



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

Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention. (2007) Fletcher, J.M., Lyon, R.G., Fuchs, L.S., & Barnes, M.A.. New York: Guilford Press.

Book Description

Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention is a selection of research in the area of learning disabilities. The book provides a conceptual framework for assessment that includes Response to Instruction, but is also grounded in an understanding of the relationship between and the impact of core cognitive processes, neurobiology, behavioral/psychosocial factors, and the environment. The book facilitates an understanding of how all of these factors contribute to a child's academic achievement. This book would not be considered *light* and it is necessary that the reader have prior knowledge of the assessment of learning disabilities.

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.

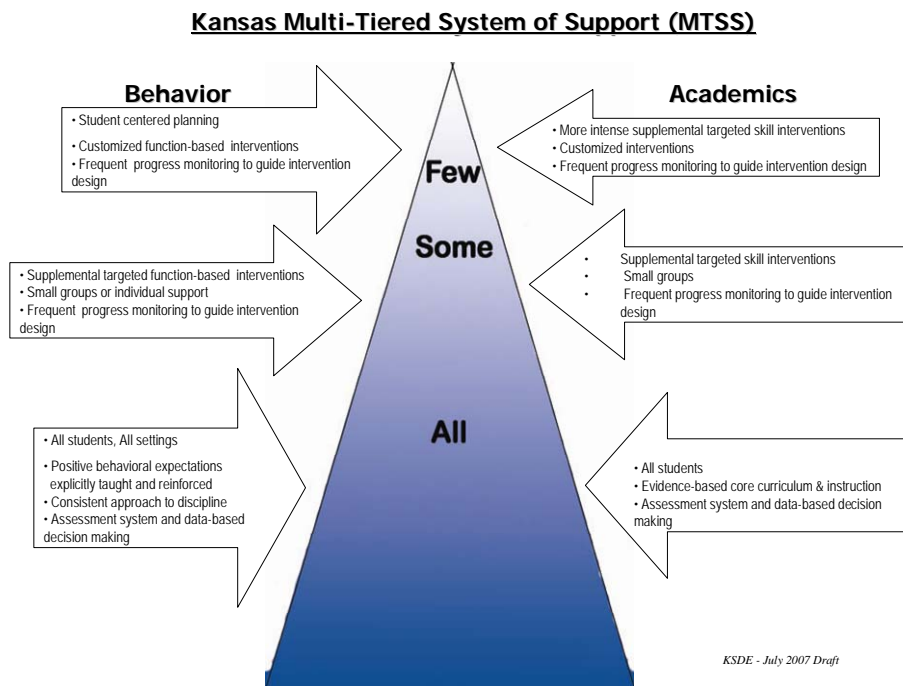
A book study becomes a powerful tool that these communities can use to engage in powerful, professional discourse. A building or existing PLC or CoP may want to add a book study as another tool to aid in professional development. When your school or team begins planning their book study, keep the above 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.

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.

KSDE-July 2007, Draft

The following section contains discussion questions broken out by chapter. These questions are designed to facilitate thinking and discussion around *Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention*.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This chapter is a general overview of the format of the book that also sets up the conceptual model for the assessment of learning disabilities.

Helpful Hints

It might be beneficial for the first day of the book study to read chapter one during the time allotted and discuss learning disabilities and what the participants currently know about it. It will be necessary to take time to understand the conceptual model provided. It would be very helpful to have that model printed on a separate piece of paper for participants to take notes on as it is discussed.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the most common misconceptions about children with learning disabilities?
2. Discuss the visual model provided and make sure that everyone has a common understanding of it.
3. What do our current assessment practices look like and entail?

Chapter 2: History of the Field

Overview

This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of the evaluation of individual differences and the concept of a learning disability.

Helpful Hints

This chapter is short enough to be done with Chapter 1. To contextualize the information in this chapter it might be helpful to also have, for the participants, the local and/or state definition of learning disability. It might also be helpful for the facilitator of the group to create a timeline of the history.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the evolution of the term learning disability as presented in the chapter.
2. Depending on the age and years of service in education, discuss experiences and observations participants may have had as the field has emerged.
3. How are the local/state definitions similar to what is provided in the chapter?

