

Designing Professional Development for Teachers

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Part 1: Effective Strategies for Leading Professional Study Groups

Getting Started

- Choose a focus for the group (book and/or video series).
- Seek volunteers who are interested in new learning.
- Limit the number of participants to about eight people.
- Set meeting dates prior to starting the group (3–4 meetings work well).
- Order books and videos for participants.
- Organize resources for participants.

Practical Tips for a Study Group Session

- Limit sessions to one hour.
- Meet in a relaxed environment.
- Provide plenty of food.
- Establish a predictable format for each session.
- Always honor ending time.
- Don't teach. This format promotes discovery through inquiry.
- Remember, participants have volunteered to be part of the group.

Establishing a Predictable Format

- **Whole-Group Discussion**
If this is the start of a new study group, then this time would be spent reflecting on current practices and creating a learning community. During future meetings, this time is spent sharing new learning and ideas that participants have tried.
- **Reading the Excerpt/Viewing the Video**
This is an opportunity for the group to work with current research/resources around the chosen topic.
- **Whole-Group Discussion**
Participants share thoughts based on the reading and viewing.
- **Putting Ideas into Practice**
Decide what to read between sessions. The reading will be used as a discussion starter. The group is not expected to read the book cover to cover. The intention of reading excerpts from the book is to whet the appetite of participants in hopes that they will dig deeper into the text on their own. Everyone is expected to try out one new strategy or idea.

Follow-Up Between Sessions

- Remind participants of the next meeting and materials they need to bring.
- Provide additional resources to help participants implement new ideas.

Part 2: Sample Study Group Session Using the *Read, Share, Teach* Video

Materials Needed

You will need:

Copy of *Learning Along the Way: Professional Development by and for Teachers* by Diane Sweeney

Copy of *Read, Share, Teach: Leading Professional Study Groups Using Stenhouse Workshop Guides* videotape

Copy of Small-Group Discussion Questions for each participant

Copy of Two-Column Notes for each participant

Participants will need:

Copy of *Learning Along the Way: Professional Development by and for Teachers* by Diane Sweeney

Small-Group Discussion (15 Minutes)

Distribute the Small-Group Discussion Questions and have participants write their answers silently (5 minutes). Break into groups of three or four to discuss the various ways that participants design professional development opportunities for teachers.

Viewing the Video (15 Minutes)

View the *Read, Share, Teach* videotape. This study group has been working with the book, *Reading with Meaning*, and videotape series, *Happy Reading!* by Debbie Miller. Distribute copies of Two-Column Notes to help participants focus on what they are viewing.

Reading the Excerpt (10 Minutes)

Have participants read pages 1–12 from Chapter 1, “Principles of Professional Development” in *Learning Along the Way* by Diane Sweeney. Ask participants to pay particular attention to Colleen Buddy’s Staff Developer’s Guiding Principles (pp. 8–9). Participants should continue to use the Two-Column Notes to record their observations.

Whole-Group Discussion (10 Minutes)

Provide participants with an opportunity to share their thoughts on the video and reading excerpt. How are their guiding principles as a staff developer similar or different to Colleen Buddy’s Staff Developer’s Guiding Principles?

Putting Ideas into Practice (5 Minutes)

Between sessions, have participants finish reading Chapter 1, “Principles of Professional Development” in *Learning Along the Way* by Diane Sweeney (pp. 12–15). The last section of this chapter deals with resistant learners. Participants are encouraged to try out a new idea and prepare to share it at the next meeting.

Small-Group Discussion Questions

How do you provide professional development opportunities that meet the diverse needs of teachers?

What are your guiding principles as a staff developer?

What forms of professional development have you found to be most effective?

Two-Column Notes

What It Makes Me Think About

What I Might Try

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