

Reflective Teaching Log

A workbook for intentionally examining why you and your students do what you do in the classroom, reflecting on how things actually go, and making plans for improving your teaching for the future.



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This **Reflective Teaching Log** was created by Rachel A. Rogers,
Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at CCRI.

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Reflective Teaching Log

What is a reflective teaching log?

A reflective teaching log is a private reflection and self-evaluation of one's teaching. Using a teaching log is a simple way of taking a step back to examine classroom experiences.

A reflective teaching log is **not** a moment-by-moment recording of what happened in your class. It is more often used as an examination of why things happened the way they did in your classes. One focus of this examination is why you made the choices you made in your courses. Another focus of reflective teaching logs is thinking about why your students might have done what they did.

Stephen D. Brookfield, one of the most well-known writers about reflective teaching, says "A teaching log is a weekly record of the events in a teacher's life that have impressed themselves most vividly on his or her consciousness" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 72). These events probably stand out to us because they either fit with our assumptions about the world or challenge those assumptions. Noticing patterns in what elicits emotional responses can help us identify our own assumptions, which may be unconscious. This is especially important to do if any of our assumptions are based on implicit biases.

Being able to notice those patterns and uncover your assumptions about the world, about higher education, about yourself, and about your students requires time and evidence to sort through. Keeping a regular teaching log gives you data to help you explore those patterns.

A reflective teaching log is only one component of creating a reflective teaching practice. Other components include student feedback, peer feedback and conversations, self-evaluation through video or audio recordings, and scholarly literature about teaching and learning. **The Center for Teaching Excellence** wants to support you as you build up your reflective teaching practice. In addition to this Reflective Teaching Log, CTE will offer more resources and opportunities for reflective conversation this semester.

How will reflection benefit you?

- It helps foster an environment for professional growth.
- It creates more confidence in your teaching practice.
- It helps you understand yourself as an instructor better.
- It encourages innovation as you consider new teaching practices and adapt your current practices to your student population.
- It reminds you that your teaching is important and is worthy of consideration.
- It allows you to learn about your teaching.
- It helps you take responsibility for your own teaching practices while helping you avoid taking the blame for others' responsibilities.
- It helps you create a rationale for your teaching practices, also known as a teaching philosophy. Teaching Philosophy statements are regularly included in Promotion packets.
- It prompts you to consider and "understand the students in terms of their social locations and identities" (Brookfield, 2017, p. 42), your own social location and identity, and how they interact.

“The most important knowledge teachers need to do good work is a knowledge of how students are experiencing learning and perceiving their teacher's actions.”

—STEPHEN D. BROOKFIELD

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- Spalding, A. (2020, January 14). How to encourage reflective teaching in your school. *Iris Connect Blog*. <https://blog.irisconnect.com/uk/blog/5-benefits-of-encouraging-teacher-self-reflection>



Reflective practice develops your ability to understand how your students learn and the best ways to teach them. By reflecting on your teaching, you identify any barriers to learning that your students have.

—CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
TEACHING AND LEARNING TEAM

Suggested Steps:

Schedule 15–30 minutes each week to reflect on your teaching.

Each week, choose 1 or 2 prompts each from Groups A, B, and C on the following pages to reflect on. Reuse prompts from these groups whenever that makes sense to you.

Choose 1 prompt from group D to reflect on each week. These items are not designed to be repeated, so try to answer each item one time this semester.

You may, of course, use your own journal, notebook, or digital document for your teaching log, but this workbook provides two pages for each week of the semester for your use. Space is dedicated to each question group on the weekly logs.

If something happens during the week that you want to make sure you include in your reflection, consider jotting down a phrase about it on a post-it note attached to your teaching log.

At the end of the semester, use the wrap-up reflection prompts (page 34–36) to reflect on your reflections, identify areas of professional development to focus on, and make plans for the future.

Keep an eye out for CTE events related to reflective teaching practice!

“
We do not learn from experience...
we learn from reflecting on
experience.”

—JOHN DEWEY

Reflection Prompts

Questions excerpted from Brookfield (1995), Brookfield (2017), McNair et al. (2020), Renard (2019), Spalding (2020). Full citations in the Reference section.

GROUP A **Affective Reflection (repeatable)**

- What was the moment (or moments) this week when I felt most connected, engaged, or affirmed as a teacher – the moment(s) I said to myself, “This is what being a teacher is really all about”?
- What was the moment (or moments) this week when I felt most disconnected, disengaged, or bored as a teacher – the moment(s) I said to myself, “I’m just going through the motions here”?
- What was the situation that caused me the greatest anxiety or distress – the kind of situation that I kept replaying in my mind as I was dropping off to sleep, or that caused me to say to myself, “I don’t want to go through this for a while”?
- What was the event that took me most by surprise – an event where I saw or did something that shook me up, caught me off guard, knocked me off my stride, gave me a jolt, or made me unexpectedly happy?
- Of everything I did this week in my teaching, what would I do differently if I had the chance to do it again?
- What do I feel proudest of in my teaching activities this week? Why?

GROUP B **Behavioral Reflection (repeatable)**

- Did I use Starfish this week? Do I need to recommend someone for tutoring or counseling?
- Was there a student missing this week? How did I reach out to that student?
- Did my assessments reflect student learning, or just task completion and memorization skills?
- Choose a specific learning method or activity utilized this week. Do all students benefit from this learning method/activity? Who does and who doesn’t? Why?
- Choose a specific topic from a class this week. Why did I choose to cover that topic in that way this week?
- Is there anything from this week I want to adapt or change for next semester?
- In what ways did my students meet or fail to meet my expectations for them this week? What about my instructions or behavior encouraged them to meet expectations? Or what can I adjust to make instructions or expectations clearer for them in the future? How can I best scaffold my students to achieve college-level work in this way?

GROUP C Cultural Reflection (repeatable)

- What are the ethnic and cultural demographics of my sections?
- Did I learn about my students beyond the classroom this week?
- What collaborative opportunities did I have for my students this week?
- Did I share alternative cultural perspectives in class this week?
- Am I treating my students consistently – from interaction to interaction and from student to student?
- Did I give my students opportunities to make their own choices this week?
- How did my personal context or my students' personal contexts impact teaching and learning in my classes this week?
- Which students were actively engaged in classes this week and which ones had disengaged? Are there any patterns in which students were/were not engaged?
- Have I made assumptions about my students' performance or ability based on their apparent race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, or age?
- Are there any potential barriers for any of my students to access course materials or resources? (Consider accommodations, technology access, physical access, color and formatting issues, etc.)

GROUP D Bonus Questions (one each week, no need to repeat)

1. What am I proudest of in my work as a teacher?
2. What would I like my students to say about me when the class is over?
3. What do I most need to learn about in my teaching?
4. What do I worry most about in my work as a teacher?
5. When do I know I've done good work?
6. What's the mistake I've made that I've learned the most from?
7. I know I've done good work when ...
8. I know I've done bad work when ...
9. I feel best about my work when ...
10. I feel worst about my work when ...
11. The last time I saw really good teaching was when ...
12. The best learning experience I've ever seen students involved in was when ...
13. Do I have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset for my students' abilities and intelligence?
14. Have I ever taken an Implicit Association Test? If so, how might my results affect my teaching practices?

