

## TEACHING TIP OF THE MONTH

### Teaching Tip of the Month

April 2024

Experiential Learning is learning through experience or by doing. Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning presents four components: *Concrete Experience*, *Reflective Observation*, *Abstract Conceptualization*, and *Active Experimentation*. Each issue of Teaching Tips of the Month for spring 2024 will focus on one of these components.

#### **Theme:** Abstract Conceptualization

Abstract Conceptualization is the thinking component of Experiential Learning. In this phase "the learner engages in thinking to reach conclusions and form theories, concepts, or general principles that can be tested" (Institute for Experiential Learning, 2024). Post reflection, the learner analyzes the concrete experience and considers what it means beyond the experience. Abstract conceptualization can occur individually or in groups using guidance or prompts from the instructor (VSU Trailblazers, 2021).

#### **Tip 1:** Concept maps

One way for students to analyze the concrete experience is to create a concept map. A concept map is a visual representation of information and how the information interrelates. In the Abstract Conceptualization phase of Experiential learning, students can identify how the different aspects of the experience relate to each other and how the experience connects with other components of their lives such as career goals, cocurricular activities, concepts from other courses, etc. In addition, the abstract conceptualization phase is a time to explore how the experience has changed their perspective on a topic. You can create concept maps on paper or digitally using tools such as [Canva](#), [Visme](#), or [SmartArt or Shapes](#) in Microsoft Office tools.

#### **Tip 2:** Analogies

Analogies can be used to identify similarities and differences between concepts. The familiar analogy structure (*A is to B just as X is to Y*), is a simple template to guide students in creating analogies; however, they can use analogy to analyze the concrete experience and reflection phases of experiential learning in other ways. For example, ask students to:

**Step 1:** Write a word a phrase that describes the overall concrete experience

**Step 2:** Generate a list of details from the concrete experience that support the word or phrase

**Step 3:** Brainstorm examples from another context (career, personal life, another course) that compares or contrasts with the details from step 2

**Step 4:** Explain how each example is similar to or different from the detail from the experience

**Sources:**

- Institute for Experiential Learning. (2024). *What is experiential learning?* <https://experientiallearninginstitute.org/what-is-experiential-learning/>.
- VSU Trailblazers. (2021, November 5). *Experiential Learning: Abstract Conceptualization*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/6bBW8eZDH1I?si=ya-q1EEiDXhHSBP>

**More Info on Teaching Tips**

“Teaching Tips of the Month” began as a project of Program for Active Learning in STEM (PALS) and Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES) grants. Many thanks to Ray Gonzales and Alla Webb, who served as Principal Investigators of the TIDES grants. You can view archived Teaching Tips of the Month on [The Hub](#). We welcome feedback and invite you to submit ideas for this publication to Angela Lanier, [angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu)