STUDY GUIDE

In the late 1990s Donald Graves (2001) set out to find the answer to a question: What gives teachers the energy to teach? About that same time, Sonia Nieto (2003) posed a similar question: What keeps teachers going in spite of everything? Both found that collaboration makes a difference for teachers and for students. Working with other adults energizes teachers, providing the fuel to keep going. This study guide is based on what Nieto, Graves, and countless other educators know: collaboration can create a vibrant learning environment that motivates educators and keeps them engaged in our profession.

Even though we know that many readers will read our book in a solitary manner, we hope that there will be others who will read with colleagues in order to explore our framework and its connection to their daily teaching lives. We hope that the conversation will be rich and stimulating and that the net effect will be seen in the classroom. The purpose of this study guide is to provide ideas for ways that the study group might progress and to offer thoughts about the role of facilitation.

The facilitator can either make or break the group. If there is no facilitator or if the facilitation is too laissez-fair, a group can go adrift and conversation devolve into the swapping of stories about the day and complaints about students. On the other hand, if the facilitator is too heavy handed, participants may avoid the difficult conversations that often emerge when teachers reflect on the challenges they face day in and day out.

It takes effective facilitation to keep the study group going in a productive manner. Our belief is that the facilitator's primary task is to keep the group motivated and engaged as they read this book. In order to do that, we offer the following tips.

Tip 1: Agreements matter.

Members of a group need to decide how they will learn and grow together. Common issues, such as promptness, need to be tackled at the onset. The group needs to consider how airtime will be shared and what to do when someone dominates the discussion.

One way we've started this conversation is by presenting the group with a set of agreements as a starting point. What's important is that the group doesn't just adopt them without in-depth discussion. The group needs to wrestle with the implications of each agreement, determine if the wording is right for them, and figure out if the set is complete.

It's important that the group arrive at their own consensus. Here are the agreements that we often begin with, but rarely does this initial set become the final set of agreements.

1. Be present. This agreement refers to the importance of each person being fully present on intellectual and emotional levels. For this to happen, even cell phones are silenced.
2. Be genuine and respectful. This agreement suggests that we will offer alternative viewpoints when our understanding differs from others. We agree that differences enrich our conversation, presenting insights we may not have considered.
3. Share the airspace. This agreement reminds us that all voices need to be heard and valued. Even though some people process their ideas verbally, this agreement reminds them that they cannot dominate the discussion.
4. Presume positive intention (Garmston and Wellman 1999). This agreement sets an important tone that encourages honest discussion and trust that all participants mean well.
5. Humor is welcome. Humor not only creates a caring atmosphere, but it enhances learning.

Tip 2: Ambiance counts.

Consider where you should meet. Is there an attractive and comfortable setting for the study group to gather? Is there a professional library or a conference room that would work well? Does a teacher live nearby who would be willing to open up her home for the study group? Consider the kind of mood that you want for an in-depth, reflective discussion. Staff developers at our former high school often planned study groups as if they were a High Tea. They would bring in sandwiches, special teas, and cookies. Diane Marino, a staff developer at our school, decorated the room with small twinkly lights from an old Christmas tree. Motivation and engagement applies to the teachers as well; *whatever you do, make this event a special time.*

Tip 3: Consider taking a broad view of perspective participants.

We often think of teachers as the participants of a study group; however, we encourage you to consider all who might be affected by motivation and engagement—or lack of it. Teachers care, but so do students, parents, paraprofessionals, counselors, and administrators.

Consider how these various voices could enhance the discussion of the book. Some of our most energetic study groups have included teachers and students thinking together about educational issues.

Tip 4: A facilitator honors the learning of the group.

Facilitation means the act of making something easy, so a good facilitator makes the conversation of a group easy by keeping the conversation moving, honoring the agenda, and ensuring that all voices are heard. Notice that the facilitator is not an expert, rather a gentle leader who attends to the overall learning of the group. Consider whether or not one person will facilitate each meeting or if the role of facilitator changes each time.

Tip 5: Agendas—and routines—matter.

In the crazy, busy world of teaching, time is a huge issue. Teachers want to know that their time in any kind of professional learning situation is maximized. One of the many roles of the facilitator is to carefully plan each study group gathering. That, of course, means an agenda. But another way to think about this planning is to establish standard routines that participants can count on at each meeting. One routine that we've used is Connections, a short activity that starts each meeting. Since study groups often meet at the end of a teaching day, participants' minds are on the high and low points of the day. The routine of Connections provides a predictable bridge from the teaching day to the professional learning. It also is a routine that invites everyone's voice to join the conversation within the first few minutes. This activity provides a transition from the busyness of teaching into the reflective time of the study group. Typically 10 minutes long, Connections is an opportunity for people to mentally shift gears. The rules for Connections are quite simple:

1. This is a time to talk—or not to talk. If you chose to talk, you can tell a story about the previous evening, explain what's on your mind at this moment, or simply talk about your children's latest antics.
2. Don't speak unless you want to.
3. Listen to what others have to say, but do not respond. This is not a time for a conversation but a time to share—or not share—a thought about your thinking.
4. You may only speak once until everyone in the group has spoken.

