

Introduction to Bibliography

We selected items for this annotated bibliography with an eye toward sources that might prove helpful and informative for professional educators. After searching the ERIC database using terms “study group or collaboratives” (194 items) and “study groups or collaborative inquiry” (149 items) from 1990 to the present, we selected sources according to themes that arose from our reading. Thus, the nature of study groups, how they are formed and used for professional development, their benefits and drawbacks are the subjects addressed in the following texts. We also included some works by educators who narrated personal experiences with study groups as well as a few theoretical writings. In shaping a brief bibliography of 20 items, our overarching concern was to include sources that spoke to professional growth. Thus, we did not include texts about study groups for students or works that describe collaborative groups that form within a specific discipline. Our hope is that this partial listing will offer some key sources on study groups for educators and encourage further research.

Compilers: Kathleen Ceroni, Ph.D., Rebecca Clothey, and Marjorie Logsdon, Ph.D.

A Selected and Annotated Bibliography On Study Groups

Birchak, B., Connor, C., Crawford, K.M., Kahn, L. H., Kaser, S., Turner, S., & Short, K. (1998). *Teacher study groups: Building community through dialogue and reflection*. Urbana, IL, National Council of English Teachers.

This text is organized around questions that educators might pose about how to form, conduct, and facilitate teacher study groups. Filled with first hand experiences from the teacher-authors, the text includes transcripts from actual study group meetings as well as very helpful guidelines for listening and communicating while in dialogue with other teachers. This is an easily read guide for educators who want professional growth rooted in reflection and dialogue with others, who want to become more thoughtful and self-

initiating, and who desire to understand ways theory unites with practice. Twenty-three (23) references are included.

Boggs, H. (1996). *Launching school change through teacher study groups: An action research project*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association: Chicago, IL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 402 286).

The project described in this report used action research to study the involvement of teacher in the change process at a suburban elementary school. The project used study groups as a professional development strategy that fosters educational reform efforts. Analysis of the data revealed that study group activities encouraged teachers to design lessons cooperatively and to develop resource materials. Study groups also provided an atmosphere of collaboration and experimentation.

Bray, J.N., Lee, J., Smith, L.L., & Yorks, L. (2000). *Collaborative inquiry in practice: Action, reflection, and meaning-making*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This text is a guide for anyone interested in initiating collaborative inquiry as a method of research or way of structuring adult learning experiences. The authors offer direction on the process including ways to form collaborative groups, how to create conditions for group learning, and suggest how to construct meaning from the inquiry process. They also identify questions and give insights from their own experiences that may be helpful to new researchers or educators interested in this type of inquiry. Differentiating collaborative inquiry from action research, the authors define it as a process that consists of repeated action and reflection through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them. The authors give key ideas from pragmatism and phenomenology that ground the inquiry. One hundred and forty-five (145) references are included.

Clair, N. (1988). Teacher study groups: Persistent questions in a promising approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32 (3), 465-492.

This article reports on a yearlong study of two teacher study groups that came together to explore teaching and learning issues with English Language Learners (ELLs). The author, (also the researcher) identifies some themes emerging from the data that speak to the tensions generated among teachers engaged in the study group process. One relates to how teachers traditionally see themselves as receivers of knowledge rather than creators of knowledge. Many had difficulty learning to trust their own knowledge and examine and work through topics of concern to them. Another tension that surfaced from the data analysis was one that spoke to the difficulty teachers had adjusting to a

professional development structure that relied on *them* to create the content and process. Teachers also had to tackle feelings of isolation and problems associated with finding ways to work together productively. These tensions, however, are not uncommon among teachers who are engaging in the study group process for the first time. It is often in working through them that study group participants come to experience the personal and professional growth that makes this approach to staff development promising.

Note: The article would be especially valuable to ELLs' teachers since the focus of inquiry for the study groups was on understanding the educational needs of ELLs.

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. L. (1996). Communities for teacher research. In M. W. McLaughlin & I. Oberman (Eds). *Teacher learning: New policies, new practices* (92-112). New York: Teachers College Press.

This book chapter focuses on teacher study groups organized for the purpose of creating communities for teacher research. The authors speak from the position that "...research by teachers represents a distinctive way of knowing about teaching and learning that will alter, not just add to, what we know in the field." Though much of the chapter is written to provide a rationale to move teacher research from the fringes to the forefront of educational reform, the authors also examine, in great detail, some of the problematics associated with forming and maintaining inquiry-based study groups. Using teacher groups and student teacher groups in the greater Philadelphia area, they analyze and evaluate them according to four perspectives: the ways in which groups organize time, use talk, construct texts, and interpret the tasks of teaching and learning. This framework can be a helpful heuristic to any prospective teacher group or existing group grappling with questions and issues related to the school cultures as sites of inquiry. The text of this chapter is dense and thought provoking. Reading it is well worth the time invested.

