

Assessment Live! Study Guide

Implementing New Strategies Is Easier Said Than Done!

One of the hardest ways to get better as a teacher is to try to go it alone. Having spent more than three decades in the classroom, I've found that there is little support for change. Yes, occasionally we teachers are exposed to some top-notch professional development, but once the experts head back to the airport, no matter how energized and enthused we might be at that particular moment, our resolutions to do things differently often fall short. Why is that? It's not like we don't *want* to be better teachers, right? The problem is that changing the way we teach means taking risks, risks that often first produce outright failure or, at best, mediocre results. Sad, alone, and frustrated, we lick our wounds and retreat to the tried and true, the comfortable if uninspired strategies and assessments we have used previously.

Now here's the good news: though the above drama is far too familiar, it is not the only professional performance in which you may be cast. Rather than playing in a one-person show, try being in a play with several other actors. While a successful one-person show lets you take all the credit, a failure offers a spectacularly long and hard fall. On the other hand, in a play there is a synergy among players. If your cast members are the "real deal," they'll make each other look better with their encouragement, inspiration, and energy. They'll come prepared to play their parts, but they'll also generously offer you some insight into your character that maybe you can't see because you are standing too close and looking too hard. Also, they've got your back; they know the job is hard and risky. If you flub a line, your actor colleagues will take it in stride, improvise, and move you back on track. And of course, you've got their backs as well and want them to shine just as brightly.

A professional book club or collegial support group offers you the same help that the best acting troupe does. Even though you all have to go back and teach in your individual classrooms, your group is the safe harbor needed to take some risks so that you can practice and hone your craft: sharing and tweaking ideas, practicing in front of a supportive audience, trusting each other to help problem solve, reading the words of some disembodied teacher-book writer and adapting the author's "perfect world" strategy suggestions into lesson plans that are useful to your students. And above all, your group should be fun! It should offer you and your colleagues a chance to share and talk meaningfully with adults. It should offer you a chance to know each other better and grow together. Your time together is something everyone should look forward to. Keeping that in mind, here are some tips for getting the most out of your meetings.

Group Size

The best size for a study group is four to six members. With more than six individual members, each will have fewer opportunities to share. Also, when a group is larger, members might feel less important. If your group has only four members, an absent member is going to be greatly missed and will therefore feel greater responsibility to the group. On the other hand, a group with eight or ten members is sometimes less devoted to each other. People might miss meetings more easily, thinking, “There are plenty of other members to keep the discussion going; I won’t be missed.” The best study group is one that’s tight and committed to one another and it’s hard to get that bonding in larger groups. So if you have fifteen people reading my book, divide into three groups of five for most of each meeting.

Group Makeup

Whether your group is heterogeneous (mixed grade levels or subject areas) or homogeneous depends on your goals. It can be enlightening to talk regularly with colleagues in other content areas because it often turns out that they are interested in the same learning goals for their students as you are with yours. But the really great thing is that people in different content areas see the same strategy or problem from an angle unique to their background and subject area. You can learn a lot about how to reach students in your content area by problem solving with those in a variety of disciplines.

On the flip side, study groups offer a great way for grade levels or departments to implement new strategies in a consistent way across the board. And since this book is all about alternative ways to assess student learning, it would make perfect sense for the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers to work together to implement these strategies in order to scaffold their students’ experiences.

Meeting Time

Whether you meet before or after school depends on your group’s schedule. Try to allow sixty to ninety minutes because it takes some time to warm up, and as you’ll see in the example agendas, one of the components of this study guide is experiential learning, which enables you to have worked through an activity or assessment with your study group before you take it back to your classroom to try with your students. That way, you’ll know how the assessment feels and will have debriefed it with your colleagues before you spring it on your students. This practice will increase your confidence as well as enable you to increase your students’ comfort levels as they try something new. Also, your study group practice will give you the opportunity to predict and head off potential problems.

And if you do decide to meet after school, make sure there is food! Every teacher I’ve ever known is famished by the end of the day. The spread doesn’t have to be elaborate, but it does have to be there.

Meeting Frequency

You'll need one specific meeting to address Chapter 1. For all of the other chapters, you'll need two meetings. First, you'll discuss and experience an activity or assessment and then have a follow-up meeting one or two weeks later to debrief classroom implementation and problem solve. Plan on a minimum of six meetings, which will provide the opportunity to organize your study group, discuss Chapter 1, try out some of the activities in Chapter 2, and explore one assessment in depth. Then, depending on the goals of your members, your study group can decide how many more meetings you want to schedule.

Preparing to Discuss the Reading

For each meeting, all members should come prepared with some good discussion questions and notes to throw out to the group. Hopefully everyone will own a copy of the book so that they can mark it up to their heart's content. If not, use sticky notes to flag important text—not as elegant as annotating the text directly, but a serviceable alternative. Plus, if you must resort to sticky notes, you'll have a chance to experience what your students probably encounter every day as they work with books that were signed out to them in August and must be returned in pristine condition the following June.

