MRL ASSOCIATE TIPS FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Lesson Segments Involving Routine Events

Design Question: What will I do to establish and communicate learning goals, track student progress, and celebrate success?

Element 1: What do I typically do to provide clear learning goals and scales (rubrics)?

- Help students understand the difference between their learning goals and their assignments.
- Make sure that learning goal language clearly indicates whether the learning goal is declarative or procedural.
- Create more than one learning goal for in-depth lessons or units (content goal, writing goal, vocabulary goal, and so on).
- Refer to and talk about the scale with students throughout the lesson and unit.
- Use the scale when designing assessment tasks.
- Post student-friendly learning goals and scales where all students can see them.
- Ask students to use the learning goal throughout the lesson and as they reflect on their learning.
- Have students write the learning goals in a notebook or journal. For younger students, simply have them repeat the learning goals after the teacher, if writing is overly time-consuming.
- Ask students to monitor their progress on their personal learning goals.
- Don’t use a standards statement as a learning goal.
- Write learning goals that are appropriate for the age or ability level of students.
- Prompt and guide students, if necessary, to help them identify personal learning goals that are important and meaningful to them.
Element 2: What do I typically do to track student progress?

- Score and return assessments to students promptly.
- Consider whether a specific assessment situation calls for an individual score-level assessment.
- Use student-generated tasks as a way to allow students to personalize their learning.
- Keep track of the types of assessments used to ensure that one type is not used excessively.
- Use a “data wall” display in the classroom to display class progress on learning goals. Update it often.
- Use simpler tracking systems with younger students.
- Monitor students’ personal learning goal progress as well as progress on the class learning goals.
- Meet with students frequently to review their progress and update goals for improvement.
- Make updating progress on learning goals a classroom routine.
- Inform parents or have students inform their parents of their current status and goals for improvement.
- Send home copies of applicable scales with a student’s current status highlighted on a weekly or bi-monthly basis.
- Set class goals for each learning goal.
- Report class progress to students regularly.
- Don’t confuse mechanical errors (for example, poor spelling, incomplete sentences, awkward writing style, and so on) with lack of knowledge or poor performance on the learning goal content.
- Don’t use one type of assessment (for example, paper and pencil tests) exclusively.
- Don’t track too many goals at once.
- Don’t assume that students know their current status.
- Don’t assume that students will track their progress without support from the teacher.

Element 3: What do I typically do to celebrate success?

- Make celebrations of success public. For example, communicate celebrations to parents, other teachers, and other students. Keep in mind that some students may prefer quieter, private celebrations.
- Hold miniconferences with students to give them verbal feedback.
- Plan feedback for specific students based on their performance on an assessment or learning activity. Be specific about their strengths and weaknesses.
- Give students specific feedback about ways to improve their scores.
- Keep each student’s individual scores private.
• Celebrate knowledge gain, effort, and personal bests. Avoid comparing students’ performances or encouraging competition.

• Avoid praising innate intelligence or “fixed” characteristics. Rather, recognize specific student effort that led to desired outcomes.

**Design Question: What will I do to establish and maintain classroom rules and procedures?**

**Element 4: What do I typically do to establish and maintain classroom rules and procedures?**

• Communicate rules and procedures to parents.

• Modify or simplify rules and procedures for students who struggle with typical classroom structures, using behavior contracts and other strategies.

• Treat students respectfully when calling inappropriate behavior to their attention.

• Adjust or modify rules that no longer make sense or that are getting in the way of classroom learning.

• Don’t allow rules that exclude students or favor a specific group of students.

• Don’t treat students disrespectfully or condescendingly during classroom meetings.

**Element 5: What do I typically do to organize the physical layout of the classroom?**

• Arrange furniture to facilitate movement.

• Use color, size, and shape of wall displays to help students easily locate important information.

• Ask for students’ permission to display their work.

• Explain to students where materials are and how to let the teacher know if supplies are running low.

• Try to make every student’s desk four steps or less from the primary teaching location.

• Allow students to give input on the room layout.

• Consider vision, hearing, physical, and behavioral difficulties when designing a seating arrangement for students.

• Don’t clutter the room with unnecessary items or teacher belongings.

• When displaying information on a whiteboard or chalkboard, make sure it is organized and legible.

• Change wall displays regularly to reflect current content.

• Keep walls free from clutter or visual distractions.
• Arrange students’ desks so that their legs, feet, and materials will not pose any sort of tripping hazard.

Lesson Segments Addressing Content

Design Question: What will I do to help students effectively interact with new knowledge?

