Welcome to Hidden Sparks Without Walls. We will be starting shortly...

- If you are using a speaker phone, the rest of us will hear everything going on in the room you are in. Speaker phones can also cause echoes and other extraneous sounds. Please avoid using them if possible. If that is not possible, make sure you are in a quiet room, and keep electronic gadgets as far from the phone as possible. To ensure a quiet and clear session we will be muting everyone's phones on entry to the call. We will open the phone lines for questions a few times during the session and again at the end. Feel free to post any questions in the chat.

- While we are waiting to begin please practice using the chat feature by sharing your name, school and location. Activate chat by clicking the "Chat" tab below the attendees list on the right of your screen.

- This is the area where messages will appear in the chat.

- This is the area where you will address and type chat messages. Don’t hesitate to engage as active, full participants. Your contributions may help others.

- If you have any clarifying questions about the format or the topic, you may click the "Q&A" tab below the presenter list and enter your questions. Feel free to use the hand raising feature, by clicking on the little yellow hand on the right side of the screen.

With Karen Kruger
November 2, 2011

Meta Cognition and Self-Advocacy
Welcome & Conference Etiquette

- Below are some tips that will help make this conference call successful.
- PLEASE NOTE: We will be muting phones automatically, but when we open the lines for questions we will want to ensure that those questions can be heard and answered without undue background noise.
- Use the right phone. - Cell phones can be included in conference calls, but some can also cause static on the lines. Try to use a landline phone if possible. Speakerphones pick up a lot of background noise.
- Participate in a quiet, undisturbed room. – Background noise can be heard through the phone and will disturb others in the conference. If you can’t find a quiet room, use your phone’s mute button until you want to speak – and avoid distracting noises such as humming, scraping chairs, tapping a pencil, etc.
- Never Put a Conference Call on Hold! - Participants will be forced to listen to your on-hold music or they will not know that you have stepped away and may continue to address you while you’re gone.
- Call Waiting - The sound of your call-waiting beep can be disruptive and confusing to conference call participants. Quite often the Call Waiting function can be temporarily suspended by touching *70 prior to the call.
- Identify Yourself - When you ask a question verbally during the designated times please identify yourself by name and school or state on-line.
- Chat Room & Question/Answer Box – Those participating on line may use the chat room and question/answer box on the lower right of their screen to enter questions and comments at any time. We will offer regular opportunities for those joining by phone only to participate as well.

Our Guest:

Karen Kruger, M.S. is the new Director of Education at Hidden Sparks. Previously, she served as Hidden Sparks’ Internal Coach Program (ICP) School based mentor, a regional facilitator and the lead trainer for No Child Left Behind funded workshops. She also mentored middle school teachers and administrator for the NYC Department of Education. Prior to this, Ms. Kruger served as a field facilitator and course instructor for ‘Schools Attuned’, teaching courses offered by “All Kinds of Minds”, developing curricula for workshops, and mentoring and supervising teachers in grades K-12. A former adjunct professor at Bank Street College of Education where she received her Master’s degree, Ms. Kruger has taught in elementary and middle schools from Kindergarten through 8th grade.
Overview of the Session

• During this session, we will look at metacognition, through a neurodevelopmental lens and consider why it is important to teach students how to “learn about learning.”
• We will also consider how self-advocacy is linked to metacognition.

Session Goals:

• Develop an understanding of metacognition and why it is important for students.
• Learn how to teach students about metacognition.
• Consider how to teach students self-advocacy skills.
What is Metacognition?

- Thinking about thinking
- Knowing what we know
- Understanding how we learn
- Being able to discern when and how to apply strategies for learning
- Appreciating how our brains work

Why is metacognition important?

- Studies show that direct instruction, in metacognition strategies, result in measurable increases in learning.
- For students who struggle, encapsulating the area of weakness lessens the feelings of overwhelming failure.
- Students who understand how they learn and what they need to be successful when they learn, are the best communicators of this very important information.
- When these students understand how to communicate their metacognitive awareness, they become their own advocates and can be reflective, independent, self-aware, strategic learners.
How do we begin to teach metacognition?

- By modeling it
- Directly teaching the different pathways of learning
- Encouraging metacognitive thinking

Some examples of modeling metacognition

- “Here is what I am thinking…” Be transparent in your own thought processes.
- “I was making an assumption because…” Show the students how you come to conclusions/opinions.
- “I’m changing my mind now that I realize…” “I’m wondering if…” Give examples of how you think.
- “I have trouble remembering names and so I do…” Share your learning challenges and which strategies you use to be successful.
- “It’s easier for me to pay attention to my writing if I take short breaks every 20 minutes.”
- “I enjoy helping people organize their desks, it’s easy for me to see where things should go.” Share your strengths and give evidence to illustrate your points.
How to directly teach metacognition

• Share the different pathways of learning and encourage students to discuss what is difficult for them and what is easy.
• Memory (short term, active working, long term); Attention (mental energy, information input, academic/behavior output); Language (receptive, expressive); Social cognition (verbal pragmatics and behaviors); Higher order thinking (problem solving, concept formation, critical thinking, brainstorming, reasoning/logical thinking, rule use); Spatial ordering, Temporal sequential ordering, motor functions (gross motor, fine motor, graphomotor)
• Begin by asking students what they know about their memory – How do they remember things?

