



Identify and Address Muddiest Points

The muddiest points activity involves asking students to identify the concepts that are still unclear at the end of a learning activity, class, week, or other unit of learning (Nilson, 2016). Regularly identifying and addressing muddiest points ensures more equitable outcomes on summative assignments and assessments.

This approach also enables students who may not be comfortable asking questions in front of the class or reaching out individually to you to ask questions and get the help they need (Nilson, 2010). It is also helpful in raising student awareness of what they have learned and what they may still need to learn. Without being explicitly asked to identify what is still unclear, students may not realize where they need to continue working.

Two-Question Survey

One method for identifying the muddiest points at the end of a unit of learning is to provide students with a two-question survey, either online or face-to-face. Below is an example of a two-question survey:

- **Question 1:** What concept from this module is very clear to you?
- **Question 2:** What concept from this module is still unclear to you?

Once students have shared what is still unclear, you may revisit the content with the class or provide students with resources to help address the areas of confusion.

Student-Developed Exam Questions

Another way of identifying and addressing muddiest points is to ask students to list the skills and concepts from the learning unit that remain unclear and then assign them to develop exam questions on those skills and concepts. The exam question may include a question stem, correct and incorrect answer choices, and feedback on why the incorrect answer choices are not correct. This process not only encourages students to reflect on the level of their understanding, but also asks them to clarify their own understanding through the process of asking and answering questions.

Written Q & A

Perhaps the simplest method of identifying and addressing muddiest points is to have your students write down the concepts that are still unclear on index cards at the end of a learning activity or class (Nilson, 2016). You can collect the index cards and answer questions either during that class session or during the following class session. If only a few students were confused on a specific concept, you might reach out to them directly with resources or offers of assistance.

Source

Nilson, L. B. (2016). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (4th ed.). Jossey Bass.