

Shedlosky-Shoemaker, R. (2018, June 25th). Facilitating student success through awareness of one's own study habits. *Teaching with Metacognition*, 2, 11-15.

Retrieved from <http://www.improvewithmetacognition.com/teaching-with-metacognition-2/issue-2-june-201...able-of-contents/>

Facilitating Student Success through Awareness of One's Own Study Habits

Randi Shedlosky-Shoemaker
York College of Pennsylvania

BACKGROUND

As an academic advisor for new college students, I often see them struggle to understand the demands of high school versus college, particularly in terms of self-regulation. Professors generally expect their students to complete work outside of class, including assigned and self-initiated activities (e.g., reviewing material). Given students' experience with homework during their K-12 experience, professors and advisors may be tempted to presume college students are well practiced at completing such work and already know how to regulate related behaviors. Although research suggests that self-monitoring and knowledge of how students learn improves as they age (Brown & Smiley, 1977; Pressley, Levin, & Ghatala, 1984), college students can still struggle with this metacognitive skill (Pressley & Ghatala, 1990). The impaired metacognition may be in part due to lack of transition training.

In high school, it was likely easier for students to determine what work they had to do because someone told them what to do. College presents a different environment; perhaps for the first time, students become largely—if not solely—responsible for regulating their studying. Although students may still have assigned homework, they also have to decide what course materials to read, what to study and how, and what and when to review. This leap from being highly guided by others to being responsible for regulating their own studying can present a challenge to college students, particularly when no intermediate steps help scaffold students' learning of self-regulation and metacognitive skills. To assist students in understanding their own study habits, I sought out to examine what role weekly study reports could play in students' overall academic performance.

METHOD

I recruited undergraduate students enrolled in a mid-sized private four-year college to participate in a semester-long study on study habits. Interested students could complete up to 12 weekly study reports (adapted from Bembenuddy & White; 2013; see Appendix). Through the online report, students recorded what assigned and self-initiated work they completed during the past week. Students also completed a survey at the beginning and end of the semester, measuring their feelings of motivation related to their courses (items adapted from intrinsic motivation

Contact information: Randi Shedlosky-Shoemaker, York College of Pennsylvania, rshedlos@ycp.edu

inventory, including the choice, tension, effort, enjoyment, and value subscales; Ryan, 1982) and other academic factors (e.g., high school GPA, cumulative college GPA, credits enrolled during the current semester). In the final survey, students assessed their experience using the study reports. Students who completed both surveys and submitted at least eight weekly reports were entered into a raffle to win a gift card to the college bookstore.

OUTCOMES/LESSONS LEARNED

Of the 77 students I observed during the semester, most ($n = 64$, 83%) submitted at least one of the 12; 36 students (47%) completed at least eight reports and 10 students (13%) submitted all 12 reports. Cumulative GPA prior to that semester was unrelated to the number of reports submitted, $r(72) = 0.15$, $p = .21$, as was academic standing based on earned credits, $r(77) = -.12$, $p = .29$. Motivation measures were unrelated to the number of reports submitted, except for choice: Students who felt they had more choice in selecting their classes also submitted more reports, $r(75) = .26$, $p = .02$.

To examine the relation to academic performance that semester, I conducted a multiple regression analysis, including previous cumulative GPA (i.e., prior to the start of the study), number of credits earned (i.e., academic standing), perceived choice in taking their courses, and number of study reports completed as potential predictors. Only two of the variables predicted semester GPA: previous cumulative GPA ($B = 0.73$, $t = 9.54$, $p < .001$) and number of reports submitted ($B = 0.19$, $t = 2.33$, $p = .02$). As previous academic success was accounted and did not predict how many study reports students completed, it seems unlikely that the positive relation between number of reports completed and semester GPA could merely be attributed to a “good student” effect, which might suggest that good students were more inclined to complete the reports, as well as engage in behaviors that improved their academic performance. Finally, none of the measures of motivation predicted whether students completed the weekly reports.

