A STUDENT'S
GUIDE TO
GREATER SUCCESS
IN SCHOOL (AND LIFE)

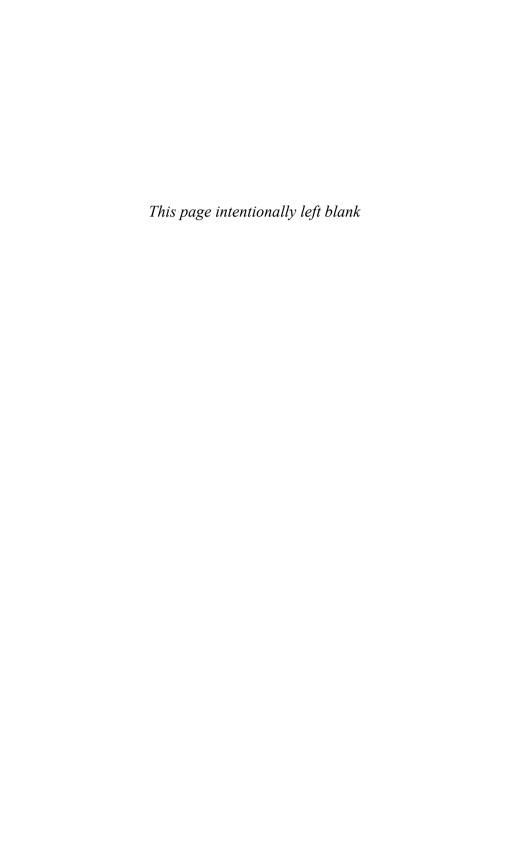
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Your

EDUCATION

MEGAN STONE

Own Your Education!



Own Your Education!

A Student's Guide to Greater Success in School (and Life)

Megan Stone

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To "Team Stone"—Rick, Lauren, and Nathan: Without you, none of this would have been possible. Love you all!

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About the Author

Megan Stone, M.Ed., Founder and President of Stone Foundations of Learning, Inc. (www.stonefoundations.net), has worked with students and faculty across the country for more than 17 years.

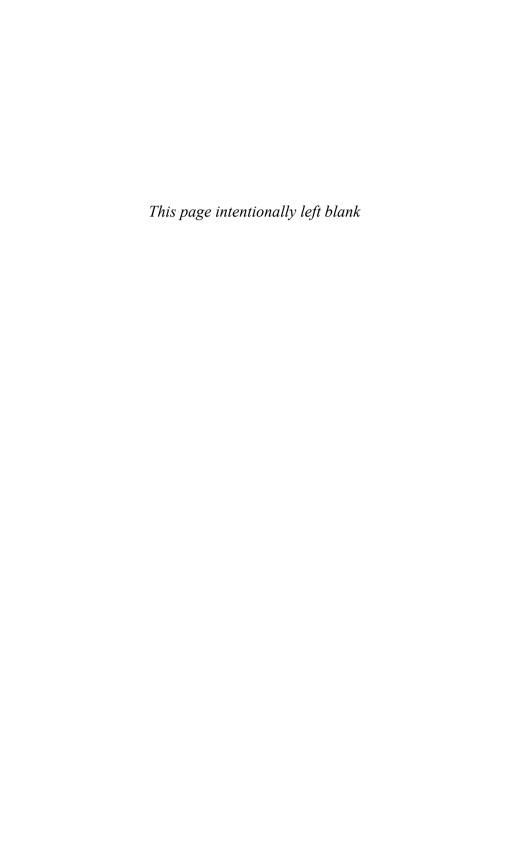
Her company's mission is to provide the organizational strategies and study skills students need to excel in academics and throughout life. Her program's foundations are self-advocacy, responsibility, and ownership.

Along with coaching students and families, she consults with school districts, colleges, and universities to better equip faculty to work with students who lack the tools to "do the job" of being a student and to build educational ownership.

Megan has also created and written a college curriculum for students and faculty called the Ownership Series (www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/series/Ownership-Series/13402.page). The series helps to reinforce the concept of student ownership so students are more likely to take responsibility for their success and failures in school and life.

