

PLC/Book Study Guide for *The Cluster Grouping Handbook*

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This study guide is designed as a professional learning resource that can be used to facilitate a book study, to guide gifted-cluster teacher meetings or teacher workshops, or to support a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided to help with the planning and implementation of the various professional learning opportunities for which this guide can be used. We recommend that the facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study. You may decide to change the order of the study depending on the school's or teachers' needs.

Prior to each meeting, participants will read a chapter of the book. They may also be asked to prepare something in advance, such as bring materials, practice and report on a strategy, or create an activity. Each section of the book study guide includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can direct the group's activities during the group session.

Please note that the preparation work is stated at the beginning of each session's text. Before concluding each session, look ahead to the next session to review and clarify what is expected before the next meeting. With the group's input, determine if any of the tasks or activities involved in the preparation work should be modified.

Each session can take one meeting, or for a more in-depth study, can be separated into multiple sessions. Likewise, the facilitator may elect to use one of the activities for each session and then a different activity for another round of sessions.

Introduction

Facilitator note: *Take notes as you conduct the book study. Prior to each session, refer to the previous meeting's notes so that you can follow up on the participants' questions and concerns. Clarify any ambiguity or uncertainty before proceeding with the next session. Use these notes to seek additional information or resources when needed.*

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the introduction session:

- Read the book's foreword and introduction.
- Consider the challenges teachers face when there are no grouping structures in place.
- Consider the learning needs of gifted students and how they can benefit when grouped together in the same class.

Activities

Individually:

Consider this question: In today's educational environment, why is it important to group gifted students together? Share your response with the group.

As a group:

1. Study "Figure 2: Example of Classroom Compositions for the SCGM (for a Single Grade Level)" (page 4). Answer this question: How does this type of grouping differ from tracking?
2. Discuss what the research says about cluster grouping.
3. Discuss the benefits of cluster grouping and its impact on student learning.

CHAPTER 1

What Is the SCGM? How Does It Work?

Facilitator note: *If possible, give the participants the numbers of gifted-identified students at each grade level prior to the meeting, so they can consider their own grade-level placements. These numbers will help guide the discussion on classroom placements as it pertains to each teacher's grade level.*

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 1 session:

- Read chapter 1.
- List questions you have about student placements and class configurations within the SCGM.
- Consider how the classroom configurations might look for your grade level based on the number of gifted-identified students and the number of classes at this grade level.

Activities

As a group:

1. Discuss how the three essential strategies of the SCGM (page 13) work together to create an effective cluster grouping model.
2. Make a list of ways the SCGM can enfranchise gifted students who may have been left out of gifted services in a different model. (These may include, but are not limited to, students who are English language learners, students who are receiving special education services, and students in primary grades and middle school.)
3. Discuss what classroom placements might look like at each participant's grade level based on the number of gifted students in that grade.

CHAPTER 2

Planning and Introducing the SCGM

Facilitator note: *Perhaps the most important determinant of the future success of the SCGM lies in the planning stages. Chapter 2 addresses this reality and recommends steps that can be critical to developing and implementing an effective and sustainable cluster grouping model. In your implementation discussions, focus on what specific communications to use with your school’s staff, parents, and administrators.*

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 2 session:

- Read chapter 2.
- Think about how, when, and where you can use the “Frequently Asked Questions About the SCGM” list on pages 49–50. What additional questions might you add for your school community?
- Read the parent letter included in this chapter (page 48). Prepare for a discussion on how your school can use this tool.

Activities

As a group:

1. List the purpose and benefits of developing and following a timeline for implementing the SCGM.
2. Discuss the importance of, and methods for, building awareness and support by disseminating information to stakeholders.
3. Create a list, chart, or graphic organizer depicting how the SCGM can address each of the essential elements of comprehensive, effective gifted programs described by Dr. Barbara Clark (pages 42–43): flexible grouping, curriculum differentiation, continuous progress, intellectual peer interaction, continuity, and teacher preparedness. Then discuss how this understanding can assist with staff and stakeholder communication.
4. Identify three to five specific methods for parent communication that you will find useful for your school. Use these methods as starting points for sharing information in your school community.

