Teach Students How to Learn: Metacognition is The Key!

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Past Director, Center for Academic Success
Louisiana State University
2004-2005 National College Learning Center Association
Frank L. Christ Outstanding Learning Center Award
Desired outcomes

• We will understand why many students do not know how to learn
• We will have concrete learning strategies that faculty can teach students to increase metacognitive learning
• We will have more resources for our students
• We will view our students differently
• We will see positive changes in our students’ performance and self-perception
• We will spend time reflecting on improving our teaching and our students’ learning
Metacognition

The ability to:

- think about one’s own thinking
- be consciously aware of oneself as a problem solver
- monitor, plan, and control one’s mental processing (e.g. “Am I understanding this material, or just memorizing it?”)
- accurately judge one’s level of learning

Why don’t most students know how to learn or how to study?
According to data from the entering class of 2011...*

- *It wasn’t necessary in high school*
  - 60.5% of 2011 (down from 63% in 2010) entering first year students spent less than six hours per week doing homework in 12th grade.
  - 49.7% of these students said they graduated from high school with an “A” average.*

- *Students’ confidence level is high*
  - 70.9 % believe their academic ability is above average or in the highest 10 percent among people their age

*2011 Higher Education Research Institute Study
How do you think most students would answer the following?

- What did most of your teachers in high school do the *day before the test*?
- What did they *do* during this activity?
- What grade would you have made on the test if you had gone to class *only* on the day before the test?
Faculty Must Help Students Make the Transition to College

Help students identify and close "the gap"

current behavior → current grades

efficacious behavior → desired grades
Reflection Questions

• What’s the difference, if any, between studying and learning?

• For which task would you study more?
  A. Make an A on the test
  B. Teach the material to the class
Turn Students into Expert Learners:

Teach Them Metacognitive Learning Strategies!
The Story of Three Students

- **Travis**, *junior psychology student*
  47, 52, **82, 86**  
  B in course

- **Maryam**, *first year art student*
  57, **87**  
  B in course

- **Dana**, *first year physics student*
  80, 54, **91, 97, 90 (final)**  
  A in course
How’d They Do It?

- They used *metacognitive strategies*
- They began *thinking about their thinking*
- They focused on *learning instead of grades*
Problem: Reading Comprehension

Solution: Preview text before reading
Develop questions
Read one paragraph at a time and paraphrase information
Maryam, *freshman art student* 57, 87

Problem: Not seeing the underlying structure of different types of art

Solution: Focus on characteristics of different artists’ work in order to identify the painter of an unfamiliar piece of art
Dana, first year physics student
80, 54, 91, 97, 90 (final)

Problem: Memorizing formulas and using www.cramster.com

Solution: Solve problems with no external aids and test mastery of concepts
Why the Fast and Dramatic Increase?

It’s all about the strategies, and getting them to engage their brains!
Counting Vowels in 45 seconds

How accurate are you?

Count all the vowels in the words on the next slide.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dollar Bill</th>
<th>Cat Lives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dice</td>
<td>Bowling Pins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tricycle</td>
<td>Football Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-leaf Clover</td>
<td>Dozen Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand</td>
<td>Unlucky Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six-Pack</td>
<td>Valentine’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven-Up</td>
<td>Quarter Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octopus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How many *words* or *phrases* do you remember?
Let’s look at the words again…

What are they arranged according to?
Dollar Bill
Dice
Tricycle
Four-leaf Clover
Hand
Six-Pack
Seven-Up
Octopus
Cat Lives
Bowling Pins
Football Team
Dozen Eggs
Unlucky Friday
Valentine’s Day
Quarter Hour
NOW, how many words or phrases do you remember?
What were two major differences between the two attempts?

1. We knew what the task was

2. We knew how the information was organized
What we know about learning

- **Active learning** is more lasting than passive learning
- Thinking about thinking is important
  - *Metacognition*
- The level at which learning occurs is important
  - *Bloom’s Taxonomy*
Bloom’s Taxonomy

Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Understanding
- Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.

Applying
- Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing.

Analyzing
- Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure.

Evaluating
- Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.

Creating
- Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.

http://www.odu.edu/educ/llschult/blooms_taxonomy.htm
When we teach students about Bloom’s Taxonomy...

