



# ★ 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:** *Data Wise* (2006). Edited by Kathryn Parker Boudett, Elizabeth A. City, Richard J. Murnane, Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

**Book Description:** *Data Wise* grew out of a cooperative effort between public school administrators and Harvard Graduate School of Education professors. This book is a road map for school leaders in search of improving student outcomes through the use of data. The authors provide a process beginning with Prepare, then Inquire, and finally, Act. Each step of the process is outlined in the various chapters and provides guidance to school leaders in the pursuit of school improvement. Resources are provided at the end of the book.

**Note:** *Data Wise in Action* is the author's newest book which is a sequel to *Data Wise*. It tells the stories of eight very different schools that used the *Data Wise* process. This book builds on the work from *Data Wise*.

### **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 **Data Wise**.

## Introduction

### Overview

The introduction of *Data Wise* prepares the reader for structuring school improvement based on the use of data. It helps lay out a road map for using data to improve instruction. The introduction explains how educators can use this book to begin the improvement process. The process includes Prepare, Inquire and Act. The first step of the process, Prepare, includes chapter one, Organizing for Collaborative Work, and chapter 2, Building Assessment Literacy. The second step, Inquire, includes chapter 3, Create Data Overview, chapter 4, Dig into Student Data, and chapter 5, Examine Instruction. The last step in the process, Act, includes chapter 6, Develop Action Plan, chapter 7, Plan to Assess Progress and chapter 8, Act and Assess. The book concludes with a series of resources for the school leader.

### Helpful Hints

This book is organized around the experiences of two schools, a K-8 school and a 9-12 school. The needs of the schools are significantly different. It is suggested that school leaders read the book and then organize a dedicated group of faculty to work through each chapter. Central office administrators, college faculty and others will find it useful in their roles in supporting change at the school level.

### Reflection and Dialogue

1. As a school leader, what steps can you take to engage faculty and others in the use of data to improve student achievement?
2. What support can central office, teacher leaders, and others provide to help in the study of data?
3. What is your belief about using data to improve high stakes assessments?

## Prepare

### **Chapter 1: Organizing for Collaborative Work**

#### **Overview**

This chapter outlines various strategies for preparing to use data in a school. The first suggestion is to develop a data team. The writers suggest that there are many ways to develop a data team and it would depend on the structure and size of the school as to the best configuration. The purpose is to have the collection and management of the data be the responsibility of a small group so that the whole faculty can spend time on analyzing the information. The authors suggest that there be a data inventory of all of the assessments given in the school, both internal and external, an inventory of instructional initiatives, and a well thought out and developed team structure for collaboration.

#### **Helpful Hints**

After reading this chapter, the school leaders may want to think about the systems that are in place to discuss data. Are there grade level or department teams that meet regularly? Is there a representative “cabinet” that meets regularly with the school leadership? What protocols are in place for team meetings?

#### **Reflection and Dialogue**

1. What structure for data discussions would be possible in our school?
2. Do we have, or can we construct an inventory of assessments and instructional initiatives?
3. Are there members of our faculty who would be willing to collect and manage our data?

## Chapter 2: Building Assessment Literacy

### Overview

This chapter reviews information about assessment measurement. Reliability, validity, measurement error, criterion referenced assessments, norm referenced assessments and score types are among the topics covered. This chapter also discusses score variation as a result of high stakes testing.

### Helpful Hints

The data team may want to consider the need to review concepts regarding tests and measurement with the faculty. How can the school leaders and/or the data team assess the needs of the faculty? Is there someone on the faculty who might be able to do a short presentation on the basics of testing and measurement at a faculty meeting? Is the faculty ready to have a discussion about the pressures of high stakes testing and dialogue regarding the purpose of using data to improve student achievement as a separate issue from improving test scores?

### Reflection and Dialogue

1. Summarize the various types of assessments.
2. Summarize the various types of score reports and describe the purpose and benefits of each.
3. Discuss how change over time can be assessed with the assessments presently provided in your school.

# Inquire

## Chapter 3: Creating a Data Overview

### **Overview**

This chapter provides advice about how to construct graphical displays that highlight patterns in a school's results. This chapter helps to clarify how to decide how much data to display and how to help faculty view data so that it can be translated into decisions.

### **Helpful Hints**

Graphical displays of data are an important tool to help faculty interpret data. Is there someone on the faculty who is comfortable with software programs that display data in interesting graphical formats to share with the data team?

### **Reflection and Dialogue**

1. How is data presented to the school presently?
2. Can you or someone in your school provide graphical formats of the data for ease of interpretation? Can the school help train someone to do this?
3. Do the data formats that are available help encourage faculty members to ask questions?