5. Silence is fine. You might want to read for a bit, take a minute or two to jot down some thoughts in your journal, or reflect on your day.
6. Our agendas tend to reflect the routines that support us in doing good, collaborative thinking. Here is an agenda we've used often:
   - Connections
   - Follow up: Discussion of what participants tried with their students based on the last discussion.
   - Text-based discussion of the reading. (You might use generic structures, such as those listed on page 159, or specific questions, such as those in the discussion questions on page 160.)
   - Priming the pump: A short discussion or reflection that "primes the pump" for the upcoming reading so that participants think about the big ideas in the chapters ahead.

Tip 5: Determine what works best for the study group: open-ended protocols or text-based questions to guide the discussion.

In our discussion guide on page 160, we suggest questions for each of the chapters; however, the group may decide to use one of the following protocols to guide their discussion:

Save the Last Word for Me: Before the meeting, all participants select a section of the reading (e.g., a phrase, a paragraph, a sentence) that resonates with them. It may resonate because the reader loves the ideas, is confused by them, or disagrees with the text. At the meeting, divide the study group into small groups of four. One person in each group begins by reading the section that resonated for him but does *not* explain why. The rest of the members discuss the section while the first person listens to the discussion but does not participate in it. The goal of the discussion is to explore the ideas and the implications in the section, not to guess why it was selected. After about four to five minutes, the original participant stops the discussion and then gets the last word by explaining why he selected the quote. The conversation now turns to the next person, and the protocol continues until everyone has had an opportunity to have the last word about their selected section.

Final Word: Similar to the Save the Last Word for Me discussion protocol, each person selects a section that resonates for her prior to the meeting. However, the discussion follows a different process: the person reads her quote and explains why she selected it. Then in a "go around" each person in the small group has up to one minute to respond to the explanation either by adding ideas, presenting an alternate viewpoint,

or making a new connection. The "go around" is done in round-robin fashion so that one person begins and the person sitting next to her follows. The original speaker has the final word after listening to everyone.

Four As: Prior to the discussion, everyone reads the chapter and answers each of the following questions of the four As. Of course, the answer is based on the ideas in the reading:

1. **Assume:** What do the writers assume to be true of you as readers?
2. **Agree:** What do you agree with?
3. **Argue:** What do you want to argue with?
3. **Aspire:** What do you aspire to?

The four As become the basis of the discussion.

Tip 6: Celebrate the learning of the group.

From the outset, decide how you're going to regularly celebrate the work of the group. Will this be done collaboratively or will you be solely responsible for planning the celebrations? How will you celebrate at the conclusion of the study group?

Discussion Questions for Each Chapter

The organization of our study guide is based on what we know about the reading process. Before we read, we need to activate background knowledge and set a purpose for the reading. We're calling that *priming the pump* and offer a series of questions intended to get participants ready for the reading.

For the questions specific to each chapter, we hope that the group will feel compelled to return to the text while they combine their own experiences with ours. For most of the chapters, we include an application question, some kind of a probe to urge teachers to take the ideas back to the classroom.

Before the group even begins the book, we encourage you to prime the pump with the following questions:

1. Prior to reading the book, talk about what you hope to gain by reading the book. What are your personal and collective goals?
2. When have you been a clock watcher? What were the conditions of the learning situation?

3. Reflect on a time when you learned something deeply. This learning could have occurred either in or out of school. For instance, you might recall the time you learned a complex algebraic formula that had baffled you or the time when you finally learned how to fly fish.
    a. Tell your story and listen to the story of others.
    b. Find commonalities: what characteristics did these stories share?
    c. Now reflect on a time when you were frustrated in a learning situation. Again, this could be in or out of school.
    d. Tell these stories, and find the commonalities.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Explore the difference between holding and catching. Is the distinction important? Necessary?
2. Whose problem is motivation and engagement? The students? The teacher?
3. How did the notions of competency and control play into your stories about a time when you learned something deeply and a time when learning was frustrating?

Chapter 2: Caring Classroom Community

Priming the pump for Chapter 2: Reflect on your favorite teachers when you were in school. What did those teachers do that made them special? How did they create a sense of community within their classroom?

1. Some teachers believe that taking time to do team building and other social activities is fluff. What do you think? How can building the caring classroom community contribute to learning? How could building classroom community detract from the learning process? The authors argue that building a caring classroom community is an ongoing process, not just a set of activities for the start of the year. Given your teaching situation, why might this be important and necessary?
2. What difference might it make if you were certain that not only do teachers know each other but students know each other well?
3. How will you incorporate the ideas in this chapter in your instruction even if you have a scripted or mandated curriculum? What will you commit to do before you meet again based on this discussion? How can your group collaborate to create caring classroom activities directly related to the curriculum?