They GET it!
At what level of Bloom’s did you have to operate to make A’s or B’s in high school?

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation
How students answered

At what level of Bloom’s do you think you’ll need to be to make an A in Chem 1201?

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation
How do we teach students to move higher on Bloom’s Taxonomy?

Teach them the Study Cycle*

*adapted from Frank Christ’s PLRS system
The Study Cycle

**Preview**

*Preview before class* – Skim the chapter, note headings and boldface words, review summaries and chapter objectives, and come up with questions you’d like the lecture to answer for you.

**Attend**

*Attend class* – GO TO CLASS! Answer and ask questions and take meaningful notes.

**Review**

*Review after class* – As soon after class as possible, read notes, fill in gaps and note any questions.

**Study**

*Study* – Repetition is the key. Ask questions such as ‘why’, ‘how’, and ‘what if’.

- Intense Study Sessions* - 3-5 short study sessions per day
- Weekend Review – Read notes and material from the week to make connections

**Assess**

*Assess your Learning* – Periodically perform reality checks

- Am I using study methods that are effective?
- Do I understand the material enough to teach it to others?

**Intense Study Sessions**

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Set a Goal</td>
<td>1-2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Study with Focus</td>
<td>30-50 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reward Yourself</td>
<td>10-15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decide what you want to accomplish in your study session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Interact with material</em> - organize, concept map, summarize, process, re-read, fill-in notes, reflect, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Take a break</em> – call a friend, play a short game, get a snack</td>
<td>Go over what you just studied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Metacognitive Strategies

- Always ask why, how, and what if
- Use SQ5R for reading assignments (survey, question, read, recite, review, wRite, reflect)
- Test understanding by giving “mini lectures” on concepts
- Always solve problems without looking at an example or the solution
- Use the Study Cycle with Intense Study Sessions
Metacognitive Get Acquainted Activity*

• What do you believe is important to understand and learn in __________________?  
• What do you believe to be critical characteristics of successful students in __________?  
• How will you study and prepare for exams in ________________________________?


- Historical Background on Study Strategies
- Developmental Education and Learning Assistance Today
- Diverse Populations in the Classroom
- Students’ Beliefs about Study Strategies
- Theory, Research, and *Best Practices*
- Assessment and Evaluation
Another Valuable Reference

Effective Strategies for Teaching Unprepared Students*

- Establish High Expectations
- Emphasize Consistent Contact
- Determine Students’ Learning Styles
- Define Student Success
- Clarify Student Responsibility
- Establish a Learning Community of Scholars
- Meet Students Where They Are
- Interweave Assessment and Teaching

Help Students Develop the Right Mindset


Mindset* is Important!

- **Fixed Intelligence Mindset**
  Intelligence is static
  You have a certain amount of it

- **Growth Intelligence Mindset**
  Intelligence can be developed
  You can grow it with actions

New York: Random House Publishing
Mindset determines reactions to

- **Challenges** – avoid vs. embrace
- **Obstacles** – give up easily vs. persist
- **Tasks requiring effort** – fruitless vs. path to mastery
- **Criticism** – ignore vs. learn from
- **Success of Others** – feel threatened by vs. find lessons and inspiration in
What happens when we teach metacognitive learning strategies, Bloom’s Taxonomy, and the Study Cycle to an entire class, not just individuals?
### Performance in Gen Chem I in 2010

Based on One Learning Strategies Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1 Avg.:</td>
<td>72.35%</td>
<td>70.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2 Avg.:</td>
<td>76.01%</td>
<td>68.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final course Avg*.:</td>
<td>82.48%</td>
<td>72.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Course Grade:</strong></td>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
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Even one 50-min presentation on study and learning strategies may mean an improvement of one full letter grade!

**Note:** 15% of the final course grade was determined by homework; students could also earn ~5% for extra credit activities.
Performance in Gen Chem I in 2011
Based on One Learning Strategies Session

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1 Avg.:</td>
<td>71.65%</td>
<td>70.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2 Avg.:</td>
<td>77.18%</td>
<td>68.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final course Avg*:</td>
<td>81.60%</td>
<td>70.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Course Grade:**
- **B** for Attended
- **C** for Absent

The one 50-min presentation on study and learning strategies again resulted in an improvement of one full letter grade!

