**The Teacher Center of Broome County**



##### Teacher Study Group Grant Award

**2014-15**

# **FINAL REPORT DUE BY APRIL 13, 2015**

**DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES**

**STUDY GROUP TOPIC: History Repeats Itself in the Classroom, Too: Prior Knowledge and Implementing the Common Core State Standards**

**List of group members: Tim Petras, Melissa Fye, Steve Moschak**

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**The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and through e-mail using this form. Send print copy Teacher Center @ WSKG, BOCES Mail Drop #22 and e-mail file to** [**bctc@btboces.org**](mailto:bctc@btboces.org)**. This report will be posted on the Teacher Center web page at http://teachercenter.info.**

## 1. Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

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| *Our goal for this group is to implement the techniques and skills that we learn though the book study to aid our students’ reading and writing skills, so as they align with what is expected by the Common Core. Through our meetings we hope to share our insights from our book analysis to create lesson plans that better align with the Common Core. In addition, we hope to discuss the successes and failures of our attempts to implement these strategies into our classrooms. This will be aided by the analysis of student work samples that are completed in our classrooms. In terms of outcomes specifically related to the Common Core, we will aim to improve students’ ability to:*   * *cite specific textual evidence (CC: Key Ideas and Details)* * *evaluate authors different point of view (CC: Craft and Structure)* * *integrate information from diverse sources (CC: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas)* * *provide clear and coherent writing in which the development and style is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience (CC: Production and Distribution of Writing)* * *conduct standard research to answer a questions (CC: Research to Build and Present Knowledge)*   *We will use these guidelines throughout our discussion to ensure we are working to improve these areas in our classrooms.* |

## 2. Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

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| Pretty much without fail, our group met once a week. If there was a week we could not meet we met twice the following week to catch-up. All three group members read *History Repeats Itself in the Classroom, Too! Prior Knowledge and Implementing the Common Core State Standards*. Overall, the group found this book to be very beneficial and allowed us to implement many of the Common Core ideas for ELA and social studies into our classrooms during the current school year. During depart meetings group members were able to share the information learned through meaningful discussion; these discussions often allowed us to think deeper about our teaching practices as they relate to the Common Core and the Framework for 21st Century Learning. |

## 3. Describe how the action plan was implemented.

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| Before each weekly meeting group members read and analyzed an assigned chapter. At the beginning of the meeting we typically recapped previous chapters before discussion of the current section. Since each chapter gave specific ideas for classroom instruction we were able to talk about what worked in our classes and what we struggled with. We brought examples of student work with us to each meeting as well as to department meetings. Before the end of each meeting we also had a plan as to what classroom examples we would try for the following week. We documented all work completed including: chapter summaries, specific classroom examples for all grades taught, sample essential questions, sample readings, sample writing assignments and projects, connections to the ELA and social studies Common Core, and the Framework for 21st Century Learning. During this process we developed a successful professional learning community that will help us to ensure our students are receiving quality instruction pertinent to the Common Core. |

## 4. Evaluate the impact of the study group effort on teacher/student performance.

## How has this study group changed you as a teacher? Do you anticipate that any of your teaching practices will have changed?

