**A Construct-Based Approach (CBA)
to Implementing Comprehensive
School Counseling Programs**

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"Self-Knowledge" Overview

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Definition of Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge is, quite simply, what we know about ourselves. The following definition was retrieved from: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/self-knowledge?s=t
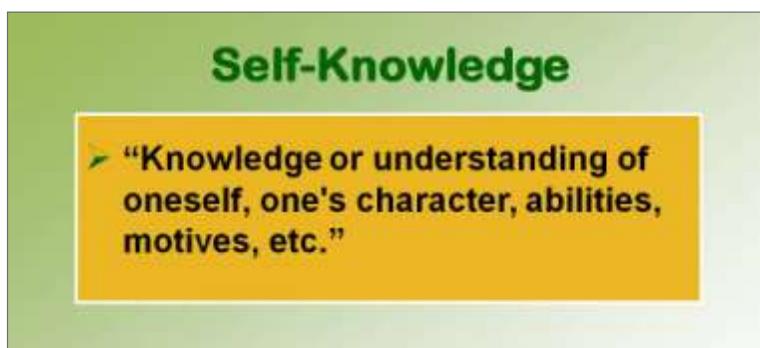

The more we know about ourselves, the more we are able to understand and control our mental processes and behavior patterns. This in turn enables us to improve how we think and behave which leads to more substantive learning outcomes. Students become proficient learners as a result of reflecting on their own experience and taking action to improve their ability to control their internal processes.

Self-Knowledge Sub-Constructs

Simply Stated

As a way of getting started, let's define each of the sub-constructs associated with self-direction in simple terms. Links to each of the Self-Knowledge sub-constructs are provided at the end of this webpage.
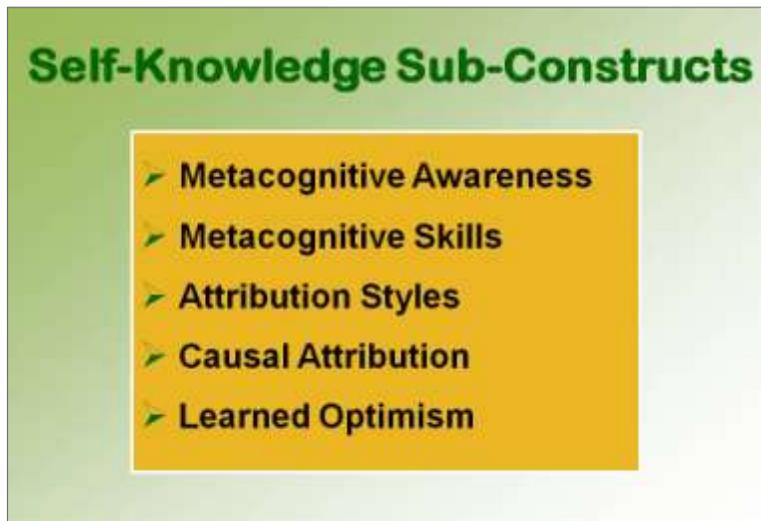
- **Metacognitive Awareness**: Metacognition is generally defined as "thinking about thinking." In other words, students reflect on the mental processes that influence how they think and assess the impact of those processes on their learning and lives. By recognizing their thinking behavior patters, students can gain an understanding of what goes on internally when they learn and how those processes can be improved. Proficient learners are aware of their metacognitive processes and how they help or hinder their capacity to learn and achieve.

- **Metacognitive Skills**: Skill is the ability to do. In terms of our metacognitive abilities, skill is associated with taking action to improve based on our metacognitive awareness. When students, as a result of self-reflection, become aware that a particular process (e.g., monitoring their progress) is inhibiting their ability to learn efficiently (acquire knowledge and successfully apply it in authentic contexts in reasonable timeframes), they can then take action to improve the process (develop their skill in executing the monitoring process more efficiently). Metacognitive skill development can be taught and learned in educational contexts, resulting in improved learner outcomes and higher levels of achievement.

- **Attribution Styles**: Attribution means to explain the causes of a behavior or an event. Understanding students' attribution styles help counselors understand how students explain the reason for behaviors (their own and of others) and events that occur and how those explanation impact their learning and how they view themselves and others. A good example of understanding students' attribution style is how they explain their successes and failures in terms of their academic performance (e.g., passing or failing a test). Attributions are often inaccurate or do not reflect the reality of the situation. Knowing about attribution styles and how to determine them are important tools for educators to help students improve their self-

image and become more proficient learners. Understanding how we explain why events and behaviors occur enables us to make more conscious and accurate attributions that help us make sense of our lives, the lives of others and the environment/situations in which we find ourselves.

