
Lesson 5

Developing Self-Awareness

Students cannot effectively take responsibility and ownership of their learning unless they have good self-awareness. Self-awareness in learning is known as metacognition. Developing metacognition takes time. Teachers and parents can help by continuously reinforcing the need for students to think about their thinking: Why did I try that approach? Why did I do well on that test? How did I study? Did it work? Without metacognition, students might have a positive mindset and work hard, but they will not know how to work most effectively and efficiently. Developing self-awareness skills is an essential step in developing purposeful, motivated learners.



VITAL VOCAB

metacognition: Understanding of one's own thinking. Metacognition includes an awareness of learning processes and strategies you use as well as an understanding of your personal strengths and needs.

self-awareness: The ability to recognize and assess one's own feelings, thought processes, and behaviors.

self-monitoring: Measuring, evaluating, and adjusting one's own behavior, thoughts, and feelings in relation to expected age-appropriate norms.



TEACHER TAKEAWAYS

- Students need to grow into the habit of thinking about their thinking and learning. It is important for students to develop self-awareness of what they do and do not understand and why. Students must learn to recognize when they need to seek help and what type of help they need.
- Most students need to learn how to self-assess. Stronger students tend to underestimate their mastery and overstudy, which can lead to excessive stress or anxiety. Struggling students tend to overestimate their mastery and might not study enough or study the wrong things, which can lead to under-performance (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

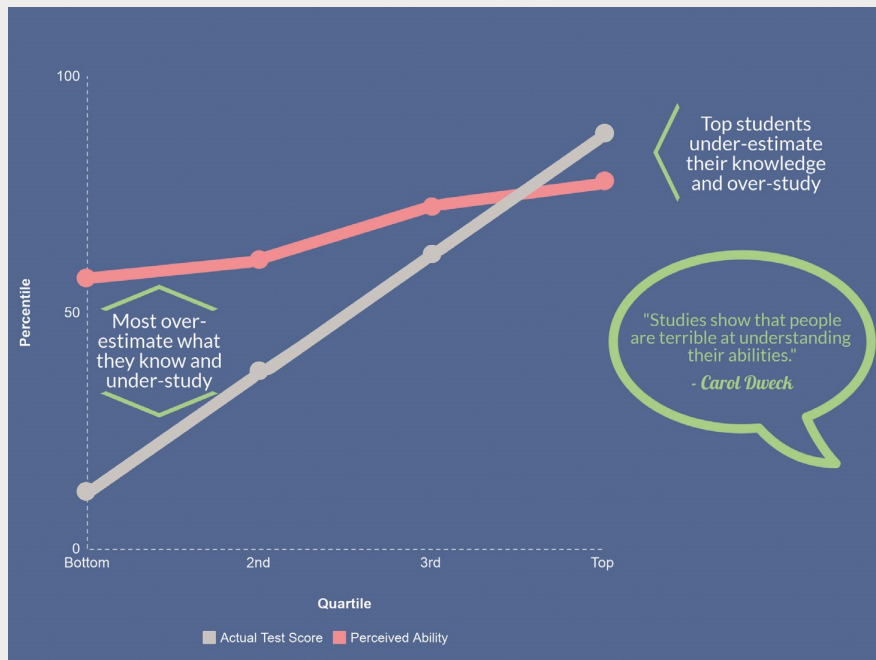


Figure 8: The Dunning-Kruger Effect

- Metacognitive thinking is important not only in academic learning but for all of life's experiences.
- Metacognition leads to empathy—the better you understand yourself, the more you can relate to others and understand their perspectives.
- Metacognitive thinking develops over time. Adult nurturing and support through ongoing, objective feedback helps significantly.



