GETTING STARTED

Build and Organize Study Groups

Research proves that learning is social. As educators, we hope to see high levels of engagement in our classrooms, including self-reflection, deep analysis, and lively discussion. When it comes to our own professional learning, however, we’re often compelled to read, study, and reflect on our own. This guide is designed to help you – or a designated facilitator – encourage deep conversations between and among colleagues. The hope is that it will challenge your thinking and strengthen your practice by examining the concepts of toxic structural inequities, social and emotional learning, and critical wellness. Please keep in mind, it’s important to create a psychologically safe climate in which educators feel free to exchange ideas, nurture growth, and inspire introspection without fear of repercussion. This is particularly true when discussing issues like equity, racism, bias, and trauma – all topics that can raise emotions and rouse feelings of defensiveness.

As you explore ways to promote critical wellness in students, the following are important elements to consider when organizing a study group:

**Group Size.** If your group consists of the entire faculty, there may be instances in which you want to break into smaller groups to discuss particular topics. Keep in mind the types of analysis or reflective thinking that may best be done in pairs or groups of four. Then be prepared to split people into appropriate groups and track any necessary start-and-stop times. If you’re creating your own study group, consider inviting 8–12 people This is the natural size of high performance, engaged groups. Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, calls it the “two pizza rule,” specifying that any collaborative group should be small enough to be fed with two pizzas. These should be people who you respect and who challenge your thinking. They don’t need to think just like you do, in fact group think does not promote new and differing perspectives. The group participants should be receptive to thoughtful dialogue and respectful of other people’s opinions.

**Invitations to Join.** When asking people to engage in thoughtful – and sometimes difficult – discussions, it’s important to be transparent about the required effort and necessary disposition. The participants you invite to be part of your study group should have the desire to improve classroom outcomes and be willing to commit the time to make it happen. Ensure that your invitation includes group expectations, time frames, responsibilities, and a proposed outcome of the opportunity.

Schedule Time. Simply put, educators are busy. Therefore, it’s essential that they explicitly know session times, locations, and the chapter(s) to be read. Unless run by a professional trainer or facilitator, consider identifying facilitators for each meeting to help divide responsibility among the group. Then be sure to end each meeting with a reminder of the next study session and required reading.
Norms and Expectations. This is absolutely critical when studying social issues like race, gender, violence, displacement, and trauma. Clear and explicit expectations will help your study group function more smoothly and increase potential for success. Be sure to include ways to engage everyone in the conversation and respect each participant’s opinion. Establish a procedure for staying on topic or refocusing the group, if necessary. And, most important, ensure a level of psychological safety – that is, a climate in which people feel free to express their thoughts and feelings – so that participants can explore concepts of bias, social equity, and emotional functioning without fear of judgement, criticism, or censure.

Study Questions. Study questions that can help catalyze your discussion are provided for each chapter. Use these questions to open a line of inquiry or to help spur individual reflection. In addition, each chapter of the book, All Students Must Thrive, includes “Questions from the Field.” These are commonly asked questions (and answers) on each chapter topic that can be used as part of a study session or as a means of grounding a dialogue.

Shared Resources. Consider creating a shared folder or area to house the group’s schedule, questions, answers, application tools, success stories, and resources. Having one location will help everyone gain access to shared materials and strengthen the translation of content to classroom practice. Good places to keep shared resources include Google Drive, Google Classroom, Dropbox, and Box.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Book Summary and Guide Features

All students deserve our best – and especially those who experience racial inequity, toxic stressors, cultural invalidation, homelessness, and other trauma. They deserve teachers who care about their overall wellness as much as their academic well-being and success. Yet inequities proliferate, and vulnerable students who most need resources are often the least likely to receive the necessary support. All Students Must Thrive is intended to inform educators about social and economic issues – trauma, death, violence, displacement, abuse, and racism – that have a profound impact on students’ social emotional well-being and their ability to learn. The book addresses:

- Demographic changes throughout the United States.
- Racial awareness and cultural competence in schools.
- The importance of identifying and understanding trauma in the learning environment.
- The underpinnings of social and emotional learning.
- The value of designing culturally responsive learning environments and experiences.

This study guide is a companion to All Students Must Thrive. This guide has been developed to support personal reflection and collaborative dialogue through suggested topics and questions. It includes “Learning Outcome(s),” “Study Questions,” and “Next Steps” to help guide discussion and further individual exploration of each topic. It also includes a “Reflection Tool” for each chapter. This tool is intended to help readers organize thoughts and questions.
Introduction

Learning Outcome(s):

- Identify the detrimental effects of toxic stressors – trauma, anxiety, abuse, neglect, discrimination, racism, and depression – on student learning and social emotional well-being.

- Understand the concept of critical wellness.