Cramer, G., Hurst, B., Wilson. (1996). *Teacher study groups for professional development*. Bloomington, IND.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

This fastback is an easily read and convenient guide that describes the nature and benefits of study groups for teachers. Written by three researchers from curriculum and instruction departments who have personal experience, it gives an overview of the conceptual foundations of study groups, discusses how to develop effective teacher groups, and ends with a bullet point summary of cautions, considerations, and benefits. The authors insist that teachers need autonomy over their own learning and thus study group membership needs to be voluntary and subjects for study must be selected not

given. Too often staff development is centered on an isolated topic with little or no follow-up and teachers become passive consumers rather than active participants in learning. A four-stage cycle of the study group process that includes both individual and group dynamics is described. This work is an excellent and handy resource and will serve well as an introduction to teacher study groups. Includes twenty-three (23) references.

Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This seminal work attempts to balance its explanation of co-operative inquiry between theoretical depth and practical guidance. It is a comprehensive account that describes this inquiry as a participative way of doing research *with* people where the roles of the researcher and subject are integrated. Grounded in the works of Dewey, humanist psychology, and phenomenology, co-operative inquiry rests on a concept of subjective-objective reality. The text includes epistemological and political aspects of participation, descriptions of method, stages of inquiry, and validity procedures. Two hundred and eleven (211) references are included.

Herner, L. M. & Higgins. K. (2000, May-June). Forming and benefiting from educator study groups. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 32 (5), 30-37.

This article is valuable for teachers and administrators for a variety of reasons. The authors provide helpful information on how to form and maintain a study group, an overview of different kinds of study groups, and an explanation of the benefits of study groups. For readers interested in becoming a member of an online study group, an extensive listserv of software, sites, and internet tools is included. The ultimate goal of study groups, according to the authors, is to improve the ability of group members to communicate effectively about educational issues in their school so as to effect reform. They also forcefully point out that the process can only be effective if administrators are equal and active members of the group. Creating a paper trail of the planning, maintaining and evaluating of the process is also emphasized as a crucial component for success. To that end, they provide samples of the following: a needs assessment, an individual study group progress report, an educator study group weekly report, and a staff survey. References included are abundant. This is a “must read” text for readers serious about creating educator study groups.

Jones, B. (1997). *Study groups: Collaboration and conflagration*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association: Chicago, IL.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 408 362).

In August 1995, the teachers at an elementary school in Houston, Texas voted to adopt teacher-led study groups as their form of staff development for the 1995-96 school year. This study documents the progress of one of these groups and examines the changes that occurred in roles and relationships as the teachers took charge of their own learning.

LaBonte, K., Leighty, C., Mills, S. J., & True, M. L. (1995). Whole-Faculty Study groups: Building the capacity for change through interagency collaboration. *Journal of Staff Development*, 16 (3), 45-47.

This article explains how the San Diego County Office of Education organized efforts to combine the resources and personnel of the forty-three school districts within its boundaries. Their purpose was to improve student learning and help schools integrate their staff development efforts. Whole-faculty study groups was the agreed upon avenue to achieve this end. What makes this article worth reading is the way in which the authors (who describe themselves as staff developers) clarify and present a set of objectives for implementing a whole study group model across a large geographic area, encompassing a multitude of urban, suburban, and rural school districts. They also explain, in a concise manner, the steps in the implementation process and the related rationale for each of the steps. Included in the article are three lessons they learned from the experience. They are the following: whole faculty study groups show great promise for integrating initiatives across and within districts; an external support provider is necessary to help teachers move the discussion to include substantive instructional issues; staff developers must be willing to go beyond the boundaries of their own systems to create interagency collaboration among all individuals whose goal is to increase student achievement. For those who are interested in implementing a whole-faculty study group program on a large scale, this article is sure to be helpful.

Makbbin, S. S., & Sprague, M. M. (1991). *Study groups: Conduit for reform*. Paper Presented at the meeting of the national staff development council; St Louis, MO. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 370 893).

This conference presentation describes study groups as a mechanism for changing teacher behavior. The history of study groups is discussed. Study groups in Richmond County, GA, which met weekly to discuss teaching models, plan lessons, and share feedback, helped teachers in acquiring new teaching models and had a positive impact on student learning.

Matlin, M.L., & Short, K.G. (1991). How our teacher study group sparks change. *Educational Leadership*, 49 (3), 68.

An elementary principal and professor of language and reading describe the positive effects of an after-school teacher study group that met to share ideas about a district's new approach to reading. The authors note that current thinking claims that students should be active learners and problem solvers, yet teachers are often not in control of their own inquiry. Through study groups, teachers not only look at curriculum, learning, and evaluation collaboratively, but also come to realize that any change goes beyond merely adding a new practice. Study groups help change ways of thinking and are a way to staff development. No references included.

Miller, J. L. Martens, M.L. (1990). Hierarchy and imposition in collaborative inquiry: Teacher-researchers' reflections or recurrent dilemmas. *Educational Foundations*, 4 (4), 41-59.

The authors, a university professor and several high school and elementary school educators, describe their insights into dilemmas that arise from unequal relationships that formed within their "critically – oriented collaborative researcher group." Using personal narratives, the authors speculate that there is an ethical dimension to the range and extent that university professors can expect classroom teachers to adopt emancipatory behaviors within high school and elementary settings. They encourage members of collaborative groups to develop an awareness of unequal power relations within the group and to support each other through their struggles. This thought-provoking article surfaces some of the ethical considerations for collaborative and critical practices. Includes twenty-eight (28) references.