Chapter 3: Checking In, Checking Out

Priming the pump for Chapter 3: What are your beliefs about assessment? What role does assessment play in the learning process? In teaching? In grading?

1. What assumptions do the authors make about the connection among assessing, teaching, and learning?
2. How does checking in/out interplay with caring classroom community?
3. What can you do to bring students more into the assessment process?
4. How can you integrate assessment and grading?

Chapter 4: Choice

Priming the pump for Chapter 4: React to this quote about choice:

> As common sense, as well as interest research, tells us, if students are doing the same activity day in and day out, boredom will inevitably set in. It is useful to have a variety of activities throughout the week, month, and school year. In addition, the introduction of novel ideas, content, tasks, and activities may facilitate situational interest. (Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece 2007)

Motivation theories suggest that providing some choice increases motivation. In this case, the focus is on building on individual's personal interest in a particular topic.

Although there is clearly a diversity of personal interests, many students share some interests. When teachers connect the lesson content to personal interests or common interests of the students, it can facilitate attention and situational interest.

1. What makes choice effective as a motivator/engager? Ineffective?
2. How does choice connect to checking in/out and caring classroom community?
3. How can offering choices improve student learning?
4. Look at something you are doing in the near future. With a partner, find entry points to add choice, such as choice of product, process, and content. Try it out and bring back the results. Do this even if you have a mandated or scripted curriculum.

Chapter 5: Collaboration

Priming the pump for Chapter 5: What do you see as the advantages and pitfalls of collaboration? What have you tried that worked? That did not work?

1. Identify several common problems with collaboration among the study group. Review Chapter 5 to find ideas for addressing those problems.
2. Determine which of these levels of collaboration you tend to work in the most, and identify specific steps that you might try to move you up a notch. Use the chapter for ideas for those steps.
    a. Level X: Students almost never collaborate. Instead, discussion is directed toward the teacher or to the whole class.
    b. Level 1: Short, focused opportunities for students to collaborate. The purpose is for students to work with a partner to address a singular goal, such as reflecting on an important point in the lesson or answering a question about the content. An example is pair/share when you ask students to turn to an elbow partner to discuss a specific topic.
    c. Level 2: Collaboration at a deeper level that requires a variety of perspectives. Often collaboration at this level is also short-termed but requires more effort than collaboration at level 1. An example is moving students into triads to solve a problem or to synthesize ideas from several texts.
    d. Level 3: Collaboration that requires students to work in groups for long-term projects or to collaborate over time. This includes students forming coaching teams to solve meaningful and challenging problems. Teacher modeling plays a critical role. Since these groups stay together for awhile, it's important for them to strategically choose group members, set norms, clarify roles, and assess their effectiveness as a group on a regular basis.
3. How does collaboration interweave with classroom community, checking in/checking out, and choice?
4. How will you incorporate the ideas in this chapter in your instruction even if you have a scripted or mandated curriculum? What will you commit to do before you meet again based on our discussion?

Chapter 6: Challenge

Priming the pump for Chapter 6: Analyze an assignment that either did work well with a group of students or did not work well. Begin by determining the level of difficulty of the task: where on Bloom's taxonomy are you asking students to think (knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation)? What scaffolds do you have in place for the academically struggling? What do you have in place to challenge the academically motivated?

1. Respond to this statement: *All* students are motivated by challenge.
2. Discuss the connection between the appropriate level of challenge and the flow experience. When have you experienced this? How do you create the conditions in which flow is likely to occur in your classroom?
3. What's the connection between challenge and kids who are clock watchers?
4. Discuss the Schmoker quote: "Children in the earliest grades will argue with force and passion, will marshal evidence, and will employ subtlety on behalf of their favorite athletes, pop stars, and automobiles. This is the mind—the intellect—in action" (68). How can you bring this into the classroom into your next lesson/unit?
5. How does choice interweave with the other Cs in order to impact motivation and engagement?
6. How will you incorporate the ideas in this chapter in your instruction even if you have a scripted or mandated curriculum? What will you commit to do before you meet again based on our discussion?

Chapter 7: Celebration

Priming the pump for Chapter 7: Is there time to celebrate students' successes in learning? Defend your position.

If we were to create a culture of celebration within the school community, what difference would it make?

1. Effective celebrations begin with planning backwards. Why take the time to carefully plan for celebrations of learning?
2. How do celebrations enhance the six Cs framework?
3. Celebrations come in many forms; discuss the multiple approaches to celebrating learning.
4. For one class, track your celebrations and reflect on what difference those celebrations make for student motivation and engagement.

Chapter 8: Putting It All Together

Priming the pump for Chapter 8: Is it realistic to incorporate all six Cs in an intentional manner throughout the year? What would you need to do to make this happen?

1. In triads, answer these questions:
   - If you were to take out one of the Cs which one would most impact motivation and engagement?
   - Now that you've the finished the book, how would you answer this question: So what?
2. As you read the methods employed by these teachers, what would you have done differently? The same?
3. How could your study group support each other as you try to implement the six Cs?

Works Cited

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