



Team-Based Learning

Questions Frequently Asked by Preceptors

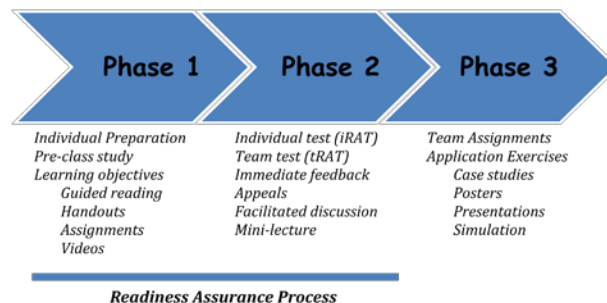
What is TBL?

Team-based learning (TBL) is a method of teaching where students come to class prepared to engage in problem-solving activities. During class, students work collaboratively in 5-7 member teams. Instructors spend their time facilitating discussion and student learning rather than giving endless hours of lectures.

TBL is delivered in three phases; preclass preparation, readiness assurance, and application.

- Phase 1:** Students are given preclass learning material with clear objectives. The students learn fundamental concepts *prior* to the start of class so they can *actively* participate with their teams during class.
- Phase 2:** At the start of class, students take an individual Readiness Assessment Test (iRAT) and when finished, the team takes the same test (tRAT). The instructor then discusses the test with the class and adds supplemental content as appropriate through a “mini-lecture.”
- Phase 3:** Once the instructor believes the student teams understand the foundational concepts, teams are given problems to solve where they build on these concepts to broaden understanding of the material. Instructors work with student teams and facilitate learning for the entire class.

Phases of TBL



Why do you use TBL?

As the doctor of pharmacy program was being developed, the faculty looked for ways to teach that were interactive and improved the student’s abilities to communicate clearly and think critically. Several different methods of active learning were considered. TBL was the most appealing since it holds students accountable for being ready for class and engaging them in actively learning during class. TBL also focuses students on problem solving instead of copying lecture notes.

Can I use TBL as a preceptor?

Certainly, in any setting where being prepared to engage in a dialog or start solving problems is important, TBL is a valuable tool. TBL is often used outside a classroom setting for professional development, in the experiential setting, and for training residents. In fact, you probably are using many of the principles of TBL when working with pharmacy students already.

Can I see TBL in action?

Of course! We would be honored to have you visit our campus and see our students in action. If you are comfortable with the teaching style and learning method, we would welcome your knowledge and experience in the classroom as well. Please contact the Experiential Education Program to set up a visit.

How are students graded in TBL?

Students are graded on their individual and team performances. In TBL, student grades have two components; individual scores and team scores. At CNU, the individual score represents 70% of a student’s course grade and the team score represents the other 30%.

When a student earns 70% or more in the individual component (equal to a letter grade of ‘C’ or above), the team score is added to their individual score to reach the grade for the course. If a student earns less than 70% (equal to a letter grade of ‘D’ or ‘F’), then no team score is used to calculate the student’s course grade leading to remediating or repeating the course. Although it sounds complicated, in practice it is easy for students to know what their grade is at any point in the course.



Do other pharmacy programs use TBL?

Yes, interest in using TBL is becoming quite widespread in pharmacy education. Many pharmacy programs have modules or full courses that use TBL. CNU was the first doctor of pharmacy program to use TBL throughout the curriculum. In fact, faculty members at CNU have given workshops on TBL to other doctor of pharmacy programs.

Is TBL only being used in pharmacy programs?

Originally developed in the 1970s to educate college business students, over the past few decades, TBL has been used to teach many different topics to learners of all ages. Recently it has been gaining popularity in healthcare education, particularly for teaching medical students.

Why do students want to learn using TBL?

Many students find lectures boring and provide little benefit over studying slide sets on their own. Active learning engages students and thus increases interest and retention. TBL is different as helps students prepare to be active at the start of class rather than waiting until the instructor delivers specific content. The students then work in teams to solve problems. This formalized type of peer education is similar to what occurs with informal study groups on university campuses across the country. Most students experienced with TBL prefer the robust conversations and interactions that occur during class over the dry delivery of content through lecture slides. Interestingly, many of our students who have acclimated to TBL tell us that they have difficulty focusing when instructors spend too much time lecturing.

TBL, however, is not for all students. Some students find working in teams too much of a challenge and report having difficulty learning unless receiving a lecture.

How do you know students learn with TBL?

One of the most powerful features of TBL is how often student learning is assessed. Rather than waiting weeks following a lecture to test student learning, in TBL students are tested nearly each class session. Comprehension of fundamental concepts is evaluated with the readiness assessment tests (iRAT/tRAT) at the start of each learning module. The student's ability to apply concepts and think critically are assessed by the application exercises. CNU then adds other major formative and summative assessments like midterms and finals. We use annual milestone exams so our faculty has a set of excellent tools to know how well our students are learning.

Numerous papers in healthcare education report that TBL improves student engagement, communication, critical thinking, team-building, and content knowledge. Students also learn how to assess the contribution and performance of their team members. TBL is particularly beneficial for students who struggle with learning on their own and benefit from peer interactions.

Can I learn how to use TBL?

Sure, we would be pleased to help with you learning more about how to implement TBL principles in the classroom or at your practice site. We have onsite training for our faculty and staff at least twice annually. Also, we would be happy to work with you individually or with your healthcare team. During preceptor training, not only will you learn about TBL, but you will experience it!

How can I learn more about TBL?

In addition to visiting our campus to chat with faculty and see TBL in action, there are a number of excellent resources that can provide ample detail about the development and application of TBL in the classroom and experiential sites. Our library has books on TBL available for loan and can provide literature papers on how TBL is being used in healthcare education.

How can I reach you?

Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions you may have about TBL or our Doctor of Pharmacy program. Two important contacts are:

Experiential Education Program
(916) 686-7400
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Library
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