



# Metacognitive Skills

Generating and Pursuing  
One's Own Standards for  
Performance

**Secondary**



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## GENERATING AND PURSUING ONE'S OWN STANDARDS FOR PERFORMANCE

Generating and pursuing one's own standards for performance is a skill that enables students to envision and articulate criteria for what a successful project will look like.

Introduce the skill of generating and pursuing one's own standards for performance using the video lesson or an introduction of your own design that covers the same content. The text of the recording is below:

**Video script** -- Have you ever taken on a task where you truly cared about the outcome, not because someone told you to, but because you had a clear idea of how you wanted it to turn out? Maybe you created a science presentation and wanted it to be clear and organized. Maybe you built a model for a class project and kept refining it until it matched your vision. Maybe you prepared for a debate by practicing clear and confident speaking. Or maybe you worked on your tennis serve by aiming for a specific spot each time you practiced.

This kind of effort shows what it means to generate and pursue your own standards for performance. This skill helps you imagine what a strong product or outcome should look like and describe the criteria that will define its success. When you use this skill, you are often guided by intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation means you put in the effort because the work feels meaningful and comes from genuine interest, curiosity, or personal goals. This inner drive encourages you to ask yourself, "What do I want this to look like when I'm done?" You set your own expectations and stick to them because of the satisfaction you get from your work.

Here is a strategy that can help guide your thinking as you generate and pursue your own standards for performance.

1. Ask yourself if this is a situation where it would be useful to generate your own standards for performance.
2. If yes, then identify what you would like to accomplish in this task.
3. Make a brief plan for how you will accomplish your goal.



4. When you are done with the task, ask yourself how well you did in accomplishing your goal and what you learned about yourself.

Here's an example of someone using this strategy.

Kiara is preparing for her upcoming debate on whether the federal minimum wage should be raised. She is arguing **in favor** of raising it, and she knows she doesn't want just to make her points and sit down. She realizes that this is a moment when setting and pursuing her own performance standards can help her improve her communication skills, not only in this debate but also in conversations, interviews, and presentations down the road.

Kiara decides what she would like to accomplish in this debate. She wants to clearly communicate why the minimum wage should increase, use economic data to support her claims, and address concerns about how raising wages might affect businesses. She also wants to stay calm and speak clearly when responding to counterarguments. These goals help her picture what a successful debate performance will look like.

Next, Kiara makes a plan for accomplishing her goal. She decides which arguments she will use to support her claim and identifies the types of evidence she needs to back them up. She also considers the most common opposing arguments and outlines her responses to each. She plans to practice her opening statement and ask a friend to rehearse with her so she can get comfortable answering tough questions clearly and respectfully.

After the debate, Kiara reflects on how she accomplished her goals. She thinks about whether she explained her stance clearly, used evidence effectively, and answered the opposing team with confidence. She realizes she stayed calm under pressure and backed up her points with strong data, but she wants to work on speaking more slowly and clearly next time. This reflection helps her see that setting her own standards motivated her to work hard because she genuinely wanted to improve.

Generating and pursuing one's own standards for performance is useful outside of school, too. For example, when Maria practices her tennis serve, she thinks about what a strong serve should look like and sets a few goals for herself. She wants to hit the ball harder and place it deeper in the court. She makes a plan to focus on two things during



practice. She will toss the ball higher and follow through smoothly, which she hopes will help her serve with more power.

After a few rounds, she reflects on how she did. She notices her serves are more consistently landing deeper in the court, right where she wants them to. By setting her own standards, she takes ownership of her practice time and the effort she puts into strengthening her serve.

Whether you're in school or not, generating and pursuing your own standards for performance helps you define what you want to achieve and take ownership of the result. With practice, you'll grow more confident making your own decisions about what to aim for and how to reach it.



