

Recommendation 4: Foster Active Learning the Classroom

This article looks at cooperative learning and if it is effective in a large statistics class. The author also gives explanation and examples of how cooperative learning can be implemented in a classroom. In the article, cooperative learning is defined as "a structured, systematic instruction strategy in which small groups work together for a common goal." There are also six features of cooperative learning that are outlined in the article.

One of the features that I found most interesting was that cooperative learning strategies should be intended for learning, not for affecting a student's grade. A project or work that is done in a team setting should be given very little weight in the student's grade. I think this is a key feature of cooperative learning because many students do not like working with other students because the other students work could negatively affect their own grade. If the project has little effect on the overall grade, then students can focus on the actual learning instead of how the assignment will affect their grade. Unfortunately, if a student is only concerned with their grade then they may view the assignment as insignificant and put forth minimal effort.

This article found that when the cooperative learning strategies were used the students' exam scores were higher than when the cooperative learning strategies were not used. The author does a nice job of pointing to the fact that the cooperative learning may had an effect on the increased exam scores but we certainly cannot say that the increased scores were caused by the cooperative learning strategies.

The most beneficial thing I got out of this article was the fact that the team or group assignments did not have a large effect on the student's grades. I think it would be important to emphasize this fact to the student so that they can focus on learning instead of their grade. Additionally, I liked the way the author balanced individual assignments, group assignments, and lectures in the classroom. As the author pointed out, students have particular learning styles that they learn the best from. Using different methods of instruction allows for several different learning styles to be used.