An Introduction to Team-Based Learning

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**Team-Based Learning**: a form of collaborative learning that consists of four components:

A) Strategically-formed, permanent teams  
B) Readiness assurance  
C) Application activities  
D) Peer evaluations

TBL has been implemented in every discipline and scaled to classes of 350.

See TBL in real classrooms in this 12 minute video:  
http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/largeclasses/#tbl
Strategically-formed, permanent teams:

Teams of 5-7 students in which student characteristics that make the course easier or more difficult are spread as evenly as possible across teams that last the entire term.
Readiness assurance: a four-step process that takes place at the beginning of each course module:

Pre-reading by students outside of class – may include podcasts and other forms of media

Individual readiness assurance test (iRAT) – short, basic, multiple-choice test over the preparation materials

Team readiness assurance test (tRAT) – once they complete their individual tests, students then take the same test again in teams, and must come to consensus on their team answers. IMPORTANT: teams must get immediate, item-based feedback on their performance, best achieved using TBT system or "scratch off" forms called IF-ATs.

Appeals – When teams feel they can make a case for answers marked as incorrect, they can pull out their course materials and generate written appeals, which must consist of (a) a clear argument, and (b) evidence cited from the materials.
The Readiness assurance process is followed by a clarifying lecture, in which the teacher can target information that the tRAT scores show the students do not yet understand.

(e.g., "All the teams got questions 1-5 correct, so that material can be considered 'covered' but questions 6-10 were hit and miss, so let me explain that material a bit more.")
Application activities: carefully-designed activities called "4 S" activities because they require teams to:

address a Significant problem that demonstrates a concept’s usefulness

make a Specific choice among clear alternatives (e.g., Which of these is the best example of X? What is the most important piece of evidence in support of Y? Which statement would the author most agree with?)

work on the Same problem, so each team will care about the conclusions and rationales of other teams

report decisions Simultaneously, so differences among teams can be explored for the most instructional effect.

Can be accomplished by holding up notecards, having team representatives write on the board, using "clickers," etc.
Application activities can be graded or ungraded, and need not have a "correct" answer. Likewise, the TBL structure can be hung as an exoskeleton around individually-completed mid-terms, finals, paper assignments, and so on.

**If you remember nothing else!** Group papers and presentations are among the worst tasks one can give a group! The nature of these tasks makes the most rational approach to segment and distribute pieces of the work. The too-often demoralizing result is that each student has a different—and inevitably unequal—experience. The **best task** you can ask of a group is similar to that of a courtroom jury: given a tremendous amount of complex information, they must produce **choice**, and perhaps a very short rationale.
Peer evaluation: both mid-course and end-of-course team-mate feedback which is processed through the instructor and returned to the students with names removed. In many cases, this takes the form of students listing for each of their team-mates one thing they Appreciate about that team-mate and one thing they Request. Must contribute to student grade.
An Example of TBL

- Why I decided to switch to TBL
  Burnout with lecturing
  Experimental nature

- Growing pains I experienced during the switch
  Student discomfort with current grade
  Difficulty in creating AOAs
  Test security

- Changes I’ve made
  Peer Eval System
  Testing System
  Process - RAP, Lecture, Team Games, Test

- My Current Attitude Toward TBL


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