

**TEACHING & LEARNING  
COOPERATIVE**

**SAMPLE  
ACTIVITIES**

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT SUBJECT MATTER OR STUDENT FOCUS**

**Effective teachers have a very special and unique knowledge of how to teach content area concepts and principles to students. In order to successfully support student learning of subject matter, however, the classroom teacher must also have a broad-based knowledge of the subjects they teach. Knowledge of subject matter includes knowledge of the concepts and structure of the subject as well as the processes utilized by professionals in those content fields. The opportunities for enriching content knowledge are varied and may include, but are not limited to university course work, collaboration with professionals in related industry/business fields, and collegial study groups.**

### **HOW IT WORKS:**

- Identify subject-related professional goal(s) and the content to be studied.
- Identify curriculum and/or student need(s) that align with proposed study.
- Determine the most appropriate activity(ies) to meet your goals.
- Make the necessary arrangements for participation in the selected activity(ies).
- Establish a timeline for acquiring the new subject knowledge, for designing and implementing related classroom activities, and for reflecting on the impact of the classroom implementation on student learning.
- Evaluate the success of your content-focused efforts.

### **REFERENCES:**

- Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, (1999). Ideas that Work: Science Professional Development. <http://www.enc.org>
- Loucks-Horsley, Susan, et.al, (1998). Designing Professional Development for Teachers of Science and Mathematics. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

# PROFESSIONAL STUDY TEAMS

**Professional Study Teams are small groups of teachers that select a topic to study and gather regularly to support each other's learning. Teachers with similar work assignments or across grade levels or disciplines come together to engage in professional discussions, share classroom experiences, and reflect on professional issues in order to grow professionally and improve student learning.**

## HOW IT WORKS:

- Identify members of the study team.
- Select a facilitator, if appropriate.
- Identify student need.
- Brainstorm list of topics for study that address the student need.
- Identify appropriate resources.
- Develop an action plan that includes the steps the group will take to pursue the identified study, including classroom implementation.
- Implement the action plan.
- Evaluate the results of the group effort and the impact of the study on student learning.

## REFERENCES:

- Murphy, C.U. (Summer, 1999). "Study Groups". Journal of Staff Development, 20 (3), 49-51.
- Routman, Regie.(March, 2002). "Teacher Talk". Educational Leadership, 59 (6), 32-35.

## **WORKSHOPS, IN-SERVICES, CONFERENCES, & COURSES**

Workshops, in-services, conferences, and courses are structured opportunities for teachers to learn from facilitators or presenters with special expertise, as well as from peers. These professional development sessions occur outside of the classroom and often bring together teachers from different locations for common experiences. The structures of workshops, in-services, conferences and courses provide teachers with opportunities to focus on topics of interest and to connect with outside sources of knowledge and/or expertise. Although individuals each bring something different to the experience and inevitably take away something different, these structures can benefit many learners.

### **HOW IT WORKS:**

- Select a workshop, in-service, conference, or course to attend.
- To receive Continuing Education units, submit a proposal for approval prior to attending the professional development activity.
- Attend and actively participate in the chosen activity. Courses, by definition, will be ongoing while workshops, in-services, and conferences will be implemented for a more limited duration.
- Process the information as directed during the activity: journal writing, analysis of case studies, role playing, small group discussions, engaging in problem-solving, creating classroom materials, modeling lessons, and/or engaging in professional dialogue/study.
- Develop an action plan that includes development and implementation of new knowledge/skills.
- Implement your plan and reflect on the resultant student outcomes.

### **REFERENCES:**

Loucks-Horsley, Susan (1998), Designing Professional Development for Teachers of Science and Mathematics, Chapter 4. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

# LESSON STUDY

**Lesson study is an effective professional development activity for elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Teachers engage in lesson study in order to continually refine their understanding of how to provide rich experiences for their students. Lesson study begins by teachers agreeing on an important goal that they all want to achieve with their students. The group then carefully plans actual lessons, known as study lessons, which serve as a concrete way to explore the chosen study goal. One or more teachers then teach the lesson in their classroom(s) while the others observe. Finally, the teachers revise and re-teach the lesson based on the group's observations and discussion of the trial instruction.**

## HOW IT WORKS:

- Form a group of teachers who teach the same grade level or content area. Choose lesson study goals that focus on skills or concepts you want to develop in students across grades and in a particular content area. These could be “essential learnings” at the elementary level. Specific sub-goals may also be identified.
- Meet for one-two hours per week, for 3-6 weeks to plan a single lesson or a series of lessons based on the goals the group has identified.
- Carefully define the instructional objectives for the lesson(s), the activities students will be asked to do, and the procedures for determining if the instructional goals have been met. Anticipate the reactions students will have to the lesson tasks and the responses the teacher can offer.
- One teacher implements the lesson(s) with students while the other group members observe.
- Hold a follow-up session during which the teacher who taught the lesson describes what she/he thought about the lesson, the class, and the materials. The observers offer feedback. Review how well the goals of the lesson were met, discuss how instructional time was utilized, and consider the effectiveness of the questions posed in the lesson.
- Work as a group to revise the lesson(s), and re-teach the lesson(s).
- Repeat the process for 2-3 lessons or series of lessons per year, taking turns with the implementation/teaching.
- Final Reflection

## REFERENCES:

- Lewis, C & Tsuchida, I. (1998). "A Lesson is Like a Swiftly Flowing River: How Research Lessons Improve Japanese Education". *American Educator*, 22(4), 12-17, 50-52.
- Lewis, C. & Tsuchida, I. (1997). "Planned Educational Change in Japan: The Case of Elementary Science Instruction". *Journal of Educational Policy*, 12 (5), 313-331.