Study Questions:

- The concept of critical wellness in education brings together three theoretical frameworks that have relevance for equity in schools. Have you read about or discussed any of these frameworks in the past? Would you be interested in exploring any of these frameworks in greater depth? (p.xx–xxi)

- How do you define “wellness” as it relates to your students? Do you see any limitations of the wellness model? (p.xx)

- How does “critical pedagogy” address these limitations? If so, how? If not, what are other frameworks that better address the limitations of wellness? (p.xxi)

- Does “critical race theory” raise important questions for you? Why or why not? (p.xxi)

- As an educator, share an example of how the social emotional well-being of a student in your classroom has influenced learning. Have you seen academic or behavioral improvements because of the increased well-being of a student? (p.xxiv)

Next Steps:

- Establish the group and individual goals for studying All Students Must Thrive

- Review the upcoming reading assignment and next meeting time, date, and location.
Chapter 1:
Developing Racial Literacy and Cultural Awareness in Schools and Classrooms
By Tyrone C. Howard

Learning Outcome(s):
- Identify the changing racial demographics of today's schools and classrooms.
- Understand how and why race and culture matter in more diverse learning settings.
- Establish strategies and resources for effectively teaching across racial and cultural lines.

Study Questions:
- Describe how the student demographics (ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic, and economic) of your school have changed since you first started teaching. If you are new to teaching, did your school's student demographics differ from your expectations? (p.2–4)
- Review the color-blindness framework and choose one of the three key contracts (whiteness, merit, and individualism) to discuss. How does this “key contract” of colorblindness manifest in your school's policies, curriculum, or teaching practices? (p.7)
- How does your race and your culture(s) overlap? Have you experienced an example of where your particular culture gives you a stronger identification with someone of another race than your own? (p.10–12)
- As a group, choose one of the three scenarios and then divide into pairs to discuss the scenario questions for 5–10 minutes. Come together again as a group and have each pair share their answers to the scenario questions. Identify any key themes or differences that emerge. (p.12–13)
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.14–15)

Next Steps:
- Discussing race in the classroom can feel like walking through a minefield. After reading this chapter, share one strategy that you plan to try in your classroom in the next week. Create a plan for each member of your group to share their experience and what they learned (group text, email, etc.).
- Gather the answers to the “questions that teachers should answer to be more racially aware” (p.8). Create a shared document to post your answers and compare responses.
Chapter 1 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
1. 
2. 
3. 

After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

What are your next steps towards helping ALL students thrive?

Additional Notes:
Chapter 2: How to Create a Trauma-Aware Learning Environment
By Maisah Howard

Learning Outcome(s):

- Define the various types of childhood trauma.
- Discuss the purpose, limitations, research, and scoring for the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire.
- Establish best practices for working with students affected by trauma.

Study Questions:

- Discuss student behaviors you’ve observed from Table 2.1. How did you interpret that behavior at the time? How would you react to that behavior after reading this chapter? (p.26)
- Share a recent example of what you perceived to be “willful defiance” from a student. As a group, list all the possible antecedents that might have caused this behavior. Brainstorm ways you could begin to implement this best practice into a busy classroom. (p.27)
- The author discusses the importance of observing rather than judging. What are some of the obstacles – psychological, historical, structural, etc. – to make this switch in how we work with our students? (p.30–33)
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.41)

Next Steps:

- Complete the ACE Questionnaire and calculate your score. (p.23–24) Reflect on how your ACE score has impacted your adult well-being and your teaching approach. Would you feel comfortable sharing your ACE score with your colleagues, your friends, or your neighbors? How might you incorporate these learnings into your interactions with students?
- Choose one strategy from the “Practical Strategies for Working with Students” to implement in your classroom in the next week. (p.36–37) Discuss how it went at your next study group session.
Chapter 2 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?

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After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

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Additional Notes:
Chapter 3: Confronting Implicit Bias and Microaggressions in the Classroom: Distinguishing Intent from Impact
By Kenjus T. Watson

Learning Outcome(s):
- Define implicit bias and racial microaggressions.
- Understand the current context of racial disparities in schools.
- Establish best practices and challenges for anticipating, acknowledging, and interrupting various forms of discrimination and trauma.

