

Introducing Metacognition and Learning Strategies to Students: A Step-by-Step Guide.

Sandra Y. McGuire, Ph.D.

Many faculty have asked me to explain just what happens in learning strategies sessions with students. The steps I usually take are listed below, but there is no right or wrong way to do this. (These steps can be used in individual sessions or with a class or other group.) If you believe that all students can succeed (as I do), teach them about metacognition and learning strategies, help them develop a growth intelligence mindset, and motivate them to use the strategies, you will see positive results! Use these steps as a guide if you like, but please adapt them to your individual needs.

1. Wait until students have gotten the results of their first major test or quiz; they're more likely to listen.
2. If for a class, consider not revealing that the session will present learning strategies; they're more likely to show up. (Or, you can indicate that the session will help them become more efficient learners.)
3. At the beginning of the session, ascertain career goals. (This will allow you to tether the strategies to goals the student ultimately wants to attain.)
4. Show dramatic before and after results from other students or classes.
5. Define metacognition.
6. Consider including the Count the Vowels exercise or another exercise that demonstrates the power of strategies.
7. Ask reflection questions such as the ones below:
 - i. What's the difference between *studying* and *learning*? Which have you been doing up to this point?
 - ii. For which task would you work harder – a) make an A on the next test, or b) teach the material that will be covered on the next test for a review session for the class? (The overwhelming majority of students say they would work harder if they have to teach the material.) Up to this point, when preparing for a test, have you been putting in the amount of effort commensurate with making a A or teaching the material?
8. Introduce Bloom's Taxonomy.
9. Introduce the Study Cycle and Intense Study Sessions as a way of ascending Bloom's.
10. Discuss specific strategies:
 - i) reading comprehension: preview material before reading, develop questions you expect the passage to answer, read one paragraph at a time while stopping to paraphrase the information read

- ii) doing homework without using examples: study the information before looking at the first homework problem, work the example problem without looking at the solution, treat the homework problems as if they are test questions. Work a few of them at a time before checking to see if they were done correctly.
11. Discuss reasons students might or might not have done well on the first exam or quiz. Highlight reasons that focus on the students' *behavior*, not circumstances they can't control. Lead them to take responsibility for their results.
 12. Ask two “on a scale of one to 10” questions to bring it home: 1) How different are these strategies from what they were doing before? 2) How motivated are they to use them?
 13. Elicit a commitment by asking students to write down which strategy or strategies they will commit to using for the next few weeks.
 14. Provide online resources and direct students to the campus learning center.
 15. Express confidence that if students *use* the strategies they *will* be successful, no matter what their past performance has been.