

Review of Linda Nilson, 2013, *Creating Self-Regulated Learners: Strategies to Strengthen Students' Self-Awareness and Learning Skills*, Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, eBook Collection(EBSCOhost), viewed 29 May 2014.

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We currently hear phrases like 'independent learning', 'lifelong learners', and 'self-directed learners' in the rhetoric of higher education. Often they are just words. I recommend this book as a way to action them. Many teachers in higher education think their students do not possess or use learning skills. Linda Nilson presents a clear and compelling case for developing students' self-regulatory learning skills as part of the curriculum. She makes this easy for teachers by suggesting techniques, activities and assignments that can be incorporated at the start of a course, during a course and at the close of a course.

The book commences with a concise summary of the research and evidence-base for self-regulated learning – its benefits for students and the positive outcomes related to student learning. The author argues that teachers must help to develop students' self-regulatory learning skills. She states that "self-regulation encompasses the monitoring and managing of one's cognitive processes as well as the awareness and control over one's emotions, motivations, behaviour, and environment as related to learning" (Nilson, 2013, Ch. 1, "Self-regulation versus Metacognition, para 2). Thus the following chapters in the book describe practical methods, based on research and practice, for developing strategies and skills in these areas that will foster self-regulated learning.

I found the book well-structured, with a very useful "Quick Reference to Self-Regulated Learning Assignments and Activities Described in This Book" at the beginning. Several chapters are devoted to activities and assignments that students can engage in before, during or after their learning of content (e.g. while reading, from lectures or in relation to exams) that enhance students' self-regulated learning skills. Many of these activities and assignments help students to learn material in a deeper and better way as well.

Nilson presents several activities that might be familiar the reader, such as "Clicker Questions" but explains how they help develop self-regulated learning skills. There are also more novel tasks such as "Letter to the Next Cohort" where students suggest useful study strategies and what worked for them for incoming students.

There is a chapter on “Self-regulated Learning from Meta-assignments”, aimed at increasing students’ awareness of their own “thinking and actions”, as well as a chapter that addresses the more behavioural aspects of self-regulated learning, such as delaying gratification and overcoming procrastination. An example of the latter is to set up your grading system to reward students for handing in assignments early and penalize them for being late. Another highly effective system is to let submission dates determine the amount of work required. For instance, students have to do only six problems if they hand in their solutions by the earliest date, eight problems if they hand in their solutions by a slightly later date, and 10 problems if they hand in their solutions after that later date (Leff, n.d.). You might be able to adapt this system in written assignments to the amount of writing required.” (Nilson, 2013, Ch. 8, “Helping Students Overcome Procrastination”, para. 5).

The last two chapters describe integrating self-regulated learning into course design with examples and models. Teachers in higher education face many constraints and challenges. The author is aware of this and addresses with possible objections, such as the pressure to cover content and not enough time, with suggestions such as innovative ways to mark assignments.

While the sheer number of activities described could be overwhelming, I think the author encourages the embedding of self-regulatory learning skills within the curriculum – where students will most benefit – in a very engaging yet knowledgeable manner that will not put off readers.

The book has an American focus in terms of terminology and audience (e.g. instructors) which could possibly be seen as a negative to a non-American reader. It is available in print and as an e-book. The author, Linda Nilson, has written many books and articles on the enhancement of teaching and learning and is the founding director of the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation at Clemson University.

I believe this is a very useful book for a teacher who might be interested in just one or two ideas to introduce her students to self-regulated learning all the way to the teacher who is re-vamping his course and looking for ways to improve outcomes. It’s evidence-based practice in action.