Parent-Teacher Book Studies: A Learning Collaboration

Money for Good Grades and Other Myths About Motivating Kids

Strategies for Parents and Teachers

For more information about this book, visit https://www.routledge.com/9781138368200
Benefits of Learning Communities

There are many ways learning communities provide advantages for teachers. Opportunities for collaborative inquiry and the learning related to it allow teachers to develop and share their learning. The ultimate benefit of a professional learning community is a positive impact on learning for everyone—including kids.

A specific strategy that enhances professional practice and enhances parental partnerships is the use of a Parent-Teacher Book Study. There are multiple benefits to a collaborative approach to book studies.

Benefits to Parents and Teachers

♦ Reduced isolation
♦ Higher sense of community
♦ Increased commitment to shared goals
♦ Collective responsibility for kids’ success
♦ Likelihood of personal and professional growth
♦ Understanding of different beliefs and perspectives.
♦ Commitment to making significant and lasting changes

For more benefits of such book studies, read this great article about a school’s experience:

Once you decide to create a parent-teacher book study, you’ll need to create some logistical guidelines.

### Book Study Protocol

- Membership should be voluntary, but inclusive.
- Decide a meeting schedule, meeting place, length of book to be read, and what will happen after the book is read. It is recommended that meetings last no more than one hour and be held at a consistent time and place. You may choose to “meet” online. If so, determine if everyone is online at a common time, or if it is open posting during a time range, such as a week.
- Select a responsible facilitator to keep the group on task and help manage the meetings.
- Select a book with a clear objective in mind. For example, use Money for Good Grades and Other Myths About Motivating Kids to discuss ways you can effectively motivate your kids.
- Conversation is important in a book study. Members of the group share insights, ask questions about the text, and learn from others. It is important to talk about how the ideas can be applied directly in the classroom and how to overcome any potential obstacles.
- Journaling is a useful way for members to think about their reading and reflect on how it might be used.

Adapted from *Rigor In Your School, 2nd edition* (2018)
Some schools use technology for book study groups. For example, at Brookings-Harbor High School in Oregon, book study was a part of their annual professional development plan. Rather than meet in small groups on campus where one or two people might dominate the discussion, they used Moodle (http://moodle.org), open-source software that is free and readily available online. With Moodle it is possible to create small discussion groups using threaded discussions. Each member of the groups can make comments and respond to the comments of others. They report that not only did participation increase but the quality of the discussion improved. One of the benefits is that teachers were able to participate any time of the day, at their convenience. That provided for more engaging and thoughtful discussion.

Probably the most popular platform for online parent-teacher book clubs is Facebook. Groups can limit participants to ensure privacy. Other options can include Twitter or a Blog, but those tend to be less effective. I've found that if you want to use an online platform, it is most effective when it supplements rather than replaces face-to-face meetings.
Action Plan for a Book Study

How will we determine membership?

What is our meeting schedule, location, and/or platform?

Who will be the facilitator?
## Action Plan for a Book Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>What book will we use?</td>
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<td>How will we ensure conversation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How will we use journaling?</td>
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Guiding Questions and Activities

If you are a facilitator or a member of a book club or study group, many teachers and parents may benefit from discussing ideas and concerns with each chapter. You may want to hold roundtable discussions after the chapters to help participants build on one another’s ideas. This will also help in understanding issues related to kids.

There are general questions and strategies for reflection that can be used throughout a discussion of the book. The activities below are divided into three sections: Before reading activities that can be used before starting the study; during reading activities, which are chapter-specific ideas; and after reading activities, to be completed after parents and teachers have finished the book. The ideas are purposely broader than the reflection and application questions in the book’s Classroom Connection feature at the end of each chapter. Balance the use of these with the suggestions in the book to best meet the needs of your particular situation and/or group. Note that kids refer to parents’ own sons and daughter and teachers’ kids.
Activities You Can Use Before You Begin Reading

SENTENCE STARTERS
Write the following phrases on chart paper. Post them around the room and ask parents and teachers to anonymously respond to each using Post-It notes. Group each set of notes by category and use as a discussion starter.
- How much do your kids struggle with motivation (rank 1-10)?
- The biggest challenge to increasing motivation for our kids is ...
- I wish ...

