The Learning Strategies Associated With the ACGC for Elementary Cycle Three

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> "In education, interest in learning strategies increased with the idea of competencies; indeed, strategies are considered to be among the resources that learners must draw on in exercising their competencies." (Peters and Viola, 2003; Tardif 2006).[1]

This document specifies, clarifies, and provides examples of, the learning strategies associated with the ACGC for Elementary Cycle Three. These strategies are an integral part of the compulsory ACGC (theme, strategy, expected outcome). They make it possible for students to construct their knowledge by ensuring that they are active and cognitively engaged. The same strategies can also be reapplied in a variety of day-to-day contexts to facilitate learning and educational success. In the long term, they make it possible for students to more effectively use information as well as academic and occupational knowledge, and to better orient themselves. In short, these strategies are very useful in learning as well as in academic and career guidance.

The following definition facilitates a better understanding of what a learning strategy involves. "In the school setting, a learning strategy is a set of metacognitive or cognitive actions used in a learning situation in which students perform a task or learning activity for the purpose of carrying out operations on knowledge according to specific objectives." (Translation, Bégin, 2008)

The learning strategies proposed by Bégin (2008) have the advantage of being generic and applicable to many different contexts. They are classified as follows: metacognitive strategies, cognitive processing strategies and cognitive executive strategies.

The four strategies associated with the ACGC for Elementary Cycle Three are cognitive strategies that foster knowledge acquisition. Developing, comparing and selecting are cognitive processing strategies; in other words, they are used to process information for the purpose of memorizing it. Producing is a cognitive executive strategy. It is useful for performing tasks and dealing with situations involving performance, operations on knowledge, and production.

To develop a strategy, teachers set tasks that require students to use that strategy. The strategy becomes one solution to the problem of performing the task. In this respect, it is important to avoid doing the students' work for them. Active cognition requires each student to approach the task by starting with what he/she actually "knows." Students can get together in a group afterward to enrich or improve their knowledge, and to add new knowledge as well. This approach allows students to familiarize themselves with a cognitive approach and enables the teacher to determine whether they are using the strategy and achieving the expected learning outcome associated with the ACGC.

The four strategies used in the ACGC for Elementary Cycle Three are described on the following page.

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[1] Peters and Viola, 2003; Tardif, 2006, quoted in Bégin 2008. "Les stratégies d'apprentissage : un cadre de référence simplifié," *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, vol. 34, no 1, p. 47. Free translation.

Produce	Develop
Definition: Express from memory or in a concrete manner knowledge deemed to be relevant. Examples: write, say aloud or draw what one knows about a subject. Unlike the other three strategies, "produce" is a cognitive executive strategy. It helps to bring together conditions conducive to learning. It is useful for activating and becoming aware of what one already knows (acquired knowledge) so that new knowledge can take root. For example, to prepare for an exam, students will write, create a diagram of, or translate into images what they know about a subject in order to see what they really know, what they master. Producing is a strategy for making students aware of their personal knowledge. In the case of interests and aptitudes, "producing" means that students, as individuals, start by asking themselves what general knowledge they have about themselves (e.g. in relation to each one's sports and recreation activities, home, school). Producing means that students externalize what they already know (prior knowledge) so that they can describe themselves in terms of their interests and aptitudes. The subsequent additions to their description represent what they have learned.	**Definition: Reformulate or transform information so that its main characteristics or components are reflected or expressed in different ways.** Examples: paraphrase, formulate examples and make analogies In this context, developing does not mean going into greater detail on, or saying more about, a particular subject—which would constitute a common-sense use of the term. This strategy is, rather, a cognitive operation that is useful for processing information, i.e. it enables students to develop their ideas by transforming information so that they can better understand it and make it their own. It gives meaning to new knowledge by allowing learners to reformulate it in their own words and to make connections between it and what they already know. When students use their own words to explain what they understood from reading a text about a trade, or what they took from a classroom presentation on a trade given by a worker in the field, they are engaged in the process of developing as understood here. This can be observed through a reformulation of what the student understood. When students learn about the occupations of the people in their community and then say how they understand these occupations using analogies or examples, or when they summarize what they learned from an interview with an employee, they are using the strategy "to develop."

Compare	Select
Definition: look for elements or characteristics that establish connections or relationships between items of information. Examples: looking for differences, resemblances or similarities, relationships of size (larger, smaller, equal, etc.), importance, order or sequence, etc. In order to compare, students need to know the terms to be compared. Accordingly, they look for elements at the same level of complexity (e.g. apples, oranges and melons are round fruit: in what respects, then, are they similar or different?) in order to process information in a comparative manner. For example, before they can compare the working methods and duties that apply to students with those they observed in the world of work, students first need to identify these working methods and duties. They will then need to access information on the applications of these methods and duties they have observed in the workplace (e.g. fire station), before summarizing this for themselves. Teachers can help make students' understanding of working conditions more explicit by having them ask themselves questions that make use of comparable elements. When they are learning how to compare, students must process the information themselves; in other words, they are the ones who look for the elements to be compared, who ask themselves the pertinent questions. For example: Are there methods that I use at school that the firefighter uses, or does not use, at work? What requirements are associated with the job of firefighting? Which of these could be compared with the requirements that apply to me as a student? In answering these questions, the students classify the elements under the headings of similarities or differences.	**Definition: Using different means and according to predetermined or spontaneous criteria, research and identify relevant or useful information.** Examples: Note down, underline, highlight, frame, write, say, tell, etc. It is important to keep two points in mind when using the "select" strategy. First, selection is possible when students have a set of similar elements at their disposal (e.g. food items). Second, selection presupposes that the concept of criteria is taken into account (e.g. healthy food). The Office québécois de la langue française goes into some detail explaining the difference between choosing and selecting. *Choosing*, according to the Office, has a broader meaning in that the action can be carried out in a completely arbitrary manner and refer to quite different elements, while *selection* necessarily **involves a set of elements of the same kind** and precludes the option to choose according to one's mood, tastes, etc. *Selecting* has a more specific meaning: methodically choosing elements from a set, based on **precise criteria.** For example, "Name the food items sold in the cafeteria that meet the criteria for healthy foods." In the ACGC on social influence, the teacher could start by asking students to give examples of situations of influence from their daily lives. The students could then apply the criterion by selecting examples of behaviour that enable them to show the influence the others have on them as well as the influence they have on others (criterion). In this example, the student uses the "select" strategy.

References

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