



★ 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: *Teach Them All to Read: Catching the Kids Who Fall Through the Cracks.* (2002). Elaine K. McEwan, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Resources available on the Web:

Book Description: This book focuses on the issues surrounding reading failure and provides extensive guidelines for preventing it. Chapter 1 answers the following questions: Which students are falling through the cracks? Why are they falling and, why are there so many? Chapter 2 explains why an action plan is necessary in addressing the problem and describes the nine “Pieces of the Reading Puzzle.” Subsequent chapters expand the description of those puzzle pieces. Chapter 3 looks at phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling. Chapter 4 deals with the importance of fluency. Chapter 5 looks at the essentials of comprehension: language, knowledge, and cognitive strategies. Chapter 6 gives us ways in which we can get our students to read extensively. Chapter 7 gives us a view of three schools and their before and after success stories. The concluding chapter is an extensive explanation of how to create the reading culture necessary to “Teach Them All to Read.” Also included are several practical resource sections: a list of phonics readers, brain-based reading activities, a description of Project

Pride, a lesson sequence, and finally, several useful checklists and forms.

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 ***Teach Them All to Read: Catching the Kids Who Fall through the Cracks.***

Chapter 1: Falling Through the Cracks

Overview

This chapter has a three-fold purpose: the author explains what she means by “falling through the cracks,” it looks at which students are falling, and finally, it explores the reasons for the large number of students failing.

Helpful Hints

Have statistics available on the percentage of students currently identified as special education students and the number of students in other remedial programs. Longitudinal data on ELA results would also be of benefit.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Why do you think there is a discrepancy between the number of students (5% of the population) who are genuinely learning disabled, and the number of students who are placed in special education or other compensatory programs?
2. Why do boys fall through the cracks more often than girls even though the distribution of reading disabilities is similar?
3. How is it possible that students receiving special services are still at risk for failure?
4. What problems does the author see in some early intervention programs?

Chapter 2: Developing an Action Plan

Overview

This chapter begins by defining the nine pieces of the reading puzzle – phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, reading a lot, reading culture, language, fluency, knowledge, and cognitive strategies. It continues with an explanation of the ten variables that when changed can improve literacy. It concludes by discussing the twelve fallacies about instruction that may contribute to student failure.

Helpful Hints

Prior to answering the questions, discuss the group's views on their school's and/or district's reading culture.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Discuss Figure 2.1, the Reading Puzzle Explained. All pieces of the puzzle are essential to the whole, but why might Reading Culture be especially crucial?
2. For each of the ten alterable variables, decide how each can be practically addressed in your classroom, on the grade level, and school-wide. Are there variables the author has not included? If so, what are they?
3. How have the twelve fallacies about reading and reading instruction contributed to students falling through the cracks? How can these pitfalls be avoided?

Chapter 3: Putting the Code Pieces in Place

Overview

This chapter focuses on the reading puzzle pieces: phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling. It explains what phonological awareness is, how students acquire it, why it is important, what the instruction entails, when to teach it, and how a prevention/intervention program should work. The chapter continues with the importance of phonics, highlights of essential research on phonics, and a review of the “great phonics debate.” Also discussed is when spelling instruction should begin and what constitutes good spelling? Finally, the chapter points out pitfalls to avoid when we begin teaching reading.

Helpful Hint

Resource D: The “I Do It, We Do It, You Do It” lesson sequence on p. 161 will be beneficial in answering question 2. Review materials currently being used for phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling to see if they conform to the author’s criteria for optimum instruction.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Why must phonemic awareness be the first step in reading instruction? For students who “just don’t seem to get it,” why does a “wait and see” approach not work?
2. Review the author’s conditions for effective phonological awareness instruction, paying special attention to the meaning of what is meant by explicit, systematic, and supportive.
3. What were the conclusions reached in the Houston study? Why have some experts disagreed with the conclusions?
4. Why should spelling instruction begin mid-year in first grade? Discuss the elements of good spelling instruction.
5. Review the five pitfalls in the teaching of beginning reading. How can we avoid them?

Chapter 4: Fluency – the Forgotten Piece of the Reading Puzzle

Overview

The entire chapter is devoted to fluency. What is fluency? What problems are involved in learning it? How can we identify, prevent, and remediate fluency difficulties? How do we assess fluency? And finally, how do we teach fluency? These questions are answered with concrete and practical information and strategies.

