



Indicator: The School Community Council ensures that all parents understand metacognitive competency, learning strategies, and ways they can support their children's self-management of learning at home. (D1)

Explanation: : The evidence suggests that when students learn to be reflective and self-regulating about their learning, their ability to think critically and learn deeply improves, as does their eventual academic outcomes. Teachers must explicitly instruct students in how to use metacognition to help them become better learners, and their families must be informed about these strategies as well to help with learning at home. The School Community Council, through its parent workshops and communications, is an effective mechanism for communicating a school-wide emphasis on metacognitive practice to families.

Questions: : What methods are teachers using to teach the practice of metacognitive thinking? How are teachers helping families understand this concept and actionable steps to implement it at home? How does the administration and School Community Council convey this priority to families and the school community at large? What supports and resources will the school provide to families in helping their children with metacognition?

What is the Metacognitive Competency?

Metacognition is defined as “the ability to think about one’s thinking” (Price-Mitchell, 2015, p. 1). Conley (2013) elaborates on this definition, saying that metacognitive strategies include, “all learning processes and behaviors involving any degree of reflection, learning-strategy selection, and intentional mental processing that can result in a student’s improved ability to learn” (p. 1). Other metacognitive strategies in learning include “critical thinking, information literacy, reasoning and argumentation, [and] innovation,” as well as planning, monitoring one’s own understanding, and self-evaluating progress towards learning goals (Educator Competencies, 2015, p. 23; Protheroe & Clarke, 2008).

Maats and O’Brien (2015) point out that classrooms have typically been designed for teachers, not students, to practice metacognitive strategies. It is therefore critically important for teachers to explicitly instruct and coach students in this approach (Wilson & Conyers, 2014). Teachers must intentionally model these behaviors, by showing students how to think through their mental processing aloud, summarizing what they understood, identifying sources of confusion, and evaluating their own progress (Chick, n.d.; Protheroe & Clarke, 2008; Wilson & Conyers, 2014; Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Redding, 2016). In addition to watching adults model these behaviors, students also need opportunities to practice thinking metacognitively and receive supports and feedback while they practice (Chick, n.d.; Protheroe & Clarke, 2008; Redding, 2016).

Maats and O’Brien (2015) write:

After years of classroom lectures, students everywhere -- regardless of cultural or socioeconomic background -- had internalized the idea that students are supposed to get answers from teachers. At its core, that translates to the idea that the person in charge of their learning is someone other than them. And that’s a huge problem because,

ultimately, no one else can be responsible for our learning. (p. 1)

In addition to teachers facilitating the content that students will learn, they can directly help students understand how to learn. This allows students to take ownership of their own learning experiences and progress, adjust their learning strategies, and ultimately, improve their learning outcomes (Protheroe & Clarke, 2008; Conley, 2013; Wilson & Conyers, 2014; Price-Mitchell, 2015). With this knowledge and these skills, students can better understand that they can always improve; importantly, they can also understand that their performance in school may not necessarily reflect their ability level but instead how they self-regulate their learning experiences and processes – a factor that they ultimately have within their control (Protheroe & Clarke, 2008; Educator Competencies, 2015; Price-Mitchell, 2015).

Why is it so critical to keep families informed about their children's learning?

Frequent communication from teachers to parents about their students' schoolwork has been shown to increase student academic outcomes and improve the interactions between parent and child (Kraft & Rogers, 2014). Kraft and Dougherty (2013) write that, "Teachers can empower parents by providing them with information about an area in need of improvement and by giving them guidance on how to help their child to improve" (p. 27). However, it is the quality and content of this information – rather than the frequency of messages – that impacts how families are able to connect with and support their children around schooling (Redding, 2006; Kraft & Rogers, 2014). It is critical for schools to communicate their expectations of students and families, share the responsibility of maintaining productive communication, and help families help their children. Both teachers and the School Community Council, as a convener for parent gatherings and a facilitator of trusting relationships, play an important role in helping families understand what learning and academic support can happen at home (Redding, 2006; Kraft & Dougherty, 2013).

Strategies schools can use to increase parental understanding of metacognition

Just as metacognition may not be an intuitive learning tactic for students, it is likely also a new concept for their families. Families need to understand that they can and

need to support the development of children's self-reflection and self-regulation of learning at home, but they also need to have the appropriate knowledge and strategies in their toolkit (Kraft & Rogers, 2014; Redding, 2014). Teachers and the School Community Council need to share the school's emphasis on metacognitive practice with families, explaining what it is and how parents can use it at home with their children. This teaching might occur at traditional engagement events such as Back to School Night and parent-teacher conferences, or at targeted events such as parent workshops. Making this information as simple and actionable as possible is important for helping parents apply it at home; providing lists of proven strategies, activities, or relevant apps is a great way to help parents get started (Redding, 2014).

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