

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning



November, 2014

Volume 7, Number 3

Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/edu/>) as well as in the office of the CETL.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the CETL.

Ten Tips to help you plan for the interactive learning session

1. The Essential or Focus Question

Ensure you plan your lesson in such a way that students will walk away with some new insight or leave your classroom better able to deal with a particular aspect of the content. Therefore, think about the intended goal of the lesson and express it in terms of an essential question/focus question. Once you have identified your intended goal, reframe it into a question or questions. Ensure that you plan for the highest level of learning to occur and not mere rote learning or memorizing.

2. Activating Strategy

Develop an activating strategy, something that gets students to think deeply about the subject matter or make a significant connection with course content at the very outset of the lesson. It might be that they connect something they are learning with the world and deepen their understanding of the content and how the issue or issues intersect. The use of video clips might be helpful at this juncture and of course, students usually respond meaningfully to video presentations.

3. Active Engagement

If you use the lecture strategy, please plan to limit it to at most 15 minutes or so and then have an active strategy to engage your students. Students generally have short attention spans and hence, will tune out after 15 minutes or so. So, please ensure that you have some activity for the students to do, think-pair-share might be useful. It could also be a short discussion, a quiz, a game, the use of a graphic organizer or role play, etc.

4. Dealing with the content

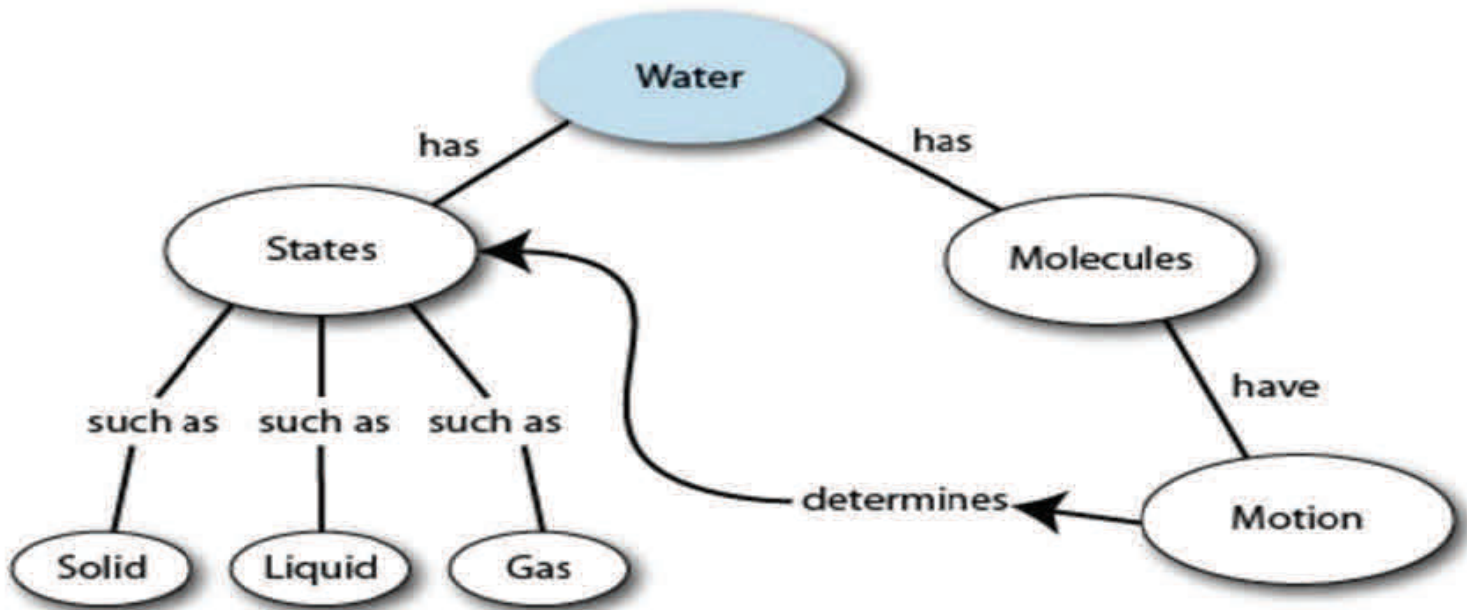
Introduce your students to the relevant content in every lesson. Ensure that your students can handle the subject matter content that you have chosen to emphasize in the lesson. Explain the content meaningfully using various approaches and 21st century technology tools, if available. Find ways to reinforce the content, for instance, through repetition or activity.

5. Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers, include things like timelines, flow-charts, and concept maps (see concept map on the next page). In a concept map, the diagram or graphic is organized and presented to show concepts and their relationships. These are usually shown through the graphic connections that are readily observable. The ideas are generally connected through the use of boxes or circles and arrows but, at times, the designer may choose other approaches. The use of a graphic organizer might be one way to get students to visually categorize or classify new information or review old information. In the classroom, any activity or assignment which requires students to identify pieces of, or perspectives on a problem can be considered an analysis-based activity and therefore promoting the higher order thinking processes.



Here is a simple concept map that pushes students to engage in analysis:



6. Movement in the Classroom

Student movement in the classroom should be encouraged. This might be understood as one way to cater to their active engagement in the lesson. However, oftentimes, especially bright students can be active in a lecture since they routinely talk back to the lecturer (mentally or otherwise) as they formulate questions in their minds and seek answers to them.

7. Higher Order Thinking Skills

Plan for the development of higher order thinking skills and ensure that you pose at least three higher order thinking skills (HOT) questions to the students. It is always good to have high expectations of your students and higher order thinking skills questions can be used to communicate this meaningfully. There are multiple ways to get responses to the HOT skills questions. This might be verbally, in discussion groups, through homework or through the use of a learning management system's forum/discussion board or some other 21st century technology tool.

8. Culminating Activity

Use a culminating activity to bring the lesson to a close. This might be done through summarization or use of an assessment strategy, for instance, an oral quiz, game or written activity such as a minute paper or the muddiest point. Ensure you assess the students' ability to effectively respond to the essential question or to determine if your objective(s) have been realized.

9. Rigor

It is important to consider the level of rigor of the lesson. Please ensure that you plan for a rigorous lesson, one that challenges the student and stretches his or her mind in a new direction. The entire lesson should be an active one so that learners can be completely engaged throughout.

10. Learner-Centred

The focus of your lesson should be the learner. Hence, the entire lesson should be designed to deal with learning and learner issues. In this regard, using 21st century technology tools to ensure that the learner is engaged cannot be overemphasized.

Check out our publications at

myspot.mona.uwi.edu/cetl/publications

Our website: myspot.mona.uwi.edu/cetl

Blog: <http://cetlmona.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/cetlmona

Twitter: [cetluwimona](https://twitter.com/cetluwimona)

Contact: 935-8341 extn 2341, 2730