Chapter 3: Classification, Definition, and Identification of Learning Disabilities

Overview

Chapter 3 is an overview of the various models of identifying learning disabilities. The chapter begins with defining the general purpose of a classification system in both research and practice as well as why learning disabilities are so difficult to define. The chapter then describes the various models of classification systems including the validity and reliability of each system.

Helpful Hint

From this point forward, the chapters provide a fairly detailed link between research and practice and provide a significant amount of content. Before launching into each chapter, it might be helpful to facilitate discussion around the current practices of the group and perhaps provide an outline for the participants to enable them to continually be comparing the information provided in the book to local practices and state policy.

Discussion Questions

1. Have a discussion about the local model and which category it fits with.
 - Aptitude – Achievement Discrepancy Model
 - Low Achievement Models
 - Intraindividual Differences Model
 - RTI Models
 - The Integrated Model
2. How do the validity and reliability of each model compare to each other? Use a table similar to the one below to organize the discussion.

Model	Validity	Reliability
Aptitude-Achievement Discrepancy		
Low Achievement		
Intraindividual Differences		
RTI		
Integrated		

3. Exclusionary Factors have been a required part of an initial evaluation for special education for a long time, but have often been a mere check box rather than a critical element of the evaluation. How does the local evaluation address this component of an initial evaluation?

4. Prereferral and/or general education interventions have been a part of IDEA for more than a decade, however, similar to the exclusionary factors, have been more of a checkbox rather than a dynamic element of the evaluation. Bring an example of a local initial evaluation and consider how the current practices address general education interventions.
5. How could an evaluation of the adequacy of instruction be done in a sensitive but authentic manner?

Chapter 4: Assessment of Learning Disabilities

Overview

Chapter 4 provides more information about the hybrid model of identification the authors proposed in Chapter 3. The model consists of monitoring progress, evaluating interventions, identifying inadequate response, evaluating achievement domains (reading, writing, etc.), and assessing contextual factors and related conditions.

Helpful Hints

From this point forward, the chapters provide a fairly detailed link between research and practice and provide a significant amount of content. Before launching into each chapter, it might be helpful to facilitate discussion around the current practices of the group and perhaps provide an outline for the participants to enable them to continually be comparing the information provided in the book to local practices and state policy. It may also be helpful to have on hand during discussion, a copy of the Kansas Special Education Process Handbook to reference.

Chapter Outline

- **Test and Treat Versus Treat and Test**
- **Heterogeneity of LDs**
- **Evaluating LDs**
 - Monitoring Progress
 - Evaluating Interventions
 - Identifying Inadequate Response
 - Evaluating Achievement Domains
 - Word Recognition
 - Reading Fluency
 - Reading Comprehension
 - Mathematics
 - Written Comprehension
 - Achievement Patterns
 - Assessing Contextual Factors and Related Conditions
- **Conclusions**

Discussion Questions

1. Review a local evaluation in comparison to what was described in the chapter and discuss the similarities and differences.
2. What pros and cons were given regarding the use of standardized assessment?

3. Below is an excerpt from the July 2000 Kansas Special Education Process Handbook Chapter 3. Does it appear that the recommended procedures in Kansas allow educators to conduct evaluations similar to what was described in the chapter?

7-2000 p 3-1 . The use of a problem-solving process during screening or general education intervention assists teams in making decisions about referrals for initial evaluation by: (1) documenting a description of the presenting behavior of concern; (2) collecting data related to the presenting concern; (3) documenting the formation and implementation of interventions designed to address the behavior of concern; and (4) documenting the effectiveness of the interventions. An appraisal of the effectiveness of the interventions, including the interventions that worked for the child, and the degree to which the interventions require substantial resources are important to consider when deciding whether a child should be referred for possible special education services, and are essential in planning and conducting the initial evaluation after a referral has been made.

The initial evaluation is also based on the use of a problem-solving model, and this chapter addresses initial evaluation from that perspective. Figure 3-1 at the beginning of this chapter is a flow chart that identifies the basic steps in the initial evaluation process. An initial evaluation involves the use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information to assist in determining if the child is eligible for special education, which is twofold: (1) to determine if the child has an exceptionality (disability or giftedness); and (2) by reason thereof, has a need for special education and related services. The use of a problem-solving model to accomplish this shifts the focus of the initial evaluation to providing a solution (not just access to services) by assessing the concern identified to determine if the child is eligible and to develop an educational plan whether the child is found eligible or not. New laws and regulations focus the school's attention on what the student needs to enable him or her to learn effectively and to participate and progress in the general curriculum.

