



★ It's in the Bag ★

Book Study Groups have long been one of the least expensive and most enjoyable ways for educators to grow professionally. Study groups provide structured time for reflection on student work and classroom practice. A book study group can be formed in your school, your district, or even online. The study group method is invaluable in bringing together groups of colleagues who can use the classroom as an arena for studies, discussions and experience exchange and turn it into a “laboratory” for trying out new teaching methods skills and practices gleaned from the books studied. The hallmarks of a successful book study group are teacher engagement, superior use of time, and sustainable changes in student achievement.

Facilitator's Guide

Resources available for Checkout: *Bringing Words to Life, Robust Vocabulary Instruction.* (2002). Isabel L. Beck, Margaret McKeown, Linda Kucan, New York: The Guilford Press.

Book Description: *Bringing Words to Life* is an excellent resource that provides research-based strategies for vocabulary development with children from the earliest grades through high school. It explains why providing rich information about words and their uses enhance students' language comprehension and production. Teachers are guided in selecting words for instruction, developing student-friendly explanations of new words, creating meaningful learning activities and getting students involved in thinking about, using, and noticing new words both within and outside the classroom. “You Try It” sections are provided to give teachers exercises to bring the concepts to life. Appendices are included in the back. Appendix A gives lists of books rich in vocabulary for kindergarten through second grade. Appendix B offers lists of books for creating a lively verbal environment.

Framing the Context of a Book Study: Powerful Tools for Learning:

Two powerful venues for deepening understanding, impacting student outcomes and contributing to the growth of learning organizations are professional learning communities and communities of practice. One of the most effective ways to make your school a learning organization is to create a professional learning community or a community of practice. The concept of a professional learning community (PLC) is a powerful influence around the work of restructuring schools. According to Rick Dufour in *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn*, the fundamental role of schools is "learning, not teaching." While Dufour acknowledges that this is "an enormous distinction," he notes that the emphasis on learning leads those within the school to place their focus and energy on three important questions:

1. What is it we want all students to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has acquired the intended knowledge and skills?
3. How will we respond when students experience difficulty?

Another option for helping schools and districts is to create a community of practice. Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. A community of practice (CoP) makes connections from person to person for mutual inquiry and learning about a practice or issue. Everyone's voice is needed. Participants develop a shared identity and share a repertoire of knowledge and experiences (Wenger, 2003). Both professional learning communities and communities of practice move system stakeholders from knowing to doing.

A Book study becomes a powerful tool that these communities can use to engage in powerful, professional discourse. A building or existing PLC or CoP may want to add a book study as another tool to aid in professional development. When your school or team begins planning their book study, keep the above questions in mind as a way to frame all discussions around student learning and school improvement.

Facilitating Successfully:

In order to facilitate the study groups most effectively, a district, school or team may want to consider the following:

- Treat study groups as a school-wide teacher professional development model.
- State the purpose for the book study groups in terms of specific student needs (these needs should be based on an analysis of student data).
- Study groups can be job-embedded, with principals freeing up time during the school day, or during superintendent conference days, faculty meetings, etc.

- Groups should be small and manageable, their work “published.”
- Study groups need support from administrators.
- Work within study groups is built around the participants’ search for knowledge according to their own needs and the needs of their students.
- Members meet regularly and work according to a study plan that they often develop themselves (the plan will include how often to meet, for how long, how many chapters will be discussed per meeting, where to meet, etc.).
- Everyone in a study group is responsible for getting the work done and for achieving the jointly agreed upon goals.
- The goals of a study group can be:
 - To offer a good method for teachers to cooperate more actively in order “to awaken their students’ minds” about sustainable development.
 - To integrate sustainable development into all curriculum subjects.
 - To provide teachers with the opportunity to share both good and bad teaching experiences and to get support from colleagues and professional books.
 - To encourage teachers to work together to solve a problem.
 - To get teachers motivated to pursue education for sustainable development—to make a difference.
- The facilitator should engage in the following behaviors:
 - Be diplomatic – suggest, but don’t subscribe.
 - Act as an advisor.
 - Be respectful.
 - Be professional, relaxed and be present in the situation.
 - Don’t intervene too much – let the group work on what they feel is important.
 - Encourage, inspire and support.
- During the last meeting, ask these questions:
 - What positive outcomes did we achieve?
 - What problems did we encounter?
 - What lessons have we learned that could be useful to other groups?
 - What do we do next?

