

Strategy: Synthesizing Information at the Midterm

Midterm is a great time to review to reinforce content, show students what they've learned, and help them make connections. These suggestions create options for synthesis and application through review.

Origin

Barkley, E. (2010). Student Engagement Techniques. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Application

Team Concept Maps

Have teams of students synthesize information from the first part of the course using a concept map approach. Concept maps can organize information visually in a series of events sequence, spider map (ideas linked to a central concept), network tree (networks of ideas linked to a central point), etc. Examples of graphic organizers can be found at <http://www.graphic.org/goindex.html>.

Class Book

Students develop a page for a class book that summarizes information from the first part of the course. You can consider letting students choose the most memorable topic for their page or assigning students specific pages. You can also consider having the class collaborate on the table of contents for the book and then having individual students or groups develop pages.

Poster Session

Students develop posters that summarize ideas from the first part of the course and present these during a poster session in the classroom. You can consider taking a class period and dividing it into two equal parts to rotate students between the presenter and the observer roles at the fair. You may wish to assign topics or have students choose their own topic.

Stations

Students develop stations that represent key concepts from the course. Stations can include exhibits of visuals, written documents, objects, media, etc., that apply and explain course material. You can consider taking a class period and opening the exhibition to your students as well as inviting others to attend.

Quotes

Students choose a quotation/reading from the first part of the course that is meaningful to them and present a summary, response, follow-up, etc. Students can share these ideas with one another in a presentation, visual, or written format.

Cubing

Students create “cubes” of material as a way to look at an idea from a variety of perspectives. Using concepts from the first part of the course, have students create a visual cube addressing six points of view:

1. Describe it
2. Compare it
3. Associate it
4. Analyze it
5. Apply it
6. Argue for and against it

You could also consider this approach to review a single concept from the first part of the course by assigning groups of students to do one of the six functions so that the full class can discuss the same topics from multiple viewpoints.

Proclamations

Using information from the first part of the course, invite students to prepare an official proclamation on an issue of significance. This allows students to apply what they have learned thus far in the course to solve a “real” problem in the community (or on campus). For example, students that have learned about environmental issues can write a proclamation suggesting change to a local recycling policy.

Contemporary Issues Journal/Artifact

Students develop a journal (print, electronic, blog, discussion board, etc.) of media accounts of current affairs/news that are related to concepts from the first part of the course. This collaborative project helps students not only review the course concept(s), but also see how the content is immediately relevant.

Post-test Analysis

After a midterm exam, students can analyze their performance. After they have completed the exam, have them submit their answers to the following:

- Predict your exam score
- Rate your effort in studying for the exam on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)
- List the specific learning strategies you used to study for the exam
- Identify what you found easiest and most difficult about the exam and why

Then, after receiving the graded exam, have students answer the following:

- Describe your emotional response to your exam score
- Compare your actual score with your predicted score
- Determine the source of the questions you missed
- Reflect upon and describe any changes to your exam preparation for the next exam
- Offer me any feedback on how I could better help you prepare for the next exam

Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing?
- How can you adapt these activities to use in your course?