

The School Year Ahead



Wellington High School
and Summit Learning

As your student completes the first few weeks of school, they will be learning how to set and achieve their goals. This installment of the Insider will introduce you to the self-directed learning cycle.

Student Experience

What is self-directed learning?

Students set goals, select strategies that will allow them to meet those goals, and practice and show those strategies to eventually see if their plan worked. The self-directed learning cycle is the process by which students set a goal, plan, learn, show and reflect on the process. This learning cycle can be applied to any task in the adult world and is developed across all aspects of Summit Learning.

Summit Learning schools dedicate specific time to self directed learning. Students are able to practice the self-directed learning cycle in Mentoring and Projects. Students prepare for projects by learning information, accessing additional resources and taking content assessments in order to understand the material deeply. Since the material is self-paced, students have to build plans to pass the required content assessments. As they learn, students see direct evidence of the benefits of the self-directed learning cycle and build learning strategies that they can then transfer to new situations.

Getting Involved

From the first day of school, students are empowered to own their learning. To guide students, we use the [Self-Directed Learning Cycle](#). Students practice actionable goal setting by making plans, reflecting on progress, and switching strategies if necessary to achieve their goal. We want students to graduate with a Sense of Purpose and a clear path to reach their goals.

Tips for families: Ask your student about the short- and long-term goals they have set at school. Log into the Summit Learning Platform to track your student's progress. View this goal-setting as critical for not only their journey to graduation, but their journey into adulthood.

Developing self-directed learners

Summit Learning places students at the center of their learning journey, empowering them to set goals and deeply understand content by interacting with it in a way that's aligned with how they learn best. Listen to one Chicago middle schooler's journey from "I can't do it" to tutoring her peers.



FAQs

Q: How will my student be graded?

A: Summit Learning's grading policy prioritizes the development of Cognitive Skills that students need for success in college and career. A student's score on the Cognitive Skills Rubric comprises 70% of a student's grade. Another foundational component of Summit Learning is student mastery on standards-aligned Content Knowledge - across all core subject areas. Mastery of Content Knowledge comprises 30% of a student's grade.

Q: Where can I learn more about Summit Learning's grading policies?

A: You can find more detail about grading on the Summit Learning [Grading Resources Page](#).

THE SCIENCE BEHIND SUMMIT LEARNING

Part Four: Gaining Content Knowledge In A Way That Best Suits Your Needs

Content Knowledge is the understanding and application of complex, challenging facts and concepts. In order for students to work on projects, they must first develop a broad knowledge base. Students need this broad Content Knowledge base to be able to develop and practice lifelong cognitive skills through their projects - skills like critical thinking, creativity and collaboration. So how do students learn content knowledge?.

What it looks like in the classroom: The content Summit Learning students have access to isn't restricted to a given textbook or handout. Instead, students have constant access to content across their entire grade level and beyond. Students independently progress through playlists of resources, mastering content across all core subject areas. Students take on-demand assessments when they are ready, rather than with the entire class at the same time. Tests can be taken multiple times until students demonstrate mastery.

What the research says about Content Knowledge: Three decades of research shows that students must acquire and retain Content Knowledge to support the development of Cognitive Skills ([Willingham](#), 2009; [Schwartz](#) 2016). Cognitive scientists have demonstrated that having specific Content Knowledge in a given discipline accelerates mastery of the subject ([Schwartz](#) et al., 2016).

Contemporary research also supports the idea that in order to meet the needs of all learners, students should advance through material at their own pace, be provided with the appropriate supports, and move on only when they demonstrate proficiency in a given subject ([AIR](#), 2016; [Rose](#), 2016).

