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Developing Study Group Models

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Introduction

My first experience with teacher study groups was as a teacher. Although I did not really understand the design or purpose of study groups, I accepted my first invitation to attend a meeting out of respect for the inviter. My job description was teaching in a one-teacher school and I thought it might be nice to see my fellow teachers in the area. (Study groups met in geographical locations within the Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for North and South Carolina.) I was excited when I returned from that first meeting because I had learned a new structure to use in my classroom.

Traditionally, I had always preferred to work alone on a project so I could get it done and move on to something else. It was a tragedy I had never been introduced to the power of group IQ during the first fifteen years of my teaching experience. Group IQ is simply combining the strengths of the group's different intelligences (Martin, Psychology Department) to produce results far superior from anything a single person could have developed. See Figure 1.
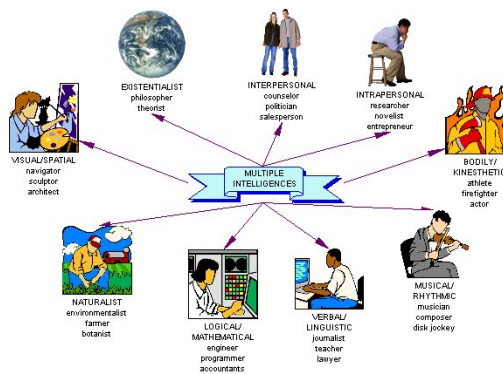

Figure 1: Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Martin, Psychology Department) http://sitemaker.umich.edu/356.martin/home

Adjusting to the idea of group work was a bit challenging for me at first because of my independent work habits. However, after about six months, my paradigm began to shift. The value of the group became more and more clear and I learned to enjoy the dynamics of doing an assignment and working through challenges as a group. Now, I not only appreciated and enjoyed study groups, I also understood the critical role they contributed in helping teachers transfer a new skill into their classrooms.

It was not long until I became a Cadre Leader for my study group. The word Cadre originates from French. It means a nucleus of trained personnel capable of assuming control and of training others (Dictionary.com, 2011). Cadre Leaders was the term used in referring to trained teachers who led the area study groups. Eventually, I became the Associate Superintendent of Education for the Carolina Conference and my study group responsibilities expanded to all the Carolina Teacher Study Groups. My job description now includes the responsibility of staff development for K- 10 teachers in the Carolina Conference of which study groups are a part. In the next section, I want to continue my study group story by recapping the events starting with the time I began to orchestrate teacher study groups for the whole Carolina Conference.

My Study Group Experience and Application
1998 -1999 School Year:

In spring of 1998, I began working as Superintendent of Education for the Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. Part of my job description was to continue the implementation of teacher study groups, which Dr. Rita Henriquez-

Green had begun several years before. At that time, schools dismissed at noon on study group days, which allowed time for participating teachers to travel to local area meetings. Most of the Carolina Teachers were voluntarily participating in teacher study groups in spite of the fact that there was no official funding available for expenses resulting in that travel. For my first year in the office, I did not make any changes to the teacher study groups, spending my time and energy connecting with each group and providing the support they needed from the office.

1999 - 2003 School Years:

During the next three years, I was able to get a line item added to the education budget, which provided a small amount for the funding for study groups. At first, I paid a limited per diem, later adding some travel reimbursement to compensate the participating teachers. It was a baby step, but nonetheless a step forward towards full funding for the teacher study groups.

Each study group had a leader, called a Cadre Leader, who was responsible for an area study group. At the beginning of every school year, I would hold training for the Cadre Leaders (See Attachment: 1A. - Cadre Leaders Training 2001-2002.pdf) providing them with an agenda and materials for their group for the year. Since these Cadre Leaders were volunteers with limited time to devote to study group leadership, I felt it critical to support them in their role and help them be successful. I did as much of the preparation from my office ahead of time as possible, to make things easier for each Cadre Leader. This provided the support they needed to be successful in their leadership.

In addition, it was especially helpful that many of these Cadre Leaders had been through William H. Green & Rita Henriquez-Green's month-long summer institute. This institute modeled teaching the method with the method (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009). Teaching a method with the method is like teaching a structure like Random Call by using Random Call. By teaching the method with the method, teachers received training through modeling, prompting, and practicing of over one-hundred strategies, structures, and techniques in a Cooperative Learning setting (Green, Burton, & Henriquez-Green, 2001; Green & Henriquez-Green, 2008). The teacher study groups were a natural and critical piece for class follow-up. In Study groups, teachers could continue to practice their skills, receiving coaching with feedback as they transferred their new knowledge into their own classrooms.