**Note:** 15% of the final course grade was determined by homework; students could also earn ~5% for extra credit activities.
# LSU Analytical Chemistry Graduate Student’s Cumulative Exam Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/04 Failed</td>
<td>10/05 Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/04 Failed</td>
<td>11/05 Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/04 Failed</td>
<td>12/05 Passed best in group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/04 Failed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/05 Passed</td>
<td>1/06 Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/05 Failed</td>
<td>2/06 Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/05 Failed</td>
<td>3/06 Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/05 Failed</td>
<td>4/06 Passed last one!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/06 N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Began work with CAS and the Writing Center in October 2005**
Email from a Spring 2011 Chem 1201 student

“…Personally, I am not so good at chemistry and unfortunately, at this point my grade for that class is reflecting exactly that. I am emailing you inquiring about a possibility of you tutoring me.”

April 6, 2011

“I made a 68, 50, (50), 87, 87, and a 97 on my final. I ended up earning a 90 (A) in the course, but I started with a 60 (D). I think what I did different was make sidenotes in each chapter and as I progressed onto the next chapter I was able to refer to these notes. I would say that in chemistry everything builds from the previous topic.

May 13, 2011

Semester GPA: 3.8
… and from the perspective of a faculty member who learned metacognitive strategies as a student

“…I am happy to report to you that many of my students are using the study cycle and all of the outcomes are positive.

In summary, students who were failing all of their classes, including my course and in their final semester before being removed from the university are now the top students in their respective classes.

I am so proud of these students. Many of the students stated to me that they will continue to use the study cycle…..”

October 15, 2010

Algernon Kelley, Xavier University Chemistry Instructor
Oct. 17, 2011

Hello Dr. Kelley. ... I am struggling at Xavier and I REALLY want to succeed, but everything I've tried seems to end with a "decent" grade. I'm not the type of person that settles for decent. What you preached during the time you were in Dr. Privett's class last week is still ringing in my head. I really want to know how you were able to do really well even despite your circumstances growing up. I was hoping you could mentor me and guide me down the path that will help me realize my true potential while here at Xavier. Honestly I want to do what you did, but I seriously can't find a way how to. Can I please set up a meeting with you as soon as you’re available so I can learn how to get a handle on grades and classes?

Oct. 24, 2011

Hey Dr. Kelley, I made an 84 on my chemistry exam (compared to the 56 on my first one) using your method for 2 days (without prior intense studying). Thanks for pointing me in the right direction. I’ll come by your office Friday and talk to you about the test.

Nov 3, 2011

Hey Dr. Kelley! I have increased my Bio exam grade from a 76% to a 91.5% using your system. Ever since I started your study cycle program, my grades have significantly improved. I have honestly gained a sense of hope and confidence here at Xavier. My family and I are really grateful that you have taken time to get me back on track.
We *can* significantly increase student learning!

- We must teach students the **learning process** and provide **specific strategies**
- We must **not judge** student **potential on initial performance**
- We must **encourage students to persist in** the face of initial failure
- We must **encourage the use of** metacognitive tools
Final Reflection Question

Who is *primarily* responsible for student learning?

a) the student
b) the instructor
c) the institution
Who do you think *students* say is *primarily* responsible for student learning?

a) the student  
b) the instructor  
c) the institution
The reality is that...

when *all three* of these entities take *full responsibility* for student learning, we will experience a *significant increase* in student learning, retention, and graduation rates!
Special Note

Please visit the CAS website at www.cas.lsu.edu. We have on-line workshops that will introduce you and your students to effective metacognitive strategies. Please feel free to contact me at smcgui1@lsu.edu. Have fun teaching your students powerful metacognitive strategies!

Saundra McGuire
Useful Websites

- http://www.xavier.edu/lac/
- http://www.xavier.edu/retention/
- www.cas.lsu.edu
- www.howtostudy.org
- www.vark-learn.com
- www.drearlbloch.com
- Searches on www.google.com
Additional References


http://academic.pg.cc.md.us/~wpeirce/MCCCTR/metacognition.htm

*Excellent student reference