Week 1

GROUP A

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GROUP B

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GROUP C

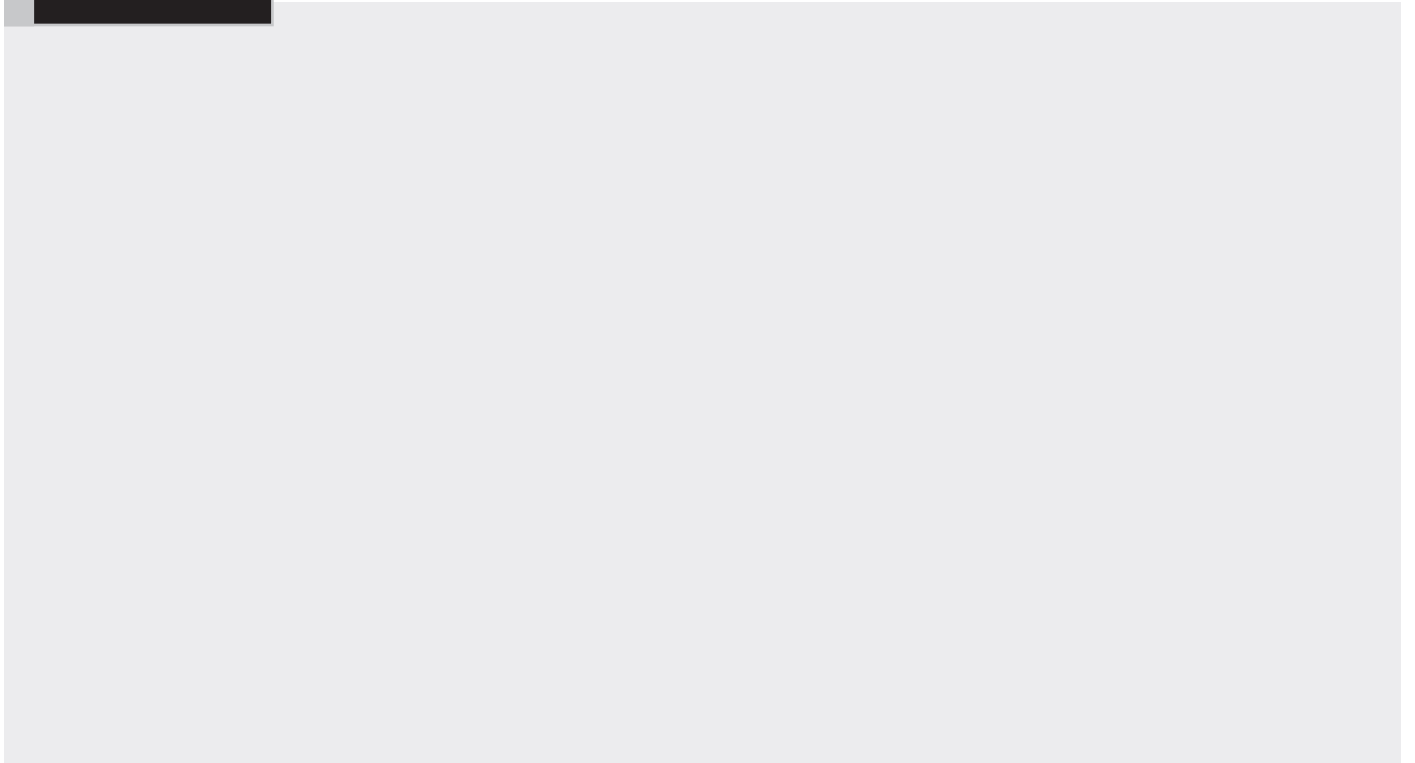
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GROUP D

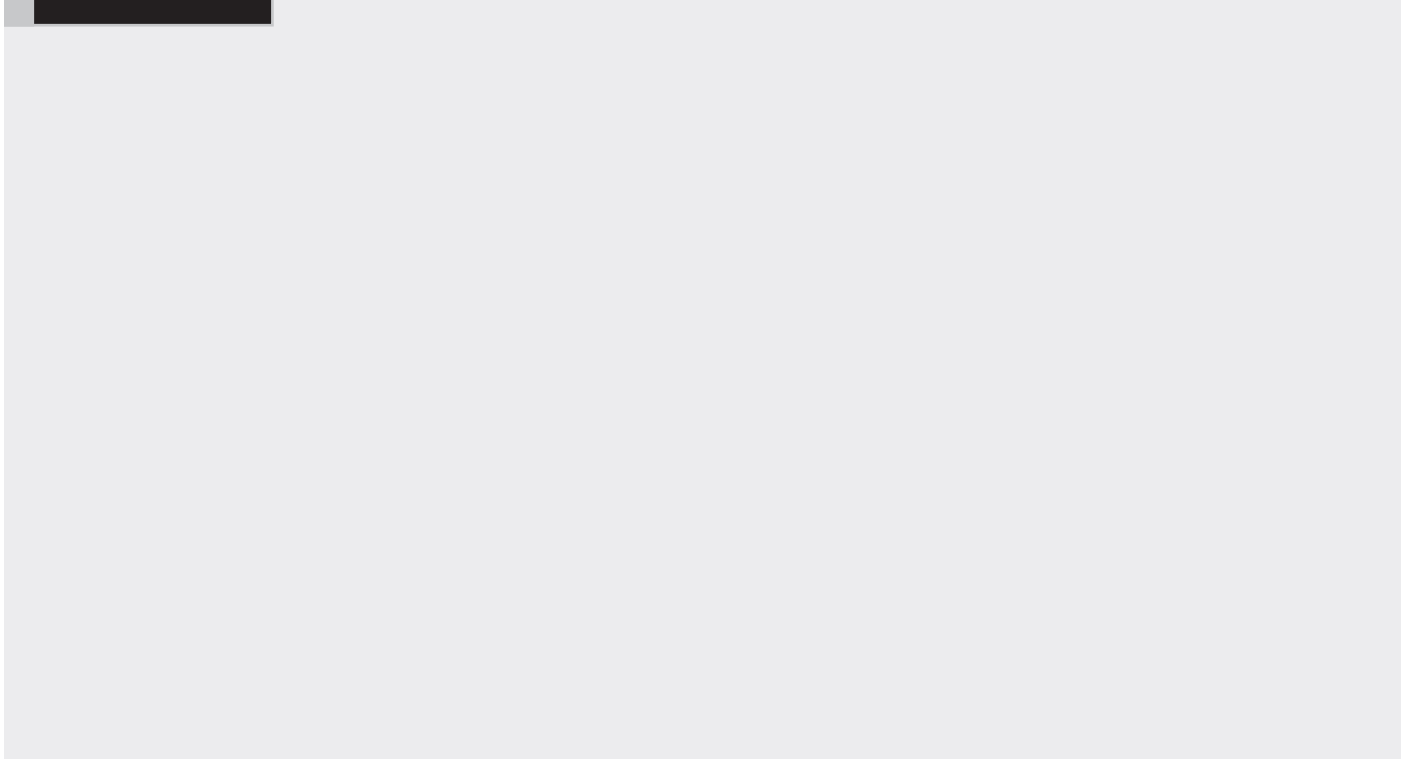
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Week 2

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

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GROUP D

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Week 3

GROUP A

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GROUP B

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GROUP C

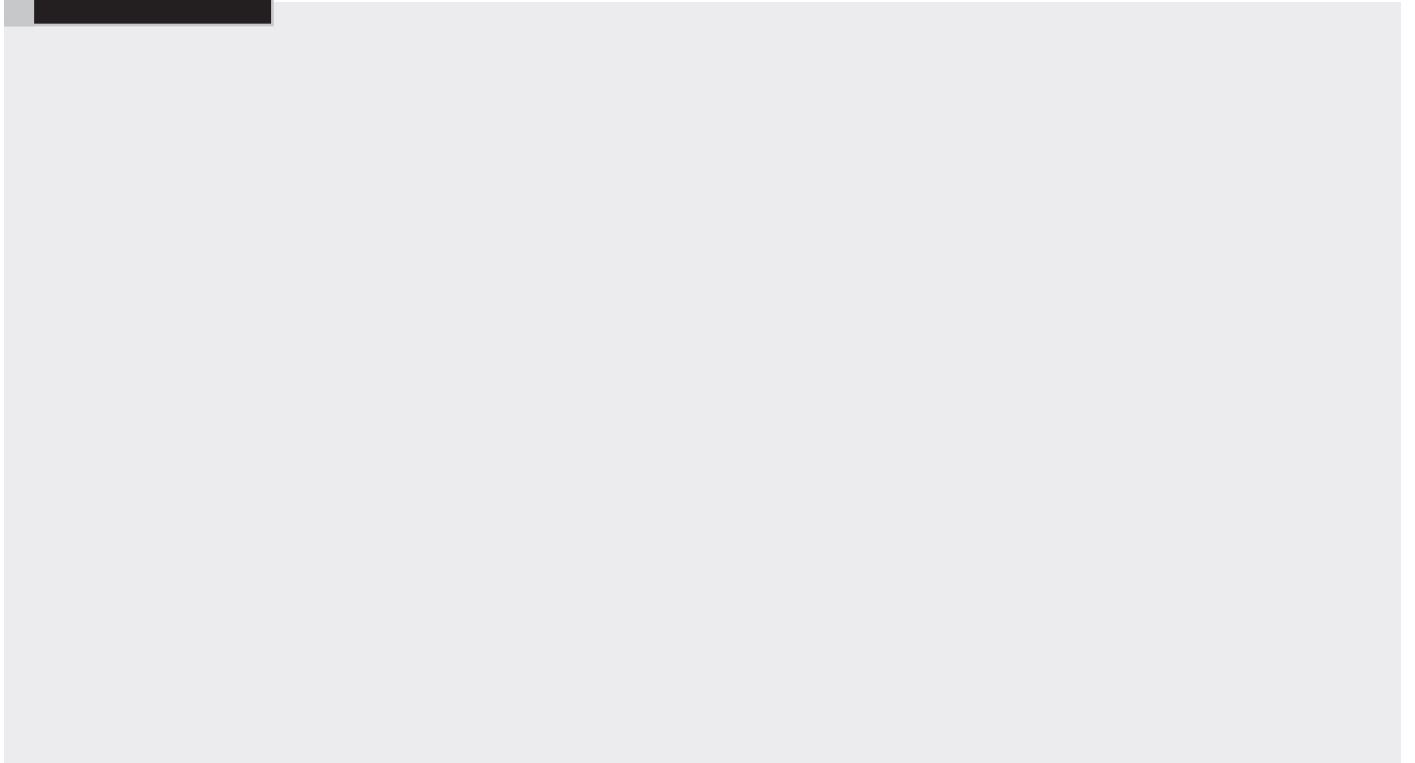
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GROUP D