- **Casual Attribution**: The attributions we make about behaviors and events explain, or make sense of, the causes for what occurred. Causes are generally understood as having to do with locus of control (e.g., how much control an individual has in the situation and whether the cause is internal or external), whether the behavior or event is temporary or if it is something permanent in the individual (e.g., is failing a math test a fluke or an inevitable result of taking math courses), and whether the individual has some degree of control or the situation is uncontrollable. The causes assigned by students have a significant influence on their motivation, self-direction and sense of self-efficacy.

- **Learned Optimism**: Optimists are more engaged learners and achieve better results (learning outcomes) than pessimists. Optimists can benefit from opportunities to learn. The tendencies toward optimism and pessimism are important considerations for those seeking to help students learn and achieve. Proficient learners are optimists who are motivated to achieve, engaged in their learning and have a strong sense of self-efficacy regarding what they are capable of accomplishing.

Self-Knowledge is Fundamental to a CBA

Self-knowledge is fundamental to implementing a construct-based approach to school counseling. School counselors have a responsibility to help students know themselves through self-reflection, recognizing the processes by which they learn, and improving them in ways that result in students becoming proficient learners. Self-knowledge is a key to learning how to learn, plan for future success, and cope with the challenges of learning and growing up prepared to enter and thrive in the postsecondary world.

School counselors are responsible for helping students become aware of how they learn and how well they control the mental processes that govern their learning. Counselors are responsible for guiding students in developing the skills necessary to improve their learning processes by bring them up to a conscious level, acting to change them, monitoring their improvement activities, evaluating the results and making informed decisions about the next steps to take to become more proficient at learning.

In order for school counselors to be able to maximize their efforts to help students, they should go through this same process by reflecting on their own experiences, recognize the impact they are having and take action to improve. In this way, counselors can gain a deeper understanding of what knowing one's self really means and the best way to teach students to successfully engage in the process themselves.

These webpages can also be accessed via the hyperlinks provided in the Sidebar to your left. Motivation links will appear in the Sidebar of all webpages within the "Develop a CBA" module.

Additional Resources Related to Self-Knowledge

The Internet is a wonderful tool for accessing information on just about any topic. It has been invaluable in helping us to identify what research has demonstrated to be strongly related to students' academic achievement and well-being, and evidence-based practices that provide concrete examples of how to translate the research findings into meaningful learning opportunities that support student development.

Staying informed about what works and does not work to help students achieve and succeed is one of the defining characteristics of a professional school counselor. Internet search engines can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the topics discussed on the CBA Website. To get you started, here are some additional resources you may find helpful. These resources, however, only scratch the surface of what is available on the Internet or in published books and articles. We encourage you to use search engines to find more resources that will increase your understanding and build your capacity to apply these ideas in your work as school counselors.

Videos

"Selling Social and Emotional Learning: An Interview with Daniel Goleman." In this interview on the Edutopia website, Dr. Goleman discusses how a focus on self-awareness is central to all large-scale programs that have attempted to address problems with youth, and how recognition of this essential ingredient became transformed into a focus on social-emotional learning in the classroom.

https://youtu.be/j30KPuYiKII

This video by Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl discusses the paradigm shift from focusing on "ill-being" to "well-being," and from "intervention" to "prevention" when looking at child development. She identifies five core competencies critical to social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making and relationship skills.

https://youtu.be/DUnUYMZD2PY

A video on self-awareness by "StartSmart StaySafe" that identifies key characteristics of self-awareness.

https://youtu.be/VYutXOGaZTY

A video by "expertvillage" on a simple exercise to help students increase their self-awareness by listing their strengths, weaknesses and what they can do to improve.

https://youtu.be/l_RDS6C9Xss

Websites

A webpage on the Edutopia website that addresses "5 Keys to Successful Social and Emotional Learning," one of which is self-awareness. The website has an embedded video. It also contains a short history of social and emotional learning.

http://www.edutopia.org/keys-social-emotional-learning-video .

A website containing many good questions one can ask to become more self-aware. Self-defeating beliefs are also discussed.

http://selfcreation.com/change-beliefs/index.htm

Links to the Self-Knowledge Sub-Constructs

Now that you have a general sense of the importance of Self-Knowledge to student learning and why it is fundamental to a CBA, it is time to explore the five sub-constructs associated with the Self-Knowledge construct. Each sub-construct has its own webpage and can be accessed by clicking on the desired sub-construct hyperlink in the Sidebar to your left. The sub-constructs are listed under the "Self-Knowledge" Overview link in the following order.</p>

- Metacognitive Awareness
- Metacognitive Skills
- Attributional Styles
- Causal Attribution
- Learned Optimism

Self-Knowledge links will appear in the Sidebar of all webpages as long as you are within the "Develop a CBA" module. "PDF" versions of all these webpages can be accessed from within the respective webpages, and in the "Free Resources" module.