Each area study group met face-to-face for four hours eight times each school year. Some teachers traveled 90 minutes one-way to meet with their study group. As we moved the reimbursement of the travel expense closer and closer to the same rate as for other teacher meetings, the travel time and cost were beginning to be quite a challenge.

2002-2005 School Years:

By 2002, the Education Office of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists had voted to implement Bernice McCarthy's 4MAT training (McCarthy, 2000) throughout the Southern Union as part of an initiative called the Adventist EDGE. Shortly after that vote, the Carolina Conference K-12 Board of Education voted to use the teacher study groups as the medium for training the bulk of the Carolina teachers. At the same time, they also voted to make participation in

teacher study groups a part of the requirement for employment in the Carolina

Conference. The K-12 Board also voted to support a school calendar that would

reflect eight complete school days dedicated to study groups. There would be no

school during those eight study group days. This freed the teachers for a full day of

study group meetings with no worry about teacher substitutes or lesson plans or

misbehaving students. The Carolina Conference was continuing to progress towards

meeting the ideal criterion described in Henriquez-Roark's (1995) Study Group

Innovation Checklist for making study groups successful.

2005 - 2006 School Year:

Using a core of 4MAT certified trainers as Cadre Leaders, we worked to train

the bulk of the Carolina teachers in 4MAT for the next three years. In order to make

this work, we had to rethink how study groups met. Skype was in its early stages of

development and the idea seemed like a possible answer to our challenge. I discussed

the idea with several Cadre Leaders and we decided to present the concept of shifting

the study groups towards using technology in place of actual travel to the teachers. At

teachers' convention, I presented the idea of piloting Skype^{TM} teacher study groups

and re-grouping the teachers according to their teaching assignments. There was

discussion and debate about how it might work; what about teachers who did not have

broadband, how would the technology work, what if they had trouble with the

technology, and how would they get help? Of course, I had given much thought to

these questions before hand and had possible solutions ready. I told them we would

take 'baby steps". All they needed to begin was the telephone conferencing number

and the time to call. I would train the Cadre Leaders and be with each leader for their

first meeting and every subsequent meeting until each Cadre Leader felt he or she could manage things on their own. The teachers liked the idea of not having to travel so much and they loved the idea of working with teachers that were teaching similar grades. Finally, with some hesitation, they agreed to pilot study groups through Skype^{TM} for one year. At the end of the year, in May of 2006, we would discuss the results with everyone at a face-to-face meeting to determine where to go next year.

<div align="center">

2005-2006 School Year:
The Pilot of Skype^{TM} Study Groups

</div>

Now, my challenges begin. I regrouped the teachers into teams of four to six, paying special attention to place them with others teaching the same grades as much as possible. Because there were not enough Cadre Leaders for the seventeen groups, I asked several more teachers to be Team Leaders. The content for that year was to develop 4MAT lessons in their study group. Each teacher received a three-year subscription to LiveText^{TM}. This became the method for real time collaborative work in the groups. When logged into LiveText^{TM}, teachers could share their lessons and see each other working on lessons in real time. Skype^{TM}, or an 800 number that my office provided in case of Skype^{TM} problems, was the method for voice connection. Many of them were able to use Skype^{TM} for verbal communication. An 800 number provided a backup in case of "bottle necking" from too much Internet traffic.

For the Team Leaders' training, I used technology in place of having them travel to a physical location. I wanted them to learn the method by using the method. Some expressed fear about the process, but I assured them that all they needed to know at the beginning was the 800 number to call and the time to call! This

encouraged them to lay their fears aside and give it a try. Because these Team Leaders were all volunteers, it was especially critical that I keep them involved at a level of success for each or I would lose their help. Their leadership was imperative for the survival of teacher study groups and I did everything I could to encourage and provide them with success. I assured each leader that I would be with them at every step for as long as they needed, until they felt confident of managing the meeting without my help.

The training began and everyone called in. We were off and running; now it was up to me to make things work. The first thing I did was to tell all of them how to get Skype downloaded onto their computer. I gave them an agenda to follow for the school year and we set the dates for each meeting. Because I would be "attending" all seventeen meetings at first, the scheduling was challenging. The big goal was to do two things: teach their team how to use Skype^{TM} and then move towards getting them to learn LiveText^{TM}. I closed the training session by telling them to remember one thing; *any progress* with their group towards the goal was success! With the assurance that I would call in to begin working with the Team Leader thirty minutes before scheduled meeting, we adjured. A new day was beginning for the Carolina Teacher Study Groups.