Element 6: What do I typically do to identify critical information?
• Give students opportunities to discuss what they already know about the critical information.
• Incorporate relevant media (such as audio clips, video clips, or article excerpts) when presenting critical information.
• Show enthusiasm for the critical information (especially if it is typically considered boring to teach or learn).
• Explain the rationale for learning the critical information to students (real-world applications).
• Alert students before you begin to present critical information and let them know what to focus on.
• Avoid telling students that they need to learn the content because it will be on a state or national exam.

Element 7: What do I typically do to organize students to interact with new knowledge?
• Design a task sheet (outlining purpose, materials, procedures, directions, and closure) that students can use as a guide during group work.
• Periodically ask groups to stop and reflect on how well group members are observing group norms.
• Collect observational data (unobtrusive assessment) about student learning and levels of competence while students are working in groups.
• Plan alternative activities for students who are unable to work in their groups.
• Teach students to move in and out of their groups quickly (in 1–2 minutes) and quietly. Use a stopwatch to time them as they practice.
• Rearrange groups as often as appropriate so students have the opportunity to work with as many of their peers as possible.
• Consider the purpose of each lesson and activity when deciding which kinds of groups to use (for example, dyads, triads, groups up to five, ad hoc groups, or assigned groups).
• Have materials ready for each group before students move to their groups.
• Don’t ask groups to complete activities that are better suited to individual work.
Element 8: What do I typically do to preview new content?

- Preview unfamiliar and important vocabulary terms.
- Throughout the lesson, refer back to previewing activities.
- Make connections between previously learned information and new content.
- If students’ background knowledge contains errors or misconceptions, correct them during previewing.
- Don’t use preassessment scores to determine a student’s final grade or score.

Element 9: What do I typically do to chunk content into “digestible bites”?

- Adjust the size of chunks while teaching if the planned chunks seem too large or small.
- Tell students about each chunk and how long it will be before presenting the lesson.
- Use an advance organizer to visually represent chunks, their relationships, and their relative sizes to students.
- Between chunks, provide opportunities for students to process and reflect.
- Check for understanding after presenting each chunk.

Element 10: What do I typically do to help students process new information?

- Explicitly teach students the steps for each processing activity before asking them to engage in it.
- Post a chart with the steps for processing strategies (such as jigsaw or reciprocal teaching) in the classroom where all students can refer to it.
- Post a list of specific clarifying questions that students can ask during small-group discussions.

Element 11: What do I typically do to help students elaborate on new information?

- Ask students to reflect on how elaboration is extending their learning.
- Have students respond to each other’s questions rather than always using teacher-posed questions.
- Use graphic organizers to help students map out their thinking and reasoning.

Element 12: What do I typically do to help students record and represent knowledge?

- Have students refer back to their notes to clarify information and correct misconceptions.
- Provide feedback to students on the quality of their academic notebooks.
• Don’t ask students to recopy notes from the board or screen or take verbatim notes from a lecture.
• Don’t require each student to have exactly the same information in his or her academic notebook.

Element 13: What do I typically do to help students reflect on their learning?
• Model reflection by reflecting and sharing your reflections with the class.
• Use both oral and written strategies for reflection.
• Ask students to reflect often.
• Give students time for reflection right after a learning event.

Design Question: What will I do to help students practice and deepen their understanding of new knowledge?

Element 14: What do I typically do to review content?
• Use games to review content.
• Use review strategies within lessons, not just at the beginning of each day.
• Make sure to review important vocabulary, in addition to content information.
• Have students teach review segments.
• In addition to reviewing content, review the learning goals and objectives for a unit regularly.
• Ask review questions that require more than a yes or no answer.

Element 15: What do I typically do to organize students to practice and deepen knowledge?
• Have students record their individual thoughts and ideas before conferring with a partner or group to increase accountability.
• Don’t use tournaments or team points to determine students’ scores or grades.

Element 16: What do I typically do to use homework?
• Make sure students have a way to check how they are doing with a specific procedure or skill as they practice it independently.
• Explain to students how the homework is designed to help them improve on the learning goals.
• Complete homework assignments yourself before assigning them to students. Estimate how long it will take for students to complete them and anticipate questions that may arise while students are working on the assignment.
• Provide adequate time to explain homework, for students to record directions and expectations, and to answer students’ questions.
• Don’t make homework a major determiner of a student’s final grade or score.
• Give students feedback about homework assignments.

**Element 17: What do I typically do to help students examine similarities and differences?**

• Select items that allow for extended comparisons.
• Ask students to revise their comparisons and classifications after discussing them with peers.
• Model how to create and use comparisons, classifications, similes, metaphors, and analogies.

