Effective Team Assignments

Maximum learning occurs when assignments at each stage are characterized by "4 S's":

- **Significant Problem.** Problem involves issues that are significant to students.
- **Same Problem.** Individuals/groups are working on the same problem, case or question.
- **Specific Choice.** Individuals/groups are required to use course concepts to make a specific choice.
- **Simultaneous Report.** Individuals/groups report their choices simultaneously.
Violating/omitting _______ would have the LEAST negative impact on the effectiveness of team assignments?

1. Significant problem
2. Same problem
3. Specific choice
4. Simultaneous report
Problems with Learning Groups?

- Using class time for group work limits content coverage.

- Grading group work results in:
  - Better students doing most of the work.
  - Less motivated and/or less able students becoming “free-riders.”

- Using group assignments requires the instructor to:
  - Spend time resolving conflicts in groups.
  - Teach students how to work in groups.
Problems GUARANTEED if:

- Individuals not accountable for being prepared for group work.
- Groups create the deliverables to be graded outside of the class.
- The form of the deliverables:
  - Requires students to create complex and professional-looking "products."
  - Prevents students from receiving timely and unequivocal feedback on the thinking that went into their creation.

Beware:
Requiring lengthy documents (or group presentations) is at the heart of most of the really bad problems because:

- The sensible approach is to divide-up the task of creating the final “product.” (Thus, it won’t actually be a group assignment).
- Better students are forced to choose between doing more than their fair share of the work or facing the very real risk getting a bad grade.
Problems with Learning Groups?

- Using class time for group work limits content coverage.
- Grading group work results in:
  - Better students doing most of the work.
  - Less motivated and/or less able students becoming “free riders.”
- Using group assignments requires the instructor to:
  - Spend time resolving conflicts in groups.
  - Teach students how to work in groups.
Problems AVOIDABLE by:

- Individual accountability for PRE-class preparation for group work (Readiness Assurance Process).
- Groups create the final product to be graded during class time.
- Using 4 S’s group assignments:
  - **Significant Problem**: Problem involves issues that are significant to students.
  - **Same Problem**: Individuals/groups work on the same problem, case or question.
  - **Specific Choice**: Individuals/groups must use course concepts to make a specific choice.
  - **Simultaneous Report**: Individuals/groups report their choices simultaneously.
Questions?

www.teambasedlearning.org
Example Application: Muscle Physiology

The two finalists in the world arm-wrestling championships at Petaluma, California, are well-matched. Upper body muscle mass, insensitivity to pain, motivation, and experience are identical between the two. Vito, a Las Vegas bookie, slips you the results of each competitor’s physical exam and ‘asks’ you to predict the winner. What is most likely to determine the eventual winner?

A. Maximum cardiac output
B. Mitochondrial content of the exercising muscles
C. Muscle glycogen content
D. Oxygen carrying capacity of the blood
E. Phosphocreatine levels in the muscles