Before launching her company, Megan taught science in the highly ranked Edina and Eden Prairie Public Schools. She holds a B.S. in human biology and an M.S. in life science education from the University of Minnesota.

Megan enjoys spending time at her cabin, being outside, and helping others. She has been married to her husband, Rick, for 19 years. They have two children.



Introduction

What do you want to be when you grow up? The future "you" will be the product of what you do now and how you go about doing it. So what kind of person do you want to be?

he sunny June day was all about me...my graduation party. The party tent was decorated in my school colors of green, white, and yellow and with banners reading "Congratulations, Emma," certificates, letters, and every first-day-of-school photo for all the guests to see. Even Grandma Sheila from Dallas made the trip. I thought it was my day to relax, enjoy my success, eat my favorite Mexican food, and hang with my friends. Boy, was I wrong.

"What are you going to major in?"

"Do you have a job for the summer?"

"What internships do you have planned for the future?"

"Where will you be studying abroad?"

"What is you minor? Will you double major?"

"Have you met your roommate yet?"

"How are you going to pay for all your expenses at school? Do you have a job on campus?"

I never imagined that I would be bombarded with life questions and need to have answers and a plan for the rest of my life—especially at my perfect grad party!

Emma is a typical high school graduate, with her whole life in front of her and many decisions to be made. If you've picked up this book, you are probably in the same boat.

Astronaut? Princess? Pro Athlete?

List your current occupations and/or responsibilities.

What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you remember being asked this question as a kid? You may have fantasized about becoming the next Wayne Gretzky, Cinderella, a firefighter, or a zoo keeper. Even older adults may jokingly remark, "I don't know what I want to be when I grow up." This question is always a great conversation starter, but you also need to consider what your occupation is right now. Do you have a job? What are the everyday tasks you have in or outside of school?

Did you list being a student as one of your jobs? If not, take a look at how you view your school experience. Being a student is a full-time job. If you did list student as an occupation, are you taking control of this experience or relying on others to get you through your courses?

Either way, you've made a great choice in reading this book! Together we will discuss the idea of owning your experience and taking control of your life. You will become more confident in and outside school. I promise.

What Is Your Job?

You have likely listed many other responsibilities aside from school work. Being responsible for chores at home, a part-time job, volunteer work, sporting activities, the arts, and other chosen obligations take commitment and hard work. School is just the same. The payoff is worth it, no matter what you choose to do. Your "paycheck" will be knowledge,

skills, and abilities that you will need in order to succeed now and in the future. And who doesn't want that?

Think of a basketball player who shoots free-throws until the sun goes down. An oboe player who practices 45 minutes a day instead of the required 30 minutes. A school play understudy who practices lines with her little brother—just in case. These types of extra effort earn a spot on the varsity team, first chair in the concert band, and a leading role in the play. As with any other activity, the more effort you put into the job of being a student, the greater the opportunities will be in the future.

In all these situations, knowing the expectations and going above and beyond will build success. Whether in education, work, or any other endeavor, opportunities and your desire to get them will drive your success. You need to know the requirements, receive training, practice, ask questions, get feedback, and then take responsibility to perform independently.

Sam's Story

"In my first job, as a restaurant host, I went through a short training period, where my boss explained his expectations of me and what I was to accomplish during each shift. I learned to greet customers, take incoming calls, and manage reservations. I understood the general rules for the restaurant. I then practiced these skills with a more experienced hostess, asked questions, and listened to her feedback. Finally, I worked by myself. When I had a question, I took the initiative to find someone to ask. I took responsibility. I *owned* my job performance."

