

PLC Book Study Guide

Directions for Using this Guide

Book studies can be powerful tools for developing the teacher expertise necessary for improving performance and enhancing student learning through deliberate practice. What sets an effective book study apart from an ineffective one lies in both the initial planning of the book study itself and the utilization of the knowledge, skills and practices acquired.

- This guide is for groups of educators' intent on bringing meaningful change to their teaching, mentoring, and/or leadership practices. This guide will take the study group through the study of a professional text and into planning and implementing of high quality changes in practices.
- The desired **size** of a study group can range from 2 to 10 people but a suggested size is 3-5 educators who are able to reflect upon and adapt their practice as needed. Having an administrator in this type of learning community is not necessary but administrators' participating as one of the learners is a productive practice.
- A study group does not require a leader, per se, but having a **Coordinator** to send meeting reminders and organize meeting locations is helpful.
- Any of the members of the study group can choose a text, if an administrator or other stakeholder has not already recommended one. Study groups can also choose to coordinate with other study groups at other school sites and districts via the Florida School Leaders website.
- Determine if study on and implementation of concepts in this resource are aligned to a Master In-service Component in the district's master In-service plan, issues in your School Improvement Plan, and/or the IPDP or deliberate practice growth targets of individual members of the study group. Where they align your study to requirements in those processes.
- The study group should create and maintain a **Group Journal** to serve as an archive of the group's work over time. All members should contribute to and have access to the journal, although one person can be in charge of coordination.
- This can be done any number of ways:
 - on paper
 - in a file that can be group shared (Dropbox, Google Drive, school network)
 - blog format

Learning Community Professional Study Template

Phase 1: Planning the Work

As you plan your book study, be mindful that the combination of learning and fellowship is often what draws people, and especially educators, to want to participate. The research is very clear that successful teacher study groups honor principles of adult learning. Adult learning, and specifically teacher learning, must be grounded in and connected to solving real-world issues. In addition, educators yearn for and thrive in shared learning experiences built on respect, choice, voice, and personal connections. Taking time up front to address these factors will go a long way to ensuring a successful book study that result in improved teaching practices and increased student learning.

Developing mutually-established goals, clear and up-front procedures, and expectations of relevance to group-determined issues are all methods for establishing and maintaining respect.

- The “organizer” of a study group should establish him/herself as a co-learner in the process.
- Use the first study group session to set goals, establish norms, create a timeline, and set at least one individual responsibility recording these and reminding participants of the agreements as needed as the work proceeds.
- Have an end product in mind that each participant can use (e.g., a set of lesson plans that include newly learned best practices, a new PD plan, revising your school’s teacher induction program).
- Revisit the study group’s goals and timeline at the start of each session, allowing participants to give an update. Amend plans to accommodate new ideas.

Step 1 – Build your learning team

- If possible, allow people to join voluntarily.
- Introduce yourselves if you don’t already know each other.
- Members can connect with others studying the same book or topic by going to the PD Systems Section of the Florida School Leaders website to connect with others studying this same topic. Links for this will be provided in September, 2014.)

Step 2 – Select a book and create goals for the book study

- If possible, offer several book options for the group to choose from.
- Create relevance by selecting books that deal with an issue the teacher, school and/or district is currently facing.
- What are our “big picture” goals for this study group? (Refer back to these goals periodically as you work your way through the book you’re studying.)
- Individually, what do you hope to learn from this book study?

Step 3 – Establish group norms

Group norms exist whether we’re intentional about them or not. Establishing group norms will ensure that group meetings are pleasant and productive. Once established, they should be monitored (“*Shall we work according to our norms during this meeting?*”), evaluated (“*How did we do on our norms today?*”) and updated (*Do we need to amend our current norm on _____?*) as group needs change.

- Use the [Creating Synergy Through Group Norming](#) document in the appendix to walk you through this process.
- Once completed, make sure everyone has a copy of the group norms, and they should be included in a *Group Journal* that will serve as a running record of the LEARNING COMMUNITYS

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activities. This can be done online (as a journal or a blog) or on paper (notebook) that everyone has access to.