There were several observations that I noticed during that pilot year. First, the teachers began moving more and more towards becoming problem solvers instead of just calling my office and asking for help when a challenge arose. For example, some of the teachers did not have high-speed Internet access in their area because of the remote location. This presented a problem if they used a dial-up connection for

LiveText^{TM} because it was too slow for Skype^{TM} and it tied the phone line needed for calling the 800 number. Somehow, between cell phones, creative scheduling, with some traveling to where there was Internet access, they were able to work out those challenges. I remember feeling quite amazed and very proud that the teachers did not call me for solutions, but found them on their own! I later told them how impressed I was. Now they were actually doing the kinds of 21st century problem solving they needed to teach their students.

Another observation was how the teachers supported and worked together, even across teams, to help each other through the huge learning curve they faced. With the learning curve so steep, I was unsure of the level of success they would reach. However, by the end of the school year, they were actually writing 4MAT lessons on LiveText^{TM} and talking over Skype^{TM}. Writing 4MAT lessons, learning to use Skype, or learning LiveText^{TM} are huge adjustment alone, but most had combined all three! There was much sharing and talking outside of the regular study group time as this came together.

In April of 2006, I prepared and sent out a survey via Survey Monkey^{TM} (See Attachment: Skype Study Group Pilot Survey) to all the teachers asking for their reaction and suggestions to the pilot year. I was surprised at the results, which I presented for discussion at the May teachers' face-to-face meeting. Not only were the teachers quite happy with the Skype^{TM} study groups, but several of them begged me in person not to change their group for the following school year. Only two groups wanted to change members. Those groups I would have changed anyway because some were moving out of conference and some were just not a good fit together.

Therefore, we agreed to continue the Skype^{TM} study groups using LiveText^{TM} for the 2006/2007 school year.

<p style="text-align:center">2006/2007 School Year:</p>

That year, the Skype^{TM} study group name began to shift, being called Virtual Study Groups. We used the same technology and practiced developing 4MAT lessons in LiveText^{TM} for that school year. As the 4MAT lessons began to emerge, a new challenge arose. Some 4MAT lessons were wonderful, while others need a range of improvements before they would be ready to share with others for classroom use. Because we wanted to develop a bank of 4MAT lesson plans, we needed a certain level of quality to accompany those shared lessons. After some discussion with two of my top 4MAT Trainer of Trainers, I added a new piece to the mix. Two of the study group teams had a high level of expertise in 4MAT. They became the Curriculum Coaching Committees (CCC). These two committees reviewed all 4MAT lessons, which the other groups developed. One of the CCC groups reviewed each lesson. Lessons that need additional work went back to the original group accompanied with coaching comments to help complete and refine the lesson for posting in LiveText's online public library. Since anyone subscribing to LiveText^{TM} could post a lesson in the public library, not all the posted lessons were good 4MAT lessons. Since we wanted to add some credibility to our 4MAT lessons, we established the CCC. By the end of the summer of 2007, the CCC had approved fifty-three 4MAT lessons and posted them in the public library (To view the lessons click this link: https://college.livetext.com/visitor-pass.html. Enter the visitor's pass code:

86392DD2). We coded these lessons with EDGE: CCC so teachers could do a search and find them easily.

<center>2007/2008 School Year:</center>

As we moved into the 2007/2008 year of virtual study groups, we headed for another huge learning curve. The Southern Union voted not to renew the LiveText^{TM} contract when it expired in December of 2007. We would be using new software called 4MATION for 4MAT lesson development. This was more cost effective for the conferences and contained an excellent built-in coaching piece for developing 4MAT lessons, which we did not have in LiveText^{TM}. However, this presented two major dilemmas for the Carolina Conference Virtual Study Groups. 4MATION was not web-based, but rather a software application to install on each teacher's computer. How could we continue to collaborate in real-time over the Internet and develop 4MAT lessons together without physical travel? Moreover, how would the teachers respond to yet another learning curve so soon? They had just become accustomed to using LiveText^{TM} with some level of comfort.

Now, it was my turn to get creative and do some problem solving if Virtual Study Groups were going to continue. I had heard of GoToWebinar^{TM}. I began to explore the possibility of using that technology as the medium for collaboration for the study groups. I discovered that GoToMeeting^{TM}, part of GoToWebinar^{TM}, is a web-based program that allows people to invite each other to see their desk-tops from remote locations and even work on each others' computers. I immediately began training the Team Leaders to use this program as the tool to work with 4MATION software on each other's computers.

