

Quiz Bowl is a Valuable Extracurricular Activity and Engaging Classroom Activity

Quiz Bowl, also called Scholastic Bowl, Academic Bowl, and a number of other names throughout the country, is growing in popularity nationwide both in and outside of the classroom. It is most often played at the junior high, high school, and college levels in regional, state and national tournaments. Almost to a person, students who have participated on Quiz Bowl teams express greater confidence in their academic abilities through the experience, and that they learned a great deal about personal responsibility and teamwork in the process.

In Quiz Bowl competition students are recognized and rewarded for what they know. Valuable preparation for college and the real world, Quiz Bowl tests knowledge in subjects generally covered in a liberal arts education including literature, history, science, math, and the social sciences, as well as several areas that go beyond those covered in the classroom such as arts, music, philosophy, and current events. Both what they learn and the process of learning prepares students for college admission tests, performance under pressure and academic and other forms of discipline.

“Quiz Bowl and other forms of academic competition should not be evaluated solely in terms of wins and losses but in successful preparation for the "real world." The students that choose to participate are winners before they play their first game because they have learned to challenge themselves and stretch their goals to guarantee individual achievement.”

--Paul Cain, Teacher, Ysleta High School, El Paso, Texas

As in athletic competition, Quiz Bowl gives students the opportunity to represent both their school and their community. Although Quiz Bowl shares certain attributes with athletic competition, it usually attracts different types of students. It also fills a critical niche for students who are either not interested in, or not capable of, athletic competition, but who enjoy the experience of competition, teamwork, and training and want to represent their school and community. It is also clearly ideal for students who are physically challenged or disabled. Like athletic competition, it teaches sportsmanship and the responsibilities inherent in teamwork, yet it goes beyond athletics to teach the rewards of both studying and learning.

“Quiz Bowl fills a niche for certain students who don't want or aren't interested in athletics, but enjoy competition. It can be the only form of team play and opportunity to represent the school or community that special needs kids have. This was recently the case with a young man I taught who had muscular dystrophy and could not participate in sports.”

--Melinda Dixon, Teacher, Lockwood High School, Lockwood, MO

“Students who used to be shunned and called “nerds” or “geeks” often become very popular school heroes once they’re on the Quiz Bowl team. Just like their athletic counterparts, they represent their school in competition, earn varsity letters, and are respected for their abilities and successes.”

--Paul Cain, Teacher, Ysleta High School, El Paso, Texas

Quiz Bowl: Teaching competition or teamwork?

Some educators claim they don’t like the “competitive” nature of Quiz Bowl; however, in truth, there is a very high level of interdependence in a team amongst team members. Each student specializes in one or several subject areas on behalf of the team, and the team depends on each respective team member to carry their weight for the team. This teaches responsibility and interdependence.

“On a team, all members must depend on one another, and the acceptance of an individual by peers is important. In order to gain this respect, the work ethic becomes important. Students learn to be prepared to carry their share of the load and expect others to do the same ”

--Joel Arvizo, former HOSA president

Quiz Bowl in the Classroom

“I saw the practical use and applicability of Quiz Bowl early on for the classroom—about 30 years ago. I use Quiz Bowl for Spanish and Social Studies. It is ideal for review and recall, and my students enjoy it much more than drills. It is ideal for test preparation as well.”

--Melinda Dixon, Teacher, Lockwood High School, Lockwood, MO

Keeping students engaged and focused in the classroom and motivating them to pay attention are key challenges for even the most seasoned teachers. Quiz Bowl types of games in the classroom are a practical strategy for promoting student engagement. Many teachers immediately see the practical use and applicability of Quiz Bowl in the classroom for material review and recall.

“In addition to coaching our Quiz Bowl team, I also use Quiz Bowl in all my Latin classes including AP Latin for vocabulary review, identification of characters in literature and teaching rhetorical devices. I use it to prepare my students for their AP exams. I see that it helps them in rapidly answering questions under pressure. My students don’t always realize that they are learning because it is fun.”

--Mike Zinmeister, Seton Hall Preparatory School, West Orange, NJ

Sandy Sowell says, “I learned early on that flashy and expensive equipment looks nice, but it was hard to maintain when it malfunctioned or broke, and the hotel staff had neither the time nor the training to repair or maintain equipment. It was also much more complicated to set up and dismantle. Time is money, and the resorts I work with are happier with the more durable (and less expensive!) Quiz Bowl equipment I now provide.

In major Fortune 1000 corporations, Quiz Bowl is frequently used as part of training exercises, team building exercises, on corporate retreats and elsewhere. As in the case with students, playing a game breaks down barriers, makes people more relaxed and comfortable with each other, and makes an event or training and recall exercise more fun and memorable.

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