



Indicator: The School Community Council ensures that all volunteers understand metacognitive competency and their roles relative to its enhancement in students. (D2)

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. Adults must explicitly instruct students in how to use metacognition to help them become better learners, including school volunteers. The school must provide training and support for volunteers so that they fully understand the Metacognitive Competency and can support students in reflective learning practices.

Questions: What methods are schools using to teach the practice of metacognitive thinking to volunteers? What supports are being provided to volunteers throughout the school year as they work with students on the Metacognitive Competency? How does the administration convey this priority to the school community at large? *What Are the*

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).

Students need explicit instruction and coaching in this approach, as metacognition may not be an intuitive or natural process (Wilson & Conyers, 2014). Adults 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).

When students better understand how they learn, they can take ownership of their own learning experiences and progress, adjust their learning strategies, and ultimately, improve their own 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).

How Can Schools Ensure that Volunteers Understand and Help Promote the Metacognitive Competency?

Teachers and parents are not the only adults involved in children’s educational experiences and therefore not the only ones who can help students take ownership of their learning. Between after-school and summer programs, as well as school day volunteers, there are many other adults who are influential in how and what students learn. Redding (2016) defines a school community as, “the people intimately associated with a school—students, their families, teachers, administrators, school staff, and volunteers—bound together by their common interest in the students served by the school” (p. 12). Bayerl (2014) writes:

By working together toward shared goals for the youth they serve, schools and community-based youth development organizations can ensure that their efforts are aligned and complementary and that every young person has the opportunities and supports they need to develop the skills and mindsets that support success in school and beyond. (p. 18)

These adults can provide additional academic and emotional supports for students, but for them to be most effective, they need to be familiar with the goals and strategies of the classroom (Bayerl, 2014). The onus is on the school to fully integrate volunteers and community partners into its work and values, treating them as equals and as meaningful contributors in the task of educating children (Bayerl, 2014). When advertising their needs or requests for volunteers, schools can incorporate these values and competencies into job descriptions, scopes of work, and onboarding conversations (Redding, 2016).

For strategies such as metacognition, which may be just as new for volunteers as it is for the students, schools must provide training and support (Kraft & Rogers, 2014; Redding, 2014). Schools should provide professional development opportunities for volunteers and partners in their building about the Metacognitive Competency and how they can use it to support student achievement. These professional development sessions can be just for these stakeholders, or they can be shared training with school staff (Bayerl, 2014; Redding, 2016). Just like training in the Metacognitive Competency for parents, making this information as simple and actionable as possible is important for helping volunteers use it in their

classroom or program; providing lists of proven strategies, activities, and instructional resources is a great way to help volunteers get started (Redding, 2014; Redding, 2016).

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