



## **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**

*I Read It, but I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers* (2000). Cris Tovani  
Portland, Maine: Stenhouse.

### **Book Description**

*I Read It, but I Don't Get It* is an insightful, practical guide into your students' minds. From here, Tovani takes you into the theory behind the most strategic thinking strategies and leaves you with practical tips to employing these strategies in your classroom. Tovani presents her information in an anecdotal, easy to read style targeting the variety of students you find in your classroom. She provides the information to take these strategies straight to your classroom and implement them with ease.

### **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.
- Always provide a time or forum for teachers to respond to what speaks to them.
- 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.

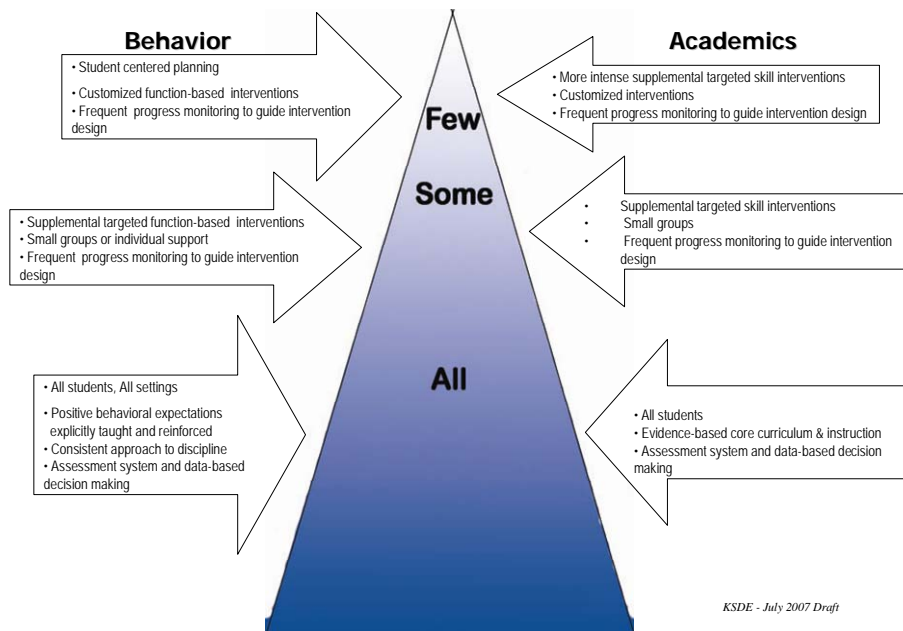
### **Framing the Context of Discussion within the Kansas Multi-tiered System of Support**

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:

## Kansas Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)



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 *I Read It, but I Don't Get It: Comprehensions Strategies for Adolescent Readers*.

## **Part 1: Setting the Stage**

### **Chapter 1: Fake Reading**

#### **Overview**

Tovani doesn't waste any time getting to the soul of students. She relays the feelings and strategies of her students and of herself as a struggling reader. Tovani is quick to dispel the myth that fluent reading equals comprehension.

#### **Helpful Hints**

While reading this chapter, think about how you would have these candid conversations with your students.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Make a chart of the traits of effective and ineffective readers. Which traits do we reinforce in the classroom and how?
2. What is fake reading? Discuss the possibilities for students to fake read in your class.
3. Tovani is successful at getting her students to open up to her right from the beginning. How does she do this? Why is this so important?

## **Chapter 2: The Realities of Reading**

### **Overview**

In this chapter, Tovani characterizes two different kinds of struggling readers: resistive readers and word callers. She then dives into the research and theory behind teaching strategic thinking while reading.

### **Helpful Hints**

As you read this chapter, try to empathize with your students by thinking about the kind of reader you were at different times in your past. Or, think about how you read various types of text from a novel, to the newspaper, to legal documents, to governmental documents such as and IRS form.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the danger in feeding students enough information to get by without reading. What are the short term and long term benefits and hazards for the reader?
2. Take some time to discuss who your word callers might be? Why are these students specifically in big danger?
3. Discuss Tovani's opinion about prescriptive reading programs.
4. What is the K-12 reading instruction that takes place in your district? Is it comprehensive and complete or is there a point of breakdown?

## **Part 2: In Support of Strategic Reading**

### **Chapter 3: Purposes for Reading: Access Tools**

#### **Overview**

This chapter introduced the first reading strategy, setting a purpose. Tovani models how she introduces this to her students. In this chapter, she introduces the teaching strategies of thinking aloud, marking the text, and double-entry diaries, comprehension constructors and modeling.

#### **Helpful Hints**

While reading, think about your current use of each of the teaching strategies.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Have a discussion that highlights the wide variety of reading you do everyday and how the purposes of that reading vary. How does the purpose effect how you read?
2. Thinking aloud is an important component of reading instruction. Talk about your experience and comfort level with this strategy. What kind of preparation would be necessary to make this strategy successful?
3. Create a guide to help differentiate marking the text, double-entry diaries, and comprehension constructors. Identify to the purpose of each strategy and the best times in instruction to implement them.