If you glanced ahead in this study guide, you'll notice some specific discussion questions for each chapter. Rather than turning to these first, I suggest that you save them as a last resort, maybe if you have a few minutes left in your meeting or if you just get curious and start wondering how my discussion questions compare with the ones your members brought to the group. You'll get the most out of this book if you focus on your experiential learning first because it is so much more powerful. And when you bring your classroom experiences back to the group, you may find that your members have plenty to talk about and you won't need those questions at all. So feel free to skip them and continue your own deeper in-depth assessment investigation!

However, there is one recurring theme from the study guide questions that I do recommend your group address in your implementation discussions: what is your rationale for choosing to use this assessment with your students versus a traditional objective test or essay? You'll find plenty of support for all of the assessments in this book, but it's important that your members articulate this out loud. That way, when a curious administrator comes by to observe, you'll be ready to explain your assessment choice with strong, convincing rationale.

Speaking of that experiential learning, each member of your group will also need to bring implementation ideas to the group. In Chapter 2, there is a buffet of activities to choose from, depending on what skills students need to practice. When preparing for this discussion, participants need to have a clear idea of which strategies they want to try in their own classrooms so that, again, the group can experience these strategies together first, before taking them to the kids. This planning suggestion is also included in the study guide sample agendas for Chapter 2.

For Chapters 3 through 12, the experiential part of the meeting should arise from the members' content areas. For example, when studying tableaux, members will need to bring in a piece of text they use with their students. Then the group picks one piece and works to create a tableaux series. If the group chooses to study academic controversy, members need to bring in controversies that arise in their curriculum: Should Romeo and Juliet have gotten married without their parents' knowledge or approval? Should genetic testing for diseases be required or optional? The group picks one of the controversy topics and uses it while moving through the controversy steps.

Preparing to Discuss Classroom Implementation with Journaling

The point of reading any professional book is to find important ways to revise your own teaching and try something new that might benefit your students. Therefore, it's important that all group members work to implement the strategies discussed and then bring their reflections and questions based on their classroom practice back to the group. Since meetings can be separated by weeks, groups often find it useful to jot down some personal reflections and observations immediately after trying a new strategy. Then, at the next meeting, these notes help members remember what they observed in their classrooms, and can be used to kick-start a discussion.

Ground Rules

Since your group needs to be tight and synergized, it's important to come up with a set of rules everyone is willing to stick to. Social psychologists call these *group norms*. When my students are meeting in their literature circles for the very first time, I ask them to agree on four to five ground rules so that they can enjoy some good times and success together. Their rules usually look something like this:

1. Have the reading done.
2. Come with interesting questions/points to discuss.
3. Actively participate in the discussion.
4. Respect other people's ideas.
5. Have fun.

Whatever rules your group decides on, beginning your study group with a clear set of expectations is important. Also, don't be afraid to revisit your ground rules and revise them. If it turns out that everyone always comes with the reading done, but the group gets easily derailed into off-topic discussion (about the disappointing pep assembly, the disappointing administrators, the disappointing contract negotiations, etc.), then recognize the problem, figure out how to keep discussion on track, and pull out the ground rules and update them.

Share the Leadership, Share the Work

Ideally, your group will share the leadership, which means that all members will be full contributors who willingly initiate discussion as well as respond to the ideas of others. However, there are a couple of crucial jobs that should be rotated among members as your meetings progress:

- Snack provider (if you are meeting after school)
- Timekeeper/Agenda Stickler: Someone has to keep an eye on the clock and the agenda so that the group doesn't get sidetracked or run out of time before you've gotten everything done.

Install a Welcome Mat for Study Group Members

One of the best ways to learn from each other is to come in and be a part of each other's classrooms. Watching how others implement the various strategies and assessments can inform both your own teaching and that of your colleagues. Beforehand, talk with the teacher you will be visiting and determine what your role will be. There are at least three roles one can take during a visitation.

- Passive observer: The observer watches the strategy and thinks about implementation.
- Active observer: The observer watches for something specifically requested by the teacher being observed (for example, how students interpret and respond to her instructions, how specific students engage in the activity, and so on).
- Active participant: The guest teacher joins the kids in the activity. This is probably the most fun, although once you are part of the activity, your focus will shift from the teacher and classroom to your own interactions with the students as you all work together.

Agendas

You'll notice that each of the sample agendas has two recurring parts:

First, every meeting begins with an icebreaker called the Membership Grid (which you'll find included on the following page).