## Chapter 4: Digging into Data

### Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to help schools identify a learner-centered problem that is common to many students and that, if solved, would help meet larger goals for students. The chapter helps the reader with a process for getting to the root problem.

### Helpful Hints

It may be helpful to review the inventory of assessments and the data available before proceeding with the suggestions of this chapter. The chapter cautions the reader to take time to identify the problem before trying to develop a solution.

### Reflection and Dialogue

1. What would be your first single data source for review?
2. What questions might you ask as a result of this data source?
3. Can you bring other data sources into the discussion to help triangulate the data?
4. Can you begin to identify a learner-centered problem?
5. Once you have followed the process, reflect upon and be prepared to discuss the answers to the questions on page 96.

## Chapter 5: Examining Instruction

### Overview

This chapter describes the link between learning and teaching, the skill of examining practice, the skill of a shared understanding of effective practice and the analysis of current practice in order to articulate the problem of practice.

### Helpful Hints

In the resource section of the book, there are protocols for guiding the discussion of the “problem of practice.” There are strategies that leaders can use to help faculty identify the problem of practice without the faculty becoming defensive.

### Reflection and Dialogue

1. As a leader, how will you move the conversation from students (or parents or community) to teachers?
2. How will you help the faculty look for a root cause?
3. What internal and external resources are available to you to help develop a shared understanding of effective practice?

## Act

### **Chapter 6: Developing an Action Plan**

#### **Overview**

This chapter outlines the process for implementing a plan. There are a number of issues to consider when developing a plan including the scope of the plan, the specific solution to implement, developing a common vision for the implementation, discussion the theory behind the plan, putting the plan on paper, assigning responsibilities and supporting the teachers in implementing the plan.

#### **Helpful Hints**

The development of an action plan is an opportunity to provide quality professional development to the staff. It may be helpful to evaluate the resources you have available to provide this support. Is the district ready to commit to providing real resources, including the resource of time, to improve student learning?

#### **Reflection and Dialogue**

1. Is the problem that the team is analyzing a school wide problem, a grade level or subject based problem? Is the solution consistent with the scope of the problem?
2. What will be the venue for the discussion of the solution of the problem?
3. How will the solution look in classrooms? Is there a common vision of the implementation of the solution?
4. How will the school leaders and district leaders support the teachers in the implementation of the plan?

### **Chapter 7: Planning to Assess Progress**

**Overview**

This chapter focuses on strategies to assess progress of students as a result of the implementation of the action plan. Short term, medium term and long term data are discussed. Setting improvement and proficiency goals are discussed

**Helpful Hints**

It is helpful to consider the level of improvement and proficiency goals for the team. Setting goals is an opportunity to set high expectations for students. The authors encourage setting ambitious goals, but caution the reader to set goals that are achievable.

**Reflection and Dialogue**

1. What short term, medium term and long term data is available?
2. What plans need to be put into place to collect and manage short, medium and long term data?
3. Describe the difference between an improvement and proficiency goal. What is an example of each?
4. What template can you use to plan for the assessment of the implementation?

**Chapter 8: Acting and Assessing**

## **Overview**

This chapter focuses on the role of the school leader in the implementation of the plan. Strategies for communicating the plan, developing internal capacity for accountability, promoting consistency rather than conformity, monitoring implementation, supporting staff with professional development and celebrating success are discussed.

## **Helpful Hints**

School leaders will need to plan well in advance for this phase of the improvement process. During a change process, the results may not show a dramatic change initially. However, it is the responsibility of the school leader to help identify small incremental change in order to maintain support for the change.

## **Reflection and Dialogue**

1. Who will you rely on for internal capacity to monitor implementation?
2. How will you provide direct support to teachers during the implementation?
3. In Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence*, they described how successful leaders were tight on the mission and loose on the implementation. How does that fit into the concept proposed by the authors regarding promoting consistency rather than conformity?

## Chapter 9: Roles for the District Central Office

### Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide superintendents and their leadership teams at the district level with an understanding of the roles that district central offices play in supporting the use of data to improve student outcomes. The chapter goes on to discuss how central office can provide data systems, software and incentives, as well as helping to develop skills and providing time to do the work.

### Helpful Hints

This chapter provides guidance for central office staff. Perhaps the reader can plan a strategy to engage the central office staff in a discussion of using data to improve student outcomes. Support at the central office is essential in implementing this process.

### Reflection and Dialogue

1. Does the district have a data management system in place and is the collection and distribution of data and information valued?
2. Will the district allocate money and time to this process?
3. Are there staff at the district level who can model this process?



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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 *Data Wise*? Why or why not?
2. How can we improve this experience?
3. Would you recommend this to other groups?

