**July 2020**

*Please share with your faculty:*

**Tips for fostering students’ self-regulated learning in asynchronous online learning environments**

Due to the pandemic, both instructors and students have had to adapt quickly to different forms of online learning models. Asynchronous learning has emerged as a predominant model because of its flexibility in allowing students to learn anytime and anywhere. Although convenient, this type of learning model requires students to exercise a high degree of self-regulated learning.

Self-regulated learning is defined “as the degree to which students are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process” (Zimmerman, 2008, p.2). In other words, self-regulated learning involves a high degree of motivation and self-direction.

For students who lack self-regulated learning skills, asynchronous learning can be extremely challenging and overwhelming. This in turn can  hinder a student’s motivation to succeed. As result, it is essential for educators to help foster students’ self-regulated learning skills so that they can succeed with the highly self-directed asynchronous learning model.

Zimmerman (2000) proposes a three-phase cyclical model of self-regulation by which students combine cognitive, behavioral, and motivational strategies in order to attain task-specific goals. Educators can help students develop important self-regulated learning skills within each of the three phases of the model.

(1) At the forethought phase, students must create an effective learning plan. Educators can help students do so by helping them identify their learning goals. Learning goals should be specific—challenging but attainable, proximal, and hierarchically organized with larger overarching goals. In addition, educators should help students allocate appropriate amounts of time to complete learning tasks. Educators can do so by having students break tasks into smaller, more manageable sub-tasks that should be completed by specified dates. If tasks are taking longer or faster than expected time, allocations should
be adjusted accordingly. This information can be used to inform future planning.

(2) At the performance phase, students deploy differing strategies towards achieving their learning goals. This phase also requires students to exercise self-control and to self-observe the effectiveness of the strategies they are using to complete their learning tasks.

Educators can help students at this phase by teaching and modeling various strategies that can be used for completing a learning task. In other words, they can equip students with a tool box of strategies that they can use for completing a task. This way students will not be stuck on just one strategy or approach.

Most important is for educators to teach students to be flexible in their learning tactics. For example, students should be reminded to reflect continuously on the effectiveness of their learning approaches, and revise their strategies if necessary. One way of doing so is to encourage students to actively think aloud in a structured way while completing a learning task (see Ebner & Ehri 2013 and Ebner & Ehri, 2016). A structured think-aloud method involves continuously thinking about one's learning goals, and the effectiveness of each action for attaining one’s goals. If a student recognizes that an action or strategy is not working well, they will then need to exercise flexibility by trying a different approach instead.  Research by Ebner & Ehri (2013; 2016) revealed the effectiveness of students using a structured think-aloud approach for improving learning outcomes with college students. Furthermore, asking students to create a checklist of their learning goals and a record of their actions and the effectiveness of those actions for reaching their learning goals also can be a concrete way to help students self-reflect during the performance phase.

(3) Finally, the self-reflection phase requires students to self-reflect on their learning outcomes and experience. This phase is crucial for informing future learning success. It is important that students who did not perform as well as they hoped or expected, do not become fixated on their final grades, and instead focus on what they can learn from their experiences and improve or do differently next time.

Educators can help students develop mastery versus performance mindsets by providing students with timely, specific and concrete feedback on learning tasks and assessments. Using detailed analytic scoring rubrics can be one useful way of organizing and providing students with specific and concrete feedback. Educators also can encourage students to self-assess their own work by providing them with grading rubrics to self-evaluate their own work before turning in assignments. Or educators can ask students to write why they believe their work should receive a particular grade and what they feel they did well or needs improvement.

In sum, with the advent and prevalence asynchronous online learning models, it is important for educators to equip students with essential self-regulated skills. By encouraging students to be proactive and self-reflective learners, students will have the drive and the ability to succeed.

References:

Ebner, R., & Ehri, L. (2013). Vocabulary learning on the Internet: Using a structured think-aloud procedure. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 56 (6), 472-481, republished in Digital Literacies: An IRA Cross-Journal Virtual Issue (International Reading Association)

Ebner, R. & Ehri. L. (2016) Teaching students how to self-regulate their online vocabulary learning by using a structured think-to-yourself procedure. Journal of College Reading and Learning, 46(1), 62-73, DOI: 10.1080/10790195.2015.1075448. Published online Oct. 5, 2015 and available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10790195.2015.1075448

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Zimmerman, B.J. (2008). Investigating self-regulation and motivation: Historical background, methodological developments, and future prospects. American Educational Journal, 45(1), 166–183. doi:10.3102/0002831207312909

**Check out!**

Ebner, R., & Ehri, L. (2013). Vocabulary learning on the Internet: Using a structured think-aloud procedure. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 56 (6), 472-481, republished in Digital Literacies: An IRA Cross-Journal Virtual Issue (International Reading Association)

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**Please share examples** of effective asynchronous learning methods being used in your program or course, and I will feature those examples on YU’s Learning Assessment Website.

**Reminder:** Please remember to submit a Spring 2020 assessment report or alternative assessment narrative by **August 17**. If choosing to submit the latter, below are some guiding questions to consider:

* What are some examples of online learning assessments that your program's faculty conducted this semester, and what student learning objectives were those assessments designed to measure?
* What are some of the challenges that faculty and/or students experienced in connection with these online assessments?
* Based on your experience this Spring, what do you consider to be some of the relative benefits  of online student learning assessments  vs. traditional assessments?
* Should program faculty consider using blended learning assessment techniques (i.e., a combination of online and traditional assessments ) in the future?  If so, how?