

## Team-Based Learning in the Economics Classroom

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This teaching method has been in development for some 20 years by a variety of higher education instructors. References include *Team-based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching*, Michaelsen, Knight, and Fink (eds.), 2004, Stylus Publishing; *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, Michaelsen, Sweet, and Parmelee (eds.), 2008, Jossey-Bass; and <http://teambasedlearning.apsc.ubc.ca>. It also recently received national publicity in "Team Program Is an Experiment in Active Learning," Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop, *New York Times*, April 29, 2009.

This method is highly polished given its numerous higher-ed instructors who have contributed to its development. Perhaps the most appealing feature is that the developers have structured it so that students face numerous incentives to do well in the class. Briefly, it works as follows. The semester is broken up into 5 to 7 "modules," each of which is comprised of 2-3 textbook chapters. Students are assigned into teams of 6-7 members that are carefully chosen to be diverse; teams are kept for the semester. Each module begins with a quiz over the basic material of the chapters; students are responsible for learning this material on their own. Immediately after they take it on their own, they retake the quiz as a team. "IF-AT" cards are used so teams receive immediate feedback (IF-AT cards use the same technology as lottery scratch-off cards). This rapid feedback aids team building as good suggestions are quickly recognized. It also encourages learning as it is obvious to team members who is not prepared for class. The results of these quizzes are used by the instructor to briefly address common areas of difficulty. The rest of the module is spent working in teams on questions of increasing difficulty. The teams report their answers to them at the same time. If there is a difference, teams are asked to explain why their answers differ. Once again, students are held accountable for their learning.

Team-based learning might be thought of as the ultimate in cooperative learning as almost all learning occurs in teams. This is also something of a drawback as the transition cost to the instructor is relatively high. This might explain why its use isn't more common. As the article in the *New York Times* puts it, "It's a completely different way from teaching and lecturing."