's knowledge and skills increase (Van der Stel & Veenman, 2014). In the iSelf approach, the terms "gradual guidance" and "adjustment" are used to make the tailored instruction for self-regulated learning more concrete (Sins et al., 2019).

## **In practice: flowchart and poster**

For this iSelf project various tools have been developed, including a poster

to use as a tool when giving explicit instruction. The questions that teachers can ask explicitly during instruction and for the children to ask themselves whenever, to further develop self-directed learning, are listed on this poster. Horizontally are the phases of self-regulated learning, with the letters indicating the phases (V = before, T = during and N = after) and vertically the four elements are shown in different colors (white = (meta)cognition, yellow = motivation, blue = behavior and red = space & materials). All phases and elements together form the process of self-directed learning. The poster is a tool that can be used during preparation, to determine which strategies are used during instruction (Sins et al., 2019).



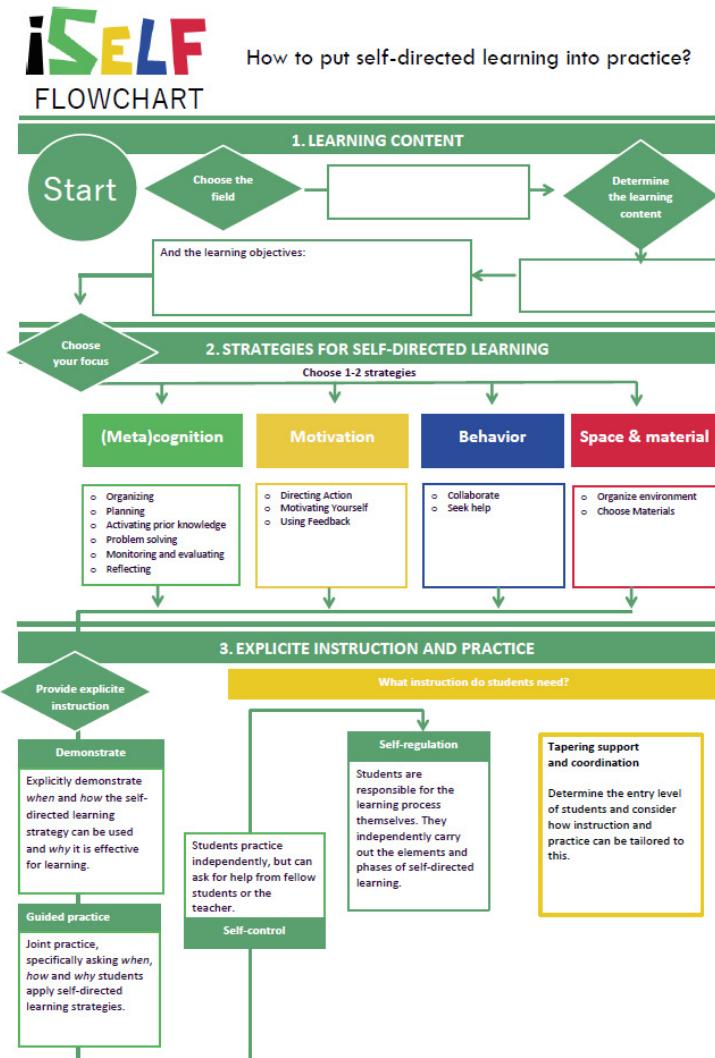
In addition, core questions are asked for each phase for each element. Answering these questions helps students think about what they can do to learn self-directed. In the table below are the questions translated in English.

**How can I learn new things on my own? (iSelf)**



(meta)cognition	motivation	behavior	space & materials
<b>WHAT am I going to learn?</b>  HOW am I going to learn this?	<b>WHY is it interesting to learn this?</b>  HOW can I make it interesting?	<b>How do I PLAN the task?</b>  Do I need help or can I do it ALONE?	<b>What do I need to do to START?</b>
<b>Is it going WELL?</b>  What can I do to make it BETTER?	<b>Do I still find it INTERESTING?</b>  What can I do to make it INTERESTING AGAIN?	<b>Am I working according to the PLAN?</b>  Do I need HELP?	<b>Do I have the right MATERIALS?</b>  What OTHER materials do I need to continue?
<b>Have I achieved my GOAL?</b>	<b>Did I find it INTERESTING?</b>	<b>Was I able to stick to the PLAN?</b>  Did I ask for help ON TIME and from the RIGHT PERSON?	<b>Did I make the right PREPARATIONS to complete the task?</b>