**Element 18: What do I typically do to help students examine errors in reasoning?**

• Explicitly teach students what each error means before asking them to find the errors.
• Don’t use examples that might be considered biased toward a culture, age group, or gender group.

**Element 19: What do I typically do to help students practice skills, strategies, and processes?**

• If students track their improved performance, celebrate their progress as they achieve increasing levels of proficiency and fluency.
• Ask students to indicate how confident they are with a skill or process using a scale from 1 (not confident at all) to 4 (very confident).
• Let students move to a more complex level of practice when they are ready, not when the whole class is ready.
• Do not assign structured or varied practice as homework.

**Element 20: What do I typically do to help students revise knowledge?**

• Provide feedback to students on their academic notebook entries.
• Provide students with a scale or rubric that allows them to self-evaluate their academic notebooks.
• Don’t score academic notebook contents.

**Design Question: What will I do to help students generate and test hypotheses about new knowledge?**
Element 21: What do I typically do to organize students for cognitively complex tasks?

- Teach students about differences between experimental, problem-solving, decision-making, and investigation tasks.
- Allow students to choose what data collection tools and other resources are best suited to their projects.
- Find existing opportunities (for example, Ameritowne) that allow students to engage in cognitively complex tasks.
- Don’t insist that all students work in cooperative settings for every task.

Element 22: What do I typically do to engage students in cognitively complex tasks involving hypothesis generation and testing?

- Make sure that students are familiar with content before asking them to engage in cognitively complex tasks.
- Use a monitoring system to track individual and group progress on tasks.
- Model and teach the steps for each type of task.
- Provide time for students to learn and practice the set of steps for each task before engaging in them.
- Have students examine similarities and differences among the types of tasks and explain which tasks are most appropriate for which types of learning.
- Provide charts and visual aids to help students remember the steps for each task.
- Display examples of end products.

Element 23: What do I typically do to provide resources and guidance?

- Identify students who need extra support, and volunteer your help.
- Create a procedure or sign for students to use to request help.
- Let students know who you are helping and who you are planning to come to next if several students need help at the same time.
- Provide students with access to the library, computers, and the Internet.
- Make sure that the resources provided are appropriate for students’ level and task.
- Be proactive about offering resources and guidance. Don’t wait for students to come to you for help.
Lesson Segments Enacted on the Spot

*Design Question: What will I do to engage students?*

**Element 24: What do I typically do to notice when students are not engaged?**
- Use a stopwatch, if necessary, to remind yourself to check on the engagement level in the room.
- Plan strategies into each lesson that will bring disengaged students back into the content.
- Seat students who habitually disengage close to the front of the room.
- Reinforce engaged behavior with positive recognition.
- Don’t embarrass or single out students who are not engaged.

**Element 25: What do I typically do to use academic games?**
- Explain the purpose of a game to students and connect it to the learning goals.
- Allow students to introduce new academic games.
- Emphasize learning instead of winning during inconsequential competition.
- Don’t use games that are nonacademic or that are not related to the learning goals.
- Don’t use game scores to determine grades.
- Ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in games.
- Don’t allow inappropriate comments or overly competitive behavior.

**Element 26: What do I typically do to manage response rates?**
- Use a balance of oral and written response strategies.
- Explain the different types of wait and pause time and their purposes to students.
- Use a friendly and respectful tone of voice during follow-up questioning.
- Don’t allow irrelevant questions to distract from the topic at hand.

**Element 27: What do I typically do to use physical movement?**
- Explain to students the reasons for physical movement.
- Teach students procedures to avoid wasting time trying to get back on task.
- Try a strategy several times before deciding whether to continue using it.

**Element 28: What do I typically do to maintain a lively pace?**
- After teaching students the procedures for transitioning, time them with a stopwatch while they practice quickly moving from one activity to another.
• Use verbal and nonverbal cues to signal different instructional segments to students.

**Element 29: What do I typically do to demonstrate intensity and enthusiasm?**

• If you aren’t genuinely excited about the content, study it more deeply, look for interesting connections between it and your interest areas, or just fake a level of excitement.
• Learn about students’ interests in order to make appropriate connections between the content and students’ lives.
• Don’t share negative opinions or negative past experiences with specific content (for example, “I’ve always hated math”) with students.
• Don’t use stories that are overly personal or controversial.