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| *We will use our periodic assessments results which fall perfectly within the work study time frame. We will be able to compare the results of the assessments given prior to the study group (which measure reading comprehension and writing ability) with the assessments given during and after the study group. Ideally, after utilizing the techniques we discussed and developed over the two month period of our study group, we should be able to see results in our students’ essay scores and reading assignments and specifically our 4th ¼ assessments scores. Long-term, over the course of the following year(s), teachers in our study group will be using many of the strategies that we have learned from this study group. Our scores on essay and reading assignments compared to the previous years should see a distinct increase.*  Overall, there was a positive impact on both our students and our own performance. In terms of our own performance, while we regularly speak during the week, many times these conversations are short and general in regards to what is going on in our classrooms. Thanks to the additional time that we had to speak we found that our conversations could go into further details and that we could piggyback on each other’s ideas to develop lessons that were far more elaborate than what we could have been created without the book study group. In addition, we found that together we had a plethora of resources available that we were not all aware of.  In terms of student performance, as you will see below there was definite improvement in terms of their performance on their periodic assessments. We think this is because of the more targeted discussions that we were able to have and the specific action plans that we could create at our meetings that targeting specific goals for the students.  We have talked about how we now think more globally as teachers. It was nice to make the connection between 7-9 (and even 10) and understand that we are teaching some of the same concepts every year. For example many of the 7th grade topics can and should be referenced in 8th, 9th, and 10th grade. This would go right in line with the books emphasis on using students’ prior knowledge base. In addition, to this we do not believe that our collaboration will end with this group and hope to continue finding the time to have more lengthy discussions about our teaching and classroom tools. |

## 5. What evidence do you expect to see of student achievement improving as a result of your participating in this study group?

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| Long term, we hope that the positive trends that we are seeing in the before/after study that we did continues, especially in 10 weeks when we give students their final exams, which will include another DBQ. Even longer term we hope that this will better prepare students for the new Common Core Regents exams for Social Studies. These skills will be essential for the students to be successful on the upcoming exams. We would also hope that we could share some of the things that we have learned with our fellow colleagues as they could find some of this information valuable for their own courses. |

6. What evidence is there that the goals of the study group has/has not been met?

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| As you can see this was our most recent periodic assessment given at all grade levels. We teach grades 7, 8, and 9 and all of these grade levels have seen increasing trends in terms of student performance on the essay sections. This assessment in particular was a good predictor of students’ reading comprehension and writing ability because the DBQ utilizing reading passages with questions, in addition to requiring students to write an essay based on the reading comprehension. In addition, it fits perfectly with the discussion of the book study group because students on this type of assessment are rewards for eliciting prior knowledge (outside information) and adding it to their essays. This is especially important for a student to get a score of 3 or higher and grades 7-9 saw increasing across the board in this subset of scores.  One area that we have not necessarily met was analyzing the point of view. This might be a section that becomes extra pertinent with the new Common Core tests as it is an important part of the standards. We agreed that we need to brainstorms additional ways to at least begin to do this more in our classrooms.  Another area that we are lacking in in grades 7-9 is the research component. This is something that we could easily do in collaboration with the ELA department who already does a form of a research project. We are hoping for beginning this conversation with the ELA department prior to the end of the school year. |

## 7. Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

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| The three educators participating in this study group have worked together for more than eight years as members of the History department. While we have worked together countless times on curriculum development, this book proved to be an outstanding resource that introduced many new concepts to our existing group dynamic. While true collaboration is best achieved through a structured process for exchanging insights and content, even informal teacher-to-teacher collaboration can have a positive impact on students. Teachers, especially teachers who may be the only one of a particular subject in a grade level, as is the case in small district such as Harpursville, need to provide learning communities and create professional development opportunities for themselves. All professionals need time to collaborate, to think and to reenergize and each of us must strive to be the linchpin we are looking for. Further, when the relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction, that is, when school capital is strong, student achievement scores improve. |

## 8. How can we make this study group program better?

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| Overall, we really enjoyed meeting together as we all have a great working relationship and respect for each other’s ideas. The one issue that we had was the fact that this book was probably not the best option in terms of getting the most bang for the buck. This is not the Teacher Centers fault and we did read the review, but if it was possible to get the book a little earlier and allow the option to return the book for another option that would eliminate the chance of picking a book that is sub-par. It really only was a minor issue and we dealt with it and still came out gaining a great deal of knowledge. |

A final report is due two weeks after the last meeting or by April 13, 2015, whichever date is first. The report must be typed and double-spaced using the provided form. One copy must be submitted in print and the file must be submitted through e-mail to bctc@btboces.org. Return to the Teacher Center (Mail Drop #22), 601 Gates Rd., Vestal, NY