A flowchart was developed to help teachers how to put self-regulated learning into practice. With the flowchart you can determine which (meta)cognitive and/or motivational strategies are taught during an instruction to learn a certain learning content. In addition, you can choose how you pay attention in your instruction to strategies that are necessary for regulating behavior and/or the use of space & materials.



In research on learning strategies and self-regulated learning, explicit instruction plays a crucial role in developing independent learning among students. By applying these approaches, we can contribute to improved learning outcomes and greater independence in students' learning processes (Sins et al., 2019).



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# The Child in Charge: scaffolding learner autonomy within the global Dalton educational framework

Dr. Agata Rohner, Dalton International

## Abstract

This article explores the interconnected concepts of **self-regulation** and **metacognition**, tracing their cultural and historical roots and assessing their significance within the global Dalton education framework. Drawing inspiration from progressive educators—including Helen Parkhurst, Lev Vygotsky, William James, Jean Piaget, and Anna Brzezińska—it examines methods for nurturing self-regulation through carefully designed learning environments.

Special emphasis is placed on the **social foundations of cognition** and the dynamic interplay between teaching and developmental processes. These principles underpin the creation of educational spaces that foster autonomy, responsibility, and reflective practice. Practical strategies used in International Dalton Schools—such as laboratories for independent work, differentiated assignments, and the “We Learn Together” project—are presented as scaffolds for self-regulation. Finally, the article considers the impact of cultural norms on fostering autonomy, particularly in family-oriented societies.





## Theoretical Foundations of Self-Regulation

### **Helen Parkhurst: Freedom, Responsibility, and Socialisation**

Dalton education prioritises **internal discipline** over external constraints. Parkhurst envisioned the child as a self-educator, capable of steering their own cognitive and social growth. Rooted in American ideals of liberty and democracy, her philosophy advocates minimal direct instruction and maximum autonomy. This model thrives in societies that value independence, as evidenced by Dalton schools worldwide.

### **Lev Vygotsky: Social Constructivism and the Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky defined self-regulation as the ability to manage one's actions, developed through language and social interaction. His concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** highlights the gap between what a child can achieve alone and with support. Progress, he argued, is driven by socialisation, with adults and peers guiding the transition from external regulation to internal control.

### **Anna Brzezińska: Early Childhood Support**

Brzezińska emphasised the importance of early social support in Polish Dalton schools. She highlighted two key elements:

- Coordinating biological and social growth through concise instructions.
- Establishing self-sufficient work areas tailored to individual learners, such as classroom corners or Dalton laboratories.

Her approach builds on Vygotsky's ZPD, positioning adults as facilitators who help children overcome cognitive and emotional challenges.

### **William James: Habit, Will, and the Self**

James distinguished between the "I" (active self) and the "me" (reflective self), linking self-regulation with metacognition. He stressed the importance of habits and willpower in managing thoughts and actions, urging teachers to



support students in developing voluntary focus and purposeful routines.

### Jean Piaget: Intellect and Affect

Piaget viewed self-regulation as the intentional management of **thoughts and behaviours**, encompassing both cognitive and emotional aspects. He underscored the role of will in controlling impulses, asserting that children construct knowledge through experience and interaction.

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## Cultural Dimensions of Self-Regulation

The application of self-regulation varies across cultures. In more egalitarian societies such as the Netherlands and Finland, independence and self-reliance are everyday values. In family-oriented societies like China, Turkey, and Poland, adult direction and hierarchical relationships play a stronger role.

Within these contexts, scaffolding and the ZPD are essential for nurturing autonomy. Educators and parents must balance support and independence, adapting guidance to cultural expectations and developmental stages.

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## Practical Implementation in International Dalton Schools

### 1. Laboratories for Independent Work

Designated spaces where pupils work independently or in groups at their own pace. Teachers remain accessible, but students are expected to initiate requests for help. Weekly objectives, “office hours,” and learning diaries support reflection and planning.