STUDENT TAKEAWAYS

- When you focus not just on the outcome but also on why you did well or not, you are more likely to improve in subsequent attempts.
- When you understand and accept your own strengths and challenges, it will be easier to relate to your classmates during group work and social situations.
- Although you know yourself better than anyone, you are still learning and growing. Sometimes adults and friends will see you in a way that you do not see yourself. It is important for you to listen to feedback to fully and effectively self-assess.
- Most students struggle to find the right balance of what to study and how much. You don't want to study too little, but you also don't want to over-study. It is important to learn to recognize when you need to work harder or longer and when you can feel confident in your knowledge and mastery.



MINDPRINT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS

- Self-Awareness (Metacognition) (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/10345>) (S)
- Instill Ownership in Class Work (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/11909>) (T)
- Dialogue Journal (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/10421>) (T, S)
- Exam Wrapper (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/11537>) (T)



A CLOSER LOOK

- Mindprint Homework Wrappers by Skill (https://s3.amazonaws.com/wordpress_uploads/site/uploads/2014/04/mindprint-homework-wrappers.pdf)
- 5 Strategies on Teaching Students to Use Metacognition; teachthought (www.teachthought.com/learning/5-strategies-teaching-students-use-metacognition/)
- Nurturing Self-Awareness in the Classroom; edutopia (www.edutopia.org/blog/8-pathways-metacognition-in-classroom-marilyn-price-mitchell)
- Exit Slips, Robert Marzano of ASCD (www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct12/vol70/num02/The-Many-Uses-of-Exit-Slips.aspx)



LESSON ACTIVITIES

Direct Instruction

What Is Metacognition? (E, M, H)

Teacher Background:

Metacognition is one of the most important skills in the process of building self-regulated learning and driving student success. You can make it important by making it practical. Start by simply defining it for them. Then practice and develop it in the context of everyday learning. Well-developed metacognition evolves over time. Expect that a deeper understanding and appreciation will come with practice.

Teacher-led Discussion:

Start with the definition. Describe it simply as: *"Metacognition is thinking about your thinking"* or more detailed, *"...thinking about your thinking to improve your learning."*

Highlight that although students might understand a concept, they come to that understanding in their own unique way.

Understanding your own processes will help make it easier for you to learn new things.

Teacher Example:

Give a personal example of how you understood a problem or situation differently from someone else, even though you both had the same information. The funnier the outcome, the better!

Work through a problem on the board and discuss how you are thinking about it: *If you make a mistake, how do you think about correcting it?* On an ongoing basis, remember to think aloud. Regularly ask the class if anyone was thinking about the problem differently or has an alternate way to solve the problem.

You can model metacognition by asking yourself the questions in Figure 9 aloud when providing feedback and instruction. Over time, students will begin asking themselves these questions.

Student Activity

Self-control and self-awareness are closely aligned. Watch and discuss Ted Talk: Don't Eat the Marshmallow (www.ted.com/talks/joachim_de_posada_says_don_t_eat_the_marshmallow_yet) as the start of a discussion on self-awareness. (M, H)

Student Activity

This Is What I'm Thinking: Have students fill out this sheet independently. Use a relatively brief exercise so students have the mental energy to focus on the metacognitive task and not be tired from learning. Plan to do this activity several times so that students grow more accustomed to thinking about their thinking and ways to improve. Discussing students' responses with them individually is optimal. For ongoing coaching, prompts can be posted on a class poster and copies can be printed for students to complete during assignments. (E, M, H)

Student Activity

Dialogue Journal: Use between student and teacher as a written discussion throughout the term. Give each student his or her own journal. The frequency of writing and responding depends on the class subject and how often it meets. If a class meets every day, it might make sense for the student to write in the journal

1–2 times per week. Teachers give a specific prompt and guidelines about what is expected (e.g., a one-sentence answer or a one-page reflection). To inspire metacognitive thinking and reflection, consider the best prompts to encourage students to think about their academic experiences and learning in a way that is most relevant and comfortable. Teachers should expect to respond to each student promptly and model the types of responses they expect in their answers. Teacher responses could include questions for the student to reflect further. (E, M, H)