**Element 30: What do I typically do to use friendly controversy?**

• Closely monitor students during friendly controversy activities to ensure respectful behavior.
• Ask students to paraphrase others’ positions on issues.
• Emphasize that ideas, not people, are the subject of the debate or discussion.
• Teach students respectful language and phrases (for example, “I respectfully disagree”) to ensure courtesy during discussions or debates.
• Select age-appropriate topics for discussion and debate.
• Make sure that students are not condemned or personally attacked for their views.
• Always save time for a debriefing session after a friendly controversy activity, debate, or discussion.

**Element 31: What do I typically do to provide opportunities for students to talk about themselves?**

• Create graphic representations comparing student interests and opinions so that students can see commonalities with their peers.
• Don’t allow students to judge one another’s interests or accomplishments.
• Allow students to opt out of sharing about themselves if they aren’t comfortable.

**Element 32: What do I typically do to present unusual or intriguing information?**

• Share unusual information with colleagues to create a bank of unusual facts for each learning goal and unit.
• Identify student experts and invite them to share what they know about the content.
• Avoid overwhelming or confusing students with too much unusual information or with unclear or irrelevant information.
Design Question: What will I do to recognize and acknowledge adherence or lack of adherence to rules and procedures?

Element 33: What do I typically do to demonstrate “withitness”?

- Establish routines that encourage teacher proximity to students (for example, the teacher goes to students’ desks to answer questions during individual work time).
- Prepare teaching materials before class to avoid being distracted or turning away from the class during instructional time.
- Be specific about what student behavior is inappropriate and what student behavior is desired.
- Don’t make judgmental or broad comments about students in response to inappropriate behavior.

Element 34: What do I typically do to apply consequences for lack of adherence to rules and procedures?

- Try to remove factors that may be motivating students to act inappropriately (such as certain group configurations or seating arrangements).
- Use group contingency carefully to avoid creating negative relationships with and among students.
- Consult with administrators to determine procedures already in place for dealing with high-intensity situations.
- Don’t humiliate students who are acting inappropriately.

Element 35: What do I typically do acknowledge adherence to rules and procedures?

- Encourage students to monitor their own behavior.
- Encourage students to recognize other students who are adhering to rules and procedures.
- Be specific about the positive behavior exhibited when giving verbal acknowledgement.
- Identify specific positive behaviors that students exhibited, and tell how they contributed to positive classroom functioning and learning.
- Don’t neglect to praise students who dependably adhere to the rules and procedures.
- Avoid comparing students.

Design Question: What will I do to establish and maintain effective relationships with students?
Element 36: What do I typically do to understand students’ interests and backgrounds?
- Write down specific details about each student as you learn about them.
- Keep track of students about whom little is known, and seek opportunities to learn more about them.
- Consider coaching a sport or sponsoring a club in order to learn more about students and develop relationships with them.
- If necessary and appropriate, make home visits to connect with students and parents.
- Don’t endorse inappropriate elements of student culture.
- Don’t sacrifice the teacher’s position as an authority figure in order to “be friends” with students.

Element 37: What do I typically do to use verbal and nonverbal behaviors that indicate affection for students?
- Write personal notes to students to recognize positive behaviors.
- Know what name students prefer to be called by.
- Recognize that physical touch makes some students uncomfortable, and communicate affection and interest to them in alternative ways.
- Use humor respectfully.
- Don’t use sarcasm.
- Don’t laugh at students.
- Don’t embarrass students.

Element 38: What do I typically do to display objectivity and control?
- If you cannot control your emotions, take a “time-out.”
- Take deep breaths to slow your heart rate and calm down.
- Use a soft, controlled voice.
- Don’t have “favorite” students or “teacher’s pets.”
- Don’t raise your voice, yell, or demean students.

Design Question: What will I do to communicate high expectations for all students?
Element 39: What do I typically do to demonstrate value and respect for low-expectancy students?
- Realize that prior teachers’ expectation levels for students may influence your expectation levels for students.
- Don’t group students based on expectation levels.
- Don’t allow students’ previous teachers to make negative comments to you about students.

Element 40: What do I typically do to ask questions of low-expectancy students?
- Build relationships with students so they are comfortable answering questions in class.
- Allow students to write their answers first or check in with a peer before responding out loud in front of the class.
- Give students time to check their thinking before answering.
- Don’t accept responses only from students who raise their hands or indicate that they know the answer.

Element 41: What do I typically do to probe incorrect answers with low-expectancy students?
- Use a positive tone of voice and an upbeat attitude when responding to student answers.
- Don’t show irritation or frustration with a student who answers incorrectly.
- Don’t embarrass or humiliate a student who is having trouble answering.