Once students have been introduced to the skill of generating and pursuing their own standards for performance, emphasize the following points with them:

- Generating and pursuing your own standards for performance means deciding for yourself what quality looks like before you begin, rather than relying only on external rules or expectations. Discuss with students using prompts like, “Before anyone tells you what to do, how might you decide whether this work meets your own expectations?”
- This skill is especially useful in situations where there is more than one “right” way to perform, such as presentations, debates, creative projects, or skill practice. Discuss with students using prompts like, “In which parts of this task do you have flexibility to decide what doing well means to you?”
- Personal standards are often guided by intrinsic motivation, in which effort arises from caring about improvement or from pride in the work itself. Discuss with students using prompts like, “When Maria practices her tennis serve, why does she keep adjusting her technique even when no one is watching?” or “Can you think of a time you kept working at something because you wanted to get better, even when no one was checking your work?”
- Generating your own standards for performance involves picturing a strong outcome in advance and using that mental image to guide decisions during the task. Discuss with students using prompts like, “Imagine a strong outcome for something you really want to do, and share what that looks like.”
- Pursuing personal standards requires monitoring your performance as you work and noticing whether your actions align with what you intended. Discuss with students using prompts like, “While you are working, how can you tell if you are meeting the standard you set for yourself?”
- Self-generated standards can focus on both what you produce and how you perform while producing it. Discuss with students using prompts like, “In the debate example, what expectations does Kiara have for how she communicates during the debate, not just the points she makes?”
- Reflection is a critical part of this skill and involves comparing the final result to your original expectations. Discuss with students using prompts like, “After practicing serves, how does Maria decide whether her performance matched what she was aiming for?” or “Think about something you have practiced or



worked on recently. How did you decide whether the result matched what you wanted it to look like?”

- Evaluating yourself against your own standards helps identify strengths without waiting for outside feedback. Discuss with students using prompts like, “What can you learn about your performance before a teacher, judge, or coach gives feedback?”
- Noticing gaps between your standards and your performance supports adjustment and growth rather than discouragement. Discuss with students using prompts like, “When Kiara notices she wants to speak more slowly next time, how does that realization help her improve?” or “Think of a time they noticed something they wanted to do differently next time, and how that helped them improve instead of giving up.”
- Over time, generating and pursuing your own standards builds independence and confidence in making decisions about quality and effort. Discuss with students using prompts like, “How might using your own standards change the way you approach future tasks in school or outside of school?”



## LEVELS OF COMPETENCE

There are specific levels of competence for this skill against which students can be evaluated (see **Table 1**). It is important to note that the levels of competence are articulated as a scale that can be used to make judgments about students' status and growth. That scale has score values that range from 0.0 to 4.0. At the 0.0 level, the student cannot demonstrate any part of the skill even with help. At the 1.0 level, the student can perform some of the foundational aspects of the skill with help but not independently. At the 2.0 level, the student can independently demonstrate the foundational aspects of the skill but not the behaviors described at the 3.0 level. The 3.0 level on the scale represents proficiency in the skill. When students can independently demonstrate these behaviors, they have reached the desired status for the skill. At the 4.0 level, the student demonstrates everything at the 3.0 level AND goes above and beyond expectations by adding useful adaptations to the skill. Finally, the scale describes half-point scores that indicate partial progress toward the next level of the scale.

Periodically evaluate students' status relative to these levels of competence using the assessment activities in **Table 4**.

It is also important to note that **Table 2** and **Table 3** contain versions of the scale that can be used by students to rate themselves. These scales are both stated in an "I CAN" format. Periodically, students evaluate themselves relative to the levels of competence using the Full-point or the Half-point self-evaluation scales.



**Table 1: Levels of Competence**

4.0	The student can articulate specific situations (in school and outside of school) in which they should generate and pursuing their own standards for performance, set goals to do so, and evaluate progress.
3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, partial success at score 4.0 content.
3.0	The student will recognize when they are not generating and pursuing their own standards for performance, and respond by executing a complex strategy involving self-analysis.
2.5	No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content.
2.0	<p>The student will recognize or recall vocabulary associated with self-analysis as it relates to generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (for example, <i>evaluation, independence, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation</i>), and perform basic processes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Describe a complex strategy involving self-analysis for generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (articulated by the class or the teacher in the form of a standard operating procedure [SOP]): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask yourself if this is a situation where it would be useful to generate and pursue your own standards for performance.</li> <li>○ If yes, then identify what you would like to accomplish in this task.</li> <li>○ Make a brief plan for how you will accomplish your goal.</li> <li>○ When you are done with the task, ask yourself how well you did in accomplishing your goal and what you learned about yourself.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Understand what an individual might think and feel while generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (for example, feeling trust in oneself or pride; thinking, “What do I want this to look like when I’m done?”)</li> </ul>
1.5	Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content.
1.0	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content.
0.5	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content but not at score 3.0 content.



