Although mastering subject matter is important, strategies to increase thinking power are equally important, writes Marv Marshall. Schooling today emphasizes "correct" answers and single solutions. But in so many situations, it is not how many correct answers one knows, but rather how one proceeds when one does not know -- as when confronted with problems, dilemmas, enigmas, and situations to be addressed, the answers to which are not immediately known or readily available. This is becoming truer every day in the rapidly changing information age. Students often attempt to solve a problem or analyze a situation without thinking. The answer may be so obvious that they just say it. There are many situations that can be dealt with successfully in this way. However, a problem arises when this approach does not work because the task has become too complex. For students who are habituated to thinking at the perceptual level, and who have not developed cognitive tools, such problems appear to be "too much" for them to deal with, and they just give up. According to Marshall, the inability to take charge of one's own cognitive processes is a very large part of the at-risk/dropout problem -- as well as discipline problems.

Full details at:
<http://teachers.net/gazette/JUN03/marshall.html>