Team-Based Learning (TBL)

What is Team-Based Learning?
Team-Based Learning (TBL) is a structured approach to foster active learning and peer teaching in a large group setting. TBL experiences are designed to provide students the opportunity to assess their learning and practice course concepts through application and problem solving. Students must prepare in advance of each session, and participate in team activities for most of the session time. Instructor participation is essential to ensure key concepts are addressed and clarified. However, the instructor serves as an on-site expert and facilitator, rather than a lecturer.

What are the essential elements of Team-Based Learning?
Dr. Larry Michaelsen first introduced TBL at the University of Oklahoma business school in the late 1970s. There are four essential elements of Team-Based Learning: groups, accountability, feedback, and assignment design (McMahon 2010). Careful attention is paid to the creation and orientation of small groups. Accountability is promoted through the use of graded Individual Readiness Assurance Tests (IRAT) and Group Readiness Assurance Tests (GRAT). Feedback is provided in real time. Readiness Assurance tests (typically multiple choice questions) are scored immediately to provide feedback to students and instructors. Peer and instructor feedback is also provided throughout the application stage. Assignments are designed with four principles (the Four Ss) in mind. Assignments are significant and the significance is explained to students. The same assignment is used for all teams to maximize collective learning, rather than encourage students to focus only on their own group’s assignment. A specific choice is always required as this helps students to develop critical thinking and choose between plausible alternatives. Finally, simultaneous reporting of teams’ decisions is employed to ensure teams complete their work independently rather than wait to hear the work of another team before finalizing their decisions (McMahon 2010).

Why use Team-Based Learning?
The use of TBL has increased over the past decades, especially in health sciences education, because it is an efficient strategy to promote active engagement and application of course content. Although students work in teams, only one “expert” instructor is required to facilitate a TBL session. TBL is typically used with large classes, and can be implemented without leaving the lecture hall. TBL has been the subject of scholarship since its inception, and there are numerous peer-reviewed publications documenting best practices for TBL and evidence of successful learning outcomes.

To learn more about TBL, consult the resources listed below. But first, click on the links below to watch brief videos of TBL sessions in action.

LINKS:

Team-Based Learning Collaborative
Team-Based Learning Group Work that Works
TBL Video - Duke-NUS Medical School
RESOURCES:


