

APPENDIX A

Suggestions for Using *Rigor for Students with Special Needs* with Book Clubs or Study Groups

Effective Staff Development

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

Key Elements of Effective Staff Development

1. Clear purpose linked to research, student data, goals, and needs
2. Accountability through classroom use of ideas and impact on students
3. Development of a common, shared language
4. Shared decision making that includes an emphasis on teacher input
5. Incorporation of relevant, practical, hands-on activities
6. Integration of opportunities for follow-up and application
7. 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 for Students with Special Needs* 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 portions in the book labeled “A Reflective Moment” and the suggestions provided below, you can incorporate hands-on activities for follow-up that will also allow for accountability through classroom use of the material. 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

Teachers may benefit from discussing ideas and concerns by chapter. If you are a facilitator or member of a book club or study group, 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 schoolwide initiatives, as each teacher will have input and ownership over the strategies discussed. Barbara has this facilitator's guide posted on her website, along with free downloads from the book. Keep in mind there are chapter-specific questions in each "A Reflective Moment" section. There is also a summary at the end of each chapter. Please consider 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 first set of 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 the book. The ideas are purposely generic. Balance the use of these with the more specific suggestions throughout the book to best meet the needs of your particular situation and/or group.

Prereading 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 them as discussion starters.

Rigor is . . .

Rigor is not . . .

The biggest challenge to working with students who have special needs in our school is . . .

I wish . . .

Find the Solution!

On an index card, each person writes one of the biggest classroom or student-specific 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 challenges they drew, as well as the solutions they found in the book.

Pipe-Cleaner Responses

Each teacher uses a pipe cleaner to form a shape that represents how his or her students respond to the notion of rigor or challenging work. Ask each to share the shape with the group and explain it.

During-Reading Activities

Learning Walk

As you begin to implement some of the strategies, do a learning walk. Find other teachers who are willing, and visit one another's classrooms. Look for examples of rigor, motivation, and engagement. Discuss the positive examples you see.

Write a Letter to a New Teacher

Write a letter to a first-year teacher using the following terms:

Rigor Intrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic Motivation

Accommodation Modification

Myth

Diagnostic Assessment

Concrete-Representational-Abstract

Scaffolding

My Head Is Spinning!

Draw two heads: one smiling and one with a question mark. In the smiling head, write ideas from the book that you connect with. In the one with a question mark, write questions you have from each chapter.

Try It Out!

Choose at least three strategies discussed in the book. Implement them individually, and then discuss in the book group.

After-Reading Activities

Author Interview

Write a list of interview questions or a letter in which you ask the authors a series of questions about some of the ideas expressed in the book.

Sharing Our Successes

Have each teacher take a picture of the student work that resulted from one of the strategies suggested in the book. Then, ask the teacher to write what he or she learned from the activity. Create a bulletin board in the faculty workroom or lounge to showcase student and teacher learning!

Blueprint for Literacy

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