4. Are and/or how could the results of progress monitoring be incorporated into and or summarized in an eligibility report?
5. What data are currently collected for progress monitoring and how frequently are they reviewed by grade level teams, classroom teachers, or special education teachers?
6. Discuss how interventions and contextual factors are being evaluated? How can regular education and special education partner to accomplish this component?

Chapter 5: Reading Disabilities

Word Recognition

Overview

Chapter 5 examines various factors related to word level reading disabilities and provides an explanation of the link with dyslexia. Below is an outline of the many sections in this chapter.

Helpful Hints

Chapter 5 is a long, complex, and technically written chapter. Allow additional time for the participants to get through the material. It may also be helpful to jigsaw the chapter.

1) Academic Skill Deficits

- a) Word Recognition
- b) Spelling

2) Core Cognitive Processes

- a) Phonological Awareness
- b) Other Cognitive Processes
- c) Other Unitary Processes
 - i) Rapid Naming
 - ii) Phonological Memory
 - iii) A Causal Link?
 - iv) Other Unitary Processes
 - (1) Visual Modality
 - (2) Auditory Modality
 - v) Other Hypotheses
 - (1) Cerebellar Hypothesis
 - (2) Peripheral Vision Hypothesis
- d) Subtypes of Dyslexia
 - i) Surface versus Phonological Dyslexia
 - ii) Empirical Subtyping
- e) A Definition of Dyslexia

3) Epidemiology

- a) Prevalence
- b) Gender Ratio

4) Developmental Course

5) Neurobiological Factors

- a) Brain Structure
 - i) Postmortem Studies
 - ii) Anatomical MRI Studies
- b) Brain Function
 - i) Imaging Modalities
 - ii) Overview of Neural Correlates of WLRD

- (1) PET Studies
- (2) fMRI Studies
- (3) MSI Studies
- iii) Interventions: Imaging Studies
- c) Genetic Factors
 - i) Family Aggregation
 - ii) Twin Studies
 - iii) Linkage Studies

6) Summary: From Academic Skill Deficits to Neurobiological Factors

7) Word Recognition Interventions

- a) Empirical Synthesis
- b) Prevention of Reading Disabilities
 - i) Classroom Studies
 - (1) Direct Instruction
 - (2) Foorman and Colleagues
 - (3) Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies
 - ii) Tutorial Studies
 - (1) Reading Recovery
 - (2) Other Tutorial Studies
 - iii) Multitiered Intervention Studies
 - iv) Summary: Prevention Studies
- c) Reading Remediation Studies
 - i) Empirical Synthesis
 - ii) Multisensory Methods
 - iii) Lovett and Colleagues
 - iv) Morris, Lovett, and Wolf
 - v) Olson and Colleagues
 - vi) Blachman and Colleagues
 - vii) Torgesen and Colleagues
 - viii) Berninger and Colleagues
 - ix) Summary: Remedial Studies

8) Conclusions

Discussion Questions

1. If the chapter was jig sawed, have each group provide a brief summary of the portion that was read.
2. Identify and discuss the specific academic skill deficits that are markers of word recognition reading disabilities.
3. Dyslexia is a term that is used frequently in mainstream society. Often, parents will ask the school if their child could be tested for dyslexia. Since that term is not one of the disabilities categories under IDEIA, school teams will often respond with an explanation that dyslexia is a “medical diagnosis” not an educational diagnosis. After reading this chapter, what would be your answer if a parent asked that question?

4. The chapter provides significant evidence of the malleability of the brain as well as the power of instruction. Discuss this in relationship to past and current attitudes about students who are at-risk or have a learning disability.
5. Identify the diagnostic process currently being used to identify word level reading difficulties. Based on the chapter, should anything change?
6. Discuss the importance of response to instruction in relationship to the identification of a word level reading disability.
7. Discuss the current interventions being used in your school to address word level reading disabilities. Do they tend to be preventative or remedial?

Chapter 6: Reading Disabilities Fluency

Overview

This chapter examines the aspect of reading fluency both as a result of various types of phonemically based and word level reading problems as well as a specific domain of reading disabilities.

Helpful Hints

When reading this chapter, as well as all the others, it will be helpful to keep in mind the current reading programs used in order to continually be examining what is being said within the context of the instruction being provided.