Student Activity

Show Your Thinking: Have students use one of the many apps available that allow them to show and record their thinking—e.g., ThinkingKit (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/12284>) or Storyboard That (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/11295>). (E, M, H)

Student Activity

Exit Slip: Use this activity as a short reflection at the end of class so that students have an immediate opportunity to reflect on what they learned. Provide a page with no more than three prompts that are relevant to the class or lesson. Depending on your goals and time, you can ask for simple fill-in-the-blank answers (e.g., The hardest thing I did today was _____) or require students to go further and explain why. This daily reflection can be modified to be a weekly reflection. You can do it as a group dice game, where each prompt corresponds to a number on the die. Students take a turn rolling and sharing based on the roll. Alternatively, exam wrappers (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/11537>) can be used after quizzes or tests. (E, M, H)

Coaching

Metacognitive Questions: Referring to the prompts on the image, model metacognitive thought processes out loud as you teach. Talk through your thinking and problem solving steps: “Hmmm. Where did I make my mistake? I tried this but it didn’t work...” Point out when a student is using metacognition. Repeat what the student said and label it as “using metacognition.” You might even have a “metacognitive thinking” board and post examples when they arise in class. This might come up if a student is reflecting on why they had difficulty on an assignment or a test. (E, M, H)

Metacognition Questions



These are metacognitive questions students should ask themselves before, during, and after the learning activity to optimize their success and continuous improvement.

1

Think about **WHY** you are engaging with the activity:

- How do I define success? What is my personal goal?
- Why is achieving my goal important to me?
- Before I begin, do I have all the tools and strategies I need to be successful? If not, what do I need and who can help me?
- How will I know if I am on track to succeed throughout? How can I accurately self-assess or receive objective feedback along the way?
- How will I self-assess at the end of this process? What is important for me to understand? Do I need to evaluate my process? My mindset? My outcome?

2

Think about **HOW** you are learning:

- How will I learn best? Do I need the same or different approach than my classmates? How will I identify what I need and, if necessary, who can help me?
- What do I think I can handle independently? What do I anticipate might be challenging? What can I do to prepare myself to handle those challenges successfully?
- Am I giving myself sufficient time and resources to handle anticipated challenges? How can I make sure I have the time and tools I need to be successful?
- How can I apply previous learning to increase my chances of meeting my goals? Does the new information remind me of anything I know? Is the process similar to something I have done before? How will I know when I have learned/mastered everything I need?

3

Think about **WHAT** will demonstrate your knowledge:

- Given my options, what final product will enable me to best demonstrate my full knowledge?
- What methodology would I enjoy the most? What would challenge me while still feeling achievable?
- Before I get started, what is my goal for my final product?
- What tools or help will I need to achieve my goal?
- How will I plan and monitor my progress to be certain I achieve my goal?

Figure 9: Metacognition questions

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

This Is What I'm Thinking

Name: _____

Respond to at least 2 of the following prompts:

I'm wondering...

I'm picturing...

I am reminded of...

I understood it best when...

I liked when...

Respond to at least 2 of the following prompts:

I have questions about...

I want to go back to...

I am confused about...

I had difficulty when...

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Dialogue Journal

Provide students with one or two of the following prompts each time you ask them to write in their journals. Students might enjoy selecting or personalizing their journal covers at the beginning of the term.

Today I learned...

Today I was most interested in...Why?

One thing I did differently today was...How did it turn out?

One risk I took today was...How did it turn out?

Something that was hard for me was...Why? How did I take on the challenge?

I didn't understand...What did I do?

I have more questions about...How will I answer those?

I used a new strategy today...What was it? How did it go?

Next time I will try...

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Exit Slip

Name: _____

Think about your work in class today and respond to at least two of the following:

Today I learned...

I want to investigate further...

I am still wondering...

I am proud of...

Next time I will do this differently...

I keep thinking about...

I was surprised by...

I did not understand...