

DREW WRITING PROJECT

Study Groups: Inquiry Groups

Objective: The Drew Writing Project aims to support districts in developing reflective teacher-leaders who share researched best practices with their colleagues.

Background: In order to facilitate teacher inquiry in our partner schools and to promote transitions to site-based leadership, we developed this protocol for the implementation of study groups.

Description of Inquiry Study Groups: Teachers will deepen their understanding of student performance in writing by forming small groups to investigate particular aspects of teaching writing. Some examples include: grammar instruction, sentence building, developing voice, and writing conferences. A National Writing Project teacher consultant will facilitate these sessions and guide participating educators as they develop lesson or unit plans that conform to district standards. NWP-facilitated study groups aim in part to optimize and extend the gains realized by teachers working together in Professional Learning Communities.

Study Group participants will

- Engage in collective inquiry into their practice by
 - Determining areas of inquiry
 - Reviewing book chapters and articles from professional journals
 - Selecting helpful texts from their own libraries
- Recognize trends and alternatives in their area of inquiry
- Reflect upon and discuss professional literature
- Listen carefully and share ideas in a collegial setting
- Identify effective instructional methods
- Develop lesson or unit plans to target specific writing skills

Rationale:

Study groups promote teacher leadership and support teacher inquiry in the following ways:

- Students learn more when the educators who serve them work collaboratively rather than in isolation (DuFour, R., DuFour, R. and Eaker, R., 2008).
- Study groups provide an environment in which teachers can think and talk about their classroom practices and work together to improve instructional practices (Tichenor and Heinsm 2000).
- Study groups encourage teachers to reflect on how their instructional practices impact student outcomes (Buysee, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003).
- Study groups assist teachers in their exploration of current research in education (Murphy 1992).
- Study groups support teachers as they revise and refine instructional practices (Barab and Duffy, 2000).
- Study groups promote positive interaction among staff members (DeBlieu, 2002; Sanacore, 1993).
- Study groups transform teaching through dialogue and reflection and create a sense of community among teachers (Birchak, et al., 1998).