Step 4 – Plan the reading

- Look at the Table of Contents and divide up chapters based on the number of meetings and other extenuating circumstances (such as, books already having a time table listed.)
- Decide on a method of “During Reading” individual activities. Options might include:
 - A list of interesting concepts
 - Marked pages (tape flags, Post-its)
 - Written summaries
 - [Book Study During Reading Guide](#) (see appendix)

Phase 2: Working the Plan: Protocols for Discussion Groups Meetings

Either the coordinator or the learning community at large can choose from the protocols provided in the appendix (or use their own) to use at each subsequent reading discussion meeting. The same protocol can be used repeatedly, or each one can be tried once. Some protocols may be better suited to different types of reading than others. All protocols demonstrate a best practice that can be utilized in the classroom setting with any level of student.

THE APPENDIX PROVIDES A LIST OF 6 USEFUL PROTOCOLS FOR GUIDING BOOK STUDIES AND OTHER TOOLS FOR “WORKING THE PLAN”.

Phase 3: The Future

- The learning community and action research are models that can be replicated infinitely.
- Learning communities work best when the same team members are involved all year and when the groups are smaller (3-5 members).
- The responsibilities should rotate among the team members – this will help develop leadership skills among each of the members, building their professional growth.
- The meetings should be scheduled and regular, during school time.
- Action research works best when it is focused on the same topic for an extended period of time.
- The learning community should periodically evaluate the team’s functioning.
- The focus of a learning community should be on professional learning and growth, with focus given to teachers being able to examine the impact of new teaching strategies and classroom instruction on students.
- Members of a learning community should have the opportunity to observe each other teaching.
- The Group Journal should be maintained as a record and archive of the group’s work, and made available to all members.
- The successes of the learning community should be shared with other stakeholders, not just learning community members.

Appendix A - Six Group Learning Protocols

TOP 10 LIST

Set up: One *Note-taker* at the board, and one appointed *Coordinator* to keep members on track. Other group members present with their notes.

Procedure:

1. Group members take turns sharing interesting facts, opinions or points they learned from the assigned reading.
2. Note-taker records as concisely as possible.
3. Coordinator can allow discussion to occur, but prevents discussion from going too far off topic.
4. When everyone is done sharing, the group evaluates their group's work and directs Note-taker to consolidate or eliminate notes.
5. Then the list is ranked from least important (10) to most important (1) of concepts cleaned from the chapter.
6. A cleaned up version of the notes is made available to all group members.

ROUND ROBIN

Set up: Entire group seated in a circle, one *Notetaker*, and one appointed *Coordinator* to keep members on track. Other group members are present with their notes.

Procedure:

- One group member begins discussion with a statement that begins with "I learned," "I realized," or "I now know" and shares something from the assigned reading that appealed to them. Refrain from evaluative statements such as "I think," "I feel," "I believe."
- When Group Member 1 is done, attention turns to his or her left. This member can either add on to GM 1's statement, or begin a new statement of what he/she learned.
- Discussion continues in this fashion until every member has spoken at least twice.
- Group norms can determine if someone can "pass" one turn until later.
- When discussion is concluded, Notetaker records a summary of the meeting in group journal.

SILENT WEBBING

Set up: Large pieces of chart paper or butcher paper, variety of colored markers (thin tipped)

Procedure:

- *Coordinator* leads discussion on what the group perceives the main ideas of the assigned reading were – two or three (or *Coordinator* decides beforehand, or uses ideas outlined in the reading itself).
- Those main ideas become the center of each piece of chart paper, or spaced out in the center of the butcher paper.
- Each GM takes one marker and, silently, adds thoughts, comments and reflections on each main idea. GMs can add on to the main idea "web" or add reflections on other GMs ideas. This "silent discussion" continues as long as needed.
- When the writing stops, the *Coordinator* brings group together for oral discussion on concluding or prevailing thoughts and discoveries.
- *Notetaker* records conclusions in group journal.

