

**MPS 4. Strategy** © copyright, Donald R. Woods, 1998

**Strategy:** is the organized and systematic sequence of stages applied when problems are solved. Each stage is characterized by its own set of attitudes and thinking skills. Example: the four-step problem solving strategy published by Polya: Define, Plan, Do it, Look back.

**Skill development:**

1. More skill in being able to talk about thought processes
2. More practice to focus on accuracy (instead of on time)
3. More practice on being active and writing things down
4. Recognizing that others solve problems differently than they do
5. Acquire more skill at listening
6. Acquire more skill in self assessment
7. Acquire more skill in giving and receiving feedback
8. Through self awareness, to improve self confidence
9. Further emphasis that assessment is based on

**evidence**

10. Continuing to develop an environment of trust where risking is OK.
11. Beginning to recognize patterns in the problem solving process
12. To realize that a “strategy” is not applied **linearly** and sequentially; that it is used flexibly.
13. To recognize the difference between *problems* and *exercises*.
14. To acknowledge the importance of **defining** problems and to recognize this as a three-step process.
15. To acknowledge the importance of **reading** the problem statement.
16. To realize that *problem solving* is not “doing some calculations.” Conversely, to correct the misconception that if you are not “doing some calculations” you are not solving problems.
17. To acquire skill is explicitly monitoring the process.

**Applicability:**

Public school onwards.

**Time required**

3 to 8 hours with extensive followup through interview and journal writing.

**Brief description**

Participants learn how to use organized patterns and monitoring to improve their ability. To develop the skill, they work in pairs and prepare strategy charts for each other that show stages of development of these skills. Personal development can be compared with research evidence to help each set personal goals. For more see **HTGTM** Chapter 3, problem 3.2, p. 3-23; **Resources** Section **B.4** and Woods (1985a).

**Comments:**

This requires the Awareness Unit as a prerequisite. Because the workshop activities build on skills developed in Unit 1, this is an excellent one to follow the Awareness Unit. It also should be given early in the program because it helps one to see that "having a strategy" is not the only skill needed to be a successful problem solver.

**Prerequisites:** Unit 1. (It helps if they have had Units 2 and 3.)

**Objectives**

**Timing sheets**

**Transparencies**

**Additional work you have to do**