

# The Kindergarten Chronicles

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## NEPF Standard 4: Students Engage in Metacognitive Activity to Increase Understanding of and Responsibility for Their Own Learning

The NEPF Literature Review states metacognition, thinking about our own thinking, is a foundational cognitive process that is essential for creating independent learners. Metacognition impacts learning in numerous ways. Research has shown that students who monitor their own thinking and take action based on that knowledge are more successful learners than their peers. They understand the “how” of a task, allowing them to process more deeply, think more critically, and create more meaningful and lasting connections. Metacognition has two components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation. **Metacognitive knowledge** is understanding what factors impact performance, including knowledge about oneself as a learner. For example, a student uses metacognitive knowledge when she/he annotates text during reading as a way to stay active and engaged in the reading process. Click [here](#) to see examples of kindergarten annotation. **Metacognitive regulation** is the actual monitoring of one’s own thinking. This promotes awareness of one’s own strengths and weaknesses and the ability to take action based on this understanding. For example, if a student is listening to or reading a story, does the student realize when his or her comprehension begins to falter?

Metacognition can be promoted in the classroom by providing tasks that have novelty, variety, and diversity. Tasks should also have personal relevance to students. Our kindergarten literacy and math stations can be vehicles for achieving metacognition, based on the criteria mentioned.

In addition to stations, the following activities will help build students’ metacognitive knowledge:

**Think-Alouds:** When you think aloud—verbalize YOUR thinking process—during a mini-lesson, an oral reading, or problem solving exercise, you are offering students strategies that can enhance their comprehension and self-monitoring abilities. To learn the steps of a think-aloud and different ways to use them, click [here](#). See the bookmark example on the right. This makes for a powerful think-aloud!

**Journals, Learning Logs, or Exit Summaries:** These sentence stems and questions can be used orally or as an informal writing activity and are excellent for promoting metacognition.

- I understand ... but I don’t understand ... because ...
- When I don’t understand how to solve a problem, I ...
- Today my thinking is like ... because ...
- What changes did you make and why?
- How did your thinking change?
- What did you do well?
- With what do you need help?
- Which strategies work best for you when reading?



### Thinking About My Thinking Bookmark

Here is a visual and concrete way for students to think about their thinking, as well as when their understanding is breaking down. The bottom color on the paint swatch shows that the understanding is crystal clear.

The next color is slightly darker, indicating that the understanding is getting a bit hazy. The next color is darker yet, indicating that the understanding is getting cloudy. The top color is the darkest, indicating that the student is in a fog and does not understand. What should the student do?

This tool is a great resource to accompany your reading think-alouds. With scaffolding, kindergarteners can use the bookmark independently.

To access the label templates, click [here](#).

**Portfolios** help students, teachers, and parents monitor learning. Have students return to their portfolios periodically and reflect on the work represented there. Ask them to choose examples of their best work, work they are most proud of, or work that shows the most growth and have them justify their choices. [HeidiSongs](#) has ideas for using portfolios with kindergarten students.

**Think-Write-Share:** The teacher poses a question, the students think for about one minute about the question, the student writes/draws a response to the question, and the student shares the response with a classmate. The teacher has three or four students share their response.

**Quick Draws:** Select a “big idea” or major concept within your lesson. Ask students to reflect on the meaning of the concept and create a visual image that represents that concept (about three minutes). Have student share and explain their image with a partner, in a small group, or in a Chalkboard Splash. Click [here](#) for more information on Quick Draws and Quick Writes as well as a template for students to use.

**Chalkboard Splash:** This is a variation of the Quick Write or Quick Draw. Once students have recorded their individual thoughts, have them write/draw their responses (or group responses) randomly on the whiteboard or chart/butcher paper. After reviewing their responses, create a three-column chart with the headings: similarities, differences, and surprises. Read and analyze the responses and record what they noticed under the columns. Students then get into small groups and share what they noticed. Have groups share with the whole class. Click [here](#) for more information on this technique.

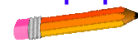
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