As your study group sits down with their snacks, the first order of business is to spend five or ten minutes interviewing each other about an interesting yet low-risk topic: favorite book, favorite movie, best vacation. Members ask questions and jot down details. From time to time, it's fun for the group members to review all the notes they've taken and talk about how they've gotten to know each other differently than when they first started working together. Another suggestion for the Membership Grid is for everyone to bring an interview topic to each meeting and then have group negotiate which one to discuss.

MEMBERSHIP GRID

Name _____

Date _____ Hour _____

Topics	Group Members' Names				

And second, every meeting ends with group processing, goal setting, and celebration. Processing focuses on how the meeting went. Questions a group might ask include:

- What's something our group did that made this meeting helpful and fun?
- What were the three most interesting items we discussed today?
- What's something I learned from each member in my group?
- What's a discussion skill our group uses really well?
- What's one thing our group might do a little differently next time we meet?

Goal setting is twofold: individual and group.

- For individual goal setting, each member publicly commits to a specific classroom implementation to report back on at the next meeting.
- For group goal setting, members negotiate the next direction their study will take. Will it be to read a new chapter or continue to experiment with the strategies and assessments they've already begun to discuss?

Sample Agendas

The numbers on the left indicate the approximate number of minutes to spend on an agenda activity, based on a meeting length of one hour; however, an hour and a half would allow the group to discuss and explore topics in greater depth and at a more leisurely pace. And of course please keep in mind that these are just sample agendas; each study group should design agendas that best suit your own goals!

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Meeting # 1: Getting Acquainted and Organized

- 10 Introductions and Membership Grid.
- 25 Write-around based on the article "School Cancels Graduation for Cheaters" (a copy of the article and write-around directions can be found at end of the sample agendas).
- 10 General Discussion: How can we develop assessments that students will feel invested in? What characteristics should they reflect?
- 10 Develop ground rules.
- 5 Agree on the next meeting date when Chapter 1 will be discussed.
Review/clarify discussion note preparation.
Decide who will bring snacks (if necessary).
Thank your colleagues for their energizing presence.
Adjourn.

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Meeting #2: Chapter 1

- 10 Membership Grid. Decide who will be this week's Timekeeper/Agenda Stickler.
- 5 Five-Minute Write: What are some assessment ideas mentioned in Chapter 1 that got you thinking?
- 25 General Discussion: Share the quickwrite and then move into the text. Take turns initiating a topic for discussion. Encourage members to turn to the page you are referencing. Feel free to read a provocative quote aloud and then get your group's reactions.
- 5 Out of all that you've discussed, what's the one idea you want to remember? Take a minute for members to each jot down their own idea, and then whip around the group to share.
- 5 Processing (decide as a group): What were the three things we did today that made this meeting energizing, informative, and enjoyable?
- 10 Agree on the next meeting date, when Chapter 2 will be discussed.
Review/clarify discussion note preparation.
Remind members that they should be on the lookout for two strategies they would like to try out and discuss at the next meeting.
Decide who will bring snacks (if necessary).
Members turn and thank each other for their energizing presence.
High five!
Adjourn.

NOTE, from Meeting #3 onward: There is a recurrent pattern of two meetings for each chapter. For each assessment, the first meeting is a time to discuss the particular strategy, try it out among colleagues, and make plans to try a version with your students. Then at the follow-up meeting, a week or two later, the group can share and debrief on what happened when members tried out the assessment with students.

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Meeting #3: Exploring Chapter 2

- 5 Membership Grid. Assign Timekeeper/Agenda Stickler.
- 5 General Discussion: Briefly discuss one important point about this chapter that needs to be remembered. Give each person a minute to respond.
- 35 Negotiate strategies to try out in the group. Each member picks their top strategy for the group to experience. After each experience, discuss how the strategy could be used, how to introduce it to students, and predict and solve potential implementation problems.
- 5 Individual Goal Setting: Which strategies will you try out in your classroom and report back on at the next meeting?

- 5 Processing (decide as a group): How did your group members have fun and help each other when trying out the strategies?
- 5 Agree on the next meeting date, when classroom strategy implementations will be discussed.
Review/clarify implementation of reflection/journaling.
Decide who will bring snacks (if necessary).
Members turn and thank each other for their energizing presence.
High five!
Adjourn.

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Meeting #4: Debriefing Chapter 2 Implementation

- 5 Membership Grid. Assign Timekeeper/Agenda Stickler.
- 30 General Discussion: Take turns describing which strategies you implemented, what seemed to work, and what problems arose. Plan implementation revisions, brainstorm solutions to problems, discuss how the skills practiced with the strategies tie in to your curricular goals and possible future live assessments.

