



# PROFESSIONAL BOOK STUDY

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## Professional Book Study Introduction

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One type of professional learning is a professional book study or book talk. A book study can be a powerful way for educators to drive their own learning. Adult learning theory (Knowles, 2005) states that adults learn best when their learning is “self-directed and task-centered.”

A book study is an effective form of professional learning because new learning can be immediately applied in the classroom. Teachers are involved in multiple sessions over time where there is continuous discussion around a relevant topic that has arisen from school data. Remember, the goal for any professional learning is to have a positive impact on student learning!

### What is it?

#### **Professional book studies are (Ryley, 2012):**

- Small groups of educators with similar interests and goals gathered together to engage in professional discourse around a specific topic of teaching and learning.
- Individuals committed to reading and discussing a selected book, guided by the question: "How will this book influence professional practices at both the classroom and school level?"
- Opportunities to build a shared knowledge base.

### How is it used?

#### **The professional book study process includes (Ryley, 2012):**

- Identifying a topic, reviewing and selecting a book for study.
- Engaging in dialogues around specific content in the book, usually using professional protocols.
- Committing to trying out ideas and strategies from the book.
- Studying to make recommendations to impact instruction in order to promote student achievement.

### How can our professional book study be successful?

#### **A book study group is successful when:**

- All group members are involved in the decision-making processes.
- Every member is involved because they have an interest in learning more about the topic.
- Norms and protocols have been established as a group.
- There is time for reflection and celebration.





## Creating and Maintaining Your Professional Book Study

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- 1) Meet with your professional learning team. Refer to schoolwide educator learning targets to determine your area of study.
- 2) Take time to research relevant books or scholarly authors around your identified focus area. After researching, select one book for your professional book study.
- 3) Decide on the structure of book study group (see p. 5).
- 4) As a team, determine the necessary roles for your group and define them (see p. 6). Decide if members of the team will hold the roles permanently or if the roles will be rotated amongst the members.
- 5) Establish meeting dates that can accommodate all members of the team.
- 6) At the first meeting, establish “norms” for working together (see p. 7).
- 7) It is expected that participants will come to each subsequent meeting prepared to discuss the section or chapter for that day. Participants may come with questions or comments to be included in the conversation.
- 8) Consider using the planning tool (see p. 8) to guide each meeting. Possible meeting topics could include: discussing focus questions (determined by facilitator), discussing applications to classroom practice, and reflecting on what has changed as a result of your new learning on the topic.
- 9) Remember whatever you are discussing should be linked back to how it will affect student learning, including academic and social-emotional development.
- 10) Take time to reflect on and celebrate the successes of your team. Consider presenting your key understandings and new instructional practices to another learning team.





## Professional Book Study Structures

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- **Chapter by Chapter:**

- ☛ Group reads the book one chapter at a time. The team is responsible for generating questions and discussion topics to discuss from within that chapter.

- **Independent Reading:**

- ☛ Teams read independently and then debrief in pairs on what they have read. Group members work in pairs to generate one thought-provoking question or comment to bring back to the group as a whole. This may work well for larger groups.

- **Applications of Ideas:**

- ☛ After reading a section, the team discusses and directs specific strategies they apply in the classroom. At the next meeting, participants will reflect on the strategies that they applied in the classroom focusing on *what worked, didn't work* and *why*.

- **Protocols:**

The group may choose one of several protocols to guide their discussion. The use of protocols ensures that all voices are heard. There is opportunity for open conversation, dialogue and reflection. Consider using one of the following protocols (see pp. 10–15) from the *School Reform Initiative* ([www.schoolreforminitiative.org](http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org)) to guide your discussion:

- ☛ Text-Rendering Protocol (p.10)
- ☛ The Final Word (p.11)
- ☛ The Wagon Wheel (p. 12)
- ☛ Three Levels of Text (p. 13)





## Roles

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### **Facilitator:**

- Is a neutral observer whose primary task is to maintain an orderly discussion.
- Gathers information from participants in order to create discussion questions/topics.
- Is responsible for pre-and post-meeting logistics.
- Helps to focus group on the common task.

### **Recorder:**

- Captures the discussion process using the participants' own words and phrases. Consider using the notetaking sheet (see page 9).
- Records decisions and tasks assigned to individuals.
- Provides a clear, legible record of all aspects of the meeting, which must be approved by the participants before becoming a permanent, public record.

### **Reflector:**

- Analyzes the processes of the meeting (did the group follow established norms?).
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses of the process.
- Communicates how well the set agenda was followed.