Study Questions:
- The terms “implicit bias” and “racial microaggressions” have been adopted by the media in recent years. Describe examples of how you’ve seen the media deploy these terms in both positive and negative ways. How does the media’s use of these terms compare with the definitions and examples used by the author? (p.47–51)
- Share an example where you felt the impact of a microaggression (gender, religious, ethnic, sexual orientation, racial, etc.). Share an example where your words or actions showed implicit bias. How can these experiences help you become more aware and sensitive to your student’s experiences with implicit bias and racial microaggressions? (p.50–51)
- The author examines three steps to counter racial microaggressions: acceptance, belief, and anticipatory action. Which of these three steps would you want to focus on? What support and resources would you need to do so? (p.56–62)
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.63–67)

Next Steps:
- Work together to create a classroom activity for a community agreement or ground rules that nurtures “an environment in which all community members promise to work on developing accountability when we harm others while working toward a more respectful, shared, and collective space of engagement.” (p.59) Commit to incorporating this activity by an agreed upon date and sharing the results at an upcoming study group.
- Take the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (access it here: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html). What insights did the results give you into your potential implicit bias with race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion?
Chapter 3 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
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After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

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Additional Notes:
Chapter 4: Designing Culturally Responsive Learning Experiences
By Tonikiaa Orange

Learning Outcome(s):

- Establish the importance of creating culturally responsive learning experiences.
- Understand that students are not problems to be solved – they’re young people who need to be understood, loved, and provided with educational spaces that support their diverse cultural needs.

Study Questions:

- Teachers must consciously think about how culture shapes the ways students see and interact with the world around them. They must focus on what is invisible in school spaces (cultural values, beliefs, norms; race, bias, etc.) when deciding how and what to teach and what policies to enact. What are some “invisible” factors that you have noticed in your school space? Discuss how these factors can affect learning and behavior. (p.71)
- Think about your own identity, bias, and cultural values and beliefs. Are these biases, values, and beliefs static or dynamic? Has your sense of identity changed throughout your life? Does this change how you think of your students? (p.72)
- Review the RLP framework. Does it help you identify any inequitable teaching practices? If yes, can you think of any changes or actions that may help create culturally responsive experiences? (p.75)
- Divide into small groups – discuss the norms present in your classroom. Are these norms culturally responsive? If not, what can be done to change the classroom experience to make it more responsive to different cultures? (p.79–83)
- What students walk into is just as important as how and what they’re taught. In your classroom, are the various cultures of all of your students visible and centered as a tool for learning? Does your classroom display diverse people, works of art, quotes, literature, and so on? Are there instances when you believe displaying different cultural depictions or touchstones may be detrimental to learning? (p.86–89)
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.90–91)

Next Steps:

- Do an informal “audit” of your classroom environment. Does it reflect the various cultural values, beliefs, and norms of your students? Share any culturally responsive changes you intend to make or have already made in your classroom with the group. Have you noticed any changes in class behavior or performance due to creating a more culturally responsive learning space?
- Review the “Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies” presented in Table 4.2. (p.82) Try incorporating one of these strategies – as appropriate – in your classroom. Be ready to share your experience with your chosen strategy.
Chapter 4 Reflection Tool

**Before you meet:**
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

**During your discussion:**
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
1. 
2. 
3. 

**After your discussion:**
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

What are your next steps towards helping ALL students thrive?

Additional Notes:
Chapter 5: 
Promoting Critical Wellness with Young Learners
By Andréa C. Minkoff

Learning Outcome(s):
- Understand the importance of developing racial and cultural knowledge, including the significance of self-reflection in understanding our own social biases.

Study Questions:
- Do you think it’s important for students to discuss and explore issues of race and culture? Do you provide opportunities and a space to discuss these issues with your students? Why or why not? (p.94–95)
- The first step toward becoming the kind of teacher who can effectively teach students from all backgrounds is understanding the power and significance of one’s own identity. Have you spent time reflecting on your own social and cultural identity? Do you think that a better understanding of your own identity could improve your communication with both students and parents? (p.97–98)
- According to Diane Finnerty, self-change is important, but if we don’t work to shift systems, we are doing little to truly develop critical wellness for our students. Have you talked or worked with colleagues to reduce the impact of bias? If so, share your results. (p.101–102)
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.103–104)

Next Steps:
- Take time to critically reflect on your own identity development and the origins of your behaviors, habits, beliefs, and biases. Share and discuss some of these realizations with the group during the next meeting.
- Create opportunities for your students to do the same. Facilitate and guide a discussion of their social and cultural identities. Be sure to foster an atmosphere of psychological safety so that students can share thoughts and experiences without fear of judgement, or criticism.
Chapter 5 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
1. 
2. 
3. 

After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

What are your next steps towards helping ALL students thrive?

Additional Notes:
Chapter 6:
Creating a College-Going Culture
By Jonli D. Tunstall

Learning Outcome(s):

- Characterize the features of schools with a strong college-going culture.
- Understand how culturally relevant pedagogy and pedagogy of plenty are needed to create a strong classroom college-going culture.