# TEACHER RESEARCH

**Teacher research, also called action research, is a professional activity that enables teachers to find answers to their own questions about how children learn. Teacher research supports teacher learning and action. Teacher researchers begin with questions about what they know, observe, and experience in their teaching and their students' learning. Teacher researchers collect data by engaging in a structured and reflective look at their own students. They analyze their data, form conclusions about approaches to teaching that most effectively promote student learning, and take action to shape their practices accordingly.**

## HOW IT WORKS:

- Begin with questions about teaching and learning. For example, questions may focus on:
  - Specific concerns
  - Assumptions
  - Teaching practices
  - Students' learning/understanding
  - Students' families and communities
  - School policies
  - Instructional programs
- Determine a method to collect and organize relevant data about the research topic.
- Collect data. Data may be in the form of observation notes, surveys, interviews, journals, test scores, grades, videos, and/or student work.
- Analyze the data. Analysis may take the form of summaries of interviews, tallies of responses, rubric evaluations, pre/post survey results, and/or counting types of responses or reactions.
- Interpret the data. Find patterns, infer cause and effect, identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Take action. Make decisions to continue or change current approaches. Determine if further research is needed.
- Final Reflection

## REFERENCES:

- Hubbard, R. & Power, B. (1999). Living the Questions: A Guide for Teacher-Researchers. York: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Hubbard, R. & Power, B. (1993). The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher-Researchers. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

## COACHING/COLLABORATION/FACILITATION

**This is a professional development activity that is collaborative in nature. It may include peers pursuing identified professional topics and goals together or it may be a mentoring relationship between an experienced teacher and less experienced colleague(s). Regardless of the relationship between the participants, the activity is guided by clearly identified professional goals and collaborative activity.**

### HOW IT WORKS

- Determine an area or areas for focused study with one or more teaching colleagues.
- Generate a list of topics you wish to study, and/or readings you wish to explore, and concerns you have about classroom practice and student learning.
- Hold an initial meeting to agree upon a protocol, set ground rules, and determine operating procedures such as meeting time/place, roles, and responsibilities.
- Select initial reading(s) and/or topic(s); if mentoring, identifying initial focus.
- Each member accomplishes the reading/task and responds to it in writing; if mentoring/coaching, accomplish the first coaching observation.
- At the next meeting, members discuss the reading or topic and share their written responses. If mentoring/coaching, share observation reactions and scripted notes.
- Agree upon another reading or topic for the next meeting. Repeat the cycle, incorporating classroom action based on new learning, as appropriate. If mentoring/coaching, select next target.
- Evaluate the experience and impact of the work on professional practice and student performance throughout the process and at the end of the time span identified in the activity proposal.

### REFERENCES:

Costa, A. & Garmston, R. (1994). Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools. Norwood, MA; Christopher-Gordon.

# NATIONAL BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS CERTIFICATION PROCESS

**National Board certification is a demonstration of your teaching practice as measured against high and rigorous standards. It is a symbol of commitment to excellence in teaching. National Board certification is a recognition that you have been assessed by your peers as one who is an accomplished teacher, makes sound professional judgments about student learning, and acts effectively on those judgments. Offered on a voluntary basis, the National Board certification process is a means to professional reflection and growth. Candidates describe the process as a way to deepen subject matter knowledge and become more skillful in daily classroom instruction and student assessment.**

## HOW IT WORKS:

- To qualify for Continuing Education Units, you must submit a proposal form, providing all the information requested and collaborate with a Board Certified Teacher throughout the process.
- Attend one or more PFT/PUSD sponsored orientation workshops to learn about the specifics of the process and to qualify for financial support related to the application fees.
- Complete the application and submit it to PFT/PUSD to be processed and submitted to the National Board.
- Download the portfolio directions and the certificate standards for your certificate area from the National Board website.
- Begin gathering information and planning your portfolio entries. Identify growth areas for on-going professional reading.
- Participate in the day-long workshop provided by PFT/PUSD.
- Attend optional after school support sessions and/or
- Connect with a Board Certified Teacher who will provide support and constructive feedback throughout the process.
- Meet all deadlines established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and complete all requirements in a manner that demonstrates professional effort.

## REFERENCES:

American Federation of Teachers (2001). National Board Certification: A Guide for Candidates.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards website. [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

# REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

**Reflective Journaling is a professional development approach that is teacher-research oriented and based on learning through writing. Reflective journaling can be an individual or group activity. Through the reflective journaling process, teachers develop a professional voice and gain insight about teaching and learning. Reflective journaling helps teachers learn by articulating their individual and shared professional experiences.**

## HOW IT WORKS:

- Identify members of the journaling group and a group facilitator.
- Generate a list of topics you wish to study, readings you wish to explore, and concerns you have about classroom practice and student learning.
- Hold an initial meeting to agree upon a protocol, select readings or topics, set group ground rules, and determine operating procedures such as meeting time/place, roles, and responsibilities.
- Assign readings or topics for the next meeting.
- Each member responds to the reading or topic by writing an initial journal entry.
- At the second meeting, members discuss the reading or topic and share their journal entries. A second journal entry is written in response to this meeting. The second entry may include what was learned, new insights, changes in thinking, and additional questions.
- Agree upon another reading or topic for the next meeting. Repeat the journaling-meeting cycle until the group establishes steps for specific action based on new learning.
- Evaluate the experience and impact of the group's work on professional practice and student performance.

## REFERENCES:

Killion, J.& Todnem, G. (1991). "Reflection for Action: A process for personal reflection". Educational Leadership, 48,14-17.