FIND THE SOLUTION!
On an index card, each person writes one of the biggest challenges he or she is facing related to kids’ motivations. Fold each card and place it in a bowl. Each group member then chooses a challenge from the bowl. As you progress through the chapters, look for solutions to those challenges. After reading the book in its entirety, everyone will share the index card challenge they drew, as well as the solutions they found in the book.

PIPE CLEANER RESPONSES
Each teacher uses a pipe cleaner to form a shape that represents the feelings your kids have about motivation (you might choose to be more specific, such as motivation to complete homework) Ask each to share their shape with the group and explain why they formed it.
Chapter-by-Chapter Suggested Ideas

INTERVIEW YOUR KIDS
Ask teachers and parents to periodically interview their kid(s) about their motivation using the questions below. There is a set to ask prior to each chapter. Then discuss them with the group. Note: teachers may want to use a simple survey instead.

Chapter 1: Rewards
• Do you like rewards? Why or why not?
• What is your favorite reward?

Chapter 2: Value
• What are you interested in (topics and activities)?
• What is something you would like to do related to your interests?

Chapter 3: Relationships
• How do you feel about me/our relationship?
• If you were me, how would you treat you (as a kid) differently?

Chapter 4: Expectations
• What are my expectations for you?
• Do you think they are too high, too low, or just right? Why?

Chapter 5: Failure
• Do you think you are a failure? Why or why not?
• How can I help you when you feel like a failure/feel bad?

Chapter 6: Getting Stuck
• Have you ever been stuck in a situation? What happened?
• How did or do you get unstuck? How can I help?

Chapter 7: Competition, Grading, and Homework
• Do you feel pressured to compete? With whom? Why?
• How do you feel about grading and homework?

Chapter 8: Nothing Works
• Sometimes I’m not sure I’m doing the right things to help you be successful. Imagine you are in charge. What should I do?
Chapter-by-Chapter Suggested Ideas

MY HEAD IS SPINNING!
For each participant: Draw two heads: one smiling and one with a question mark. In the smiling head, write down ideas from each chapter that you connect with. In the one with a question mark, write questions you have from each chapter. Use these to jumpstart the discussion for each chapter.

TRY IT OUT!
All teachers and parents choose one idea from each chapter to try with their kid(s). At the next meeting, they share what happened and what adjustments they will make.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW
Working together, teacher write a list of interview questions or a letter for the author posing a series of questions about some of the ideas expressed in the book.

Activities After You Finish the Book

WRITE A LETTER TO A NEW TEACHER OR PARENT
Choose 8-10 topics or words from the book. Ask teachers to write a letter to a first-year teacher using the terms you provide or ask parents to write a letter to a new parent using the same.

SHARING OUR SUCCESSES
Have each participant share an example of a situation that was more motivating to his or her kid and how the information in the book contributed to the success.
Who leads the book study? Or does anyone need to?
The choice of a leader depends on your situation. Ideally, you are looking for someone to facilitate discussion. That means they don't need to “teach” a book study session; they need to ask prompting questions and pull the group back together if they get too far off-track. I've worked with clubs where someone with a stronger, more direct approach leads. That can work, but I've also seen situations where participants were intimidated and unwilling to talk. One compromise is for the person who is more facilitative to assist in leading the conversation, and the person who is more directive can coordinate logistics. Ultimately, you must assess your situation to determine the best approach.

We’ve tried a book club before and one or two of our members dominate the conversation. Often, they try to draw us off track into something else. How can I prevent this or at least lessen the impact?

This can be a real problem in book clubs. There are two ways you can minimize the impact. First, you might ask participants to turn to a partner and share their answers, and then ask for pairs to share with the whole group. This would lessen the impact on the entire group. Second, you will also want the group to agree on other ground rules. They might include norms about how frequently a person can speak or use of a post-it notes to be held for later conversation to capture the thoughts and ideas without impacting the conversation.

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