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

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

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 here this communication. How could the practitioner improve?

Task

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.