There Are Better Ways to Study That Will Last You a Lifetime

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Picture your preschooler’s teacher pulling you aside at pickup time to say that your child was “not taking responsibility” for learning the alphabet. You’d be puzzled and probably angry. It’s not up to a 4-year-old to make sure he learns the alphabet. That’s the teacher’s job.

But as your child gets older, he’ll increasingly be expected to teach himself. High school seniors must read difficult books independently, commit information to memory, schedule their work, cope with test anxiety and much more.

These demands build slowly across the grades, essentially forming a second, unnoticed curriculum: learning how to learn independently.

For most American students, that curriculum goes untaught. In a 2007 survey, just 20 percent of college students agreed that they study as they do “because a teacher (or teachers) taught you to study that way.”