### 2. The “We Learn Together” Project

A structured inquiry project involving:

- **Problem Statement** – identifying a real-world issue.
- **Interaction** – engaging with peers, experts, and media.
- **Clarification & Planning** – organising ideas and setting objectives.



- **Execution & Evaluation** – carrying out the project and reflecting on outcomes.

For example, students at Wenzhou Dalton School investigated local energy consumption, proposed solutions, conducted interviews, analysed data, and presented findings—developing both metacognitive and social skills.

### **3. Home System and Mixed-Age Families**

Students meet regularly in mentor groups to plan, set goals, and reflect on communal life. This system fosters peer mentoring, cooperation, and social responsibility.

### **4. Differentiated Assignments**

Pupils select from a range of activities tailored to their interests and abilities. They decide how to approach tasks, when to seek help, and whether to work independently or collaboratively.

### **5. Learning Diaries and Self-Assessment**

Students monitor progress, identify challenges, and set future objectives. Weekly reflections cultivate metacognitive awareness and emotional regulation.

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## **Case Study: “Big Investigators” Assignment**

Targeted at students aged 14–18, this assignment integrates all aspects of Dalton education:

- Identifying a problem, conducting research, and collaborating with peers and experts.
- Reflecting on the learning journey, assessing approaches, and presenting conclusions.
- Teachers act as facilitators, guiding without dictating solutions.

### **Sample topics include:**

- The Dalton Plan: History and Impact on Modern Education



- How Green Are We? Environmental Awareness and Action
- Historical Background of Wenzhou: An Archaeological Inquiry

### **Extension: “Does Food Grow in the Store?” Project**

Originally designed for younger children (ages 6–7), this project exemplifies Dalton principles of inquiry, autonomy, and responsibility.

#### **Key assumptions:**

- Expanding vocabulary related to food and agriculture.
- Developing consumer awareness and understanding food origins.
- Fostering respect for work by observing farmers, sellers, and producers.
- Encouraging collaboration and independence through group tasks.
- Experiential learning: visits to markets and farms, building stalls, role-playing as sellers and buyers.
- Parental and community involvement: families provide materials and co-create learning environments.
- Reflection and metacognition: children create mind maps, observation sheets, and discuss their learning.

This project demonstrates how Dalton schools scaffold self-regulation even in early childhood. Children plan, execute, and reflect on tasks, negotiate responsibilities, and connect classroom learning with real-world contexts. It lays the foundation for later “Big Investigator” assignments, instilling habits of inquiry, cooperation, and reflective practice.

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## **Conclusion**

This article has examined theoretical and practical aspects of self-regulation and metacognition through the lens of Dalton education. Drawing on progressive educators and cultural perspectives, it highlighted the importance of environments that foster autonomy, reflection, and social interaction.



In societies where independence is not the norm, scaffolding and nuanced instruction are critical. Teachers, parents, and peers must create conditions that stimulate growth, enabling children to take ownership of their learning.

Dalton education offers a robust model for cultivating self-regulation in diverse contexts. By employing laboratories, house systems, differentiated tasks, and scaffolded projects, students learn not only what to learn, but also how and why to learn.



# Research Findings on Self-Regulated Learning in Chinese Schools: Gaps and Future Directions for China and International Dalton Schools

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## Introduction

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is a critical factor in students' ability to take charge of their own learning, a process that involves metacognition, strategic actions, and motivation. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2014) describe SRL as a multifaceted process in which learners not only reflect on their own thinking but also engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning progress. This allows learners to develop independent control over their learning journey. Understanding SRL's key components is essential to grasp how students can engage deeply and effectively with their learning. Self-regulated learning consists of three key components: metacognition, strategic actions, and motivation. Metacognition refers to students' reflection on their own thinking. Strategic action involves planning, monitoring, and evaluating their progress in relation to specific learning goals. The final component, motivation, refers to sustaining a desire to learn. Together, these components enable students to engage more deeply and





effectively in their learning journey.

