



Metacognition: Thinking about Thinking

Have you ever wondered what might be going on inside the brain of Auguste Rodin's famous sculpture, *The Thinker*? Could he simply be thinking about metacognition, which is often defined as thinking about thinking? If so, then Rodin's *Thinker* knows that metacognition plays a big part in how we learn and process information. Successful learners use this powerful tool to create a deeper level of awareness as they continually analyze their thinking. Students who think about how they think often gain much deeper insights from the topics they study.

Building Metacognition When Learning To Read

Teachers and parents can help develop this skill in children by asking questions focused on the thinking process. For example, if a student is reading aloud and pauses at a word before saying it, we can ask, "How did you figure that out?" This helps the student connect to what just happened in his brain. If the word verbalized is correct, then the metacognition reinforces the behavior, and if not correct, metacognition helps him learn what he could do to avoid making the same mistake in the future.

What if a student pauses, misreads the word, and then self-corrects? This is yet another opportunity to show the student how metacognition works and is

important because often there can be more than one reason why a self-correction occurs. Perhaps the student realized that the word made no sense in the context of the sentence, or maybe the student realized that the word she said did not match the letters in the word on the page. Understanding what she did right is just as, if not more, important as recognizing mistakes.

Building Metacognition When Reading To Learn

When reading to learn, a student benefits from thinking about what he already knows about the topic. Using this as a starting point, he can successfully connect and add new information. After making connections with prior knowledge, he can use metacognition to clearly understand the process he used to make that connection happen.

The planning, analyzing and monitoring of the thinking involved is very important to grasping a new concept or idea. Metacognition creates an awareness of the thinking process, which helps the student become active and engaged while reading. The ability to predict, analyze, infer and perform other higher order thinking skills is metacognition in action.

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Colin's Story

My nine-year old son, Colin, is a very hard working and smart young man. He enjoys all types of outdoor activities including fishing, hunting, basketball, baseball, riding his bike and playing with his friends.

As early as kindergarten Colin's teacher began to tell us that he was having trouble with reading skills. We started working at home on reading nightly. Colin also started to attend programs at school to help him. Through the next few years we continued to try all types of interventions including after school sessions, summer school, private tutoring with a former special education teacher, RAD prism lens glasses and specific reading programs. By the time Colin reached third grade he had been diagnosed with ADD and was taking medication to help him focus. This did help, but Colin continued to have trouble with reading, writing and spelling.

All of this was very hard for me to understand because Colin has always been able to comprehend and reason things very well. He has had good teachers and he attends a very successful school but he was continuing to get further and further behind grade level. Third grade was the year of frustration for all us. Colin was being required to do things daily that he was unable to do and his school wanted to retain him in third grade.

I learned about the Langsford Center from a teacher I worked with whose son attended Langsford. I called and scheduled an evaluation and learned that Colin was unable to break down the sounds of letters. This is called "Phonemic Awareness" and is a common problem for children with dyslexia and learning disabilities. Kristin told me that the Langsford method of teaching could help retrain Colin's brain and bring his reading up to grade level.

I could see from the beginning that Colin enjoyed the one on one instruction and we both liked the fact that he had a different instructor every hour, which varied the style and technique used. A few weeks after starting at Langsford, Colin began to bring home small chapter books and we would read at home. I will never forget

the night that after reading the first chapter Colin asked me if he could keep reading. That night we finished that book, it was the first chapter book Colin ever read. Colin began to gain self-confidence in his reading.

We decided to have him repeat third grade because I knew that with his new ability to read at third grade level it would be much different this time. Colin's attitude toward school has changed dramatically. He is no longer frustrated with school

and is now learning and enjoying school. Colin and I continue to read daily at home. His processing speed is still slow which makes his fluency slow. However before he began Langsford his reading level was below first grade and after he finished Langsford he was reading on a third grade level. Colin enjoys reading Magic Tree House books and his writing and spelling has improved greatly. Colin recently received the "Most Improved Student" award from his teachers at Pleasant Grove Elementary School.



Colin continues to practice reading daily at home and will return to Langsford for additional work this summer. We know that Colin may very well always have some difficulty with reading but he now has the tools to enable him to read independently and be a successful student.

One day on our way home from Langsford Colin said "I wish we would have found Langsford a long time ago." I wrote on a note to all the staff at Langsford that I believe God places people in our paths to help us through tough times in our lives. I know the program and staff at Langsford were a blessing for Colin and our family.

➔ Mindy Vincent



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To sign up today, simply go to www.WeTeachReading.com

Read our blog for a peek inside Langsford: www.langsfordcenter.blogspot.com

Would you like to see your Langsford story in the next Langsford Letter? Just send your letter and a picture of your former Langsford student to our nearest office.

Website Spotlight

<http://tinyurl.com/2xz1ff>

Take a fascinating look in 3D at the human brain! National Geographic Magazine has put together an online interactive program showing how various forms of memory work inside the brain. Using a mouse, visitors can rotate an image of the brain and learn how memories are saved (or lost).



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Metacognition for Efficient Learning

Metacognition can help the brain perform more efficiently. After a student solves any type of problem, using metacognition helps her understand the process she used to arrive at the solution. This helps her be successful the next time she is faced with a similar problem and may even help avoid the problem. For instance, a student may say to herself, "The last time I made a great grade on a research paper, it really worked well for me to organize my thoughts before I started to write the paper." This continual process of metacognition often creates additional advantages such as increasing the student's confidence. She recognizes that her own thinking is helping her become a stronger learner.

Metacognition also helps when a student gets stuck. Parents or teachers can ask, "What are you thinking?" This not only checks out whether or not he is focused on the problem at hand, but often the act of verbalizing his thinking will help the student move forward in working out the difficulty.

We think a key part of helping students become self-correcting independent learners is metacognition. What do you think? ↩

Struggles of Life

by Brian Hsiao, age 14

*A tear for every second,
A memory everyday.
I struggle to prevent it,
But the years fly away.*

*I wonder "Is it worth it?"
If my struggle's for the best.
Maybe I should just give up
And give it all a rest.*

*No, I'll never stop it!
For I must do what's best.
My time will come through effort.
My fight will be the quest.*

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& learning for life!

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Langsford Learning Center, with locations in Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio, has tutored children and adults since 1992. We have proven results teaching phonological (phonemic) awareness, phonics, reading, spelling, reading and listening comprehension, handwriting, and math using specialized, research-based approaches.

From enrichment to remediation, we have extensive experience training the foundations associated with independent learning, including helping individuals with learning disabilities, auditory processing disorder (APD), dyslexia, and hyperlexia.

- Multisensory, one-to-one learning sessions
- A customized plan of action
- Diagnostic assessment
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