Though I have never considered myself particularly oriented toward visuals, in recent years I have come to appreciate the value of mapping from both a teaching, learning, and productivity perspective. If you haven't explored how mapping might help enhance your work, I would encourage you to take a closer look at concept and mind maps. Both are visual representations of knowledge and ideas.

Concept maps are traditionally more structured and hierarchical in terms of organization, with the most general concept at the top and the more specific concepts at the bottom (Nilson, 2010). The links between the concepts should also be meaningfully labeled.

Maps as Teaching and Productivity Tools

Even faculty who typically don't use visual cues in their teaching or workshop could experience a boost of motivation by mapping out ideas rather than relying entirely on lines of text.
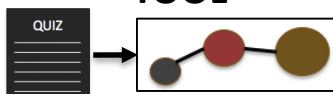
TEACHING TOOL

Map course content to show students how class elements are connected

LEARNING TOOL

Have students refine or demonstrate their learning by creating their own maps around a given topic

COURSE DESIGN TOOL

Generate learning outcomes and key content areas, and how these are connected and sequenced.

ASSESSMENT TOOL

Evaluate student learning in a visual form, using rubrics and models to guide their work.

Ways you might use concept or mind maps include:

- **As a teaching tool**: consider creating a map as a way to help students the structure of the day's topic or even an entire course. On the first day of class, I show students a concept map I have drawn of the course and then use that map to explain the course structure and syllabus.
- **As a learning tool**: have students refine or demonstrate their learning by creating their own maps around a given topic or the course. Note: because students can be uncomfortable with ambiguity (there's no one "right" map), this might require a good amount of coaching and guidance from you. See how this teacher uses mapping to generate student discussions and assess learning.
- **As an assessment tool**: maps can be a great way for students to demonstrate their learning in the course. Just be sure to give students clear guidelines for developing their maps (and lots of practice creating maps beforehand) and consider creating a rubric.
- **As a course design tool**: if you're designing a new course (or doing a major revision of a current course), consider first creating a map to help you generate your learning outcomes and key content areas.
- **As a writing tool**: Mapping can also be a great way to organize your ideas for a paper.

- **As a notetaking tool**: Recently, mapping and sketchnoting have become popular methods for taking notes at conferences. I now take notes at conferences this way and have also extended this practice to creating sketchnotes for books while I am reading them.
- Maps are wonderful tools for brainstorming, providing a "big picture" overview of ideas, or representing a large amount of information in a small space. They're great tools to consider adding to your teaching and productivity "toolbox."

Resources

Center for Instructional Innovation and Assessment (2008). Classroom assessment technique: Concept maps. Retrieved June 30, 2016 from: https://youtu.be/Gm1owf0uGFM.

Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence. (2016). What are concept maps. Retrieved June 30, 2016 from: http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/howto/assesslearning/conceptmaps.html.

Mindmapping.com. (2016). Theory behind mind maps. Retrieved June 30, 2016 from: http://www.mindmapping.com/theory-behind-mind-maps.php.

Nilson, L. B. (2010). Concept Maps. *In Teaching at Its Best* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schrock, K. (2016). *Sketchnoting in the classroom*. Retrieved June 30, 2016 from: http://www.schrockguide.net/sketchnoting.html.

Submitted by:
Kristi J. Verbeke, Ph.D.
verbekkj@wfu.edu
Director of Educational Development, Teaching and Learning Center
Wake Forest University
tlc.wfu.edu