The Top 4 Most Useful Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognition represents an example of deep learning, where students become aware of their own thought processes through self-reflection after learning has occurred. When students reflect, they grow more confident and willing to take on new challenges. However, as Hattie (2009) explains, far too many teachers tend to stay at the surface level. In fact, nearly 90 percent of instruction is designed to be at the surface level of learning.

1. Use the 3-2-1 Strategy

Step 1: Ask Students to Answer the 3-2-1 Prompt

After students engage with a text or a lesson, ask them to list the following details in their journals or on separate paper:

☐ Three things that they have learned from this lesson or from this text.

☐ Two questions that they still have.

☐ One aspect of class or the text that they enjoyed (or a part of the lesson they'll never forget)

Step 2: Evaluate Students' Responses

Use students' responses to guide teaching decisions. 3-2-1 responses can help you identify areas of the curriculum that you may need to review again or concepts or activities that hold special interest for students.

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2. Exit Cards /Journal Prompts
Description
Exit Cards are tools for gathering information on student readiness levels, interests, or learning profiles, using predetermined prompts relating to the content or activity that focuses on instruction. These prompts can be collected before, during, or after an instructional period.
Set up:
1. Identify the focus of instruction and determine whether prompts are to be used as a pre-assessment or a progress check.
2. Ask students to describe three takeaways, two questions they have or two things they want to learn more about, and one thing they enjoyed about a subject matter in writing.
3. Collect prompts.
4. Modify instruction based on data gleaned from prompts.

3. Inquiry Writing
Description
Inquiry Writing is a reflective strategy to help students process content.
Set up:
1. Develop questions pertinent to the focal point of the lesson.
2. Direct students to answer the questions, and then compare and contrast their answers with one another.
3. Ask students to share out their perspectives.

Introductory Questions/Writing Task	Reactionary Question/Writing Task	Follow-Up Question/Writing Task
Why do you think...? List as many...?	Do you agree with...?	I've changed my thinking about...
What ideas come to mind...?	Do you disagree with...?	Movie titles for this could be...
What do you know about...?	What are some questions raised so far?	Key headlines for this topic might include...
How would you find out more about...?	What impressed you the most...?	A new way to interpret...
What is your first idea when you think about...?	What seemed most important...?	Draw an analogy between _____ and _____.
How are some ways we might deal with...?	Im still confused about...? Yes, but...	What I predict will happen next...

3. Metacognition Through 3 Questions
Description
Metacognition Through 3 Questions is math* strategy that builds group discussion by collaborating and verifying their answers. This approach deepens understanding, refines problem-solving techniques, and fosters a mode mindful learning experience.
Set up:
1. Put students in groups of 3-4
2. Pass out 3 sticky notes for each group
3. During work time tell students they are allowed to ask you 3 questions
4. Answer up to 3 questions from student groups and then take the post-it note after answering each

The 3-question strategy helps students build confidence in their prior knowledge while emphasizing the value of group collaboration over solely relying on independent problem-solving. Ex. Students explain their reasoning, check each other's steps, and make sure everyone understands how they got the answer. The teacher circulates, listens in, and asks clarifying questions if needed.

*can be used in other content areas