Discussion Questions

1. The importance of fluency as a critical component of reading is provided in this chapter. Despite the abundance of research in this area educators continue to downplay the importance of this skill as well as misinterpret “fluency” to be about speed. How does this continue to be an issue?
2. Consider the assessment system (screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, outcome) at your school. How is reading fluency assessed and utilized to evaluate programs and performance from the school level to the individual student level.
3. In elementary schools we often hear the comment, “He’s just a slow reader, his comprehension is fine if he’s given enough time.” Based on this chapter, formulate a response to this comment.
4. Identify and discuss the specific academic skill deficits that are markers of a reading disability in the area of fluency.
5. Discuss the intervention approaches discussed in the chapter. How are the interventions used in your school like or unlike what was described in the chapter?

Chapter 7: Reading Disabilities Comprehension

Overview

This chapter follows the same format as the chapters on word recognition and fluency; however, the research in this area is not as developed.

Helpful Hints

As with the previous two chapters, it will be helpful to understand the district's reading curriculum, instruction, and materials when reading this chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the assessment system (screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, outcome) at your school. How is reading comprehension assessed and utilized to evaluate programs and performance from the school level to the individual student level. Discuss how the different assessments measure different aspects of reading comprehension.
2. The chapter is clear about the link between reading comprehension and language skills. What is the current role of the speech and language pathologist in reading evaluations? How might that role change or be expanded in light of this, and previous, chapters?
3. Discuss the intervention approaches discussed in the chapter. How are the interventions used in your school like or unlike what was described in the chapter?
4. Identify and discuss the specific academic skill deficits that are markers of a disability in the area of reading comprehension.

Chapter 8: Mathematics Disabilities

Overview

This chapter follows the same format as the chapters on reading disabilities with the major sections being: Academic Skill Deficits, Core Cognitive Processes, Epidemiology, Neurobiological Factors, Summary: From Academic Skill Deficits to Neurobiological Factors, Interventions, and Conclusions.

Helpful Hints

As with the reading chapters, it will be helpful to understand the district's mathematics curriculum, instruction, and materials when reading this chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the assessment system (screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, outcome) at your school. How is mathematics assessed and how are the data utilized to evaluate programs and performance from the school level to the individual student level. Discuss how the different assessments at your school measure different aspects of mathematics.
2. What are the differences between arithmetic, algorithmic computation, and arithmetic word problems? Are these skills hierarchical?
3. Identify and discuss the specific academic skill deficits that are markers of a disability in the area of mathematics.
4. Discuss the link between reading and math. Should all initial evaluations for a learning disability assess both areas?

Chapter 9: Written Expression Disabilities

Overview

This chapter follows the same format as the previous chapters with the major sections being: Academic Skill Deficits, Core Cognitive Processes, Epidemiology, Neurobiological Factors, Summary: From Academic Skill Deficits to Neurobiological Factors, Interventions, and Conclusions.

Helpful Hints

As with the reading chapters, it will be helpful to understand the district's writing curriculum, instruction, and materials when reading this chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the assessment system (screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, outcome) at your school. How is writing assessed and how are the data utilized to evaluate programs and performance from the school level to the individual student level. Discuss how the different assessments at your school measure different aspects of writing.
2. Identify and discuss the specific academic skill deficits that are markers of a disability in the area of writing.
3. Discuss the link between reading and writing. Should all initial evaluations for a learning disability assess both areas?
4. How could a speech and language pathologist contribute to an assessment of a child's writing skills?

Chapter 10: Conclusions and Future Directions

Overview

Congratulations! You finished this book!! The primary foci of this chapter are to identify the difficulties bringing research to practice and to provide basic principles for instruction students with learning disabilities. It is not a summative review of chapters 1-9.

Helpful Hints

All the helpful hints of the previous chapters apply.

Discussion Questions

1. What have been your experiences with bringing research to practice? Identify successes and failures?
2. Identify some of the potential reasons educators resist or have difficulty with the application of research to their practices? What could be done to change this?
3. Think about the way those students with learning disabilities are currently served in your schools. What are the similarities between the current practices and what is provided in this book?
4. How will you share this information with your colleagues?
5. After reading this book, how have your views of assessment, intervention and research changed?



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 *Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention*? Why or why not?
2. How can we improve this experience?
3. Would you recommend this to other groups?