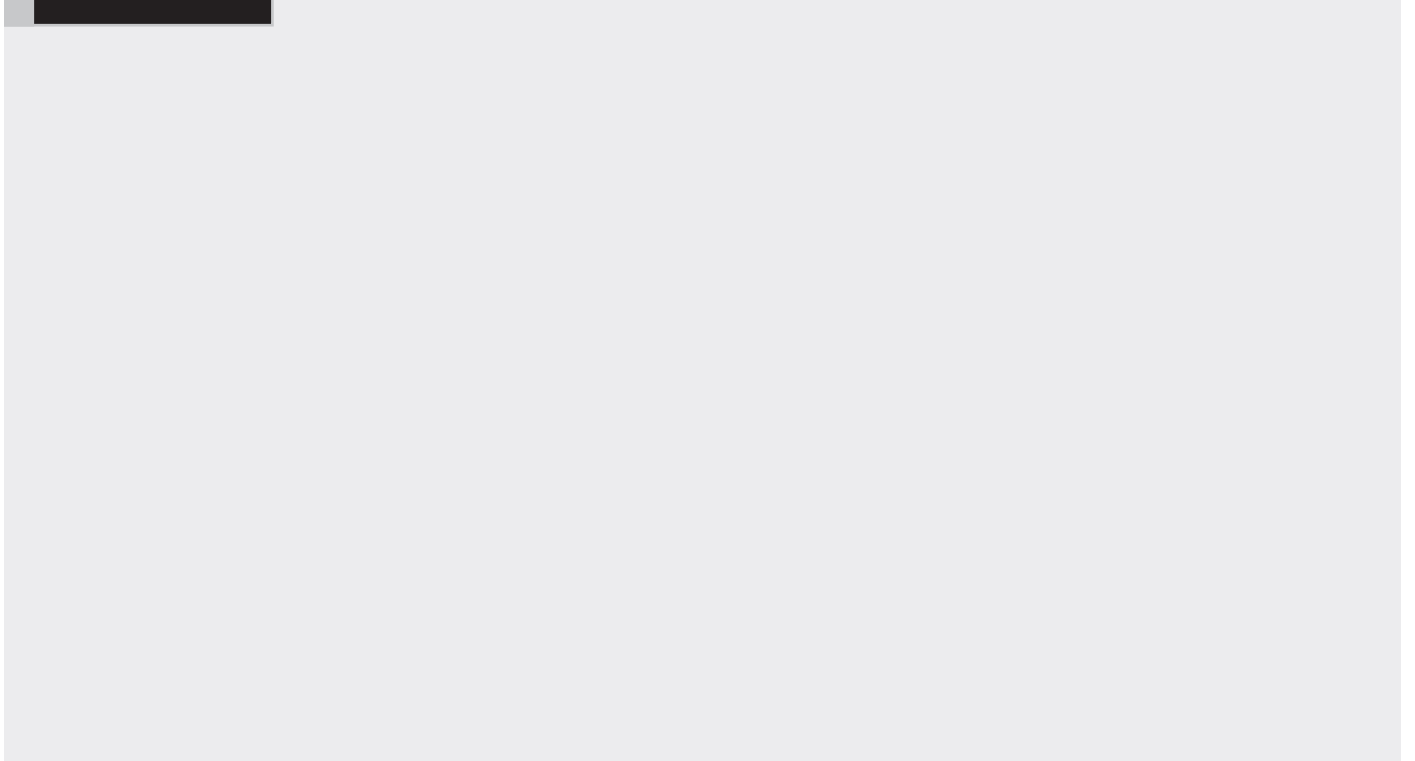
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Week 4

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

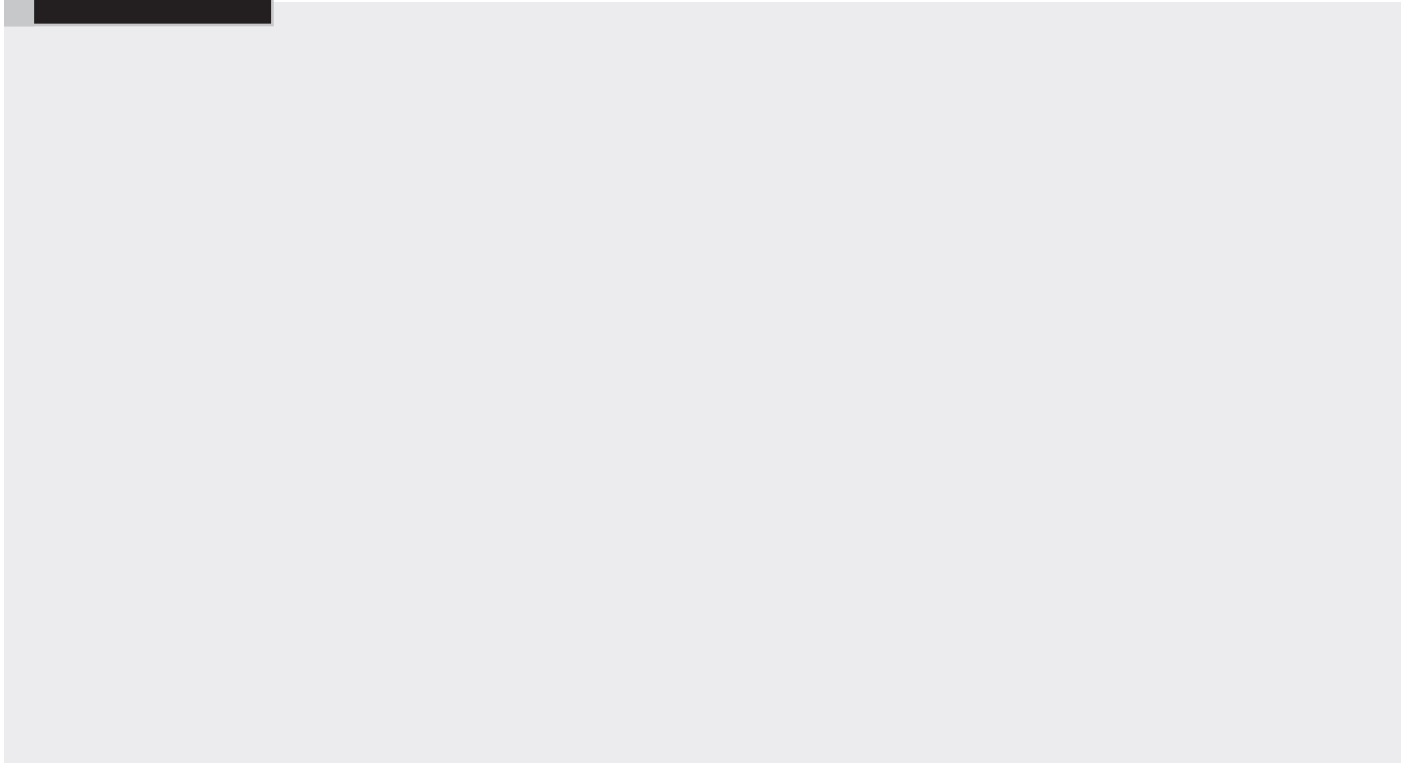
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GROUP D

