



## **Book Group in a Bag**

### **Practical Steps to Creating Book Study Groups**

#### **Why do a book study?**

A book study is about a conversation; a conversation intended to stretch thinking and influence practice. Book studies are an effective form of professional development and can be used by educators at all levels for their personal and professional growth.

#### **What steps should be considered before planning a book study group?**

According to Diane Sweeny in *Learning All the Way*, book study groups are most effective when they are:

- Are voluntary;
- Involve participants in the decision-making process regarding content and group norms;
- Reflect regularly on whether the time spent has been productive;
- Include rituals and celebrations;
- Determine norms and procedures as a group;
- Avoid assuming certain participants are experts (all are here to learn); and
- Consider the book study group a time for learning and reflective participation.

#### **How should the group set up the book study?**

- Establish a good physical environment
- Select a facilitator for each meeting
- Use questions in the facilitator's guide to start the discussion
- Create a schedule with timelines.
- Determine goal and objectives. It might be helpful to have some initial goals and objectives and present them to the group. Asking the participants for goals and objectives, again, will draw them into the process.
- Relax, keep it positive
- Snacks and other incentives are always helpful and set the tone for an enjoyable experience.

#### **Other questions to consider:**

- Who will facilitate the meetings? Will the facilitator role be rotated between participants?
- How will the group respect and gain input from people with differing opinions or people who are not actively participating?
- How will PDC points be awarded for this process? The group should keep in mind that participants could work on application and impact level by keeping journals of the process, redesigning data systems, etc.



## **Book Group in a Bag: Facilitator's Guide**

### **Available for Checkout**

*A Principal's Guide – Implementing Response to Intervention (2008)*. Hall, S. L. Corwin Press: California.

### **Book Description**

#### **Helpful Hints**

In order to facilitate the study group most effectively, a team may want to consider doing the following:

- Using technology to support the book study group. Buildings and districts across Kansas have utilized technology including hot links to make the materials more accessible for teachers. Technology will also allow greater participation to time-strapped staff.
- The text contains short, easy to read chapters that can be used during faculty meetings to engage all staff in discourse about RTI.
- Rotate facilitation of the group. In this way, more people will take ownership of the process. *(Please see the Practical Steps to Creating Book Study Groups" document enclosed in this packet.)*

#### **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 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.

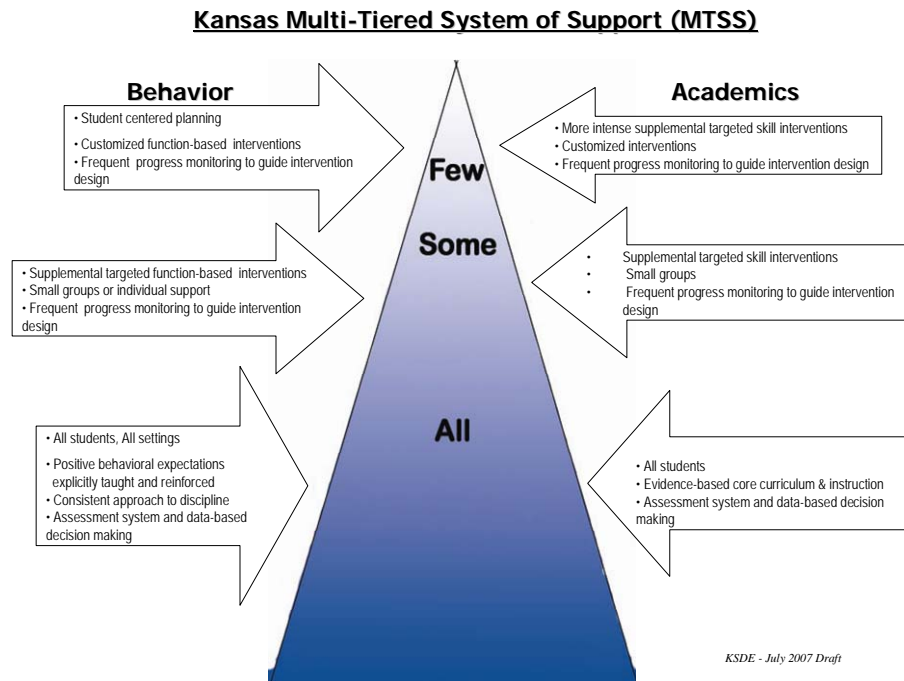
A book study becomes a powerful tool that these communities can use to engage in powerful, professional discourse. A building or existing PLC or CoP may want to add a book study as another tool to aid in professional development. When your school or team begins planning their book study, keep the above questions in mind as a way to frame all discussions around student learning and school improvement.