Sam's experience is surprisingly similar to that of a student for a number of reasons. As a student, you need to be responsible for:

- Reading the syllabus and becoming familiar with the instructor's expectations during the first few sessions of class
- Getting "trained" in the course materials, class requirements, and deadlines from your instructors' lectures
- Asking questions and obtaining feedback
- Completing homework, studying, and participating in classroom activities in order to practice skills

- Demonstrating proficiency when taking tests, completing projects, or performing skills independently
- Showing leadership by working well with others or in a group to complete a project or task

By completing each step, you are performing your "job" well, and you are "owning" your educational performance—just like Sam in his host position. When you accept the challenge to take ownership of your school experience, you commit to mastering the skills and characteristics needed to succeed. The tools gained will transfer to all other aspects of your life.

"But how do I do this?" you might be asking yourself. I will show you!

You will learn to look at your job as a student from a new vantage point, one that allows you to:

- Increase your motivation and commitment
- Build your confidence and pride
- Take control of your education and life instead of depending on others to get you where you want to go

Think back to Emma at her graduation party. If she had recognized that being a high school student is a full-time profession, she would have gained the tools to look beyond her grad party. She would have developed the strategies necessary to look into the future and answer the myriad of questions with confidence. How about you? Can you confidently answer those or other tough questions without breaking a sweat? This book will help you answer with total confidence and assurance in your future.

"It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things."—Leonardo da Vinci

Characteristics of Ownership

What is meant by ownership? How can you own your own life?

dam sits over by the windows, across the room from you in your crowded social studies class. He has brown hair and brown eyes, average height and build, yet you notice him. He doesn't glow or anything, but he stands out all the same. You've seen him suiting up to practice with the baseball team, you recall, and you also saw him working at Ace Hardware that time you went to get a key made. Alice, from your math class, tells you she lives near him, and he takes care of a sister five years younger and a brother nine years younger when his mother is finishing up her shift at the bank. How does he manage it all?

At the end of the quarter, you overhear the teacher praising Adam for never missing class and for turning in his work on time. You've seen him ask clarifying questions before assignments are due and be an active participant of the class. You see that many other students have missed class, turned in assignments late, and let other obligations take priority over their school work. What is different about Adam? What characteristics does he possess that you or your other classmates do not?

What's the thing about him that's different, that makes him stand out? How does he do it? Is there a trick? Is he cheating, or is he just smarter than you? He is not cheating, but he is smart enough to have learned the key to success. Adam does not let excuses or circumstances get in his way of success in or outside of school. He takes his job as a student seriously and does his best.

5

Maybe you would like to possess the characteristics for school success that Adam has, but you are unable to identify what those characteristics are and how to learn them. Well, it may be simpler than you think. Adam is committed, hard-working, and motivated, and he has pride in his academic work because he has ownership of his school experience. What does it mean to *have ownership of* an experience, or of your life in general? In order for you to take ownership of your job as a student, you must first understand what the characteristics of ownership are.

What Is Ownership?

Ownership is a person claiming something as his or her own responsibility, or having and controlling something. Think of the difference between renting and owning a car. When you own a car, you take care of it, getting the oil changed on schedule, keeping it clean because you are proud of it, parking it out of the sun—in short, you take care of it because it's a part of you. Adam is like that with his family, not grumbling that he has to take care of his siblings but willing to do so because he has accepted ownership of his family; they are a proud part of him. Or think of something you own, such as clothes, an idea, or even a cell phone. When you are the owner of something, you have the right to control it, and you need to have a certain skill set to use it. For example, to be a successful cell phone owner, you first need to commit to the usage guidelines and sign a contract. Then you must take the time to learn how the phone works, even though it may not be easy. You can then take pride in your possession and in the fact that you can use the phone effectively. All these skills make you a more successful phone owner.

People who do not have ownership over their experiences or life often feel out of control. Their fear and frustration often results in their not taking responsibility for their actions and blaming others for their situation. This type of behavior limits a person's ability to grow and learn from his or her successes and failures. Ownership offers the power to make a difference in your life.

You can also think about ownership in terms of education. When you, as a student, have ownership of your school experience, you are better able to control the outcome of your academic success. For you to own

your educational experience, you need to learn and adopt fundamental knowledge and characteristics. These can be academic in nature, such as math facts or paragraph writing, or they can be more personal, such as critical thinking skills, accountability, time management, or knowing effective study skills. As you adopt more knowledge and characteristics, you come closer to owning your whole educational experience. The more abilities that you, as a student, own, the more academic success you will have.