Discuss other Chapter 2 strategies you want to implement.
- 5 One-Minute Write: What was an important idea or suggestion that originated in the group today and that you want to remember? Take a minute to write and then let each person share for a minute.
- 5 Processing (decide as a group): What's something the group would do just a little bit differently the next time members discuss how they implemented a strategy in their classroom?
- 10 Skim through remaining chapters and negotiate an assessment everyone is interested in pursuing.
- 5 Agree on the next meeting date and on which chapter will be discussed.
Review/clarify discussion note preparation.
Remind members that they should also bring in a piece of content-area text or other content material that would be fun to experiment with when trying out the assessment with the study group.
Decide who will bring snacks (if necessary).
Members turn and thank each other for their energizing presence.
High five!
Adjourn.

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Meeting #5: Exploring an Assessment (Chapters 3–12)

- 5 Membership Grid. Assign Timekeeper/Agenda Stickler.
- 40 Try out the assessment. Use one of the content-area texts members have brought in and, as a group, follow the steps for creating the assessment. As you move through the steps, discuss how you would give instructions to your students and head off any potential problems you might encounter.

Discuss how the assessment can be modified for each member's content area and specific curricular goal.
- 5 Individual Goal Setting: Describe how you will try out this assessment in your classroom so you can report back on it at the next meeting.
- 5 Processing (decide as a group): What were three things the group did today that helped everyone better understand the steps of the assessment and how to implement it in their classrooms?
- 5 Agree on the next meeting date, when classroom assessment implementations will be discussed.
Review/clarify how members will record their experiences using reflection/journaling.
Decide who will bring snacks (if necessary).
Members turn and thank each other for their energizing presence.
High five!
Adjourn.

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Meeting #6: Debriefing Assessment Implementation (Chapters 3–12)

- 5 Membership Grid. Assign Timekeeper/Agenda Stickler.
- 30 General Discussion: Take turns describing how you implemented the assessment, what seemed to work, what you modified, and what problems arose. Plan implementation revisions, brainstorm solutions to problems, and discuss how the skills practiced in Chapter 2 tie in to this assessment. Are there additional skills your students need in order to better meet the demands of this live assessment? Which strategies might you use from Chapter 2 in order to build such skills and address other problems you've identified?
- 5 One-Minute Write: What was an important idea or suggestion that originated in the group today and that you want to remember? Take a minute to write and then each person shares for a minute.
- 5 Group Processing: Return to your processing from the implementation meeting discussion from Chapter 2. At that meeting, you discussed ways to improve your next implementation discussion. How did you refine today's implementation discussion in order to make it more effective and informative?

- 10 Decide what direction your next study group meeting will take; you have several choices:
 - Return to the foundation strategies of Chapter 2 for further discussion, experimentation, and implementation.
 - Plan a second classroom implementation of the assessment currently under study, devoting the next group meeting to again discussing and refining classroom practice related to that assessment.
 - Skim through remaining chapters and negotiate a new assessment everyone is interested in pursuing.
- 5 Agree on the next meeting date and the chosen meeting goal.
Clarify what members will need to bring and how they should prepare for that next meeting since it will depend on the goal your group has chosen.
Decide who will bring snacks (if necessary).
Celebrate and appreciate the difficulty and risk you all have taken in trying out a new and unfamiliar assessment.
High five!
Adjourn.

School Cancels Graduation for Cheaters

Ohio district says it will still mail diplomas to 60 high-school students.

The Associated Press

Fri., June 5, 2009

COLUMBUS, Ohio—An Ohio school district says it uncovered a cheating scheme so pervasive that it had to cancel graduation ceremonies for its 60 seniors—but will still mail their diplomas.

A senior at Centerburg High School accessed teachers' computers, found tests, printed them and distributed them to classmates, administrators said.

Graduation was canceled because so many seniors either cheated or knew about the cheating but failed to report it, said officials of the Centerburg School District.

Superintendent Dorothy Holden said the district had to take a stand and let students know that cheating can't be tolerated.

"I am alarmed that our kids can think that in society it's OK to cheat, it's a big prank, it's OK to turn away and not be a whistle-blower, not come forth," Holden said.

The district says it has identified a student who apparently accessed shared file folders on teachers' computers.

Officials believe the cheating involved at least five tests in a senior World Studies class dating to early January. One of the tests quizzed students on Aztec Indian history.

Teachers had suspicions about some higher-than-expected grades during the semester, Holden said.

The cheating unraveled when a student discovered a congratulatory note to the perpetrator on a school computer Tuesday and gave it to Principal John Morgan.

Administrators learned Friday that the cheating plot may have involved underclassmen, as well.

Holden said so many students are involved that it was impossible "to separate the wheat from the chaff" in terms of deciding who could graduate. Instead, all students will be mailed their diplomas.

"We're not going to put that type of honor out there knowing that many of you are walking through there and you cheated, you lied, you denied," Holden said.

Parents Holding Own Ceremony

Some parents angry about the cancellation are organizing an unofficial graduation ceremony.

