**EVOLUTION OF METACOGNITION**

The concept of metacognition has been around since humans have been able to reflect on their cognitive experience. Cognition or cognitive experiences are mental processes that involve attention, memory, manufacturing and understanding language, learning, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making. The famous ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, is credited for coining the concept of “thinking about your own thinking” in 400 BC. In 1690 John H. Locke, the English philosopher, mentioned the concept of children reflecting on their own thinking process, which is the basis of metacognition. However, the word “metacognition” was made popular by American psychologist John H. Flavell in the 1970’s. Metacognition is thinking about thinking, knowing about knowing, or cognition about cognition. Metacognition is to know when, why and how to solve problems; it is a higher-order of thinking that enables understanding. Metacognition is consciousness of one’s own learning or rational process; it is having an appreciation for the knowledge that you already have, knowing how and making room for the knowledge you do not have. This evolving concept is like an internal guide that notices when one’s comprehension fails or succeeds and why. The concept may seem intimidating initially but we engage in metacognitive activities daily.

Metacognition is very critical in successful learning; as educators it is beneficial to our students to teach them this concept so they know how to allocate their cognitive resources through metacognitive control. Their learning will improve as they take control of their metacognitive capabilities.

**MILES COLLEGE’S METACOGNITION EXPERIENCE**

The Miles College Metacognition Lab has one singular, simple mission: To teach students very specific, tailored metacognitive strategies that will increase academic success and retention. Around Miles College, the term metacognition is now commonplace and well understood. However, when the Metacognition Lab was initially created two years ago, there was a healthy amount of skepticism and confusion over what metacognition is and how it was supposed to help students succeed.

In the summer of 2011, Administration was inspired to bring metacognition to Miles College after they heard
Metacognition: Transforming Learning Experience

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The Metacognition Lab was born, the most common questions we heard from students and faculty alike were: "What are metacognitive strategies?" and "Why is metacognition essential?" The Lab took every opportunity to spread the word that our purpose was to teach students activities that would help them become aware of and monitor their learning in order to enable them to better manage their cognitive skills and determine weaknesses that can be corrected by constructing new cognitive skills. Thanks to the support of the entire Miles College Administration, the Metacognition Lab was very successful in spreading awareness about our lab and our mission. As noted previously, the guest speaker lectured and gave workshops to train the entire Miles College faculty and staff on the importance of recognizing and utilizing metacognition as a key to unlocking student success. After the conference, we had faculty that had been critical of the Lab’s mission sharing with us that the guest speaker’s talks and workshops had energized and encouraged them more than any conference they had ever attended. So how exactly has the Metacognition Lab helped students? Well, allow us to let our students tell you. When asked how learning about metacognition helped them, our participants: this is a sampling of some of the responses we got from students when they were asked how learning about metacognition helped them, with his permission we would like to introduce Miles College student Alfred (name changed for privacy) Alfred came to us after mid-term this spring semester. Alfred unfortunately had a very poor academic beginning of the semester and came to us with subpar midterm grades. He managed to upset all of his professors and give off the impression that he did not care about his grades. At the time he came to us, Alfred had not bought any of his textbooks and was not really doing any school work outside of class. The Metacognition Lab Coaches worked together to provide a welcoming, encouraging, and most importantly, consistent environment where Alfred could come and be treated as a scholar. We taught Alfred how to order his textbook from the website Half.com and how to order previous editions that he could afford. Alfred was given workshops on strategies to help him not only read his textbook, but understand and retain the information by previewing material and asking critical questions about the text in order to stay engaged in the material.

When we first met Alfred, his professors complained that he was frequently missing class and even when he did show up, he would be consistently late. As Alfred began working with the Lab, the Coaches stressed to him the importance of going to class not only on time and every time, but coming to class prepared to participate by reading the material beforehand and having questions on hand to ask his professor. His attendance improved, his notes became clearer, his grades improved, and he would spend any time not actually in class in the lab.

At the end of the semester, Alfred’s D in Biology Lab improved to an A, his F in Crime and Criminality had improved to a C, his D in Speech Improved to a B and his F in African American Experience improved to a B. Most astonishing, Alfred now felt like a true scholar in his college community, had built relationships with some of the top Honor students, and believed in his own academic abilities. He is now a model student and is one of the Metacognition Lab’s most vociferous recruiters on campus.

As the Metacognition Lab continues to evolve and expand, the services always remain rooted in teaching students strategies, techniques, and organizational skills that will allow the student to become an independent thinker who is a master of learning. The Metacognition Lab has been beneficial to both the students who completed High School prepared or unprepared for College work. One objective is to statistically close the gap between the Honor students and non-Honor students. Educators can experience greater rewards from unprepared students by establishing higher expectations for them; emphasizing consistent contact, helping students in determining their individual learning style, and by helping students define their own academic success. By meeting students where they are, helping to clarify their academic responsibility and establishing a learning community of scholars, students will embrace their metacognitive skills and increase their academic reward.

REFERENCES