### **Framing the Context of Discussion within the Kansas Multi-tiered System of Support**

These book studies were created from information and resources gathered by pilot sites who served as early implementers of a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) in Kansas. These schools and districts recommended several books that pertain to the practices embodied by MTSS. In response to the growing demand for more information about MTSS and what it looks like in Kansas, Project SPOT has developed a series of Book Groups in a Bag. Each book bag can be checked out or purchased. For a list of facilitated Book Group in a Bag titles, please see [www.Projectspot.org](http://www.Projectspot.org).

The facilitator’s guide has been created to frame learning and discussions specifically within a MTSS framework. MTSS is a coherent continuum of evidence based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each Kansas student to achieve high standards.

Graphically, MTSS looks like this:



The core beliefs underpinning MTSS include:

- Responsibility and leadership are critical at all levels for planning, implementing, and evaluating
- Change at all levels must be intentional, coherent, and dynamic
- Intentional design and redesign of resources are matched to student needs
- An empowering culture creates collective responsibility for student success
- Academic and behavioral performance data are used to inform instructional decisions
- Intervening at the earliest identification of need is necessary for student success (PreK-12)
- Reciprocity between policy and practice is based on research and outcomes
- Collaboration among educators, families and community members is the foundation to effective problem-solving and instructional decision-making.

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The following section contains discussion questions broken out by chapter. These questions are designed to facilitate thinking and discussion around *A Principal's Guide – Implementing Response to Intervention*.

## **Lincoln Elementary School Case Study & Chapter 1: Response to Intervention**

### **Helpful Hints**

At the first book group meeting have everyone brainstorm questions they have about Response to Intervention (RtI). Record the questions and post at each meeting so that as the group goes through the book they can begin to see what questions are being answered and what questions will need to be researched further.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Share your thoughts about the Lincoln Elementary School Case Study.
2. Are there similarities between how Lincoln Elementary uses data and how you use data?
3. Teachers have been collecting data for years to report on grade cards. How does the data collection and use of the data described in the case study differ from the typical use of data at your school?
4. Consider the case study and Chapter 1. On page 19 it is noted that there may be some who resist RTI. Have a discussion about the changes. How significant would they be in your school or classroom? Could you consider this an evolution of education rather than a revolution?
5. How is your current reading program like or unlike what was described? Do you have a basal or are you using a balanced literacy approach? Does your program cover the five critical components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension)?
6. What evaluation model does your local education agency or district use for special education services?
7. What have been your experiences with the discrepancy formula and evaluations? Have the evaluations lead to instructional recommendations for the classroom teacher, regardless of the placement decision?
8. How do the evaluations in your district address the three critical elements indicated: insufficient progress, level of performance, and instructional needs?
9. Discuss the possibility of maintaining fidelity to the core program while differentiating? Does your program provide the necessary materials to do this?

## Chapter 2: Setting the Stage for RTI

### Helpful Hints

This chapter describes various reasons for implementing RTI and underscores how important the principal, as the instructional leader, is for success. During discussion of this chapter, remember to keep focused on the fact that improving schools to have better or maintain positive results for children is really the reason for this change.

### Discussion Questions

1. “It is wise to anticipate that there will be reluctant or resistant teachers (pg. 36).” Think back upon your experiences to other initiatives and discuss the factors that contributed to their success or failure.
2. How can a principal be a good instructional leader but also allow teachers professional freedom, individuality, and flexibility in the classroom?
3. How would you phase in RTI?
4. What are some things that might already be in place that will contribute to the RTI initiative? What are some areas that will have to be revisited?
5. What would work in your school to address the issue of reliability of the screening measures?
6. Do the current assessments used meet the basic criteria to be considered “good screening assessment” (effective and accurate in identifying the right students, take little time to assess, and include progress monitoring)?
7. What changes will have to be made to get the data to teachers in a timely manner and in a format that is easy to understand?