CHAPTER 3

Identifying Students for Gifted-Cluster Groups

Facilitator note: *To prepare for this session, reflect on your school's student population. Look into the percentage of students in the various demographic groups who are identified as gifted. If your school or district has this data, bring it to the meeting along with your testing and identification procedures.*

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 3 session:

- Read chapter 3.
- Look at the list on page 55 titled “Gifted Students’ Learning and Behavioral Characteristics.” Think about gifted students you currently teach or have taught in the past. Jot down names of students who demonstrated some of those learning and behavioral characteristics.
- Look at the sections in chapter 3 that discuss students in primary grades, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, twice-exceptional (2e) students, and gifted students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Consider students you have taught who fall into those categories. Identify social and emotional concerns each of those students experienced. Be prepared to share these at the meeting.

Activities

As a group:

1. Discuss the students you considered in the preparation activities for this session.
2. Chapter 3 describes several social and emotional challenges gifted students experience, such as perfectionism, heightened perceptions and sensitivities, feelings of isolation, and so forth. Discuss the possible impact that cluster grouping could have on these issues.
3. Create a chart listing some of the differences between students with high ability (gifted students) and those with high achievement. Then discuss how the social and emotional tendencies associated with gifted students can affect their achievement.

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4. After reading through the identification procedures in chapter 3, identify areas or methods that may contribute to underrepresentation of certain subgroups of students in your school. Consider and discuss which strategies to explore adopting at your school to address specific needs.

CHAPTER 4

Staffing the SCGM

CHAPTER 7

Professional Learning Through Collaboration and Communication

Facilitator notes: Chapters 4 and 7 are combined for this session, because the topics of staffing and supporting staff are closely related. Chapter 7 explains, “Professional development must emerge from the needs of the staff, so the topics addressed, the order in which they are presented, and the depth of training may differ from school to school.” Keep this idea in mind while prioritizing training opportunities for your school’s gifted-cluster teachers.

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapters 4 and 7 session:

- Read chapters 4 and 7.
- Individually review and self-reflect on the traits listed on pages 90–91, under “teachers who work well with gifted students.” Identify which traits describe your teaching style well and which traits you want to develop further as a gifted-cluster teacher.

Activities

As a group:

1. Review the “Roles and Responsibilities of the Gifted-Cluster Teacher” list on page 92. The first five bullets pertain to your interactions with students. The last five relate to information sharing and professional learning for gifted-cluster teachers. Discuss each of these categories separately. Identify areas of support that you will need for each group.
2. Read about the roles and responsibilities of gifted-cluster teachers (page 92), gifted specialists or mentors (pages 93–94), and gifted coordinators (page 94). Describe how these roles can affect instruction in the gifted-cluster class and support the coordination of the cluster model at your school.

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3. Chapter 7 shares a variety of professional learning opportunities for gifted-cluster teachers, including: teacher workshops, gifted-cluster coaching, study groups, book study groups, online book study groups, gifted resource sites, and social media. Select three of these training methods according to the group’s needs, and then brainstorm ideas for planning and implementation.
 4. Routinely scheduled gifted-cluster teacher meetings, such as this PLC, are critical to the success of the SCGM. Using the suggestions found in chapter 7, create a rough draft of which training topics to address at your first three cluster-teacher meetings. Refer to the list titled, “Topics of Particular Help to Gifted-Cluster Teachers” on pages 181–182 for suggested topics.

CHAPTER 5

Compacting and Differentiating Curriculum That Students Have Already Mastered

Facilitator note: Give teachers at least one week’s notice to prepare for this session, and follow up that notice with a reminder. The differentiated lesson plans shared by participants in this session will provide for in-depth discussion of how the strategies work in a variety of subjects, grade levels, and instructional approaches. For this chapter, which is rich in curriculum and instructional differentiation, consider holding two or more separate meetings. Gifted-cluster teachers will appreciate the planning and collaborating time to immerse themselves in the differentiation strategies presented in chapter 5.

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 5 session:

- Read chapter 5.
- Select one lesson that you plan to use in an upcoming unit.
- Using the “Five Elements of Differentiation” (pages 101–102), modify the lesson in a way that integrates each of these elements. Prepare to share your modifications with the group.

Activities

As a group:

1. Each participant presents a lesson and describes how the five elements of differentiation are embedded in the lesson to extend it for gifted students in a gifted-cluster class.
2. Describe an instructional process in which students can demonstrate mastery of content you plan to teach, receive credit for their understanding, and then engage in a deeper or more accelerated approach to related content.
3. Review the section on curriculum compacting. Together, select one of the lesson plans used in activity 1, or select a new one. Work together to describe how teachers can compact the lesson for students who demonstrate mastery in advance.