Jeanette Lamb, whose son is a senior at the school, asked the Centerburg School Board to reconsider its decision to cancel graduation. The board declined.

“At that point I did tell them that commencement would continue, it will be at the park, I will put it together and their presence wasn’t welcome,” Lamb told WTVN radio in Columbus. Lamb said parents and members of the community have offered help.

Centerburg High, with about 400 students, is one of the state’s top schools, with an “excellent” academic rating last year, according to the state Department of Education.

Last year, the school had a 99 percent graduation rate, compared to a statewide rate of 87 percent.

Some students admit they cheated; others said they knew of the cheating but didn’t participate; and others said they had the tests but didn’t use them, Holden said.

One student who used the test still failed.

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Instructions for a Write-Around

Form a group of four members, pull your seats together, introduce yourselves if necessary, and discuss the assigned warm-up question. (*Groups of three or five are OK, but push for as many groups of four as you can get.*)

Start with a large blank piece of paper. Put your initials in the upper left-hand margin. Papers will be passed to another group member after writing; decide before you begin writing which way the papers are going to pass and stick to it.

As you work, please follow these two rules:

1. Use all the time for writing.
2. Don't talk when passing.

Ready? After reading "School Cancels Graduation for Cheaters," react to the article in writing. For three minutes, write about your thoughts, reactions, questions, or feelings related to the article.

After three minutes, finish your last sentence, pass your paper, and take another member's paper. Read the entry on the page, and just beneath it, use the remaining time to respond in writing. You can tell your reaction, make a comment, ask questions, share a connection you've made, agree or disagree, or raise a whole new idea. Just keep the conversation going!

After three minutes, pass papers again. As tempted as you are to talk, remember, this is a *silent* discussion!

Repeat until the papers return to their original writers. Once you have your paper back, read the whole thing over and see the conversation that you started. Now you don't write anymore, but feel free to continue the conversation out loud for a few minutes, using your writings however they help you.

Adapted from H. Daniels, S. Zemelman, and N. Steineke, *Content-Area Writing: Every Teacher's Guide* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007).

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Questions

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Chapter 1 The Lively Art of Assessment

1. When you think back to the assessments you experienced in elementary, middle, and high school, which ones stand out for you? Do you remember them positively or negatively? Why? How would your classmates remember them? Would their memories be similar to yours? Why or why not?
2. What assessments have you used in the past that truly fired kids up? Which assessments did they seem ambivalent about? What made them boo out loud? When you compare these assessments, what is similar and different about them?
3. What are some skills or knowledge you personally possess that are a result of multiple rehearsals?
4. How do students benefit from collaborating with their classmates?
5. What problems have you encountered when structuring lessons or assessments that require students to work together? Brainstorm ways these problems could be solved.
6. How can students be a better audience for one another?
7. Review the research on test preparation done by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. What surprises you about it? How might the findings inform or reform your own classroom practices with regard to test preparation?
8. Review your own state's standards skills for your grade level and content area. What kinds of assessments, other than multiple-choice tests or written essays, might enable students to show their mastery of these standards? Brainstorm a list.
9. What rubrics do you use with your students? Which ones help students achieve better-quality work? What components do effective rubrics reflect that are missing from less useful rubrics?
10. Imagine that an administrator observes your students as they complete a live assessment. Using all of the information available in this chapter as well as additional support your study group has collected, develop a strong rationale for using performance assessments in addition to or instead of traditional assessment formats such as objective tests and essays.

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Chapter 2 Study Questions

Getting Kids Ready to Go Live

1. What are your favorite icebreaking activities? How can you work to incorporate them in the classroom on a more frequent basis?
2. Review the interview activity and try it out with a partner. When teaching this questioning strategy to the students, how will you model it so that they understand the concept of follow-up questions?
3. Review the section called “Making Positive, Supportive Behavior the Norm.” With your colleagues, brainstorm some additional positive skills that your students need to practice and then create a T-chart for one of those skills. (What does the skill look like and sound like?). Skills you might consider: using quiet voices, staying on task, recognizing members’ contributions, disagreeing with someone’s idea respectfully, careful listening, asking questions that further discussion, adding to each other’s ideas. After you’ve completed the chart, discuss how you will guide your students in the creation of their own chart for this skill.
4. Much of this chapter focuses on getting kids up from their desks and on their feet. With your colleagues, brainstorm ways that you can help students learn the content in more physical ways.
5. Looking back at your own career as a student, what were some text pieces you were required to memorize? Was it a pleasant or unpleasant experience? Why? With the goal of creating positive feelings as well as increasing your students’ ability to memorize, what are some potential memorization pieces that might be suitable for your grade and content area?
6. Review the section called “Co-Creating Rubrics with Students.” With your study group, brainstorm a list of favorite foods. Pick one and, using the Pizza Rubric as a model, see if you can come up with appropriate descriptors that would separate that food into A, B, and C categories.