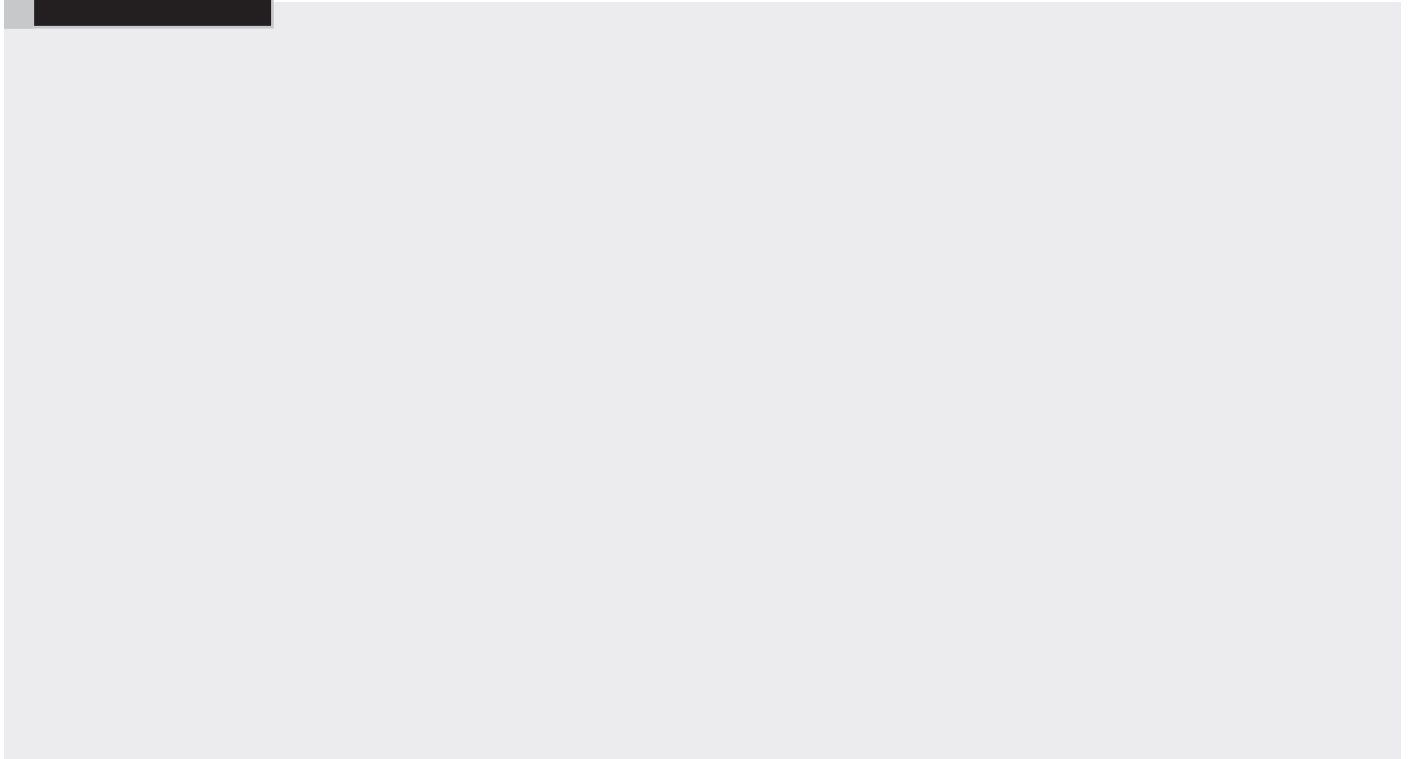
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Week 5

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

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Week 6

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

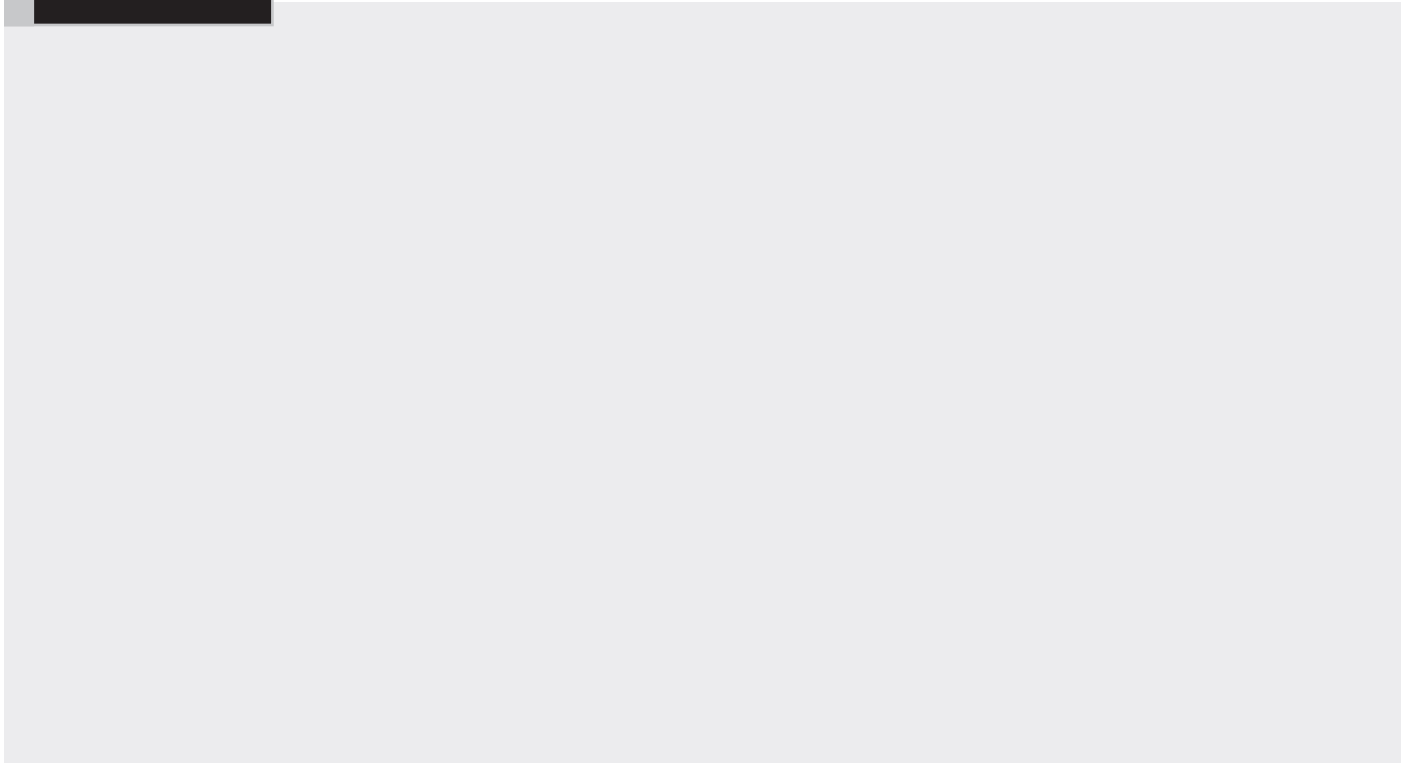
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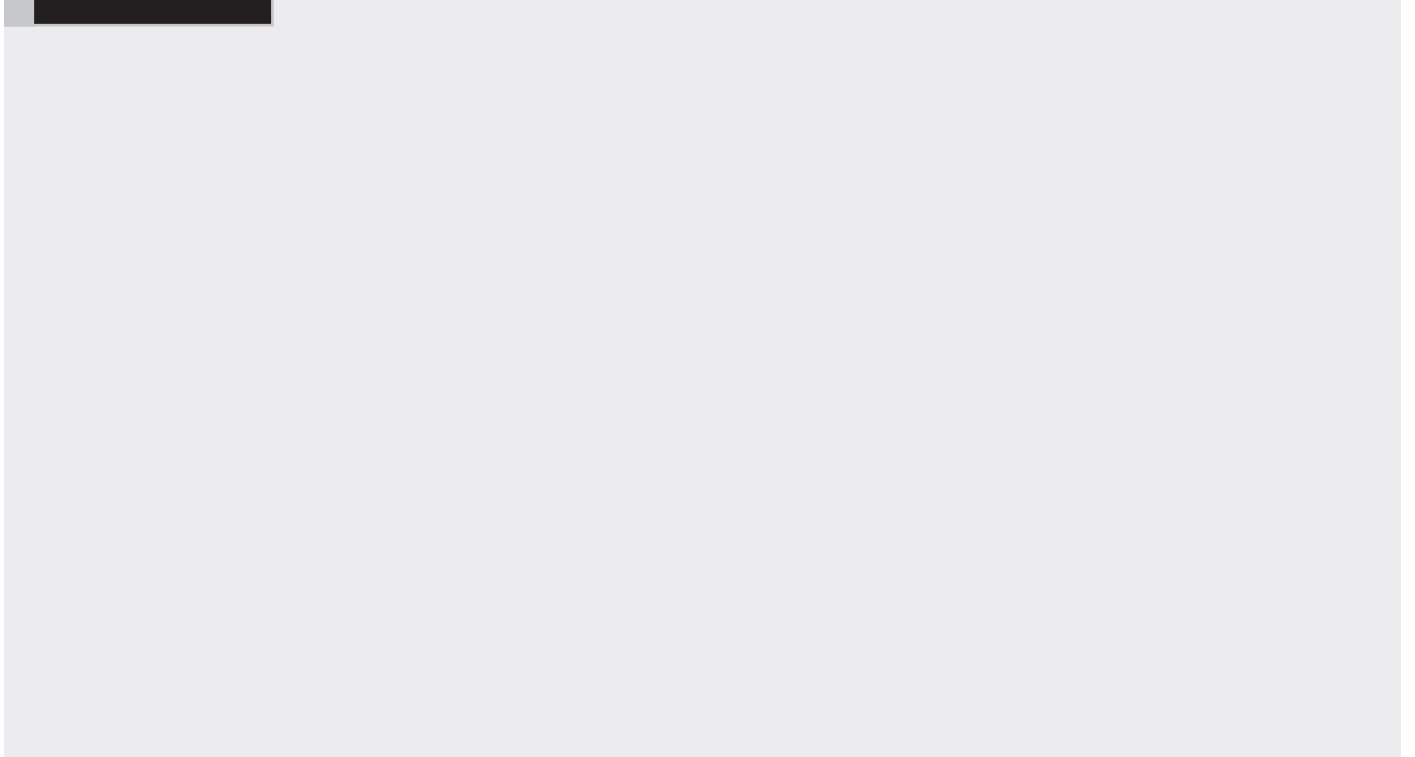
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Week 7