## Chapter 3: Delivering Intervention Instruction

### Helpful Hints

Before reading the chapter it would be helpful to talk about your current system and how interventions are delivered to students keeping the following questions in mind.

- Which students are served?
- How do you figure out who they are?
- How do you know what intervention/instruction they need?
- How is progress monitored?
- How are groups determined?
- How are parents informed?
- What if the interventions are or aren't successful?
- Others...

### Discussion Questions

1. Consider the two important factors identified at the beginning of the chapter (familiarity / experience with teaching small groups and using data to guide instruction). Discuss what possible staff development teachers may need related to these two issues. What is their current comfort level in these areas?
2. Discuss the benefits of having classroom teachers teach intervention groups. Will this be a change for your school?
3. Middle School: Is the current schedule conducive to creating an intervention block? What would need to change to make it possible?
4. Have teachers share ways that they've implemented centers with success. What were some effective behavioral management systems used during centers?
5. The author has repeatedly emphasized that "skill" groups are not the same as "ability" groups. How will you explain this to parents? Some teachers may need new language in order to convey this difference.
6. Many schools are using a balanced literacy approach to reading instruction where there are not set lessons created by an outside source. If you are in a school using such a program, have a discussion about how the five critical reading areas are being taught in an integrated and systematic way. Is there consistency across classrooms and grade levels?
7. What support would be necessary for more data-based decision-making?

8. What staff development will be needed in order to analyze data at the level the book outlined? Do you already have individuals in the building that are skilled or interested in this?
9. Discuss ways that data analysis can be built into the schedule.
10. How will you communicate your efforts to parents?

## Chapter 4: Using Progress Monitoring Data

### Helpful Hints

This chapter indicates that progress monitoring is often one of the first elements of RTI that is resisted because it can seem daunting to be collecting data so frequently. However, the author says, “It is the heart of RTI.” Keep this in mind as you read the chapter and grapple with how to work “smarter” not “harder.”

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the issue of time. How can what is done during the school day be transformed into what is described in the chapter?
2. Review the charts in the Sample Administrative RTI Data Notebook. Discuss how charts such as this would improve communication about performance, both for individual students and the school as a whole.
3. Most educators are familiar with the phrases of “he just needs more time” or “she’s a slow learner” or “the light bulb will eventually go on.” The notion of “closing the gap” for all students may be a paradigm shift for many educators. What are some ways to assist educators in thinking this way and overcoming long held beliefs about children and the power of instruction?
4. What type of data do you currently collect and report regarding a student’s performance in a reading intervention? How is what is described different?
5. If a child continues to struggle in an intervention, how do you currently respond and intensify the instruction? How is what is described in the chapter different?
6. What structures are already in place that would facilitate the type of data meetings that were described? What would need to change?
7. Not all schools have an RTI Coordinator, how can a principal serve the dual, and possibly conflicting, roles of supervisor and supportive instructional coach?

## Chapter 5: Effective Models of Professional Development

### Helpful Hints

This chapter is clear and concise. During discussion of staff development it is often easy to become overwhelmed and overly focused on the aspect of time. Keeping the discussion positive and solution focused will be important and enable the group to come up with new ways of looking at staff development.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is your current model of staff development?
2. What would need to change in order to develop ongoing, focused, and differentiated staff development?
3. What have been some effective ways that you've dealt with resistant or reluctant staff members in the past?

## Chapter 6: What the Future Holds for RTI

### Helpful Hints

Although many of the critical elements of RTI have been around for years, the integration and application of the processes at the system level is a paradigm shift for many public educators. This chapter highlights many of the questions that are yet to be answered.

### Discussion Questions

1. Integrating research and policy to impact practice is a difficult and complicated task and often the true intentions of an initiative are lost in the process. For example, many of the intentions of IDEA are often lost in the rigid application of procedures making the results merely meaningless symbols and ceremonies. The author highlights this as she mentions the notions of “prescriptive” versus “descriptive.” How can this trap be avoided with RTI?
2. Discuss the benefits and limitations of both packaged reading programs and teacher created materials?
3. Review the list of questions you created at the beginning of the book study. What questions have or have not been answered?
4. What are your next steps?



## Book Study Group in a Bag

### 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?
2. How can we improve this experience?
3. Would you recommend this to other groups?