In Adam's case, he owns the academic foundational knowledge to do well in class, and he also owns the personal characteristics of accountability, time management, and study skills to do well in class. Because of all the knowledge and characteristics Adam owns, his instructors recognize that he owns his school experience.

Characteristics of Student Ownership

When you have ownership of your academic experience, you can be described as having the characteristics of commitment, endurance, and motivation. These characteristics are enabled by the foundational skills you, as a student, acquire. The better you understand the characteristics of ownership, the more you will be able to take ownership of your education and ultimately be successful in and out of school.

Commitment

A person with *commitment* has pledged his or her dedication to see something through to completion. This person is actively involved and feels a connection to what he or she has committed. For example, when someone is committed to his or her family, he or she continually devotes time, resources, and energy to help the people in the family.

When you, as a student, have ownership over your school experience, you:

- Are engaged in your work
- Are committed to learning the material
- Feel a personal obligation to do your best
- Show leadership and positive role modeling for your peers

When you, as a student, show commitment to a class, you:

- Make it a priority to learn new concepts and complete assigned work
- Are engaged during class and when you talk with your instructor
- Manage your responsibilities in and out of school
- Devote the time necessary to get the work done to the best of your ability

Endurance

Endurance is the stamina and fortitude to withstand adversity or stress. It is staying on task and maintaining the persistence to finish a job, even if the job is very difficult. For example, a runner has endurance when he or she is able to run for long periods of time, despite pain or exhaustion.

When someone is persistently committed to education, he or she is showing effort and endurance. This hard work is essential to owning a school experience. Learning a new academic or study skill takes a lot of energy because, many times, they are acquired only as a result of repetition and great diligence. For example, despite having many responsibilities outside school, Adam shows ownership of his education by having the endurance necessary to get all his work completed on time and to be prepared for class.

Motivation

Motivation is the drive to accomplish a task. It is caused by a person's need and desire to achieve a specific goal. A motivated person directs his or her energy to creating opportunities to reach a particular goal. For example, if an athlete misses a game-winning shot in a basketball game, she is motivated to work hard and practice more so in the next game she will help bring her team to victory. Or when a salesperson does not get a sale with a customer, he becomes motivated to work harder to earn revenue by dedicating himself to persistently contacting the customer, devoting time to learning more about how the customer would benefit from the product, and creating a new sales presentation.

What motivates you to be in school? For some, it is a requirement or an expectation. Others are motivated in school because it is the next step toward getting a job or a raise or in entering a new career. You show ownership through motivation when you are inspired and compelled to reach the goals necessary to complete the work given and all the classes required to obtain your degree.

Quick Check of Your Ownership Skills

How often do you do the following? Circle the most accurate response to each item.

	Ownership Item	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1.	I attend class.	1	2	3
2.	I complete all my course work on time.	1	2	3
3.	I know how to contact all my instructors.	1	2	3
4.	I meet with instructors when I have questions.	1	2	3
5.	I go to class well prepared.	1	2	3
6.	I know my current grade in each course.	1	2	3
7.	I understand how to improve my work after I do poorly on an assignment.	1	2	3
8.	I use a planning system to document my course work and life obligations.	1	2	3
9.	I seek help, when I need it, at least several days before an exam.	1	2	3
10.	I feel confident in my academic abilities.	1	2	3

Scoring Guide

Add up your score: _____

- A high score (24 or above) indicates behaviors and attitudes that foster ownership.
- A medium-range score (16–23) suggests moderate ownership skills.
- A low score (15 or under) indicates underdeveloped ownership skills.

How did you do? What is your ownership score? At any score, you can benefit from developing your ownership characteristics.

When you accept the challenge to take ownership of your school experience, you commit to mastering the skills and knowledge you need to succeed in your courses. The tools you gain will transfer to other courses and to your life.