The following section contains reflection and dialogue suggestions and questions broken out by chapter. These are designed to facilitate thinking and discussion around ***Bringing Words to Life, Robust Vocabulary Instruction***.

Chapter 1: Rationale for Robust Vocabulary Instruction

Overview

This chapter provides a rationale for teaching vocabulary in an explicit and systematic way. It provides a perspective for thinking about how students learn words, not just a variety of strategies to teach new vocabulary. It discusses why direct vocabulary instruction is important and what it means to really know a word.

Helpful Hints

To begin thinking about vocabulary, have group members read the preface before the first session and be ready to share a memory or experience with learning new vocabulary as a child or adult. Have the group leader bring an article described in the “You Try It” section on page 7. Also, continue thinking about the population you work with while discussing vocabulary. Where do they fall on the continuum of low or high word knowledge?

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Discuss the attributes of each of the three tiers of vocabulary words. How can this help educators narrow the focus of which words specifically to teach to their students?
2. Thinking of the Multi-tiered system of support, how can we support struggling readers to reinforce vocabulary they need in order to be successful in the regular education classroom?
4. Fill out the chart on page 12. As a group, discuss how a person could use these words in multiple ways in order to “own” their new word.

Chapter 2: Choosing Words to Teach

Overview

This chapter helps educators make sound decisions of what kinds of words are important to teach. Criteria are given for selecting words for instruction. Examples throughout the chapter help educators put the criteria to use. If you can explain what the word means, you can teach it to others.

Helpful Hints

The goal of this chapter is to be able to identify words for instruction. Come prepared to briefly share the “Your Turn” section on page 30 whether it’s at an adult or student level. In step 3, be prepared to share which words you would focus on for struggling readers in a Tier-2 setting.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. To gain practice in identifying Tier Two words, have your group select and discuss which words you would choose from the passage on page 18. Compare your words with the ones the authors chose. Did they fit the criteria for identifying Tier Two words by looking at importance and utility, instructional potential and conceptual understanding?
2. Share an example of a beginning reader text that has more Tier One vocabulary. Discuss how educators can enrich the vocabulary for struggling readers that are reading books with very limited text.
3. Discuss the distinctions between vocabulary work with primary and older students. How could understanding these concepts help with planning instruction with older struggling readers in a multi-tiered system of support?
4. Discuss the criteria of knowing when a word is simply too hard for a student to understand.

Chapter 3: Introducing Vocabulary

Overview

Chapter 3 takes a close look at the foundation for all vocabulary instruction. Issues are raised about relying on dictionary definitions. Suggestions are given of how to teach vocabulary so students can explain the word's meaning rather than its definition. This chapter presents ways to make vocabulary introduction more effective by making word meanings explicit and clear. Students need to be actively involved with thinking about and using the meanings immediately.

Helpful Hint

In pairs look up one of the following words in the dictionary: elute, obviate, sigil. After reading the dictionary definition, how well are you able to use or teach the word to someone else? Keep this activity in mind as you work through Chapter 3.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Discuss the problems of using dictionary definitions for teaching the meanings of words.
2. How would you develop student-friendly lessons so students can explain a word's meaning instead of providing a definition?
3. In small groups, do the "You Try It" section on pages 38-39. Try these with your students and share the effectiveness at the next book study session.
4. Keeping your struggling readers in mind, how might scaffolding instruction be used with a Tier-2 group?
5. Choose one of the four vocabulary activities on pages 44-45 to do with the book study group. Discuss how each activity could be used during core instruction as well as a small Tier-2 group.

Chapter 4: Developing Vocabulary in the Earliest Grades

Overview

This chapter focuses on developing vocabulary for young children. A sequence of activities is included for introducing sophisticated words to young children and engaging them in interacting with word meanings. Enriching the listening and speaking vocabularies of young children can be found by selecting Tier Two words from children's trade books. Tier Two words are the ones that children will be able to use in many contexts and instructional activities to add to their repertoire of words.