CHAPTER 6

Compacting and Differentiating Curriculum When the Content Is New to Students

Facilitator note: Give teachers at least one week's notice to prepare for this session, and follow up that notice with a reminder. The differentiated lesson plans shared by participants in this session will provide for in-depth discussion of how the strategies work in a variety of subjects, grade levels, and instructional approaches. For this chapter, which is rich in curriculum and instructional differentiation, consider holding two or more separate meetings. Gifted-cluster teachers will appreciate the planning and collaborating time to immerse themselves in the differentiation strategies presented in chapter 6.

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 6 session:

- Read chapter 6.
- Select one lesson that you plan to use in an upcoming unit.
- Design a Depth of Knowledge (DOK)–leveled set of activities in a tiered lesson format to increase the complexity of the lesson. Include two activities at each DOK level. Prepare to discuss with the group.

Activities

As a group:

1. Discuss how pretesting, flexible grouping, and curriculum compacting work in conjunction.
2. Discuss how and when independent study can benefit a student.
3. Participants each share their DOK-leveled lesson activities with the group for feedback.

CHAPTER 8

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the SCGM

Facilitator note: *One week before this session, send participants the following message: “Dear PLC members: To prepare for our upcoming session discussing chapter 8, I request that each of you read the “Guiding Questions” posed at the beginning of the chapter. Then select one of the questions to study thoroughly. You will be responsible for leading a discussion that answers that guiding question. I encourage you to select your question as soon as possible and notify me. Please let me know your first choice and your second choice. If another person in our PLC has already selected your first choice, I will assign you your second choice. I will lead the discussion for the remaining questions.*

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 8 session:

- Read chapter 8.
- Select two of the “Guiding Questions” from the beginning of the chapter and inform your group facilitator of your first and second choice. Your facilitator will create a schedule so that the group discusses each question.

Activities

As a group:

1. Take turns leading discussions that answer your selected guiding questions. Refer participants to the corresponding pages in the book during your discussion.
2. Refer to “Figure 8-1 Sample Goals for the SCGM” (page 208). Use this structure to create a three-year implementation plan for your school.

About the Authors

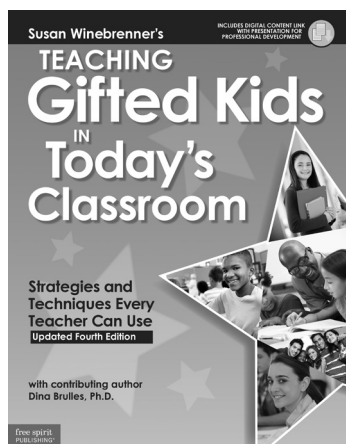
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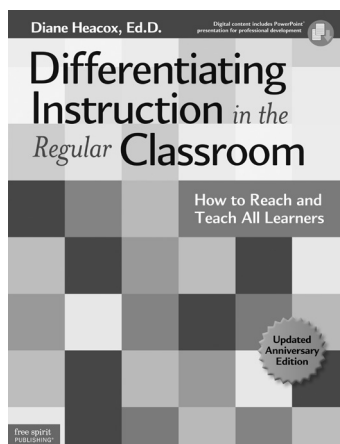
Susan Winebrenner, M.S., is a full-time consultant in staff development. She presents workshops and seminars nationally and internationally, helping educators translate educational research into classroom practice.