### **Time Keeper:**

- Reminds group of time limits set to tasks.
- Ensures the group adheres to starting and ending times.





## Establishing Norms

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### Norms...

- Express the values of the team.
- Form a process to resolve conflict.
- Guide discussion of new ideas.
- Direct the flow of communication.
- Set limits on all team members.
- Define the roles of team members.
- Provide guidance for behavior of the team.
- Help the team to evaluate its performance.
- Support the needs of the team and the organization.

### Sample Norms:

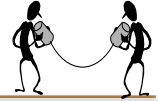
#### It's okay to...

- Ask questions.
- Say “I don’t know.”
- Disagree — as long as it is not an attack.
- Take the time to understand everyone’s point of view.
- Come to consensus.
- Compliment team members on contributions.
- Recognize different strengths in different people.
- Learn from each other and the professional literature.





# Professional Book Study Planning Tool



**Date:**

**Members:**

Book Title:

Chapter/Pages:

<b>Roles:</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Applications to Classroom Practice:</b>	
<b>Reflections:</b> <b>(i.e. How has this topic influenced classroom practice? My planning? Student learning?)</b>	
<b>Next Steps:</b> <b>(i.e. What needs to be accomplished before the next meeting?)</b>	







## Note-Taking for Group Discussions

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Question or comment posed to the group:	Who posed the question or comment?	What section of the text is this comment addressing? (page number)	Key discussion points and new learnings:	Applications to educator practice:



# Text Rendering Experience

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*Developed in the field by educators.*

## **Purpose**

To collaboratively construct meaning, clarify, and expand our thinking about a text or document

## **Roles**

A facilitator to guide the process

A scribe to track the phrases and words that are shared

## **Introduction**

Take a few moments to review the document and mark the sentence, the phrase, and the word(s) that you think are particularly important for our work.

## **Process**

### **1. First Round**

Each person shares a *sentence* from the document that she/he thinks/feels is particularly significant.

### **2. Second Round**

Each person shares a *phrase* that she/he thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each phrase.

### **3. Third Round**

Each person shares the *word* that she/he thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each word.

### **4. Discuss**

The group discusses what they heard and what it says about the document.

- What new insights have you gained about the text by looking at it in this way?
- What do you think this text is *essentially* about?

### **5. Debrief**

The group debriefs the text rendering process.



## The Final Word

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*Adapted by Jennifer Fischer-Mueller and Gene Thompson-Grove.*

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this protocol is to give each person in the group an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspective enhanced by hearing from others. With this protocol, the group can explore an article, clarify their thinking, and have their assumptions and beliefs questioned in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue.

### **Time**

For each round, allow about 8 minutes (circles of 5 participants: presenter 3 minutes, response 1 minute each for 4 people, final word for presenter 1 minute). Total time is about 40 minutes for a group of 5 (32 minutes for a group of 4, 48 minutes for a group of 6).

### **Roles**

Facilitator/time-keeper (who also participates); participants

### **Facilitation**

- Have participants identify one most significant idea from the text (underlined or highlighted ahead of time)
- Stick to the time limits
- Avoid dialogue
- Have equal sized circles so all small groups finish at approximately the same time

### **Process**

1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/timekeeper.
2. Each person needs to have one most significant idea from the text underlined or highlighted in the article. It is often helpful to identify a back-up quote as well.
3. The first person begins by reading what struck him or her the most from the article. Have this person refer to where the quote is in the text - one thought or quote only. Then, in less than 3 minutes, this person describes why that quote struck her/him. For example, why does she/he agree/disagree with the quote? What questions does she/he have about that quote? What issues does it raise for her/him? What does she/he now wonder about in relation to that quote?
4. Continuing around the circle, each person briefly responds to that quote and what the presenter said, in less than a minute. The purpose of the response is:
  - To expand on the presenter's thinking about the quote and the issues raised for him or her by the quote
  - To provide a different look at the quote
  - To clarify the presenter's thinking about the quote
  - To question the presenter's assumptions about the quote and the issues raised (although at this time there is no response from the presenter)

5. After going around the circle with each person having responded for less than one minute, the person that began has the “final word.” In no more than one minute the presenter responds to what has been said. Now what is she/he thinking? What is her/his reaction to what she/he has heard?
6. The next person in the circle then begins by sharing what struck him or her most from the text. Proceed around the circle, responding to this next presenter’s quote in the same way as the first presenter’s. This process continues until each person has had a round with his or her quote.
7. End by debriefing the process in your small group.