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Chapter 3 Study Questions

Academic Controversy

1. Consider the curriculum and mandated testing for your grade level or content area. For which assessments and assignments do students need to present well-supported arguments or write persuasively?
2. What are some topics in your curriculum or content area that offer an opportunity for academic controversy? These topics need not be polarizing but should have two sides to an issue that require further investigation.
3. Pick one of the topics you've brainstormed and work with your support group to move through the Academic Controversy model. Be sure to designate preparation partners and argument partners.
4. Brainstorm ways Academic Controversy could be used in your classroom. When an oral controversy is completed, what follow-up activities or assignments might you connect to the controversy?
5. Review the "Controversy Skills Checklist." Pick a skill students might be uncertain of and develop a T-chart for it. (What would the skill look like and sound like?) Skills you might consider: careful listening and note taking, arguing with enthusiasm, emphasizing support facts and examples, questioning the opposition, criticizing ideas rather than people, combining the ideas for the best solution. After you've completed the chart, discuss how you will guide your students in the creation of their own chart for this skill.
6. Review the section "Predictable Problems." With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
7. With your study group, review the scoring and rubric sheets for Academic Controversy. How might you revise these documents to better fit your needs?
8. After your students have completed an Academic Controversy, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
9. How will completing an Academic Controversy help students think more deeply about the material they've studied? How will it help them in using supportive details in their writing?
10. Develop a strong rationale using Academic Controversy based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in Academic Controversy.

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Chapter 4 Study Questions

Book Buddy PowerPoint

1. During PowerPoint presentations, students often turn their backs to the audience as they read their slides aloud. What tips and ideas can you share that help make these presentations lively and engaging for the audience?
2. How do you provide time for your students to read books of their choice? Share your Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) strategies and how you assess them.
3. What are some of your students' favorite choice books? With your study group, brainstorm a list of high-interest titles.
4. With a partner, choose a high-interest student title to read together and discuss. What do you notice about your reading and how it changes when you know you'll be talking about it with someone else? After your postreading discussion with your partner, what ideas/noticings did your partner present that were different from your own?
5. Photocopy a two- or three-page section from a novel you would like to share with students. Work with your study group to edit and dramatically interpret the text. Then perform it with your students in class and discuss how it went back in your study group.
6. How could the Book Buddy PowerPoint presentation format be adapted to projects other than book reports?
7. Review the section "Predictable Problems." With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
8. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your own curricular goals and your students' needs?
9. After your students have completed their Book Buddy PowerPoint presentations, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
10. How will completing a Book Buddy PowerPoint help students think more deeply about the book they've read? How will the presentations energize student interest in reading choice books?
11. Develop a strong rationale using Book Buddy PowerPoint presentations based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 5 Study Questions

Found Poetry

1. What are some of your favorite free-verse poems? Bring in a couple to share with your study group.
2. Read aloud the example poem adapted from a science textbook, “The Scientific Method.” How could free-verse poems be created using existing text from your textbooks? Bring content-area texts in and experiment with writing some free-verse poems.
3. Where in your curriculum might you introduce alternative perspective writing to your students? Brainstorm topics and possible prompts.
4. Discuss how original student alternative-perspective writing pieces might be transformed into free-verse poetry. Review the section “Creating Found Poetry: Finding Powerful Lines.” Discuss how you would model the steps and then lead students through the process.
5. Review the found-poetry examples from Incan and Spanish perspectives. How did the students incorporate content details into their fictional poetic narratives?
6. Review the section “Predictable Problems.” With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
7. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students’ needs?
8. After your students have completed this assessment, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use alternative perspective writing and found poetry?
9. How will writing from an alternative perspective and then using that original text to create found poetry help students think more deeply about the material they’ve studied?
10. Develop a strong rationale using Alternative Perspective Writing and Found Poetry based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 6 Study Questions

PostSecret Project

1. Review the “What Is It?” section and the student example. What full-length novels and nonfiction are parts of your curriculum? Consider the main characters or real people these books depict. What plausible personal experiences or feelings might these figures possess yet keep hidden from others? Discuss the secrets and the textual support to back them up.
2. Visit the website postsecret.com with your study group. Peruse the online gallery and pick some school-appropriate examples you could use with your students. The gallery changes weekly, so your group might want to repeat this activity.
3. Review the sections “Getting Ready,” “Assessment Live!,” and “Predictable Problems.” Which parts of this assessment might pose challenges for your students? Which parts do you think your students will readily embrace?
4. Brainstorm alternative ways for students to interact with each other’s PostSecret presentations.
5. Review the section “Predictable Problems.” With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
6. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students’ needs?
7. After your students have completed their PostSecret presentations, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
8. How will completing a PostSecret assessment help students think more deeply about the material they’ve studied?
9. Develop a strong rationale using the PostSecret Project based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 7 Study Questions

