

CTE This Week
(February 14 – 18, 2005)

"You have to become involved to make an impact. No one is impressed with the won/loss record of the referee"

~John Holcomb

Teaching Tip of the Week "Minute Paper - An In-Class Assessment of Student Learning"

No other technique has been used more often or by more college teachers than the *Minute Paper*. This technique -- also known as the *One-Minute Paper* and the *Half-Sheet Response* -- provides a quick and extremely simple way to collect written feedback on student learning. To use the *Minute Paper*, an instructor stops class two or three minutes early and asks students to respond briefly to some variation on the following two questions: "What was the most important thing you learned during this class?" and "What important question remains unanswered?" Students they write their responses on index cards or half-sheets of scrap paper and hand them in.

Step-by-Step Procedure:

1. Decide first what you want to focus on and, as a consequence, when to administer the *Minute Paper*. If you want to focus on students' understanding of a lecture, the last few minutes of class may be the best time. If your focus is on a prior homework assignment, however, the first few minutes may be more appropriate.
2. Using the two basic questions from the "Description" above as starting points, write *Minute Paper* prompts that fit your course and students. Try out your *Minute Paper* on a colleague or teaching assistant before using it in class.
3. Plan to set aside five to ten minutes of your next class to use the technique, as well as time later to discuss the results.
4. Before class, write one or, at the most, two *Minute Paper* questions on the chalkboard or prepare an overhead transparency.
5. At a convenient time, hand out index cards or half-sheets of scrap paper.
6. Unless there is a very good reason to know who wrote what, direct students to leave their names off the papers or cards.
7. Let the students know how much time they will have (two to five minutes per question is usually enough), what kinds of answers you want (words, phrases, or short sentences), and when they can expect your feedback.

Resources at CTE - Come by and take a look at some of the articles and books in our library. If you would like a copy of any of the articles abstracted below, contact the CTE (cte@tcu.edu). You might be interested in:

- **CATs: A Student's Gateway to Better Learning** by Mimi Steadman (University of California, Berkeley) and Marilla Svinicki (University of Texas, Austin). *Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) open the opportunity for more than just the improvement of teaching. With a solid grounding in learning theory, it has the potential of helping*

students become better learners as well. This article also includes examples of several CATs to enhance learning (including the Minute Paper)..

- **Do Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Improve Student Learning?** by Philip Cottell (Miami University) and Elaine Harwood (Boston College). *This article describes how two classroom researchers used CATs to study student learning. The article begins, "for years accounting students were taught, primarily by lecture and example, to memorize the technical aspects of accounting and use their knowledge to find correct answers to accounting problems. This worked well until the business world became more dynamic and complex, and it not only became difficult to memorize the rapidly growing body of accounting knowledge, it grew tougher to find a 'correct' answer to the complex issues accounting professionals faced."*
- **Using CATs to Help New Instructors Develop as Teachers** by Laurie Richlin (Claremont Graduate University). *One of the most pressing issues in the development of beginning instructors is how to shift their teaching focus from survival issues to an interest in student learning. This article discusses ways that new instructors can use CATs to further develop as teachers.*
- **Assessing Online Learning and Teaching: Adapting the Minute Paper** by Selma Vonderwell (Cleveland State University). *Online learning is impacting current university practices and policies and quickly changing the fabric of higher education. Effective assessment techniques can improve an instructor's understanding of student needs and provide a learner-centered classroom. This article presents the implications of adapting the Minute Paper format in two online classrooms.*

New Books at CTE!

- **Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across the Institution** by Peggy Maki. *Exploring the continuum of students' learning, this book sets the assessment of learning within the twin contexts of: (1) the level of a program, department, division, or school within an institution; and (2) the level of an institution, based on its mission statement, educational philosophy, and educational objectives. Each chapter explores ways to position assessment within program- and institutional-level processes, decisions, structures, practices, and channels of communication.*
- **Humor as an Instructional Defibrillator: Evidence-Based Techniques in Teaching and Learning** by Ronald A. Berk. *Humor can be used as a systematic teaching or assessment tool in your classroom and course Web site. It can shock students to attention and bring dead, boring course content to life. Since some students have the attention span of goat cheese, we need to find creative online and offline techniques to hook them, engage their emotions, and focus their minds and eyeballs on learning. This book offers numerous techniques on how to effectively use humor in lectures and in-class activities, printed materials, course Web sites and course tests and exams.*
- **Introduction to Rubrics: An Assessment Tool To Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback and Promote Student Learning** by Dannelle D. Stevens and Antonia Levi. *You need rubrics if: * You find yourself repeating the same comments on most student papers * You worry that you're grading the latest papers differently from the first * You're concerned about communicating the complexity of a semester-long assignment * You question the consistency of your and your colleagues' grading scales * Grading is taking up far too much of your valuable time Research shows that rubrics save professors' time while conveying meaningful and timely feedback for students, and promoting self-regulated and independent learning. The reason rubrics are little used in higher education is that few faculty members have been exposed to their use. At its most basic a rubric is a scoring tool that divides an assignment into its component parts and objectives, and provides a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable levels of performance for each part. Rubrics can be used to grade any assignment or task: research papers, book reviews, participation in discussions, laboratory work, portfolios, oral presentations, group work, and more. This book defines*

what rubrics are, and how to construct and use them. It provides a complete introduction for anyone starting out to integrate rubrics in their teaching.