Helpful Hints

Choose one of the books from Appendix A, pgs. 131-137, or a book that you are currently using to bring to the book study for developing a sequenced activity for teaching words to young children.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Review the concepts of the three tiers of words and how this relates to resources for vocabulary development for young children just beginning to read.
2. What are the two goals of implementing Text Talk in your classroom? Using the book you brought, use the criteria described in the "You Try It" section on page 50 to develop a Text Talk lesson.
3. For further vocabulary development to be used for students in a Tier-2 group, use the same book. Choose one of the activities that encourage children to interact with words listed in the "You Try It" section on page 59. Read through the samples on pages 60-66 for ideas on developing your activities.
4. Discuss how educators can ensure students will maintain their new vocabulary learning?

Chapter 5: Developing Vocabulary in the Later Grades

Overview

In Chapter 5 the focus changes to developing vocabulary activities for students in later grades. Providing rich information about words along with frequent opportunities to use and consider the words will help them understand new vocabulary. Extending attention to words beyond the lesson becomes even more critical at the upper grades because words become more complex.

Helpful Hints

As you're reading this chapter, take the time to actually do the word activities provided. Be prepared to create questions and assessment items for Tier Two words that are currently being used in your classroom.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Describe the kind of instruction that inspires and supports true word ownership.
2. Discuss the importance of the three features of frequency, richness and extended instruction for effective vocabulary instruction.
3. Explain the concept of "relationships among words" and explain why it's important to word knowledge.
4. Reflect on the "Results of Frequent, Rich, Extended Instruction" section that starts on the bottom of page 77. How can educators use these results to support struggling readers in Tier-2 vocabulary groups?
5. As a group, brainstorm five robust words around the theme of "words relating to heat". Using the examples on pages 79-85, create vocabulary activities for the five chosen words.
6. Discuss the similarities/differences in vocabulary work between middle school and high school students.
7. How will educators monitor the progress of their students' vocabulary development in a multi-tiered system of supports?

Chapter 6: Making the Most of Natural Contexts

Overview

Chapter 6 focuses on teaching students how to make the most of natural contexts in deriving word meanings. Educators will learn specific strategies for helping students use natural contexts appropriately. Because of the unreliability of natural contexts, instruction needs to be presented as a process of figuring out meaning, not simply the product.

Helpful Hints

Before discussing this chapter, review the four categories of natural context from Chapter One on pages 4 and 5.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Review the role and effectiveness of using context clues to derive word meanings.
2. Think about your targeted Tier-2 students. Complete the “You Try It” activity on page 108 to determine if they have similar characteristics as the low ability students described in this chapter. As a group, brainstorm an instructional sequence to best meet the needs of these students.
3. Compare and contrast the words product and process when thinking about word knowledge.

Chapter 7: Enriching the Verbal Environment

Overview

Chapter 7 provides techniques and resources for creating a rich verbal environment in which attention to word meanings and uses is ongoing. Educators who provide opportunities for using sophisticated, interesting and precise language are probably the most important element in this environment.

Helpful Hints

When reading this chapter, utilize Appendix B for finding resources to make students' learning environments full of lively, rich words. Bring a favorite poem or passage as an example of rich language.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Brainstorm different ways educators can apply sophisticated words to everyday situations. How can sprinkling new words in their environment help students become more interested in new words?
2. How could introducing the Word Wizard or The Suggestion Box into your classroom increase students' abilities to pay attention to words both in and beyond the classroom?
3. Brainstorm ways educators can bring forth their own curiosity about words to increase the ability of using more mature words in their classrooms.
4. How can you use these beyond the classroom activities and resources to target the interest of lower language students in your classroom?
5. As you leave this book study, focus on one of the activities from page 129 to implement what you have learned.



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NYSRRC Book Study Guide Program

Feedback Form

Please provide feedback upon completion of the book study. Return this form in the facilitator guide folder.

1. Was the facilitator's guide useful in leading your discussion of *Bringing Words to Life, Robust Vocabulary Instruction*? Why or why not?
2. How can we improve this experience?
3. Would you recommend this to other groups?