Readers Theatre

1. Read aloud the Readers Theatre example (see Figure 7.1) adapted from a math textbook, “From the Mud to the Stars—The Reach of Geometry.” What Readers Theatre scripts might you or your students create using existing text from your textbooks or other class books you regularly use? Bring them in and, with your study group, experiment with an example Readers Theatre script based on text used within your curriculum.
2. For a successful Readers Theatre, students must read their pieces dramatically. What oral interpretation skills might your students need some help with? Return to Chapter 2 and discuss which activities you might try to help students better develop their oral interpretation skills.
3. Brainstorm a timetable or agenda so that students use their time efficiently as they write and practice their Readers Theatre pieces.
4. What reflection questions might be useful for students to consider after they’ve created and performed their Readers Theatre pieces?
5. Review the section “Predictable Problems.” With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
6. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students’ needs?
7. After your students have completed their Readers Theatre presentations, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
8. How will creating a Readers Theatre piece help students think more deeply about the material they’ve studied?
9. Develop a strong rationale using Readers Theatre based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 8 Study Questions

Tableaux

1. Review the “What Is It?” section as well as the photograph and accompanying student script for *My Heart Is on the Ground*. How might students better understand and remember what they have read when they must visualize it and then create a physical representation based on it?
2. Brainstorm ways that Tableaux might be used to study specific pieces of text or units of study.
3. Look for photographs that reflect a dramatic “tableau style” to share with your group and your classes. Your photographs might be the result of an Internet search, visiting the online sculpture collections of art museums, and/or photographs you take yourself of dramatic statues in your own community.
4. What physical interpretation skills do students need in order to make their scenes dynamic and dramatic? Review the activities from Chapter 2 and determine which ones you might use in order to hone your students’ skills for Tableaux.
5. What collaborative skills will students need to use as they negotiate a script and stage their Tableaux? Develop a T-chart for a skill with which students might have trouble. (What would the skill look like and sound like?)
6. What are the benefits of being skilled at oral and physical interpretation? How might these skills serve students in their lives beyond your classroom?
7. What reflection questions might be useful for students to consider after they’ve created and performed their Tableaux?
8. Review the section “Predictable Problems.” With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
9. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students’ needs?
10. After your students have performed their Tableaux, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
11. How will performing Tableaux help students think more deeply about the material they’ve studied?
12. Develop a strong rationale using Tableaux based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 9 Study Questions

Talk Show

1. In this chapter, several talk shows are mentioned as possible models for script writing, including Oprah, Dr. Phil, and Jerry Springer. What talk shows are popular with your students? Divide and conquer the list you develop with the help of your study group. Record clips of the shows you listed and bring them in to the next meeting to watch. Discuss how students could use these shows as models for creating their own talk shows.
2. Brainstorm ways that the Talk Show might be used as a culminating assessment when completing a unit of study.
3. Take a look at the standards skills this project addresses. Which skills would you want to emphasize with your students?
4. What physical interpretation skills do students need in order to make their Talk Shows dynamic and dramatic? Review the activities from Chapter 2 and determine which ones you might use in order to hone your students' skills for their Talk Shows.
5. What collaborative skills will students need to use as they negotiate a script and stage their Talk Show? Develop a T-chart for a skill with which students might have trouble.
6. What specific content or text details will you expect students to include in their scripts? How will you encourage them to return to their notes and the text for that information?
7. Once students have completed their scripts, how might you make use of student conferencing groups in order to check for specific content details, clarity and completeness, and stage notes?
8. What reflection questions might be useful for students to consider as they practice their Talk Show? How will you make sure they set specific goals they want to achieve in their practice?
9. Review the section "Predictable Problems." With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
10. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students' needs?
11. After your student performances, watch some of the videos with your study group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
12. In what ways will creating and performing Talk Shows help students think more deeply about the material they've studied?
13. Based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1, develop a strong rationale using the Talk Show as an assessment. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 10 Study Questions