Q AND A:

Set up: Index cards, writing utensils

Procedure:

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- Each Group Member (GM) writes one open-ended question on the front of one index card about the assigned reading. The questions should be higher-order, but not evaluative.
- Each GM will talk to every other GM, asking their questions to each other. GMs will reflect on the answers to each question, and write interesting and unique responses on the back of the index card.
- When every question has been asked and answered, the group will come together as a whole. *Coordinator* will lead whole group discussions on concluding or prevailing thoughts, discoveries and revelations.
- *Notetaker* records conclusions in group journal.

EXPENSE ACCOUNT:

Set up: Each person in the group gets 3 tokens (pennies are easy to use).

Procedure:

- Coordinator explains activity and begins with an open-ended question about the assigned reading.
- Each time someone speaks, they put a token in the center of the table.
- If they don't have any tokens left, they can't speak. When everyone is out of tokens, everyone can retrieve their tokens and start the process over (with the same or new question).
- *Notetaker* records conclusions in group journal.

AFFINITY MAP

Set up: chart paper, Post-its for everyone, writing utensils

Procedure:

- Coordinator begins with asking an open-ended analytic question that asks for defining elements of something, or that has many answers and thereby provides many points of entry for deepening a conversation.
- Participants write one idea in response per post-it note. Instruct them to work silently on their own.
- Then, in silence, put all post-it notes on the chart paper.
- Organizing: Reminding participants to remain silent, have them organize ideas by "natural" categories. Directions might sound like this: "Which ideas go together? As long as you do not talk, feel free to move any post-it note to any place. Move yours, and those of others, and feel free to do this. Do not be offended if someone moves yours to a place that you think it does not belong, just move it to where you think it does belong – but do this all in silence."
- Once groups have settled on an organization method, ask them to converse about the categories and come up with a name for each one.
- Debrief, and have an open discussion using open-ended questions such as: What do you notice? Were there any surprises? What do you not see that you think it missing? Were there any surprises?

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Appendix B: Creating Synergy Through Group Norming

Answer the questions below to jumpstart your thinking about useful team norms that will bolster collaboration and productivity.

List five behaviors you value in others during team meetings.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List five behaviors that are counterproductive during team meetings.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now that you've considered the positive and negative behaviors that impact collaboration and productivity, you can begin to create your team norms by working through the categories below. Your group may choose to select some of the norms suggested and/or create their own in the space provided.

What procedures will govern meeting attendance?

- Each team member will commit to participate actively for the entire school year.
- All members will arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting.
- All members will refrain from scheduling other activities during meeting time.
- We will start and end on time.

What procedures will govern how we talk together?

- All members will join in the team's discussion.
- Each member will listen attentively as others speak.
- Our conversations will reflect our respect for and acceptance of one another.
- We will disagree with ideas, not individuals.
- We will keep our conversations confidential.

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What attitudes and behaviors do you expect from team members?

- All team members will come prepared.*
- Team members will be "fully present", both mentally and physically.*
- Members will refrain from working on other things during the meeting.*
- Team members will maintain a positive attitude toward the work to be done.*

What rules will govern decision making?

- We will reach decisions by consensus.*
- Conflicts and differences of opinion will be handled professionally and respectfully.*

What other expectations do we have for team members?

- We will rotate the group coordinator role.*
- Meeting time will be cell phone free.*

By signing below, we agree to hold each other accountable for adhering to these group norms

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Appendix C: Book Study During Reading Guide

Name: _____

Learner's Reflection Guide

Book Title:

What I learned	Chapter #	How I can use it	Result	Modification?

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Book Discussion Guide

Date: _____

Chapter (Number & Title): _____

Prior to the discussion:

What new idea(s) did you discover in your reading?

What questions would you like to ask the group about the reading?

1) _____

2) _____

During the discussion:

What are the key points being made by group members during the discussion?

What new learning about *instruction* did you take away from this discussion?

After the discussion (Now What):

What new knowledge or skill will you “practice” as a result of the reading/discussion?