

Teaching and Learning

Metacognition



A child's developing awareness of their own mental processes is known as metacognition.

Metacognition involves those higher-order thinking skills that enable awareness and understanding of our cognitive processes. Fuelled by memory and experience, it helps us to understand the structure of a task and to reflect on the strategies and processes necessary to achieve it.

- Knowledge – surveying and reviewing that knowledge.
- Thinking – understanding cognitive tasks and selecting strategies for those tasks.
- Thinking strategies – such as self-assessing, self-questioning and revising.

Flavell identified three 'metas' that children gradually acquire and use consciously or subconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally:

- Identifying situations in which conscious storage of information may be useful in the future.
- Keeping to hand information that might be useful for active problem-solving.
- Making deliberate, systematic routine searches for information pertinent to problem-solving, even in the absence of problems.

Task 1

Watch the video link <https://youtu.be/HZrUWvfU6VU>

Can you see the relevance and importance of metacognition in the early years?

Reflect – can you think of a time when you have noticed a child demonstrating metacognition?

Task 2

Do you deeply probe children's thinking? - Distinguish between what a child knows and understands and what they do not?

Do you ask children these types of questions in their play -

- I would like to know more about that.
- What should I do first?
- So you think?
- So what will you do first?
- That reminds me of?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What do you feel about?
- Can you tell me more why you think that happened?
- Is something confusing you?

Observe a member of staff interacting with an activity - did you hear this communication. How could the practitioner improve?

Task 3

Supporting metacognition in your setting - reflect on these strategies and discuss with a peer -

- Do you create opportunities for structured dialogue?
- Do you encourage mindfulness and reflection of activities?
- Do practitioners model their own metacognitive strategies?
- Do practitioners model self-talk and the creative process in their support?
- Do practitioners give children time to watch each other?
- Do you encourage mind mapping?
- Do you create thinking times?
- Do you encourage children to evaluate work critically?
- Do you verbalise approaches during activities?
- Do you value the process, not the product?
- Do you encourage children to solve problems?
- Do you encourage children to talk about their strategies?
- Do you plan - review - do?

Has this exercise raised more questions? Be sure to expand on your knowledge of metacognition through further CPD opportunities.