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

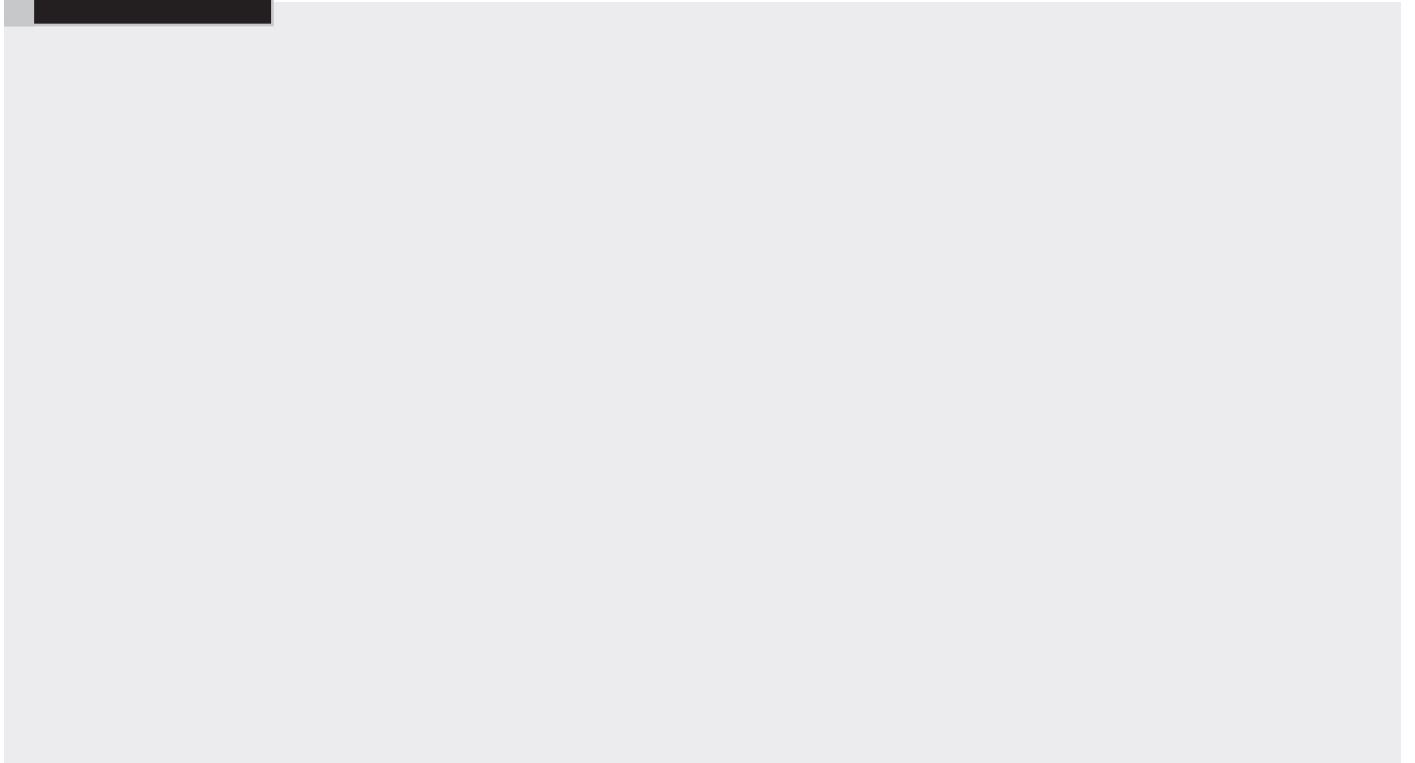
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GROUP D

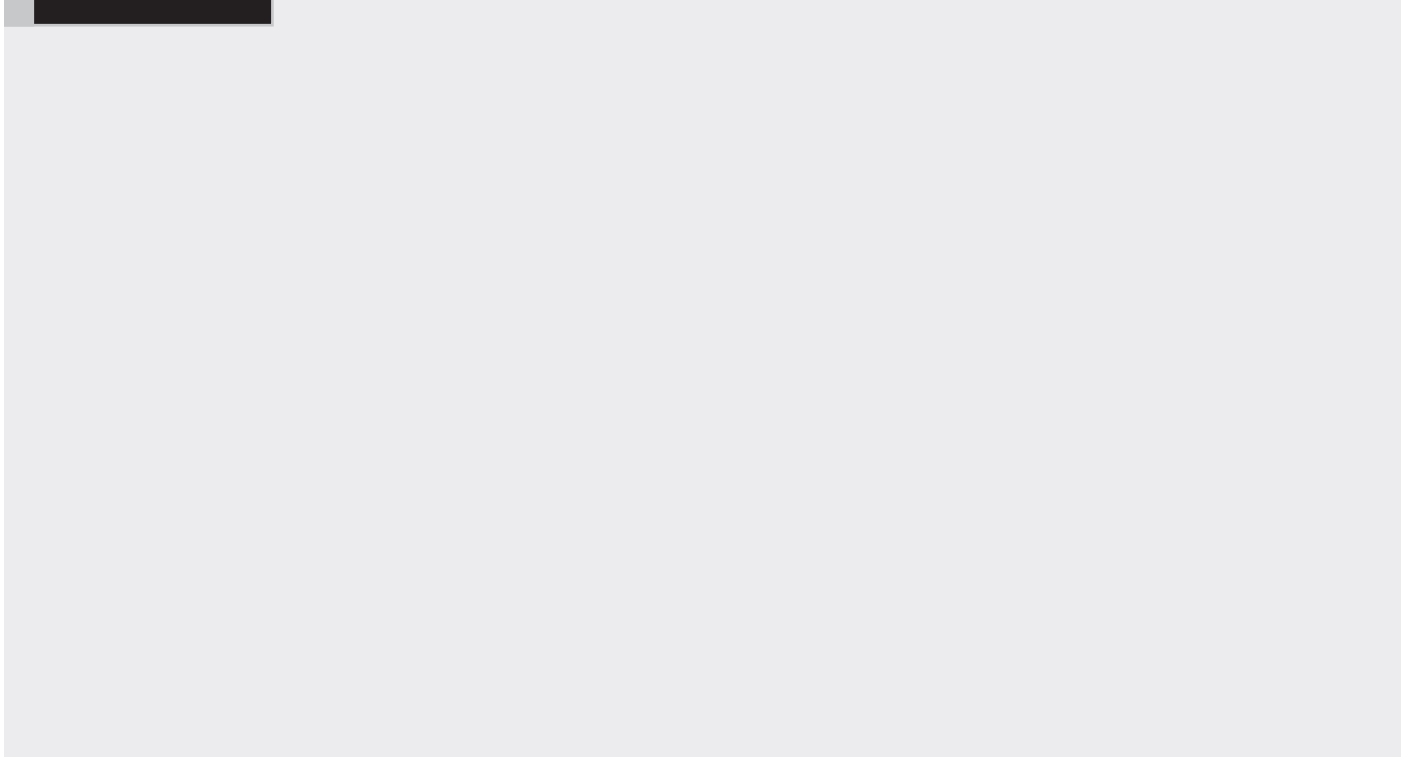
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Week 8