## **Chapter 4: Conversations with Cantos: Tracking Confusion to Its Source**

### **Overview**

Chapter 4 introduces the notion of readers monitoring their reading. This is about students understanding their own thinking and recognizing when they are confused. Tovani first describes how a reader knows if he or she is confused, then she describes the voices to listen to in a reader's head.

### **Helpful Hint**

As you read this chapter, think about what your students tell you about the reading assignments they complete for class. Think about the teaching moment you could have with them with the information you gain in this chapter.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss how you could teach the six signals students should look for to identify confusion.
2. Discuss the voices in your head as you read. This can be difficult to monitor for an accomplished reader. You may want to have a fairly difficult piece of text on hand to practice noticing what those voices are saying to help you comprehend.
3. Create a list of ways we could teach readers to monitor their thinking. Which ones would you implement, why or why not? Be sure to keep in mind the various levels of students in your classroom.

## **Chapter 5: Fix It!**

### **Overview**

Now that students are listening to voices and notice when they don't comprehend, Tovani provides us with multiple fix-up strategies they can employ to help them make sense of the text.

### **Helpful Hints**

As you read, keep in mind, those student who come into class chiming, "I read it, but I don't remember it."

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Tovani lists nine strategies to fix comprehension. Take some time to discuss these, how to teach them, and what supports your students may need in remembering to use them.
2. How could you use these strategies to meet the variety of needs in your classroom?

## **Chapter 6: Connecting the New to the Known**

### **Overview**

In chapter 6, Tovani introduces the importance of background knowledge and the importance in students identifying it and connecting new information to it.

### **Helpful Hints**

As Tovani illustrates getting her students to make connections, take note of the instructional strategies she employs in doing so.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Some of our students are very good accessing background knowledge and others simply seem as if they haven't had any life experience or schooling, despite what we know. Discuss ways to help these struggling students connect their life experiences and what they are learning in all of their classes.
2. Making connections can have huge benefits in reading, but as Tovani states, some students will make very basic connections. What are some ways we can help these students dive a little deeper.

## Chapter 7: What Do You Wonder?

### Overview

Chapter 7 introduces the strategy of asking questions while reading. Tovani encourages teachers to make time and transfer the power to the students, let them be curious, let them ask. As secondary students are often hesitant to ask questions and seem to have all curiosity squashed out them, Tovani provides a simple activity to begin that dialogue.

### Helpful Hints

Before you read, do a survey in your head about how often you ask your students to generate questions. Think about the kinds of questions you get, are you satisfied with them? What have you done to ensure good questioning? What is your reaction when you have a student pose a really thought provoking question?

### Discussion Questions

1. On page 93, Tovani states, “Teachers have a choice. We can choose to cover the curriculum or we can teach our students to inquire.” Discuss this statement. Is it really a choice we can make or is made for us? Do we have to choose between the two?
2. Discuss the pro’s and con’s of leading an inquiry based classroom. (Be cautious in making assumptions in anticipating results of instruction).
3. Discuss how you could create an environment of inquiry in your classroom.
4. How would you teach and scaffold questioning for the struggling student?

## **Chapter 8: Outlandish Responses: Taking Inferences Too Far**

### **Overview**

In this chapter Tovani provides tools for dealing with students whose responses are quite out of what we would expect. She defines what an inference is and suggests ways for students practice making inferences.

### **Helpful Hints**

Think about those students who always remind you it is an opinion question so they can't be wrong.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the difference between telling a student to infer and showing a student how to infer.
2. On page 102, Tovani states, "Sometimes we ask our students to be proficient at a task before they have had any practice." Discuss when this happens, why, and what needs to be done to remedy it. Also consider which level of students this affects the most.
3. Take some time to talk about how setting a purpose, visualizing, making connections, asking questions, and making inferences all interact to assist in comprehension.

## Chapter 9: What's the Plan?

### Overview

The final chapter sums up the big ideas of teaching reading and reminds the readers how complex comprehension is. Tovani provides two examples of how she intertwines reading with content classes.

### Helpful Hints

As you read, be thinking about how you will organize your reading instruction.

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the roles of the reading teacher and of the content teachers in teaching reading. Who is responsible for what? (You may choose to refer to the MTSS model)
2. Discuss the importance of content reading for struggling learners.
3. Don't forget our students on the upper end of the spectrum. What kinds of reading instruction might they need?
4. Comprehension instruction is messy. Discuss how you can handle some of the messiness. For example:
  - a. Students reading different styles of texts
  - b. The overlapping nature of reading strategies
  - c. Instruction on the level of the individual student



## 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 of *I Read It, but I Don't Get It*? Why or why not?
2. How can we improve this experience?
3. Would you recommend this to other groups?