

Consider Outside Specialists to Support your Lesson Study Work

An element that can greatly enhance lesson study is inclusion of an outside specialist, such as a teacher or researcher who is highly knowledgeable about the subject matter under study, how to teach it, or both. It is often most effective to involve an outside specialist early on, so that the specialist has a chance to contribute ideas about the direction of the work, to suggest curricular resources, and schedule time to serve as a commentator on the research lesson.

An outside specialist can greatly ease the work of teachers in pinpointing useful materials within the huge variety of purportedly useful internet and print resources. However, the regular presence of a subject matter specialist (particularly one who quickly jumps in to help, and who team members look to as an authority) can also keep teachers from doing certain kinds of learning.

If you choose to use an outside specialist, make sure he or she understands the collaborative, student-focused nature of lesson study. You may want to share with the specialist the differences between lesson study and traditional expert-led professional development.

| TRADITIONAL | LESSON STUDY |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Begins with answer | Begins with question |
| Driven by outside “expert” | Driven by participants |
| Communication flow: trainer -> teachers | Communication flow: among teachers |
| Hierarchical relations between trainer and learners | Reciprocal relations among learners |
| Research informs practice | Practice is research |
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There are resources on this website to support specialists prepare their commentary on the research lesson day in our Courses section.