EXAMPLE

Think about people who don't commit to their schooling. For instance, they:

- Turn in assignments late, incomplete, or not at all
- Don't prepare for class or tests
- Justify their lack of commitment with excuses

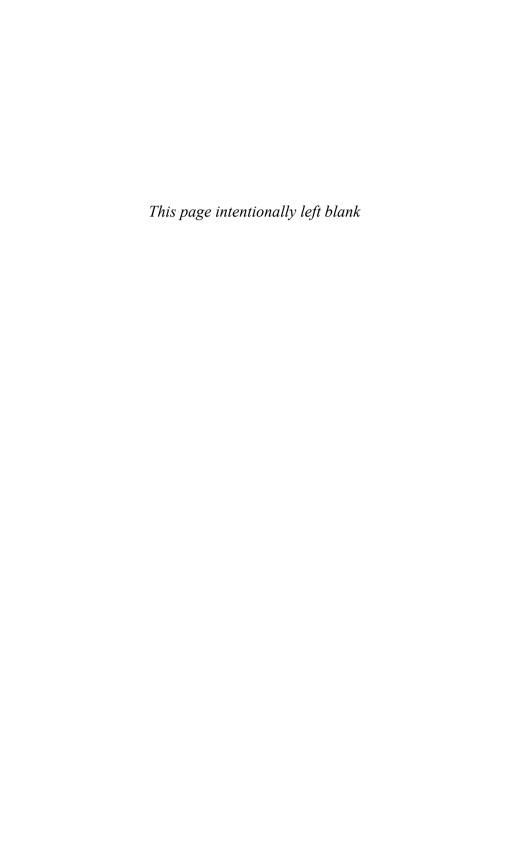
These people miss the chance to practice behaviors that would benefit them in the workplace (effective time management, adequate preparation, and acceptance of responsibility) and that would deepen their education.

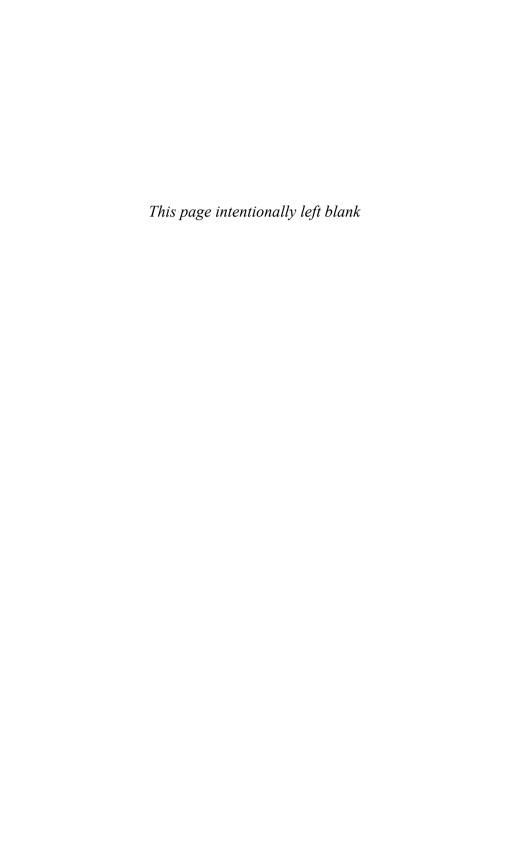
It is never too late to accept the challenge and take ownership of your life. No matter what "bad" habits you may have formed, now is the time to change.

Review

As the semester continues, you notice that Adam is committed to your social studies class. Despite his athletic, work, and family obligations, Adam works hard on individual projects and asks questions when the material becomes difficult. It is clear that Adam is motivated to succeed because he wants to obtain the opportunities for a career after school.

When you have ownership of your school experience, you are better able to control the outcome of your academic success. You realize this ownership when you learn and adopt the characteristics of commitment, endurance, and motivation—all of which contribute to your ability to own your success in school and beyond.





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