Group Grade Grubbing versus Cooperative LEARNING
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Even before the recent surge of interest in cooperative learning (CL), researchers and practitioners were already widely questioning precisely what the term means and how the idea should be implemented. Construction contractors (or, less charitably, Talmudic disputants) have argued over every aspect of it — theory and practice. Everyone in the field agrees that students benefit when they can work together to learn instead of working against each other. Yet there are few who are not constantly worried about the potential for competition and reward to undermine the fundamental purpose of the process and for learning.

But the assumption that interdependence is best achieved — or, even, as some would insist it is — that it can only be achieved — by the use of rewards is a view that has been critically examined long ago. A careful assessment of the literature on rewards, cooperation, and learning (e.g., Amabile, 1985, 1986; Barlow, 1968; and Kruglanski, 1981) has resulted in the conclusion that the research evidence in favor of using rewards is not convincing and that the results are often inconsistent. The conclusion is that there is no consistent evidence that a program of reward increases the effectiveness of CL.