## Literature review

Research shows that Chinese students generally exhibit strong self-regulatory behaviors, often attributed to cultural influences that prioritize discipline, perseverance, and academic achievement (Li et al, 2018; Pitkethly & Lau, 2015). Confucian values, deeply embedded in Chinese culture, stress the importance of self-control, effort, and moral development, which in turn shape educational practices and parental expectations (Liu et al., 2018). The role of teacher-student relationships and school environments has been identified as crucial in fostering or hindering self-regulatory development. Research indicates that supportive teacher-student interactions, characterized by warmth, autonomy support, and encouragement of independent thinking, can enhance students' self-regulatory capacities (Huang, 2022). On the other hand, traditional teaching styles, which are more common in Chinese classrooms, may limit students' ability to develop autonomy and intrinsic motivation, thereby weakening self-regulatory abilities (Guo & Wei, 2019).

Research studies also suggest a shift towards more balanced pedagogical approaches, where students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning while receiving emotional and cognitive support from teachers (Lau, 2011). Parental involvement also plays a significant role in shaping self-regulated learning. Studies reveal that supportive parenting, marked by high expectations coupled with emotional support, is positively associated with the development of self-regulation in children (Liu et al., 2018). In contrast, overly controlling or neglectful parenting styles tend to undermine the development of self-regulatory skills (Liu et al., 2018). This highlights the need for greater awareness among parents and educators about the importance of fostering supportive environments that balance discipline with emotional well-being.



## Methodology

To find studies on self-regulated learning conducted in China and published internationally, we searched four major databases: Web of Science, PsycINFO, ProQuest, and ERIC. Through this search, we identified a total of 64 studies. Interestingly, most of these studies—51 of them—were focused on the tertiary or higher education level. Only 13 studies examined primary and secondary schools combined, and within these, primary education had especially low representation, with only three studies.

We also conducted a search of the Chinese SSCI database to identify empirical research studies published in Chinese journals. Their focus was specifically on studies that involved observed and measured phenomena, such as surveys, experiments, or case studies. Out of the 30 relevant studies they found, 22 were focused on tertiary education (higher education), while only 8 were focused on K-12 education (primary and secondary levels). This shows that a significant majority of research in China is centered around higher education, with K-12 education receiving relatively little attention.

## Findings

In K-12 settings, the majority of the papers in English appear to focus on the intersection of online learning and self-regulated learning (SRL), particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several studies examine how online learning platforms and digital environments influence SRL, highlighting various strategies and frameworks that support learners' ability to manage their learning processes independently. Key themes include the use of online learning during the pandemic, with multiple studies specifically addressing its impact on anxiety, self-esteem, and self-regulated learning. These studies suggest a significant interest in understanding how online learning environments can facilitate or hinder SRL, especially in the context of



global disruptions like COVID-19.

In addition to general online learning, there is a particular emphasis on technology-mediated SRL through tools such as mobile apps and computer-supported strategies. Studies focusing on self-regulation climate and SRL frameworks examine how digital platforms create environments conducive to developing self-regulatory skills. Research on hypermedia environments, computing environments, and mobile apps for language learning further explores how different technological tools can enhance self-regulation in learners. This trend underscores the growing importance of integrating technology to support SRL in online and remote learning contexts, with a clear focus on understanding how technology can aid learners in maintaining motivation, setting goals, and managing their own learning processes.

In Chinese papers in K-12 settings, there is noticeable diversity in the research on self-regulated learning (SRL), focusing on a range of variables and educational contexts. For example, some studies explore the relationship between SRL and self-esteem in high school students, particularly examining the moderating effects of perceived teacher support and gender. Other studies focus on the mental health of middle school students, looking at how academic control and interpersonal relationships influence SRL. Additionally, research has explored how the development of motivation, cognition, behavior, and academic achievement varies across different grade levels, and how these factors impact SRL development in students at different stages of their education. Another area of interest is the types of SRL employed by junior middle school students and their influence on learning outcomes.

However, despite this diversity, research on online learning and language learning still dominates the landscape of SRL studies in China. While the broader field of SRL is explored through various educational levels and student characteristics, there is still a significant emphasis on how online learning



environments impact SRL, particularly in terms of fostering self-regulation through digital tools. Language learning, particularly in the context of SRL, remains a central focus as researchers continue to explore how technology-mediated learning environments support language acquisition and self-regulation in learners. This suggests that while there is growing interest in various aspects of SRL, the integration of online learning and language learning continues to take precedence in Chinese educational research.