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

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GROUP D

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Week 9

GROUP A

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GROUP B

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GROUP C

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Week 10

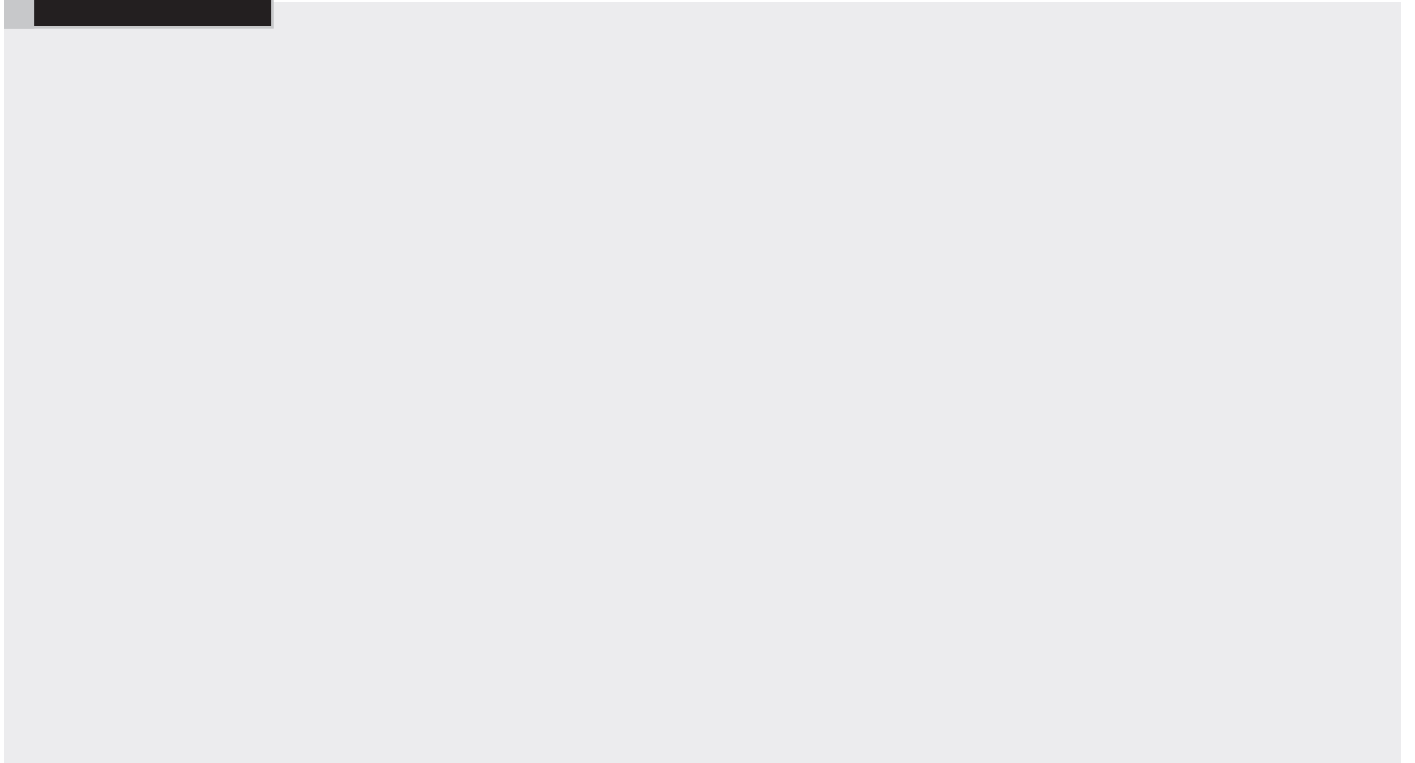
GROUP A



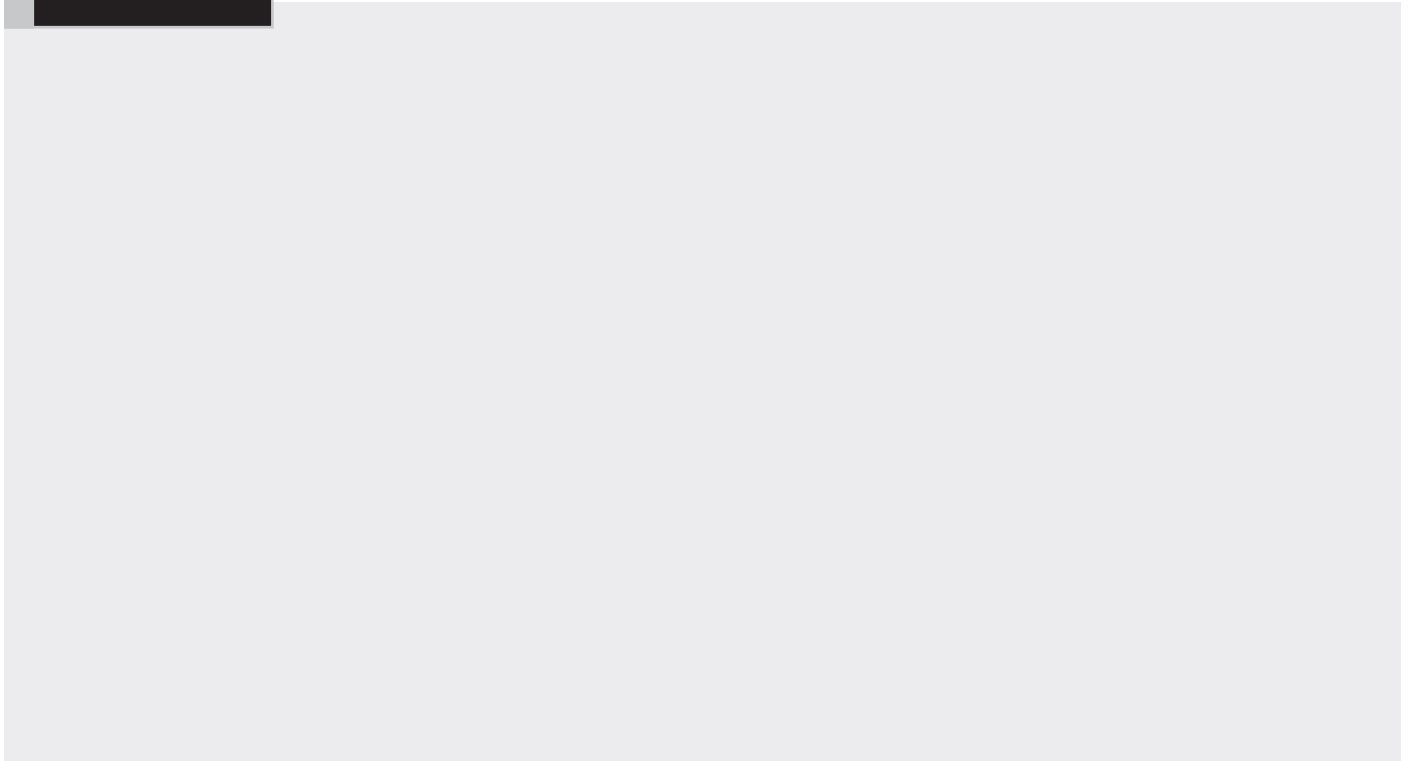
GROUP B



GROUP C



GROUP D



Week 11

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

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GROUP D

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Week 12

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

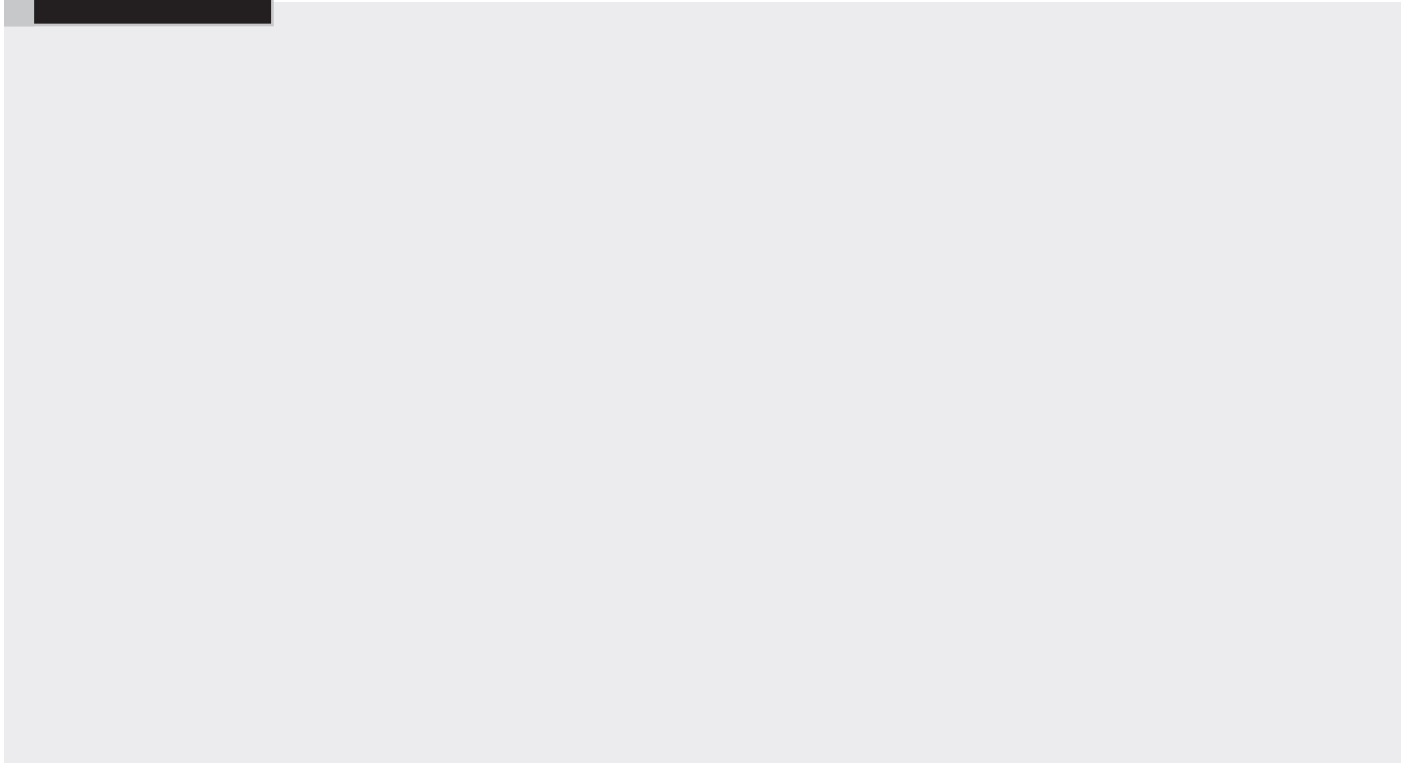
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GROUP D

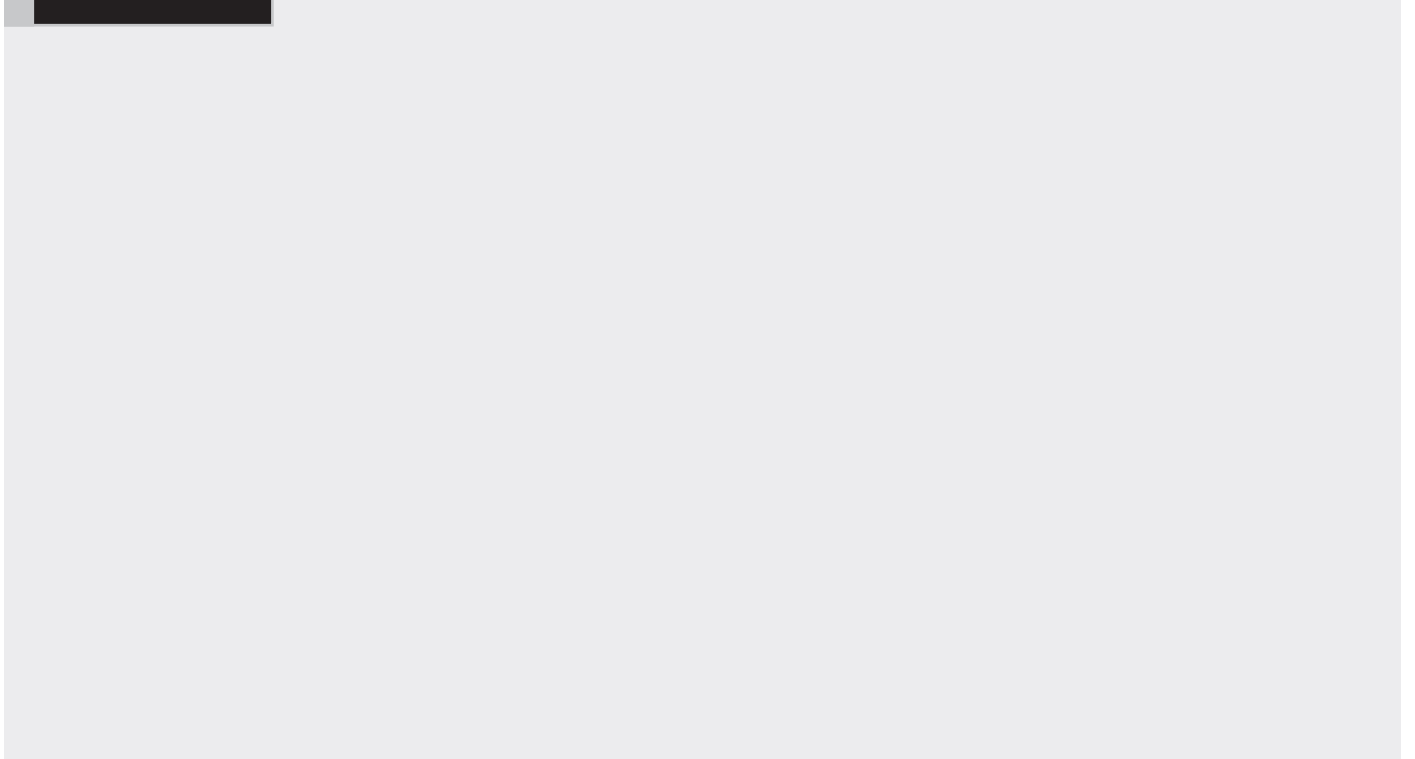
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Week 13

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

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GROUP D

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Week 14

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C

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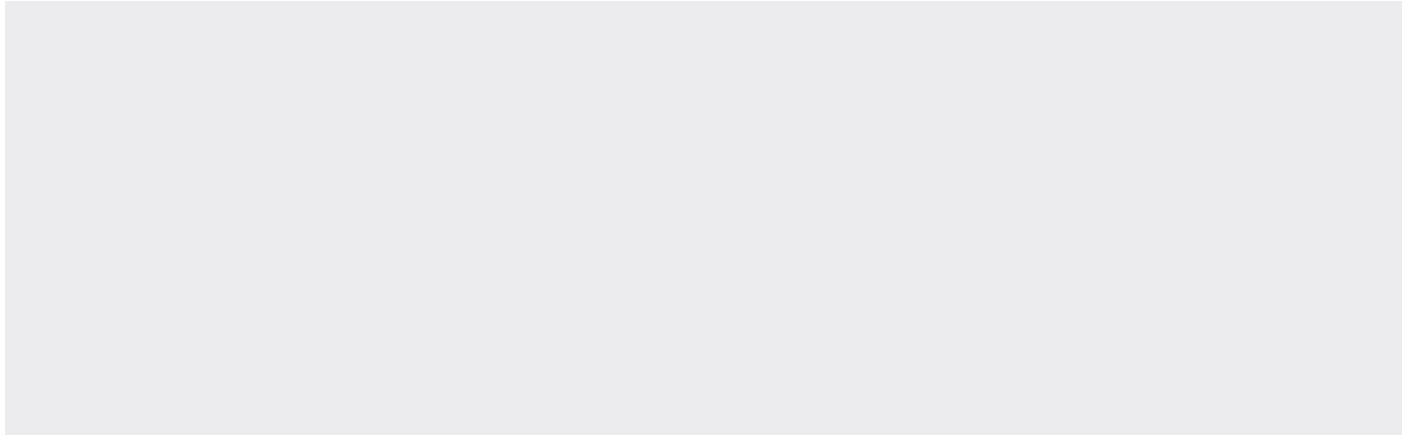
GROUP D

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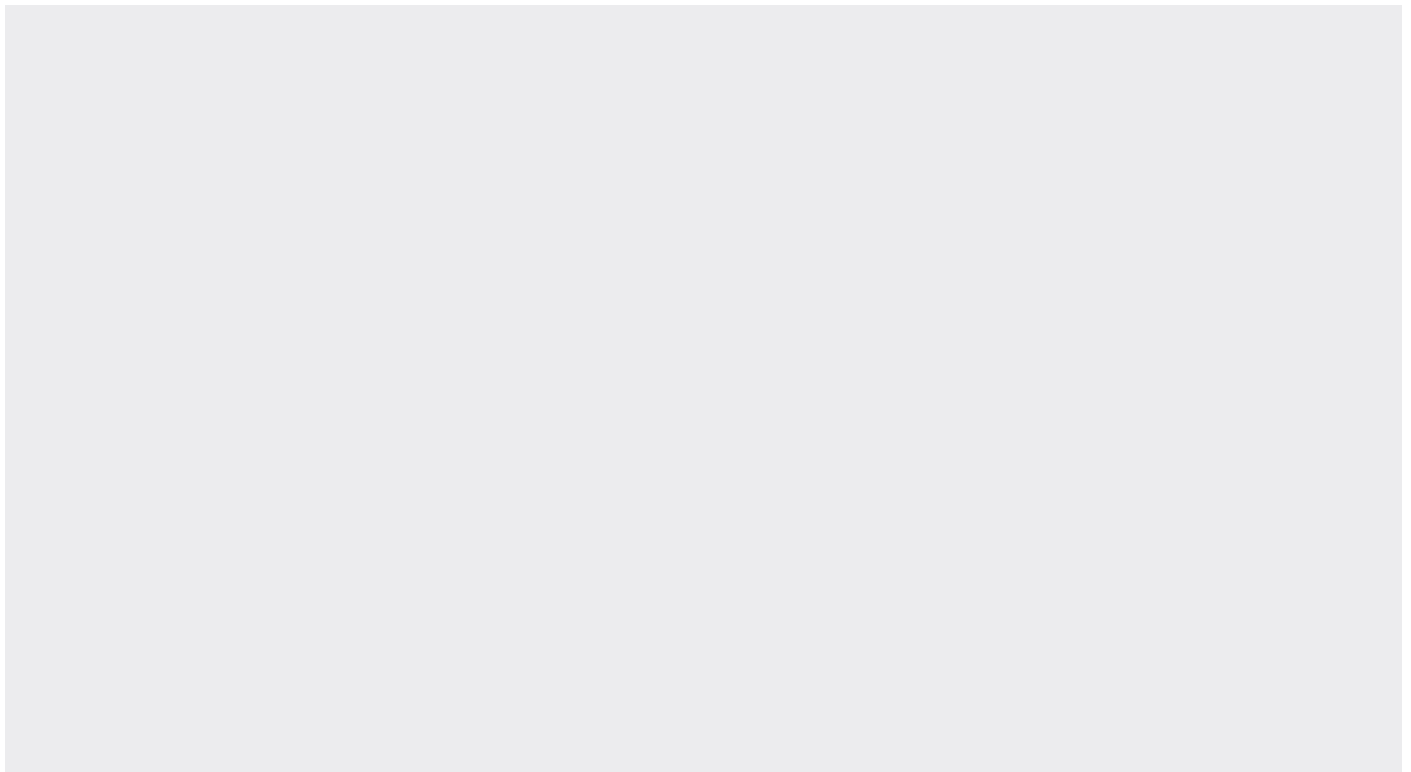
End of semester wrap-up