0.0	Even with help, the student demonstrates no success.
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**Table 2: I CAN Student Assessment Form (Half-point scale)**

4.0	I can articulate specific situations in school and outside of school in which I should generate and pursue my own standards for performance, set goals to do so, and evaluate progress.
3.5	In addition to score 3.0, I can do some of what is required at the score 4.0 level.
3.0	I can recognize when I am not generating and pursuing my own standards for performance, and respond by executing a complex strategy involving self-analysis.
2.5	In addition to score 2.0, I can do some of what is required at the score 3.0 level.
2.0	<p>I can recognize or recall vocabulary associated with self-analysis as it relates to generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (for example, <i>evaluation, independence, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation</i>), and perform basic processes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Describe a complex strategy involving self-analysis for generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (articulated by the class or the teacher in the form of a standard operating procedure [SOP]): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask yourself if this is a situation where it would be useful to generate and pursue your own standards for performance.</li> <li>○ If yes, then identify what you would like to accomplish in this task.</li> <li>○ Make a brief plan for how you will accomplish your goal.</li> <li>○ When you are done with the task, ask yourself how well you did in accomplishing your goal and what you learned about yourself.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Understand what an individual might think and feel while generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (for example, feeling trust in oneself or pride; thinking, “What do I want this to look like when I’m done?”)</li> </ul>
1.5	On my own, I can do some of the things at score 2.0 level.
1.0	With help, I can do some of the things at score 2.0 level and 3.0 level.



0.5	With help, I can do some of the score 2.0 level things but not the score 3.0 level things.
0.0	Even with help, I cannot do any of the score levels.



**Table 3: I CAN Student Assessment Form (Full-point scale)**

4.0	I can articulate specific situations (in school and outside of school) in which I should generate and pursue my own standards for performance, set goals to do so, and evaluate progress.
3.0	I can recognize when I am not generating and pursuing my own standards for performance, and respond by executing a complex strategy involving self-analysis.
2.0	<p>I can recognize or recall vocabulary associated with self-analysis as it relates to generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (for example, <i>evaluation, independence, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation</i>), and perform basic processes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Describe a complex strategy involving self-analysis for generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (articulated by the class or the teacher in the form of a standard operating procedure [SOP]): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask yourself if this is a situation where it would be useful to generate and pursue your own standards for performance.</li> <li>○ If yes, then identify what you would like to accomplish in this task.</li> <li>○ Make a brief plan for how you will accomplish your goal.</li> <li>○ When you are done with the task, ask yourself how well you did in accomplishing your goal and what you learned about yourself.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Understand what an individual might think and feel while generating and pursuing one’s own standards for performance (for example, feeling trust in oneself or pride; thinking, “What do I want this to look like when I’m done?”)</li> </ul>
1.0	With help, I can do some of the things at score 2.0 level and score 3.0 level.
0.0	Even with help, I cannot do any of the score levels.



**Table 4: Assessment Activities**

4.0	<p>Ask students to document specific situations in and out of school when they've used the skill of generating and pursuing their own standards for performance. They should be able to describe the goals they set for themselves, what they did, and how well they performed.</p>
3.0	<p>Have students document a time they used the skill of generating and pursuing their own standards for performance. They should be able to provide a detailed description of the event and a critique of their own behavior.</p>
2.0	<p>Ask students to explain the following terms: <i>evaluation, independence, intrinsic motivation, and self-regulation</i>. Their answers should be generally accurate but not necessarily detailed or complete.</p> <p>Ask students to describe a basic process that has been provided to them for generating and pursuing their own standards for performance. Their descriptions should include explicit steps such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ask yourself if this is a situation where it would be useful to generate and pursue your own standards for performance.</li><li>● If yes, then identify what you would like to accomplish in this task.</li><li>● Make a brief plan for how you will accomplish your goal.</li><li>● When you are done with the task, ask yourself how well you did in accomplishing your goal and what you learned about yourself.</li></ul> <p>Ask students to describe some of the self-talk and thinking that should occur when someone is generating and pursuing their own standards for performance. Their answers should include things like thinking, "What do I want this to look like when I'm done?"</p>

