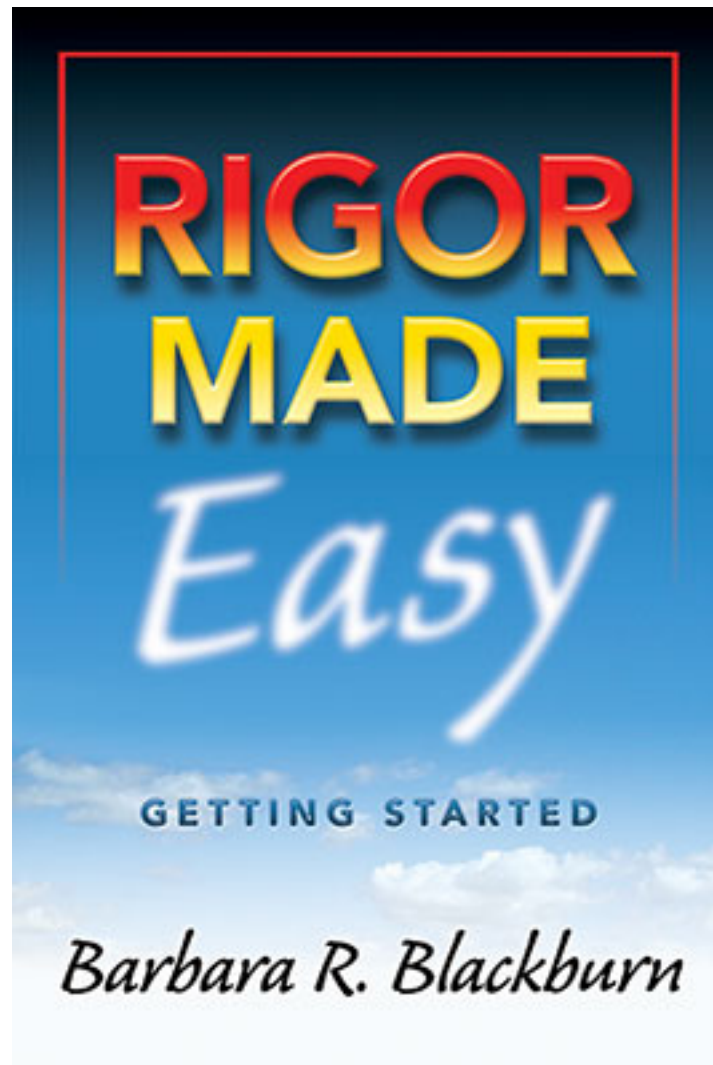


Handbook for Facilitating Book Groups or Studies



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Suggestions for Using *Rigor MADE EASY* with Book Clubs or Study Groups

Effective Staff Development

While working on my doctorate, I studied schools that had won a national award for their staff development (Blackburn, 2000). From that, I learned there are seven key elements of effective staff development.

Key Elements of Effective Staff Development

- Clear purpose linked to research, student data, goals, and needs.
- Accountability through classroom use of ideas and impact on students.
- Development of a common, shared language.
- Shared decision-making that includes an emphasis on teacher input.
- Incorporation of relevant, practical, hands-on activities.
- Integration of opportunities for follow-up and application.
- Strong leadership and a positive, collegial atmosphere.

Book clubs and study groups are an effective component of a staff development program. Hopefully, you have chosen to study *Rigor Made EASY* because it matches a need or goal in your school. Through a book study, your faculty will develop a common, shared language and perspective of rigor, which can serve as a foundation for future growth. Through the *Points to Ponder* at the end of each chapter in the book and the suggestions provided below, you will be able to incorporate

hands-on activities for follow-up which will also allow for accountability through classroom use of the material.

Another option is to jigsaw the book, having different teachers, grade levels, subject-area groups or departments present information and applications from the chapters. Chapters Two through Six are filled with classroom activities, can be presented in any order, and are ideal for the jigsaw process. Finally, through the leadership of the faculty and administrators in your building, you will be able to tailor the material to the specific needs of your students, in order to maximize learning.

General Suggestions

If you are a facilitator or a member of a book club or study group, many teachers may benefit from discussing ideas and concerns with each chapter. You may want to hold roundtable discussions after the chapters to help faculty build on one another's ideas. This will also help in establishing or implementing school-wide initiatives as each teacher will have input and ownership over the strategies discussed. Within each chapter, there are multiple application opportunities. This may allow for teachers to choose a strategies or activity to implement or adapt. You will also find open-ended reflection questions for each chapter provided in the *Points to Ponder*, which may be used as a springboard for group discussion. A handout that can be used to complete the reflections is found at the end of this document. However, please keep in mind that many of the questions ask teachers to analyze their own behaviors and practices with a critical eye; therefore, unless there is an atmosphere of trust in your group, some teachers may be less willing to share that information publicly.

Overall Guiding Questions and Activities

The activities below are divided into three sections: Pre-Reading Activities for teachers to complete prior to reading the book; During Reading Activities, which can be used anytime during the discussions; and After Reading Activities, to be completed after teachers have finished *Rigor Made EASY*. You may want to balance the use of these with the more specific suggestions within the book to best meet the needs of your particular situation and/or group.

Pre-reading Activities

Sentence Starters

Write the following phrases on chart paper. Post them around the room and ask teachers to anonymously respond to each using Post-It notes. Group each set of notes by category, and use as a discussion starter.

- What is rigor?
- What are students doing in a rigorous classroom?
- What are teachers doing in a rigorous classroom?

Challenges....and Solutions!

On an index card, each person writes one of the biggest classroom or student challenges he or she is facing related to rigor. 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.

During Reading Activities

Learning Walk

As teachers begin to implement some of the strategies, do a learning walk. Ask teachers who are willing to visit each other's classrooms. During the visits, ask participants to look for positive examples of rigor, motivation, and engagement.

Write a Letter to a Parent

Draft a letter to a parent or family member explain the concept of rigor, and how increasing rigor in your classroom will help his or her son or daughter succeed.

After Reading Activities

Have a Conversation with the Author!

Barbara is always happy to discuss reactions or questions from your group. She has created an open group on LinkedIn (you are not required to be a LinkedIn member to join). Post your questions or comments for her at http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4321321&trk=hb_side_g.

Share Your Success

Ask teachers to share their biggest success related to rigor in their classrooms or with their students. Celebrate in a way that is unique and suitable to your school.

Create a Plan

Work together in small groups to create a blueprint or plan for increasing rigor in your school. Include the next steps and any needed tools or resources.

Dr. Blackburn loves to hear your questions, comments, or successes! She regularly includes stories in her books from teachers and leaders. If you have tried an idea, or adapted a strategy, or you have another activity that helps your students thrive, please contact her:

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She is also available for video chats or presentations, on-site presentations, or other professional development. See her website for more information.

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