According to the teaching and learning literature, learning in a classroom is more effective and efficient when students have explicit, reasonable positive goals, and when their goals fit well with the teacher’s goals. Using classroom assessment techniques can help college instructors obtain useful feedback from students on what, how much, and how well they are learning. The central aim is to use the student’s (anonymous) feedback to refocus on the teaching and being willing to fill in the gaps between what is being taught and what is actually being learned. There are 50 simple classroom assessment techniques, one of them is described below.

The Muddiest Point

Description. The Muddiest Point assessment is one of the simplest techniques one can use. It is remarkable efficient, since it provides a high information return for a very low investment to time and energy. This technique consists of asking students to jot down a quick response to one question: “What was the muddiest point in ______?” The focus of the Muddiest Point assessment might be a lecture, a discussion, a homework or reading assignment, a play or a film. The purpose of the assessment is to find out if students are clear or confused about a particular lesson or topic, or learning experience.

Step-by-Step Procedure.

1. Determine what you want feedback on: the entire class session (i.e. lecture) or one particular segment of the class (i.e. a special presentation, group discussion, an assignment, etc).
2. Reserve a few minutes at the end of the class session. Leave enough time to ask the question, to allow student to respond, and to collect their responses by the usual ending time.
3. Let students know beforehand how much time they will have to respond, and how you plan to use their responses.
4. Ask students to get out a blank sheet of paper, or pass out index cards.
5. Collect the responses at the end of the class or have students put their responses in a designated box as they leave the classroom.
6. At the next class session, respond to the student’s feedback. Share a summary of the responses and review the most “muddiest” points.

For more information on informal classroom assessment: see the following website:
http://fod.msu.edu/oir/Assessment/cats.asp