



TEACHING TIPS OF THE MONTH FROM MC FACULTY



Brought to you by TIDES and PALS November 2015

The Faculty Program for Active Learning in STEM ([GTSTEP/PALS—http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/pals](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/pals)), the Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM ([TIDES—http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/TIDES/](http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/TIDES/)) grant project, and ELITE (<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/elite/>) are happy to bring you the "Teaching Tips of the Month from MC Faculty". Both PALS (with its focus on active learning in STEM) and TIDES (with its focus on active learning and culturally sensitive pedagogy) seek to incorporate highly engaging learning activities for diverse student populations into STEM courses. However, as you will see, many of these activities are not STEM-specific and can be applied to any course. You can access these activities via the [TIDES toolkit](#) or apply to PALS [here](#). **We welcome your feedback about this publication and invite you to share teaching tips by contacting us at tides@montgomerycollege.edu.**

Theme: Classroom Assessment Techniques

TIP 1: Focused Listing

Description: Give students a single, word or phrase as an important "focus point" and direct them to list several ideas that are closely related to it within time and item number limits. Suggested limits: 3-10 minutes; 5-7 items.



Examples: To assess students' knowledge of specialized vocabulary, on the first day of class, a physics instructor has the students list five or six words or phrases that define *work in physics*. Their answers form the basis of the second class, with the instructor clarifying misunderstandings as well as illustrating accurate answers with quotations from students.

Variations:

- Use at the beginning or end of a unit or as homework before a class.
- Develop from textbook glossaries or defined terms in chapters.
- Ask students to describe relationships between vocabulary terms and a focus point.
- Ask students to give definitions to match with terms.

Strengths: The strategy allows instructor to quickly determine students' prior knowledge of important terms/concepts or what they recall from a presentation or reading assignment.

When used before instruction, it helps students recall what they may know and will help them connect and retain (scaffold) new information about the focus point. When used later, it assesses long-term recall and reinforces learning.

TIP 2: One Minute Paper

Description: Stop class 2-3 minutes early and ask students to briefly answer some version of the following questions: "What was the most important thing you learned today during class?" & "What important question remains unanswered?" Students respond on half-sheets of paper or index cards. To encourage honest feedback, ask students not to write their names on these sheets.



Variations:

- Ask students just one of the two questions. For example: "What was not clear today?" or "What was the muddiest (most difficult) point today?"
- Ask students a more focused question about the topic at hand (*why, where, when, how* something happened or should be done), but the time for answering should be kept short.
- Ask students to identify several or the most important or unclear points in homework assignments or out-of-class readings.

Strengths: The strategy yields manageable and timely information to the instructor. It can be used anytime with little or no preparation. Students must consider what has been taught and reflect on/evaluate their understanding in order to state the important points and generate a question about the topic. Also, it provides an option for students who may not want to ask questions in class.

NOTE: Instructors should share the results as soon as possible with the students as well as any resulting adjustments to teaching.

Adapted by Dr. Mary Owens, me.owens@montgomerycollege.edu, from Angelo, T.A. & Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, 2nd edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. pp 126-131.