Take some time to read your weekly teaching logs from this semester. Keep an eye out for patterns, trends, and/or what's missing from your logs.

What patterns or trends are there in my logs?



Is anything missing from my reflective teaching logs? Take a moment to look back at the Reflection Prompts on page 4–5. Are there any I avoided all semester? (e.g., Did I skip items about assessments? About student-to-student interactions? About race and ethnicity?) Why do I think I skipped those items?



What did I improve in my teaching practice this semester? What am I proud of this semester?

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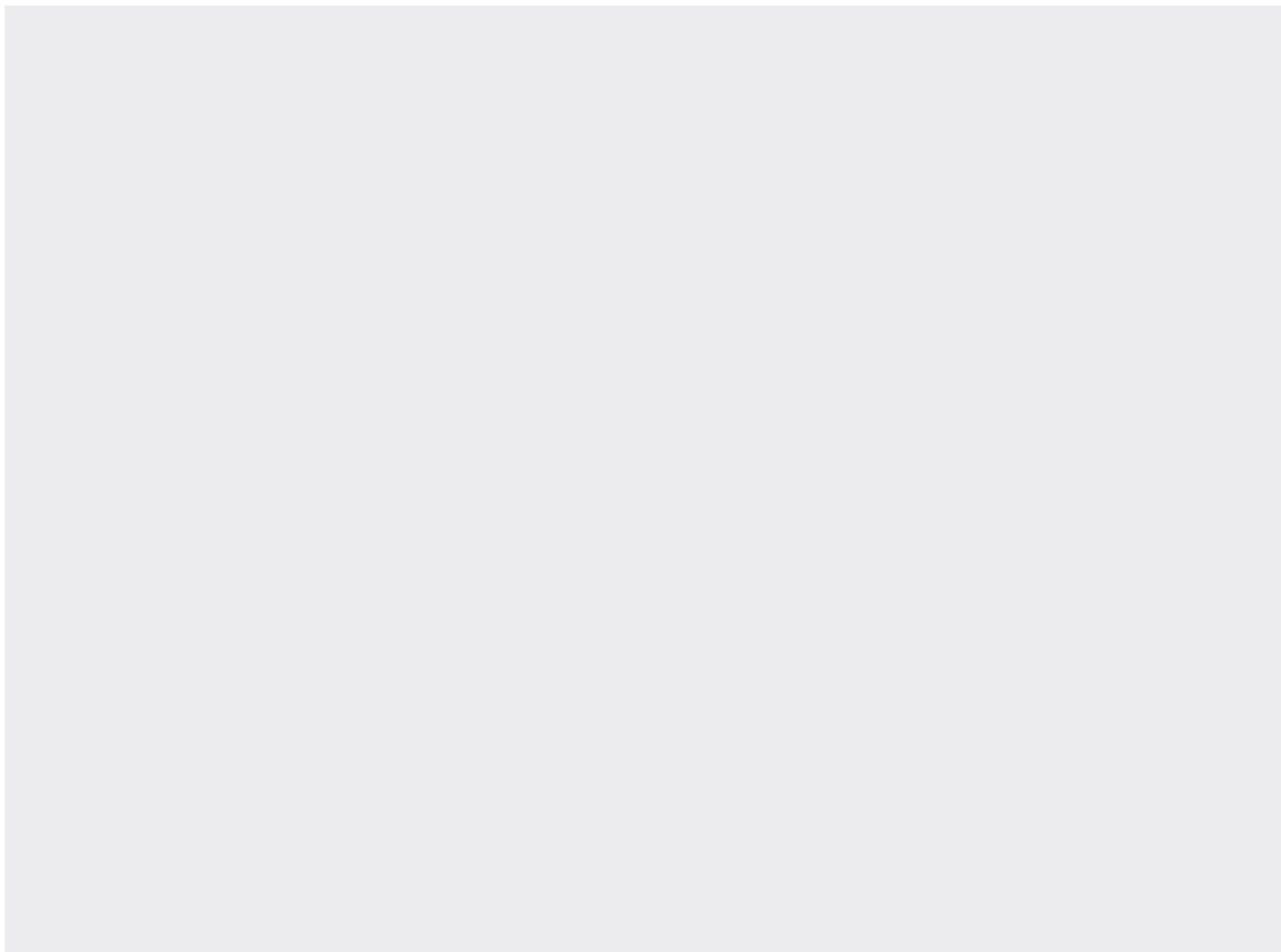
In what areas do I want to improve my teaching? Do I need any support to improve in these areas? If so, what type of support do I need?

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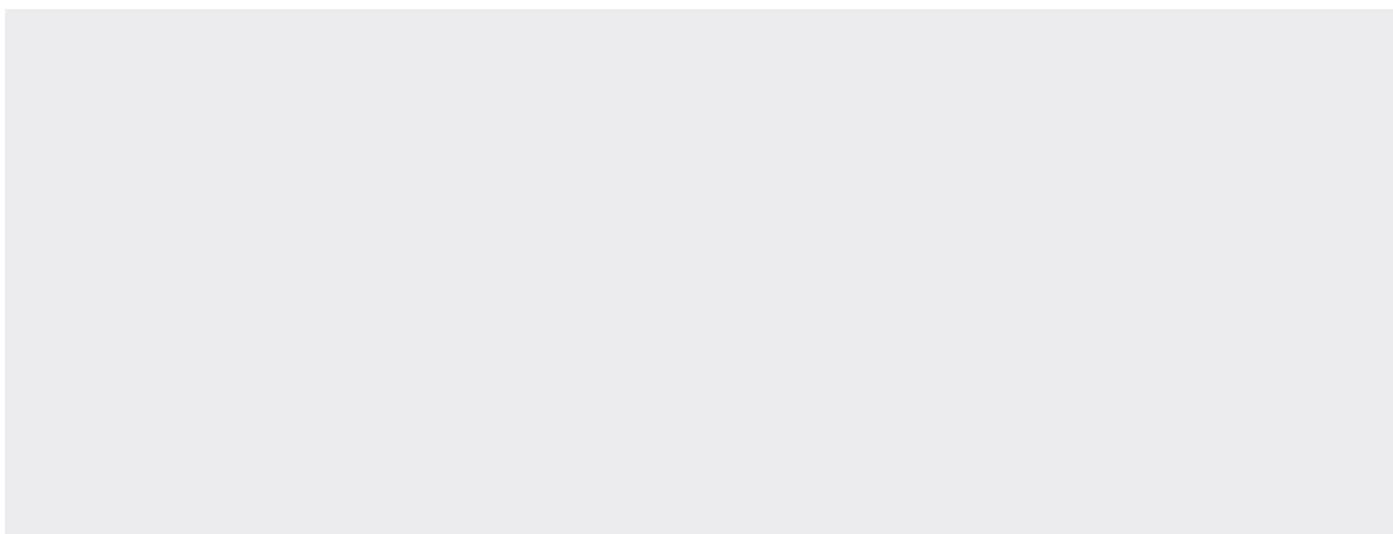
Did I make any notes about things I'd like to change for the future? How and when am I going to make those changes?

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What do my answers to the Bonus Questions tell you about my teaching philosophy?



Do my teaching practices align with my philosophy?





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