

Did You Know?

85%

of faculty surveyed in 2014 and 2015 believed their coursework emphasized learning and organizing information in new ways. For that same question, in both years students never responded higher than

70%

[CCSSE/CCFSSE Report, 2015](#)

Organizing and synthesizing information in new and unique ways has been a common target in fostering learning (Paul and Elder, 2007). Critically examining course content and making connections among course topics (rather than learning solely by rote) is a way to engage students in higher order thinking. Getting students to think about how they are organizing learned materials allows them to employ metacognition leading to a deeper understanding of the content or topic. Here are some additional ideas you can use to promote learning and organizing information in new ways:

- Take a moment at the beginning of class to discuss with your students the kind of thinking that is needed to deal with the content you expect to cover (Paul and Elder, 2007).
- Assign a concept map activity where students construct a concept map describing how they interrelate ideas learned in the classroom (Ambrose et al., 2010).
- Try beginning a topic by surveying prior knowledge of your students so that they can have their present and past ideas fresh in their mind as they integrate new ideas with old to advance further thinking (Ambrose et al., 2010).
- Recognize and take note of the times in your class when passive learning or memorization is difficult to avoid due to subject matter or format and target these areas for inclusion of some of the ideas outlined above (Nosich, 2012).

Have you tried any of these ideas in the classroom or in an assignment? Let us know about it. Reply via email to Allison Studer, Assessment Analyst (astuder@fsw.edu) and give us your feedback.

Best wishes!

References:

Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., and Norman, M.K. 2010. *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. Jossey-Bass, New York, New York, 336 pp.

Nosich, G.M. 2012. *Learning to think things through: A guide to critical thinking across the curriculum*. Pearson, New York, New York, 222 pp.

Paul, R. and Elder, L. 2007. *How to improve student learning: 30 Practical ideas*. Foundation for Critical Thinking Press, Dillon Beach, CA, 48p.