

Using teams of students within middle years classes

Student learning teams are effective in both primary and secondary schools. They can strengthen student-centred learning and provide a supportive peer environment. Students learn to value the abilities and characteristics of team members and together develop skills in problem-solving, decision making and independent and abstract thought.



How would using learning teams change teaching and learning in our school?

Here is an example of how learning teams operated in Stage 4 at a metropolitan high school.

- Students were sorted into classes, then placed into learning teams, using a wide range of evidence collected by teachers.
- Each team contained four students. They were chosen to provide the team with a mix of abilities and a range of backgrounds.
- Team membership was stable. Teams operated in every subject for the entire year.
- Teams operated under an agreed school learning code. Students had explicit instruction in cooperative learning and conflict resolution. They learned to learn together.
- Teachers were encouraged to change the layout and use of learning spaces, for example, by re-arranging furniture, to promote learning in small groups.
- Teams and individuals were regularly encouraged by school recognition and awards.
- Extensive professional development was available to staff, both to prepare teachers for the implementation of student learning teams and to support teachers once teams were established. Issues addressed included cooperative learning, conflict resolution and flexible, creative strategies for programming.



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