Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal: For Spring 2010
Metacognitive Activities for College Reading and Composition
Submitted by Kathryn Schoenrock, Language Arts Department
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Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status:
>   Full-time hire date: September 1989
>   Number of sabbaticals taken during the past nineteen years: 0

Purpose of the Sabbatical Project:
The purpose of this semester-long sabbatical project is to create a resource to assist instructors in integrating activities that foster metacognition into reading and writing instruction. The proposed guide will include an accessible summary of the pedagogical theory supporting the efficacy of methods of instruction that help students to become conscious of their individual learning processes, to monitor their learning and to develop strategies for enhancing their learning. The guide will also include examples of reading and writing activities and assignments that emphasize metacognition and that can easily be adapted for any discipline. I will make the guide available to instructors through the office of the Academic Senate and through the library reference desk.

Background for the project:
One of the greatest challenges for instructors in all disciplines is to create a classroom environment that emphasizes active learning rather than passive learning. Active learning requires students to develop an awareness of their learning processes and to monitor, direct and evaluate them. In contrast, passive learning only requires students to follow their instructors' directions and to absorb information without necessarily being aware of their own learning processes. In educational theory the awareness of one's own learning processes is referred to as "metacognition."

Although the concept of incorporating metacognition into classroom instruction is far from new, it is increasingly emphasized as a key component for community college students' success in acquiring basic reading and writing skills (even though students at all skill levels and in all disciplines benefit from metacognition). The Center for Student Success recently published a comprehensive review of the literature on best practices in basic skills, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* (2007), that states that metacognition is an integral component for creating a culture of active learners. In addition, calls for proposals from the Faculty Inquiry Network (funded by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation) recently included a request for faculty to study the role of metacognintion in students learning to learn (forwarded by Robert S. Gabriner, Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement, City College of San Francisco).

Because I have a secondary school teaching background, the importance of metacognition is not new to me. However, I am eager to learn about current applications and to promote the practice of including reading and writing assignments and activities that emphasize metacognition in English composition and reading courses, as well as courses across the disciplines. Two approaches noted by the Center for Student Success because of their demonstrated impact on the reading and writing skills of secondary students are Reading Apprenticeship and reciprocal teaching. I would like to investigate these and other approaches in order to prepare a guide for community college instructors that summarizes my findings and includes examples of teaching techniques that can easily be adapted for reading and writing instruction across the disciplines.-

Benefits:

Although this project focuses on basic skills reading and writing instruction, it will benefit instructors and students across the disciplines at all levels because a focus on metacognition transforms the classroom from a "sage on the stage" instructor-centered approach to a student-centered approach. Instructors would have an accessible summary of the research and examples of activities that employ these methodologies and that can be easily adapted to any reading or writing assignment. The guide will assist instructors who have advanced degrees in a discipline but lack a background in teaching methods in applying techniques that emphasize metacognition. This potentially will be a step towards embedding basic skills reading and writing instruction into content area courses, as well as improving instruction within the English discipline.

Students will also benefit because these methods have already demonstrated a significant impact on secondary students' reading and writing abilities. The increased challenge presented by the new AA/AS degree requirements (English 1A and intermediate algebra) requires that we utilize new methods of instruction including those that allow students to monitor their own learning and to discover their optimal learning strategies. Metacognition includes developing an awareness of:
- learning styles
- cultural, social and personal perspectives
- cognitive skills
- study skills
- time management
- campus resources

This awareness will assist students in addressing basic skills issues early, replacing ineffective learning strategies with effective strategies, taking responsibility for their own learning and knowing what questions to ask to get the most help from their instructors and student support services. The ultimate goals are to increase the number of students who are successful in developing the reading and writing skills to be prepared to succeed in English 1A and to increase the success of basic skills students in other academic disciplines.

Components of the Project:
I would like to create an accessible guide for incorporating metacognition into the classroom for community college instructors. The guide will include:

- a summary of the current theory and methodology supporting integrating metacognition into reading and composition instruction
- examples of reading and writing activities and assignments that develop metacognitive skills
- models of assignments and activities that can be used to integrate metacognition into the content area classroom