



Book Study Group FAQ's

Why should I start or join a book study group?

Book study groups promote conversations among teachers and school staff that will lead to the application of new ideas in classrooms and improvement of existing skills. It is a great way to focus on issues related to school change and also helps to build community in schools. Some districts allow teachers to use book study groups to earn Professional Learning Units (PLUs).

How do I start a book study group?

To start, seek members from grade-level team members, subject-area groups, and departments. Participation should always be voluntary and membership inclusive. It is also a good idea to seek out the support of your principal, who may be able to help your group with determining a time and location, earning PLUs, or support for refreshments or book purchases.

Decide a meeting schedule, meeting place, the length of the book to read, and what will happen after the book is read. (Will the group disband after the book is read, continue to meet to discuss applications, or read other books?)

It is recommended that meetings last no more than one hour and are held at a consistent time and place. Meeting twice a month keeps ideas of the books present in the minds of teachers without becoming an overwhelming commitment. Finally, it is very important to have a responsible facilitator to remind group members of meetings, keep the group on task, and help run meetings.

How do I choose a book?

Book study groups should have a clear objective for reading a particular book. For example, a group of teachers interested in differentiated instruction may suggest books related to that topic, and then decide which book(s) to read.

What happens during a book study group meeting?

Conversations are at the heart of the book study group. Members share insights, ask questions of the text and each other, and learn from the perspectives of other members. Be sure to discuss the ideas that can be applied directly in the classroom, the potential obstacles to implementation, and what can be done to overcome these obstacles. Journaling can also be used as a powerful learning tool along with a book study. Again, it is very important to have a facilitator to focus discussion and manage meetings.

What happens after we finish the book?

The group should evaluate the book, and members should ask themselves, “So what do we do with the information we have learned from this book?” Think about what types of follow-ups are needed to implement changes in practice and to support study group members. Also plan to examine the impact of these changes. Some groups choose to continue meeting after having read the book to discuss how it has changed their instructional practices. Other groups may choose to continue to meet and read more books on the topic.

If the group decides the book is of value, it may recommend the book to other study groups or make copies available to other faculty through the school library.

What is the role of the principal in book study groups?

The principal plays a key role in championing book study groups. S/he can help support book study groups by finding time during the day for groups to meet or even use faculty meeting time for groups. Principals can also promote study groups by asking members to present their book at a faculty meeting and encourage them to share their insights.

Other creative ways to promote book groups are to work with parent groups to provide faculty with bookstore gift certificates as presents, review books in faculty newsletters, provide refreshment for study group meetings, or designate a faculty reading area in the school’s media center.

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