Some examples of a metacognitive lessons:

• 7 word activity – short term memory
• Paperclip activity – HOC (Higher Order Cognition) brainstorming/creativity/problem solving
• Brainstorm “What does it mean to ‘Pay Attention!’”? – attention awareness. Please see “Additional Resources” for more ideas for specific lessons to teach students about how their brains work and how they learn.
How to encourage metacognitive thinking

- Guided self-evaluation experiences can be introduced through checklists focusing on thinking processes. Gradually, self-evaluation will be applied more independently. Example: Ask students to predict how they did on a test – begins self assessing of performance.
- Ask students to state what they already know about a new topic that you are introducing – encourages reflection about what they do/do not know/what they want to know
- Encourage students to describe their thinking processes: “How did you come to that conclusion? What were you thinking when you read that passage?” “How did you decide which research topic to choose?”
- Increase students responsibility for planning and regulating their learning. It’s difficult for learners to become self-directed when their learning is planned and monitored by someone else.
- Teach students to estimate time requirements and organization of materials to complete an activity.

When do I begin?

- Tomorrow – a little bit is better than nothing…
- Ideally, in the beginning of the school year
- Kindergarten: circle time/calendar time can be 5 minutes of “How do we ‘pay attention’?” “How do we remember how to spell our names?” Tell them what you do when you are thinking about the answer to that math problem.”
- 3rd and 4th grade students are capable of understanding their learning profiles and teaching adults about the learning pathways.
Metacognition with 4th grade students

- The following photographs are from an NYC public school, where the faculty learned about the 8 pathways of learning or neurodevelopmental constructs. One of the teachers decided to teach her students about their learning profiles, using the 8 pathways as a framework.
- The 4th graders were so enthusiastic, the teacher asked to principal if they could have a “Parents Fair” where the students could teach their parents about how they (the parents) learn.
- The response was overwhelming – over 200 adults attended and the 4th graders confidently taught the adults.

Higher Order Thinking teachers:
Middle School and High School

- Middle school students love to talk about themselves, love to think about themselves and love to understand themselves. Early adolescents are the perfect candidates for metacognitive experiences. They are natural experts on their lives and they usually enjoy learning about how they learn.

- People underestimate adolescent students’ interest in learning about learning. It’s wonderful to observe the surprised reactions of seasoned middle school and high school teachers, when they discover the impact of their students metacognitive awareness.
Some possible outcomes of teaching students about how they learn...

- The following photos are from 2 events where 7th grade CTT (Collaborative Team Teaching) students taught administrators and teachers about the different pathways of learning.
- The students did activities with the adults and explained their own learning profiles, their areas of strengths and challenges and which strategies were effective.

What metacognition can look like...
The “team of teachers” who taught 85 faculty members about how they learn:

How Self-Advocacy can combine with Metacognition

• One of the most powerful gifts we can give to students who struggle with academics or behavior issues is the ability to understand how they learn, which strategies help them to be successful in school and how to self-regulate their emotions.

• This process will gradually and intentionally transfer the role of “critic” from the teacher to the student.

• The next step is to teach the student how to effectively communicate this vital information: what the student has learned and continues to learn, metacognitively.
**What is self-advocacy?**

- Advocacy = active support
- Self-advocacy = active support of self

**Why is self-advocacy important?**

- Every parent of a struggling student voices the same concern about their child’s future: “I just hope they can learn to become independent, successful adults.”
- One of the best ways to encourage learning independence is to teach children about how they learn so that they can understand who they are as learners.
- Goal: Self aware, independent, motivated students who can effectively communicate their strengths, challenges and strategies that help them be successful in school and in life.
How to teach self-advocacy

• Model it

• Directly teach it

• Encourage/practice

Model self-advocacy

• Be transparent and clear when you are demonstrating how you advocate for yourself and highlight other examples of people advocating for people or causes.

• For example: Describe different ways that you have been an advocate (a strong supporter) for yourself or for causes. As educators, we often advocate for our students or our colleagues. Consider sharing appropriate examples of other forms of advocacy.
Directly teach it

Self-advocacy workshop for Students

- Brainstorm: “What is Advocacy?” or “What is an Advocate?”
- Discuss: How do you advocate for yourself in school?
  - Talking to a teacher
  - Writing to a teacher
  - Meeting with teachers
- Practice…

Practice

- Support students in writing letters to their “next year’s” teacher(s) in which they politely describe their learning profiles and which strategies they use to be successful in school/life.
- Role play with students to demonstrate how to converse with high school teachers and how to constructively engage in a dialogue about the student’s learning needs.
- Help students understand their IEPs and how to communicate the content of their IEPs.
- For older students: practice attending and then running their own IEP meetings/conferences.
Some final thoughts…

- Understanding how you learn and what is your unique learning profile --- your strengths and your weaknesses and the strategies that you use to be successful, can be a powerful tool for navigating life.
- Two wonderful byproducts of teaching metacognition to your students are: you are giving them lessons in diversity and empathy.
- You are modeling compassion for people who learn differently, for people who struggle in areas that might seem easy for others, and how to support and not judge these areas of struggles. At the same time, you are modeling the appreciation of strengths and the importance of acknowledging and emphasizing what we can do well.

Additional Resources

- For more information about teaching students about the learning pathways, please visit:
- www.hiddensparks.org and see the archived webinars. There are specific webinars about Attention, Memory and Social Cognition as well as “An Overview of How We Learn”, “Helping Students Discover How They Learn”, “How to Ask Questions that Stimulate Students to Think and Learn” and “How to Talk to Students about Their Learning Strengths and Struggles”
- www.allkindsofminds.org Click on “Reach More Learners” and you’ll find a learning library, case studies about students and helpful tips and teaching techniques and strategies.
- All Kinds of Minds by Dr. Mel Levine
- Keeping a Head in School by Dr. Mel Levine
- A Mind at a Time by Dr. Mel Levine
Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

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About Hidden Sparks

Hidden Sparks is a non-profit fund whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit. Hidden Sparks’ programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching. The Hidden Sparks model and program is currently in 21 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and 7 in Boston, through a partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education.
Contacting Hidden Sparks

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