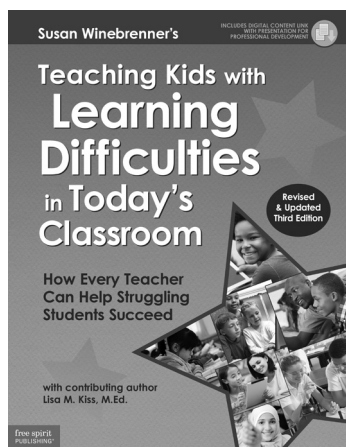
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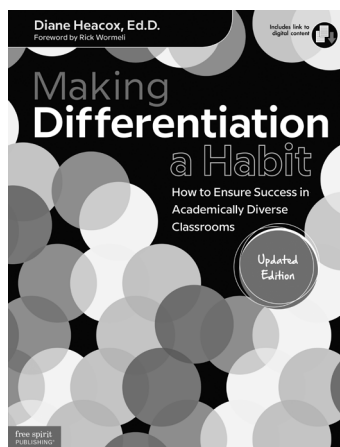
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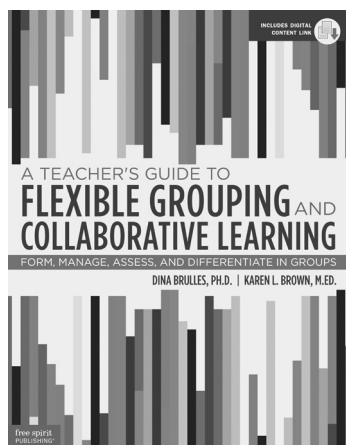
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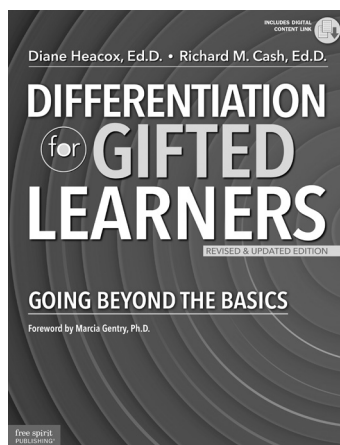
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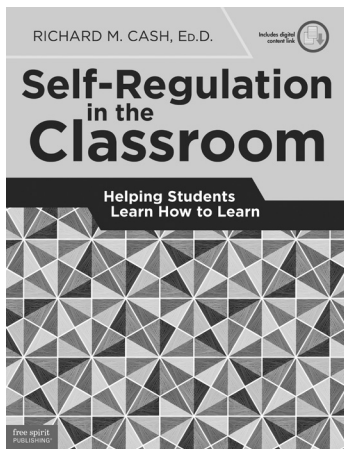
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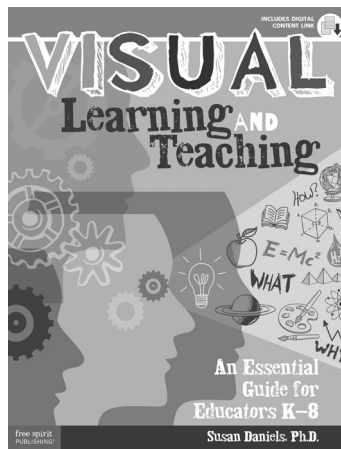
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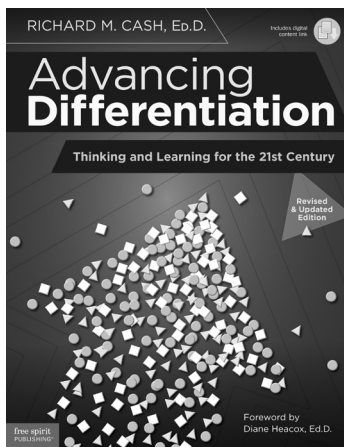
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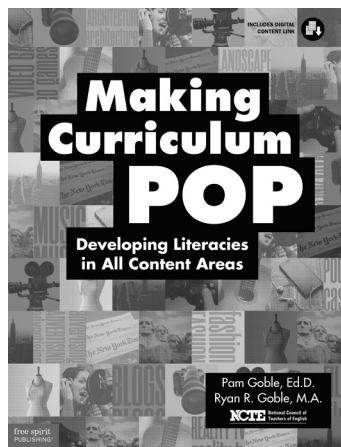
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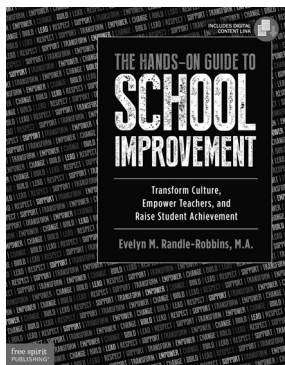
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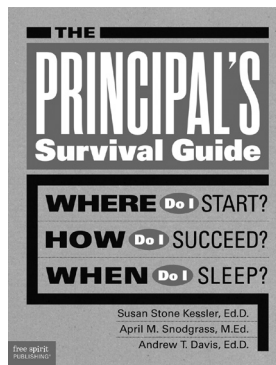
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