High Impact Teaching Strategy 9: Metacognitive Strategies

Effective teachers use metacognitive strategies to help students develop awareness of their own learning, to self-regulate, and to drive and sustain their motivation to learn

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Hattie (2009) found an effect size of 0.69 for metacognitive strategies.

What is it?

Metacognitive strategies empower students to think about their own thinking. Awareness of the learning process enhances control over their own learning. It also enhances personal capacity for self-regulation and managing one's own motivation for learning. Metacognitive activities can include planning how to approach learning tasks, evaluating progress, and monitoring comprehension.

How effective is it?

Evidence shows teaching metacognitive strategies can substantially improve student learning. Hattie measured the average effect size of metacognitive strategies at 0.69. The Australian Teaching and Learning Toolkit reports an impact equivalent to 8 additional months of progress.

Considerations

Students use metacognitive strategies to make the most of classroom instruction and to extend the learning beyond it. Metacognitive strategies do not directly influence how content knowledge is presented to students. In a sense, teaching metacognitive strategies entails teaching students to teach themselves.

Metacognitive strategies are taught explicitly, extensively modelled, embedded in routines and the lesson structure, and linked to the content being taught. Most importantly, the advantage of using a metacognitive strategy must be clear to students. These considerations apply to basic cognitive skills like notetaking and summarising, and to self-regulation strategies such as self-questioning and self-consequences.

THIS STRATEGY IS DEMONSTRATED WHEN THE TEACHER:

- provides students with specific strategies to set goals, and monitor and evaluate their learning progress
- assists students to identify and use strategies that support them to achieve learning goals
- demonstrates how to use a particular metacognitive strategy in ways that make content knowledge more accessible, malleable and intriguing
- uses a variety of learning and assessment strategies to scaffold and personalise the learning process
- provides support and scaffolding for tasks through checklists, self-questioning, student-teacher conferences and self-assessment
- uses ICT to increase student choice and flexible learning.

THIS STRATEGY IS NOT DEMONSTRATED WHEN THE TEACHER:

- gives students a choice of activities but does not explain how they can use specific strategies to achieve particular learning goals
- does not encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, or for applying metacognitive strategies.

THIS STRATEGY IS DEMONSTRATED WHEN STUDENTS:

- have a repertoire of learning strategies and can select strategies appropriate for the learning goals
- reflect on their learning processes, self-assess and acknowledge the impact of effort on achievement
- actively seek out feedback because they value it as a way to improve understanding of how they learn
- are capable of self-regulation and proactively take control of, and responsibility for, their own learning.