Mohr, N. (1998). Creating effective study groups for principals. *Educational Leadership*, 55 (7), 41-44.

The author emphasizes the need for principals to focus on actual student work, to research, and to share their own experience with other principals. Study groups for principals, with structured protocols and facilitators are recommended. Principals learn how to derive theory from practice and gain valuable insights if they take time for their own learning says the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Four (4) references are included.

Murphy, C. (1995). Whole-faculty study groups: Doing the seemingly undoable. *Journal of Staff Development*, 16(3), 37- 44.

In this article, the author offers a condensed version of a 2001 complete guide that she co-authored with D.W. Lick on whole-faculty study groups. She explains the concept of student-based faculty study groups, how to initiate them within a school, and she offers a useful chart that describes phases in the process. In this brief article she also addresses the benefits of initiating a whole-faculty process for professional development and student learning. The article gives a solid introduction to the concept of whole-faculty study groups and should be valuable in helping a reader decide if a more thorough study of this concept would be useful. Includes seventeen (17) references.

Murphy, C. (1997). Finding time for faculties to study together. *Journal of Staff Development*, 18 (3), 29-32.

This article focuses on time as a major barrier to successfully implementing a whole faculty study group structure into schools. After working with fifty schools in eight states, the author shares her experience of creative ways school personnel carved out time to make whole faculty study groups a part of the overall school wide design and a regular part of the school day. The examples provided are extensive (about twenty) and show a wide range of strategies for making time for whole faculty study groups to meet in an ongoing manner in both elementary and secondary school settings. Over time, as faculties participated in the whole faculty study group process, they came to view it as an integrated and holistic approach to professional development, one in which students directly benefited from time allocated to teacher development. When this happened, time became less of a problem.

*Note: A web site address is provided for readers interested in contacting any of the schools cited in the article.

Murphy, C.U., Lick, D.W. (2001). *Whole-faculty study groups: Creating student-based professional development*. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Whole-faculty study groups according to the authors are a holistic way of facilitating major staff development and school-wide change that enhances student learning. They offer detailed and practical explanations about how study groups may be successfully implemented and maintained. As the name implies, whole-faculty study groups, once accepted in a school, require that all teachers and administrators become enjoined to address the question, "What are students learning and achieving as a result of teachers learning and doing in study groups?" The authors also emphasize the importance of the principal in sponsoring the work of study groups and explain why institutionalization is essential to success. Addressed to teachers, administrators and academics, as well as corporate and community organizations involved in education, the authors intend this text to be used as a reference work, textbook, or stand-alone guide. The authors encompass

theoretical literature in a conversational way and offer a large amount of resources in the form of real-world examples and data from schools in every phase of initiating or maintaining study groups. In addition to step-by-step guidelines, the authors suggest interventions for problem-solving. Includes fifty-eight (58) references and twenty-two (22) recommendations for reading.

Powell, J. H., Berliner, D. C. & Casanova, U. (1992). Empowerment through Collegial study groups. *Contemporary Education*, 63 (4), 281-284.

In this article, the authors summarize evolving views of staff development through the 1980s and into the 1990s and portray its emergence as an integral component in educational reform. They assert, however, that when bureaucratic control over staff development is the norm, the growth of a professional culture is often denied. Given this, the authors present some convincing data to support the view that collaborative teacher study groups offer an alternative approach to staff development which places teachers at the center of their own learning and creates in them a sense of professional efficacy and agency. Included in the article are evaluation responses of some of the teachers who participated in the study, called the Readings in Educational Research Project (RER). These responses offer insight into how the study group experience impacts teachers both personally and professionally. They also highlight some of the problematic aspects of the experience. The reference includes nine sources, heavily weighted in content related to staff development.

Short, K.G. (1992). "Living the process:" Creating a learning community among educators. *Teaching Education*, 4(2), 35-42.

The author describes what she learned in her role as facilitator for study group formed when a school district adopted new reading program. [See this bibliography for Matlin, M. & Short, K. (1991)]. She reflects on how the collaborative inquiry process caused her to redefine her role as an expert and how sharing her experiences and vulnerability led group members to trust her. She also talks about ways to negotiate group and personal agendas and discusses how study groups become learning communities. This article is useful for the insights it gives from the point of view of an academic who is an outside member in a school based study group. Includes four (4) references.

Tichenor, M. S. & Heins, E. (2000). Study groups: An inquiry-based approach to improving schools. *Clearing House*, 73 (6), 316-319.

Inquiry based teacher study groups are lauded by the authors as a promising strategy for on-going, meaningful staff development and substantive school improvement. They

describe how, in collaboration with a university education department, an elementary school (K-5) staff formed a study group and engaged in learning the process of collaborative inquiry. This article is particularly significant because a study group implementation model is presented that focuses on how to conduct an inquiry and includes built-in activities to encourage and support reflection as integral to the process. The authors even provide a sample of the questionnaire used at mid-year and year-end that could prove quite helpful to anyone interested in using this study group model. A helpful list of ten guidelines for success is also included as well as about a dozen references.