Helpful Hints

Have on hand any materials that are being used for fluency instruction and assessment. A group evaluation of their effectiveness would be helpful.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Why does the author feel that fluency is critical to comprehension? How is RAN crucial to fluency?
2. How can we most effectively use DIBELS in identifying fluency deficiencies?
3. Why must accuracy and rate be linked when measuring fluency?
4. How can we best implement the three-part approach to teaching fluency?
5. The author describes a dozen different ways to do repeated oral reading. Which, if any, are we doing? How might we incorporate them into our instructional time?

Chapter 5: The Meaning Pieces – Language, Knowledge, and Cognitive Strategies

Overview

This chapter deals with the ultimate goal of reading – comprehension. It delves into the three essential elements of comprehension – language, knowledge, and cognitive strategies. It explains how language acquisition differs from vocabulary, why knowledge creates the context to our reading, and why the teaching of cognitive strategies must be integral to the understanding of what is read.

Helpful Hints

Have copies of your core reader available for use with question 4. Have teachers share the graphic organizers that they have found effective. There are also several provided in Resource B which can and should be discussed.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. How is our willingness to be active, engaged readers reflected in our ability to model this behavior in our students?
2. Why is the language piece of comprehension so much more than just vocabulary knowledge? Why is vocabulary instruction insufficient?
3. How can we best integrate language development in our reading instruction, as well as in the content areas?
4. Using Figure 5.1, “The Essential Cognitive Strategies,” decide how we can efficiently implement them into a reading selection.
5. How does the teaching of cognitive strategies differ from the teaching of reading “skills”? Why is long-term staff development necessary for teachers to become proficient in teaching cognitive skills?
6. Why are the four essential strategies described on pages 78-81 critical to comprehension?

Chapter 6: Putting it All Together – Reading a Lot

Overview

This chapter explains the reasons why students must read extensively and why that reading, in order to be beneficial, has to be challenging, well-written, and varied. The chapter also addresses the necessity of accountability.

Helpful Hints

Have participants bring with them examples of any incentive programs they may use to encourage reading and examples of what tools they use to monitor accountability.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. Share techniques you have used to encourage students to read more.
2. How could we incorporate a program such as “The Battle of the Books” into our school and/or community? What benefits do you see in such a program?
3. How can we encourage our students to read challenging, well-written, and varied books-not just those they might read for pleasure?
4. The author describes four methods for holding students accountable for what they read. What other ways have you found effective?
5. Share with your colleagues successes you have had in encouraging reluctant readers to begin to read a lot.

Chapter 7: Snapshots of Success – Classrooms and Schools that Work

Overview

This chapter is a “call to action.” It urges us to take what is known about reading instruction and utilize the information in establishing a widespread culture of literacy in our schools. It lists the traits necessary to create that culture and goes on to highlight the successes of several schools.

Helpful Hints

Be sure to make use of Resource C, “Project Pride,” and Resource D, the “I Do It, We Do It, You Do It” lesson sequence in your discussions.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. For each of the twelve traits of a “pervasive and persuasive reading culture,” decide what obstacles we would need to surmount in order to achieve them.
2. Do you see your school in any of those highlighted? If not, why? If yes, what similarities do you see?

Chapter 8: Putting the Final Piece in Place – Creating a Pervasive and Persuasive Reading Culture

Overview

This chapter outlines the fifty strategies that are integral in creating a “pervasive and persuasive reading culture.” The fifty strategies are organized within the twelve characteristics of a reading culture described in the previous chapter.

Helpful Hints

A brief review of the group’s responses to question #1 in the previous chapter would be beneficial.

Reflection and Dialogue

1. How can we best implement the four strategies in characteristic #2?
2. What resources do we currently have that can be utilized in establishing meaningful long-term goals? How can forms E2 and E3 be used in creating short-term goals?
3. Depending on your grade level, which strategies in characteristic #5 can you implement in your classroom, grade, and/or school? How will you do it and measure its success?
4. What improvements in reading instruction can we make in order to make more efficient use of time? Are there ways to incorporate reading into extracurricular time?
5. How might meeting with the grade-level teachers above and below the grade you are currently teaching be helpful?
6. How can we get our parents involved in our quest for literacy?



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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 *Teach Them All to Read: Catching the Kids Who Fall Through the Cracks*. Why or why not?
2. How can we improve this experience?
3. Would you recommend this to other groups?