## Discussion and future directions

The discrepancy in the educational levels suggests a few possible interpretations. One interpretation might be that self-regulated learning is not yet widely practiced or emphasized within Kindergarten to Grade 12 education settings in China. Alternatively, researchers may feel that K-12 environments are not the most suitable or conducive settings for studying self-regulated learning. This raises important questions about how self-regulated learning is understood and implemented at different educational levels, and whether more emphasis might be needed to introduce and study it at earlier stages in the educational journey.

The imbalance in Chinese papers also highlights a potential gap in empirical research on K-12 education in China, despite its foundational role in the educational system. The concentration of studies on tertiary education may be due to factors such as greater funding opportunities, a higher perceived need for reform in higher education, or easier access to data and resources. This trend mirrors international patterns where research in higher education often outpaces that in K-12 settings, despite the long-term impact of K-12 education on students' futures.

In the context of kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) education settings in



China, there are several promising research areas related to self-regulated learning (SRL) that could be explored. These areas can address both the developmental aspects of SRL across different age groups and the unique challenges or opportunities posed by educational practices, technology, and cultural contexts. Some possible research areas include:

*1. Development of SRL Across Different Age Groups:* Research could investigate how SRL develops from kindergarten through to high school, examining how younger children begin to engage with self-regulatory behaviors (such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and reflection) and how these skills evolve through later stages of education. Understanding the age-related developmental trajectory of SRL can inform age-appropriate strategies for fostering self-regulation at various educational stages.

*2. Influence of Teacher Support on SRL:* Research could examine the role of teacher support in fostering SRL across K-12 education. This might include studying how different teaching styles, feedback mechanisms, and instructional strategies (such as scaffolding) affect students' ability to regulate their learning. Additionally, exploring the moderating effects of teacher-student relationships on SRL could offer insights into how emotional and motivational support influences self-regulation.

*3. SRL in Chinese Cultural Contexts:* Given China's unique educational and cultural context, research could explore how cultural values such as collectivism, respect for authority, and emphasis on academic achievement shape the way SRL is developed and practiced in Chinese students. This could include investigating how family expectations, peer influences, and societal pressures impact SRL, and whether there are cultural differences in how students approach self-regulation.

*4. Impact of Technology on SRL:* As digital tools become increasingly prevalent in education, examining how technology—such as online



learning platforms, mobile apps, and educational games—affects SRL in Chinese students could be an important area of research. Studies could investigate how technology enhances self-regulation, supports personalized learning, and helps students set and monitor goals, particularly in online or hybrid learning environments.

*5. SRL and Academic Achievement:* Research could focus on how SRL influences academic performance across different subjects in K-12 education. For example, studies could examine the relationship between self-regulation and achievement in subjects such as mathematics, language arts, and science. This could also involve looking at the role of SRL in improving students' problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and long-term academic success.

*6. Gender Differences in SRL:* Gender may play a role in the development and expression of SRL. Research could investigate whether male and female students engage in SRL differently, and how factors such as teacher expectations, classroom environments, and gender roles influence their self-regulatory behaviors. Understanding gender-specific needs and practices could help design more effective interventions to promote SRL.

*7. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and SRL:* Since SRL is closely tied to emotional regulation and motivation, research could explore how social and emotional learning programs in schools influence SRL. This could involve investigating how promoting emotional intelligence, empathy, and interpersonal skills in K-12 settings contributes to students' self-regulation abilities.

*8. Peer and Group Dynamics in SRL:* Collaborative learning environments provide an opportunity to explore how peer interactions and group dynamics influence SRL. Research could examine how students regulate



their learning in group projects or study groups, and how peer support, competition, and cooperation impact their self-regulation skills.

*9. SRL and Mental Health:* With increasing concerns about student mental health, research could examine the relationship between SRL and psychological well-being. Studies could explore how self-regulation skills help students manage stress, anxiety, and academic pressure, and how SRL can be integrated into school-based mental health initiatives to promote resilience and coping strategies.

