

# AN EEF SCHOOL CASE STUDY: METACOGNITION

Park View Academy

## School context:



Park View

Park View School is a large academy for 11-18 year olds in Chester-Le-Street, County Durham. We serve over 1500 students across three sites and 23% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. The catchment area includes neighbourhoods spanning both the most-deprived and least-deprived deciles in England.

## 1 What problem were you looking to solve?



A significant proportion of students in Year 10 were using ineffective study strategies, such as re-reading their notes and making superficial mindmaps. Those using more effective strategies did so poorly, and without a clear understanding of the rationale behind them.

After reading Dunlosky et al (2013), and the EEF's [Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning](#) guidance report, I decided to explicitly teach students effective study habits, alongside the principles which underpin them. The intention was to enable students to make better-informed decisions about their learning to aid independent study.

## 3 What did you do?



As the EEF's guidance report shows, metacognition is inseparable from subject knowledge and therefore should be integrated when teaching content at regular intervals. This helps space out learning and gives students actionable steps to apply the principles in practice.

To this end, I began the year with a lesson explicitly introducing effective study habits including: spacing, retrieval, elaboration, and the Leitner method, as well as practical methods to aid revision. It was important to discuss ways in which effective strategies can go wrong (making flashcards but not using them, or only using them to cram).

To space out the approach, I revisited this once or twice during each half-term in preparation for assessments or self-study tasks by modelling my own metacognitive processes to demonstrate how to prepare. As the year progressed, I reduced this scaffolding, modelling less as independence increased, which is exemplified in recommendation 3 of the EEF guidance. This shifted the culture from telling students to revise, to supporting them to revise effectively. Homework activities were then designed to support this, through retrieval quizzes and key facts tests.

## 2 What were the anticipated barriers/challenges?



Dunlosky's research shows that when given the opportunity, students are more inclined to choose less effective study strategies. I anticipated that changes would be more difficult for older students to embrace, as their habits and routines may have been more strongly embedded through repetition. This meant students' natural inclinations and pre-existing habits would have to be overcome to help them create new, more effective study strategies.

During the partial school closures of the past academic year, students had to be more independent in their studies. I was particularly concerned with the impact this would have on Year 12 students beginning their A-levels, where independent study becomes more significant (especially as they missed out on the experience of taking their GCSE examinations in 2020).

## 4 How are you monitoring the success of this intervention?



We are proactively seeking feedback from our pupils; after each assessment, students complete a reflection activity which allows us to discuss and monitor study habits. Their responses suggest that they are choosing more effective study habits, and not falling into the trap of low-impact strategies such as merely highlighting and re-reading.

As well as making better-informed choices, students have been able to better articulate why they are choosing particular study habits. In-class discussions have shown they can identify more effective habits and challenge the usage of poorer ones.

We continue to adapt this approach during this exploratory phase. The next steps will be to share across the department and promote practical strategies with parents to support home learning.

## Additional:

### Suggested reading:

- *Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning*  
[eef.li/metacognition/](http://eef.li/metacognition/)
- *Working with Parents to support children's learning*  
[eef.li/supporting-parents/](http://eef.li/supporting-parents/)
- *Strengthening the Student Toolbox: Study Strategies to Boost Learning. By John Dunlosky. American Educator, Vol. 37, No. 3, Fall 2013, AFTJ*
- *Dunlosky et al's (2013) Improving Student's Learning with Effective Learning Techniques.*

## Reflection questions



- Do we know how our students are revising?
- How do we support students to choose more effective study methods and develop self-regulation?
- Effective habits can take a long time to build; when do you begin explicitly teaching students how to study?
- Do your current assessment and homework policies promote short-term cramming or long-term spaced approaches?