

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: *STUDY GROUPS AND ACTION RESEARCH*

Study Groups:

A study group is a group of teachers and/or administrators who come together to learn more about a particular topic, such as discipline, cooperative learning, or curricular or instructional programs. The groups review and discuss the literature, may visit model programs, and meet to discuss the potential of the practices or program for their school or classrooms. The participants develop new skills and understandings as a result of the study/discussions that they pursue before trying out a new approach to teaching. They also learn a great deal during their sharing and problem-solving sessions.

How to Implement a Study Group:

- List and prioritize areas to be explored.
- Establish an agenda and meeting times.
- Decide on readings and disseminate them prior to the meeting.
- Share strategies that evolve from the readings.
- Possibly develop and provide a mini-lesson.
- Provide time for questioning.
- Implement new strategies and report back.
- Assign new topics and/or readings.
- Keep a record of new methods/theories/approaches learned.

Remember: If you commit to the process, you need to prepare and participate.

Action Research:

Action research is a form of job-embedded professional development which involves educators in the process of raising questions about how to improve school or classroom practices, studying the literature and research related to their questions(s), and then selecting an approach or approaches that might result in improving current practice. This is followed by developing a plan to implement the most promising approach or program. The field test or a pilot is then conducted, data regarding the effectiveness of the program or approach is collected and analyzed, and then shared and discussed by those in the action research group. Based upon the results, group members decide what they will do to implement what they have learned in their work setting. Often the results are shared with others in their school or district. **Note: Action Research Proposals require the approval of the supervisor, building principal, and the Curriculum Office.**

How to Implement an Action Research Plan:

- Identify a problem or concern.
- Consider ways to frame the problem.
- Establish the purpose and goals.
- Collect data and conduct research.
- Analyze data and research.
- Report results; make recommendations.
- Field test.
- Determine impact and benefits of field test.
- Apply what is learned through implementation of new strategies.

See accompanying handout/guide entitled "What is the Action Research Process."