*10. Parental Involvement in SRL:* Parental influence is crucial in early childhood education and can continue to impact SRL throughout K-12. Research could explore how parental expectations, support, and involvement in the learning process affect children's development of SRL skills. Additionally, the role of parental strategies in fostering self-regulation at home could be examined in relation to students' academic outcomes.

These research areas could provide valuable insights into how SRL is cultivated and supported across different educational settings in China.

### **Future research in international Dalton schools' settings**

The following research directions are proposed to further investigate educational practices, student outcomes, and pedagogical innovations within international Dalton school contexts. These studies could provide valuable insights into how the Dalton Plan's principles of autonomy, collaboration, and personalized learning are adapted and implemented across diverse cultural and educational settings, and how these adaptations influence students' academic, social, and self-regulatory skills.

*1. Exploring the Impact of the Dalton Plan on Self-Regulated Learning Skills in Students*



- *Objective:* Investigate how the Dalton Plan's three core components—House, Assignment, and Lab—foster self-regulated learning skills among students.
- *Research Questions:*
  - How does the Dalton Plan promote students' development of metacognitive, motivational, and strategic skills?
  - Are there differences in SRL skills between students who have experienced the Dalton Plan and those in traditional schools?
- *Methodology:* Use a mixed-methods approach with surveys, observations, and interviews to assess SRL skills in students at the Dalton School and compare them to students in conventional schools.

## *2. The Role of Teacher-Student Relationships in Fostering SRL in the Dalton School Setting*

- *Objective:* Examine the influence of the Dalton Plan's "House" component (homeroom advisory system) on students' SRL development, focusing on the importance of teacher-student relationships.
- *Research Questions:*
  - How does teacher support in the House system contribute to students' self-regulation?
  - In what ways do these relationships impact students' intrinsic motivation and goal-setting behaviors?
- *Methodology:* Conduct case studies or interviews with teachers and students to explore the role of teacher support in promoting SRL skills within the Dalton School's advisory model.

## *3. Self-Regulated Learning Through Assignment and Autonomy in Dalton's Progressive Model*

- *Objective:* Analyze how the "Assignment" component of the Dalton



Plan supports self-regulated learning through student autonomy and choice.

• *Research Questions:*

- To what extent does autonomy in assignments foster SRL behaviors like self-monitoring, goal-setting, and time management?
- How do students perceive their ability to control and direct their learning through the Dalton assignment system?
- *Methodology:* Employ surveys and task analyses to assess students' self-regulatory behaviors in completing assignments, comparing these findings with schools using a less autonomous, teacher-directed approach.

#### *4. Technology-Enhanced SRL Practices in the Dalton School: Adapting the Dalton Plan for the Digital Age*

- *Objective:* Investigate how the Dalton School integrates digital tools within the Dalton Plan to support SRL skills in students.

• *Research Questions:*

- What role do digital resources play in helping students self-monitor, reflect, and adjust their learning within the Dalton model?
- How do digital platforms complement or enhance the Assignment and Lab components in fostering SRL?
- *Methodology:* Use digital platform analytics, student surveys, and performance data to assess how technology-enhanced SRL tools are integrated into the Dalton Plan.

## **Conclusion**

While SRL is increasingly recognized as a vital component of effective learning, there remains a significant gap in research within the K-12 education sector in China. The focus of current studies is overwhelmingly on higher education, with relatively little attention given to the foundational years of education where self-regulation skills can be cultivated. Given the rising



importance of digital tools and online learning environments, more research is needed to understand how these factors influence SRL in younger learners. The findings suggest several promising areas for future research, including the development of SRL across different grade levels, the role of teacher and parental support, and the impact of technology on self-regulation. Addressing these gaps will be essential to fostering a more self-regulated and independent student population in China's K-12 education system.

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# Closing Session



## Closing Remarks – XXVII International Dalton Congress

Dr. Agata Rohner, Dalton International

Ladies and gentlemen,

### Reflections on the XXVII International Dalton Congress

It is a pleasure to be here at the concluding session of the XXVII International Dalton Congress in Wenzhou. Throughout this event, our primary aim has been to deepen our collective understanding of the Dalton model—an educational approach that positions students as active learners and central protagonists, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning journey.