## Wagon Wheels Adapted for Texts

*Developed by educators in the field and revised by Connie Parrish and Susan Taylor, 2012.*

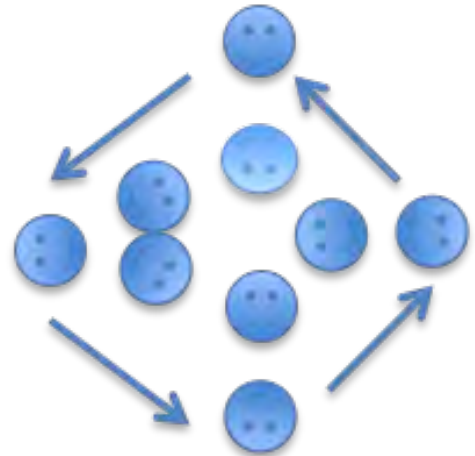
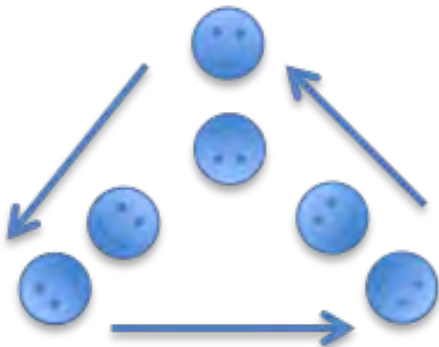
### Purpose

To deepen understanding of a text; to explore implications for participants' work

*Note: Wagon Wheel structure may also be used to brainstorm an issue or topic. See Wagon Wheels Brainstorm.*

### Set-Up

- Four chairs back-to-back at the hub of the wheel and 4 chairs on the outer circle facing the chairs at the hub.
- Since this process is done in a “knee-to-knee” format without tables, it’s helpful for participants to bring reflection journals to lean against. They also bring their texts, something to write with, and perhaps some sticky notes for jotting down ideas.
- Each Wagon Wheel optimally includes 6 or 8 participants. If you have an uneven number you can hook together 2 participants on the wheel hub, which then becomes a discussion triad, rather than a pair. See examples below:



### Procedural Notes

- The people on the outside of the wheel will be moving one seat to the left (or right) at each rotation; the people seated at the hub remain in their seats.
- Explain that they will be working on one guiding question or piece of text with each partner for approximately five minutes – i.e., they will work with four different partners during the activity – trying to amplify their understandings of the text and any implications from the text for their work.
- At the end of each rotation, ask each participant sitting on the outside of the wheel to rotate one seat to the left. After they settle down, give them the next question/quotation/topic and ask them to once again amplify and extend their understandings.

## **Debrief**

Some ideas for structuring discussion:

- You might offer guiding questions for rounds (i.e., What was confirmed or confusing in the text? What might you consider using from the text?)
- You might identify salient quotations or direct participants to particular places in the text, one per round. At the beginning of a round, you would direct participants to a page number and quote, read it aloud, and then post it as a reminder. Participants turn to that place, read the quote, think about and then discuss it.
- It's important to provide a moment or two at the beginning of each round during which participants can go back into the text. This deepens the talk.



## Three Levels of Text Protocol

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*Adapted by the Southern Maine Partnership from Camilla Greene's Rule of 3 Protocol, November, 2003.*

### **Purpose**

This protocol is designed to deepen the understanding of a text and explore implications for participants' work. It asks participants to respond to 3 levels of the text: literal (level 1), interpretation (level 2), and implications (level 3)

### **Facilitation**

Stick to the time limits. Each round takes up to 5 minutes per person in a group. Emphasize the need to watch air time during the brief group response segment. Do 1-3 rounds. Can be used as a prelude to a text-based discussion or by itself.

### **Roles**

Facilitator/timekeeper (who also participates); participants

### **Process**

1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/timekeeper.
2. If participants have not done so ahead of time, have them read the text and identify passages that they feel may have important implications for their work.
3. Do 1-3 rounds. A round consists of:
  - One person using up to 3 minutes to:
    - Level 1: Read aloud the passage she/he has selected
    - Level 2: Say what she/he thinks about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.)
    - Level 3: Say what she/he sees as the implications for her/his work.
  - The group responding (for a **total** of up to 2 minutes) to what has been said.
4. After all rounds have been completed, debrief the process.



## Works Cited

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