Study Questions:

- Discuss the concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy, pedagogy of plenty, and resilience. How are these concepts interdependent on each other? Can you create a strong college-going culture by incorporating only one or two of these concepts? (p.109)
- Does your classroom exhibit any of the components of a college-going culture? Your school? Give your school a grade for each component listed and explain to the group why you assigned each grade. (p.111–115)
- Explore the impact “social and cultural supports have on both students’ academic success and your belief in each student’s potential.” (p.120) Share recent examples that illustrate this from your classroom.
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.120–123)

Next Steps:

- As a group, choose one Key Component for a College-Going Culture to tackle. Create a plan for implementing change around this Key Component, and then schedule a meeting with your principal to discuss. (p.111–115)
- Choose a Practical Tip for Creating a College-Going Culture or create your own based on the chapter. Try out the tip before the next study group meeting and be ready to discuss your results. (p.115–119)
Chapter 6 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
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After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

What are your next steps towards helping ALL students thrive?

Additional Notes:
Chapter 7:
“It’s Not So Much ... for a Grade”:
Humanization as Real Social and Emotional Learning
By Patrick Camangian

Learning Outcome(s):

- Establish the importance of humanization in the form of knowledge of self, solidarity, and self-determination.
- Understand what the tenets of humanization look like in practice.

Study Questions:

- Discuss this statement from the chapter: “It’s the teacher’s role to design learning activities that help students share their experiences with various systems of oppression.” Does this align with your current role? If not, how do you feel about incorporating this responsibility? (p.130)

- Thinking about your own students, what types of achievement outside of the classroom could you measure, in addition to traditional academic standards? How would this contribute to the humanization of your students’ education? (p.131–133)

- Revisit the story of Leon in the section “Social and Emotional Learning in Practice.” What about this story resonated for you? What did you find applicable to your own teaching practice? Is there anything about this unit that you would have done differently? (p.133–142)

- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.144–146)

Next Steps:

- Design a learning activity that incorporates one of the following: knowledge of self, solidarity, or self-determination.
Chapter 7 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
1.
2.
3.

After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

What are your next steps towards helping ALL students thrive?

Additional Notes:
Chapter 8:
Helping the Unseen: Providing Education Equity for Students Experiencing Homelessness
By Earl J. Edwards

Learning Outcome(s):
- Understand the issue of student homelessness and its impact on academic achievement.
- Discuss the federal policy designed to support students experiencing homelessness.
- Identify tangible strategies for supporting students experiencing homelessness.

Study Questions:
- Review the statistics of students experiencing homelessness (p.149). What is alarming to you? What do you think are the contributing factors?
- Discuss the mandates of the McKinney-Vento act. How successfully have these been implemented in your classroom, school, and district? Who is the homeless liaison for your district, and have you had any contact with that person? (p.150)
- Review Table 8.2: Potential Signs a Student May Be Experiencing Homelessness. Explore how you could use this to help identify students potentially experiencing homelessness. What strategies could you use to help these students still access a high-quality education? (p.157)
- As a group, choose one of the three scenarios presented on p.165–167, then divide into pairs to discuss the scenario questions for 5–10 minutes. Come together again as a group and have each pair share their answers to the scenario questions. Identify any key themes or differences that emerge.
- What other “questions from the field” would you like to ask the author of this chapter? Discuss these additional questions as a group and identify potential answers and strategies. (p.168–169)

Next Steps:
- Choose at least one principle for “Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness” to implement in your classroom and at least one for your group to advocate for at the school level. (p.158–165)
- Take one action to raise the level of awareness in your school around the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
Chapter 8 Reflection Tool

Before you meet:
What ideas resonated with you from the chapter? Do you have any questions?

Review the “Questions from the Field” section of the chapter. What additional questions do you wish the author had covered?

During your discussion:
What are some of the key ideas that were brought up during your discussion?

What three key points did you take away from the discussion?
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After your discussion:
Reflect on your discussion. Did it alter your perspective? If so, how?

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Additional Notes:
Conclusion:
Sustaining the Critical Wellness Approach

Learning Outcome(s):
- Establish that student learning will not be maximized until student social and emotional wellness is a priority.
- Understand that this goal requires a multi-layered approach.

Study Questions:
- Do you believe that placing the focus on academics as the first priority of students is an approach that must be rethought? If so, how should it be re-thought? If not, why? What are the barriers to a more holistic vision of education? (p.171)
- It often appears that districts with the most cumulative disadvantage are missing various basic school necessities. Beyond school nurses, smaller classroom sizes, school counselors, and mental health workers, what other personnel and/or resources do ALL schools need? (p.172)
- Is school reform just an urban problem? Is it also a rural problem? Identify and share some other underserved or overlooked populations? Has media played a part in overlooking these underserved areas? Why else have we as a society overlooked these groups or areas? (p.173–174)

Next Steps:
- Real progress requires moving beyond awareness and taking action. Identify and reflect on some possible actions – protesting, voting, etc. – you can take to help humanize education. Share with the group what actions you’re committed to taking to humanize education for All students.
- Identify at least three other educators who you would recommend read All Students Must Thrive. Share a copy of the book, as well as your own experiences, with them. Be supportive in their journeys to better understand their own cultural identities and cultivate a critical wellness approach in their classrooms.