A significant focus of our gathering has also been to analyse how self-regulation is encouraged by teachers across Dalton schools worldwide, and to examine the diverse ways this is implemented in practical settings.

### Achievements of the Congress

I am confident that this Congress has largely fulfilled its objectives. The speeches and workshops have been marked by richness, interactivity, and inspiration. Delegations have shared their thoughts candidly, particularly regarding the fundamental aspects of self-regulation. Above all, we have reaffirmed that Dalton education is about recognising the uniqueness of each child—enabling every learner to discover and develop their own talents and interests, both independently and in collaboration with others.

### Key Messages from the Congress

Allow me to briefly highlight several key messages that have emerged during our discussions:



A holistic commitment to self-regulation: Schools must provide structure, encourage goal-setting, foster self-reflection, offer explicit instruction, and support autonomy. It is essential that self-regulation also encompasses social and emotional development.

Educating fearless human beings: The Dalton approach strives to nurture individuals who are independent, socially responsible, proactive, and enterprising. Education is not solely about qualification, but also about socialisation and personal development.

The need for further research: Delegations have emphasised the importance of continuing research into self-regulation practices across International Dalton Schools.

### **Commitment to Ongoing Collaboration**

Let me assure you that Dalton International will work closely with Wenzhou Dalton School to ensure that the outcomes of this Congress are integrated into ongoing academic research on self-regulation.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all delegations from around the world for travelling such distances to share your theories and practices.

Special thanks are due to the Wenzhou city government, Wenzhou Education Bureau, Longwan District Education Bureau, Shanghai Likeda Education Group, Wenzhou-Kean University, Wenzhou Dalton School, Wenzhou No.1 Private Experimental School, our partners from the Netherlands including Jasper Kok (Managing Director, OPO Hof van Twente), our Dutch member schools, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, and all our international partners. Your dedicated engagement has made this Congress possible and ensured its resounding success.

We thank you.

# Appendices



## XXVII International Dalton Congress – Wenzhou, November 2024

### Congress Description

In light of the present socio-economic climate, Dalton education is tasked with transcending conventional educational models and preparing students with the essential skills for lifelong learning. The XXVII International Dalton Congress serves as a gathering point for distinguished educators, researchers, and policymakers from around the globe, focusing on how Dalton pedagogy supports the development of self-regulation, a fundamental pillar of twenty-first-century education.

Self-regulation, defined as the capacity to plan, monitor, and reflect upon one's own learning, is increasingly acknowledged as vital for academic achievement, individual development, and social wellbeing. The Congress will address both the individual dimension (including cognitive control, motivation, emotional regulation, and goal-setting) and the social dimension (encompassing collaboration, empathy, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school environment).

Keynote speakers and contributors will analyse:

The methods employed by teachers in Dalton schools to nurture self-regulation, including explicit instruction, scaffolding, and structured autonomy.

The significance of family, peers, and the wider community in fostering students' independence and sense of responsibility.



Practical strategies and research findings relating to metacognition, motivation, and behavioural regulation.

The equilibrium between direct instruction and experiential learning in developing self-regulated learners.

## **Objectives**

The principal aim of the Congress is to assess the degree to which self-regulation is actively promoted in Dalton schools internationally, and to facilitate the exchange of evidence-based practices that enhance students' ownership of their learning. By emphasising both the uniqueness of the child and the social context of education, the Congress aspires to motivate schools to embed self-regulation holistically in their curricula and wellbeing initiatives.

## **Expected Outcomes**

The Congress proceedings will offer both scholarly analysis and practical guidance, resulting in publications under the theme "The Social and Individual Dimension of Self-Regulation: Navigating the Global Challenge." These resources will support educators and institutions dedicated to innovative pedagogy and systemic educational reform.



## Organising Committee

Roel Röhner – President, Dalton International Foundation

Agata Rohner – Executive Director, Dalton International Foundation

René Berends – Board Member, Dalton International; Lecturer and Researcher, Saxion University of Applied Sciences

The Administrative team of Wenzhou Dalton School

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# Photos of the congress