Among the 41 students who completed the final survey, most students indicated that the reports were helpful ($n = 34$, 83%) and felt they gained useful insight by completing the reports ($n = 30$, 73%). Among the open-ended remarks, students noted that the reports helped them realize how much work they were (or were not) doing and how much time tasks/classes required. Several students remarked that they had learned about their own study habits, including common distractors they struggled with, inadequate strategies they used, and their own failures in time management. In light of students’ remarks, the reports appeared to provide an opportunity to regularly and explicitly think about their own study habits. In doing so, students may develop improved metacognition related to their own learning.

If employed more intentionally as a learning tool, instructors and advisors could use the reports to go beyond helping students develop a heightened awareness of their study behaviors. Advisors could have new students or students who are struggling academically maintain a journal of their studying during a set period of time and then provide individualized suggestions to the student in an informal one-on-one conversation. Expecting students to have an actual record means that the advisor and student are not relying on autobiographical introspection of a student’s behaviors to understand current problems or develop future studying plans. In a class, particularly for courses that address effective learning strategies as a student learning outcome (e.g., first-year

seminar courses, major orientation courses), instructors could create more structured engagement with the tool by not only having students record behaviors but also identify patterns of behavior over time and make evidence-based plans for future studying behaviors. Such a strategy offers an opportunity to incentivize completing the reports (e.g., course credit) and could be a valuable stepping stone for students as they transition from highly-guided learner to self-directed learner.

REFERENCES

- Bembenuddy, H., & White, M. C. (2013). Academic performance and satisfaction with homework completion among college students. *Learning and Individual Differences, 24*, 83-88. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2012.10.013
- Brown, A. L., & Smiley, S. S. (1977). Rating the importance of structure units of prose passages: A problem of metacognitive development. *Child Development, 48*, 1-8. doi:10.2307/1128873
- Pressley, M., & Ghatala, E. S. (1990). Self-regulated learning: Monitoring learning from text. *Educational Psychologist, 25*, 19-33. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep2501_3
- Pressley, M., Levin, J. R., & Ghatala, E. S. (1984). Memory strategy monitoring in adults and children. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 23*, 270-288. doi:10.1016/S0022-5371(84)90181-6
- Ryan, R. M. (1982). Control and information in the intrapersonal sphere: An extension of cognitive evaluation theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43*, 450-461. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.43.3.450

APPENDIX: WEEKLY STUDY REPORT

For each course you are currently enrolled in, respond to the following questions.

1. Enter the course name and number below (e.g., Psy100: General Psychology).
2. What days of the week does this class meet?
 - a. MWF
 - b. MW
 - c. TR
 - d. S
 - e. Other
3. What coursework did you complete this week for this class? (If you did not complete any, indicate "none" and move on to the next class).¹
4. How long did you spend doing assigned homework? (Provide an estimate in minutes – e.g., 2 hours = 120 minutes.)
5. When did you spend the most time working on this assigned homework? (Select one)
 - a. Morning (6:00am-12:00pm)
 - b. Afternoon (12:00-6:00pm)
 - c. Evening (6:00pm-12:00am)
 - d. Late Night (12:00-6:00am)
6. What days of the week did you spend working on this assigned homework? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. Monday
 - b. Tuesday
 - c. Wednesday
 - d. Thursday
 - e. Friday
 - f. Saturday
 - g. Sunday
7. Where did you complete this assigned homework? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. Dorm room/apartment/residential house
 - b. Library
 - c. Computer lab/classroom
 - d. Other
8. Did you complete this assigned homework with other students?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
9. What distractions, if any, occurred while you were completing this assigned homework? (If none, please enter "none".)
10. Based on your own feelings, how would you rate your performance on the completed assigned homework?
 - a. Very Poor
 - b. Poor
 - c. Acceptable/average
 - d. Good
 - e. Very Good

11. Based on your own feelings, how would you rate the value of the assigned homework in helping you better understand the material?
- a. Not at all useful
 - b. Slightly useful
 - c. Somewhat useful
 - d. Moderately useful
 - e. Very useful

¹Depending on the purposes of the report, instructors/advisors may want to distinguish between assigned coursework and self-initiated work; for the purposes of the study reported presently, students completed one set of questions for assigned work and one set for self-initiated for each of their classes.