Storytelling

1. Name people you know who are good storytellers. They can be professional entertainers or storytellers, but they also might be friends, colleagues, or family members. What makes their storytelling engaging?
2. What are some examples of storytelling you use in your own teaching? How could you transfer some of this storytelling responsibility to the students? Remember, the more we tell a story or talk about information, the better we remember it. What stories and information do you really want your students to remember long after they leave your classroom?
3. This chapter uses urban legends as a basis for teaching Storytelling. What other types of stories might you use to reflect and reinforce areas of your own content? With your study group, work together to develop a collection of example stories with which students can work.
4. From the stories your study group has collected, have each member pick one that they want to use as an example with their students. Write your own version of the story and practice telling it. Perform it for your study group and then compare notes on how you moved through the process. Then use your own experiences to discuss how you will lead students through the Storytelling process.
5. Take a look at the standards skills for Storytelling. Which skills would you want to emphasize with your students?
6. What oral interpretation skills do students need in order to make their storytelling dynamic and dramatic? Review the activities from Chapter 2 and determine which ones you might use in order to hone your students' oral interpretation skills.
7. What collaborative skills will students need as they peer conference and rehearse with their groups? Develop a T-chart for a skill with which students might have trouble. (What would the skill look like and sound like?)
8. After a rehearsal, what reflective questions might you use so that students can analyze how effectively they used their time and set achievable goals for the next rehearsal?
9. If time is unavailable for each student to tell stories individually, what are ways that you can have students tell stories working in pairs or trios?
10. Review the section "Predictable Problems." With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
11. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students' needs?

12. After your student performances, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
13. In what ways will storytelling help students think more deeply about the material they've studied?
14. Based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1, develop a strong rationale using Storytelling. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 11 Study Questions

Songs That Make Ideas Stick

1. Brainstorm some simple songs that your students would know. Next, brainstorm content-area information you want your students to remember. With your study group, pick one of the songs and write some new lyrics that reflect content information. Take a look at the *Dred Scott* decision lyrics written to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”
2. Discuss how you will introduce Songwriting and singing to your students. Students will probably not be expecting to show what they’ve learned using this modality.
3. Take a look at the standards skills for Songwriting. Which skills would you want to emphasize with your students?
4. Since students often pick songs that are difficult to sing, brainstorm a list of ten recorded songs that are easy to sing and that have a verse and a chorus. Make sure the songs and lyrics are available for download. Talk about how you will introduce these songs to your students and whether you want them to pick a song from the list or choose one on their own.
5. What collaborative skills will students need as they work with their groups to write and rehearse their songs? Develop a T-chart for a skill with which students might have trouble. (What would the skill look like and sound like?)
6. What specific content or text details will you expect students to include in their song lyrics? How will you encourage them to return to their notes and the text for that information?
7. After a rehearsal, what reflective questions might you ask so that students can analyze how effectively they used their time and set achievable goals for the next rehearsal?
8. Review the section “Predictable Problems.” With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.
9. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students’ needs?
10. After your student performances, bring your observations back to the group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
11. In what ways will Songwriting help students think more deeply about the material they’ve studied?
12. Based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1, develop a strong rationale using Songwriting. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.

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Chapter 12 Study Questions

Performing a Scene

1. Discuss the importance of memorization and how it can enhance your students' cognitive skills, aesthetic appreciation, and study of your content. Now talk about why memorization is typically avoided in many classrooms. How can you recapture this potentially valuable form of learning and assessment?
2. Review the memorization activities outlined in Chapter 2 and discuss how you might use these activities with your students.
3. Brainstorm a list of poems in your content area that have memorization potential. As a group, pick one and work together to memorize it. Now, take that poem back to the classroom and teach your students how to memorize it. Discuss the lesson with your study group.
4. Take a look at the standards skills for performing a scene. Which skills would you want to emphasize with your students?
5. Discuss how the skills necessary for acting can be useful elsewhere in life.
6. If the members of your study group all use the same play, brainstorm which parts of which scenes would be the best for students to act out. Try to create a series of scenes that when performed together form a “mini” version of the play. Once you have your scene list, divvy up the scenes so that each study-group member has one or two. For your next meeting, each member should prepare edited, shortened scripts to share.
7. In Chapter 2, review the following activities: Applause Pass, Rainstorm, Hand Jive, Dancing, Emotion Walk, Character Sculptures, and Who Are You and What Are You Doing? Which of these might be useful as acting warm-ups? Which ones might be used to improve your students' dramatic interpretation and physicality?
8. Review the sections on memorization and interpretation. Share ideas about how you might guide your students through these two phases of creating a performance.
9. With your study group, review the information on blocking and physically move through the activities listed. Talk about how you will teach these techniques to your students.
10. After a rehearsal, what reflective questions might you ask so that students can analyze how effectively they used their time and set achievable goals for the next rehearsal?
11. Review the section “Predictable Problems.” With your study group, discuss what problems you might run into when implementing this live assessment. Be sure to brainstorm practical and positive solutions for each problem.

12. Review the scoring and rubric sheets. How would you adjust them to fit your curricular goals and your students' needs?
13. After your student performances, watch some of the recorded scenes with your study group. What went well? What would you do differently the next time you use this assessment?
14. In what ways will performing a scene from a play they've studied help students think more deeply about the play?
15. Based on the information available in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1, develop a strong rationale for performing a memorized scene. Include the action research you have gathered as your students participated in this assessment.