First, I had a virtual preliminary training session with those leaders and gave them a chance to experience the concept and understand the idea. We used a conference calling number to talk and the GoToMeeting^{TM} so we could all see the same computer. I gave each of them a chance to take control of the mouse and type something on my computer from their remote location. It was exciting and they did well. However, several struggled with the concept of layering technologies to work another technology. Some leaders even voiced their hesitancy to accept leadership of their group. I promised each of them I would initiate their first virtual study group meeting and help them get started promising to stay with their group until there was a level of comfort, even if it meant me staying for the complete meeting time. All I asked of each Team Leader at the beginning was that they make the initial 800-conferencing call as the facilitator.

I initiated the GoToMeeting^{TM} with every group the first round. Most groups did remarkably well, even surprising themselves at how quickly they learned. The conceptual idea of this process seemed much more difficult for everyone to grasp than learning to use the technology. Many gained skills for using the mechanics long before the conceptual understanding emerged. Maybe this was because the concept was so foreign to most of their thinking processes. Connecting this concept to a previous experience was difficult, if not impossible. I did work with some groups for the second and third meeting, helping them move to a comfort level for functioning. I also made myself available by cell phone if they had any difficulties. For the first meeting, I connected with the Team Leader thirty minutes before the scheduled meeting. This gave us time to download the software on their computer. Then we

would practice giving control of the mouse to each other or changing presenters (the computer viewed on the screen). I had showed them how to initiate a GoToMeeting^TM session and had them practice. This took a bit of learning for some and of course, there were a few technical difficulties, but we made it and all but one of the team leaders learned how to initiate the meetings before the end of the first semester. This one group, which considered only of Boomers, never really did reach a good functioning level. The following year, I made adjustments so the groups were more "balanced" with the technology generation gaps (Perez, 2003-2011).

The next big challenge was to get them to learn how to use the 4MATION software. This seemed more challenging. I encouraged each group to at least take a "baby step" stating that if all they did this year was to enter one lesson and be able to get around in the software a little bit, then I would consider their group to be successful. This idea brought relief to those who were struggling. By the end of the year, everyone had succeeded to that level and some much more.

Two interesting phenomena occurred over that school year. The, study groups that had been functioning at a high proficiency level moved back into the developing stage. They began to get frustrated and discouraged. It appeared the shift in the technology use was the cause. They expressed their study group was no longer inspiring because it took too long to produce anything. The learning curve had slowed their productivity way down and they did not feel successful. I spent time processing with those team leaders discussing why this might be so and how to move back into the producing stage. This provided support for helping them endure the change process and return to their productive function. However, study groups that had not

moved past the developing stage before, found the new technology wonderful and they enjoyed a new level of functioning not previously experienced. They expressed enjoying their study groups more and their productivity was increasing. I had not expected or even foreseen the possibility of this type of occurrence. I have made a mental note to be aware of this type of phenomena in change for the future.

2008-2011 School Years:

Two years after the implementation of the 4MATION software, a web-based version called 4MATION Web came out. At this point, the transition went quite easily because the teachers were accustomed to working with technology and changes. This change was similar, in concept, with LiveText^{TM} and in functionality. The 4MATION Web program was similar to the 4MATION but it sported upgraded functions, which the teachers really liked. They adjusted easily to the change and found the new program to be more helpful. The Carolina Virtual Study Groups had established a culture of learning with each other and this was now an accepted part of how we conducted on-going staff development.

In the next section, I will share a background of the philosophy of study group models and how it can affect change in individuals and systems.

Knowledge Base

Theoretical Framework for the Study Group Model

An initiative launches, the core components are identified, including behavior variations from ideal to unacceptable, and specific training is provided to the teachers

for implementation. So, is this enough to bring about the desired change in the classroom? Studies indicate that these things are still not enough to effect change in the workplace, which is the initial purpose of the innovation in the first place. Research on training and the change process (Fullan, 1998; Hall & Loucks., 1981; Joyce & Showers, 2002) has established that transfer does not happen without a social system in place to keep a practice going. Joyce and Showers (2002) have shown that only 5 - 15% of teachers who received training in teaching strategies substantially different from their usual method of teaching, without on-going support, were able to transfer the practice to the classroom over time. However, when on-going coaching was added to the theory, demonstration, practice and feedback, 80% - 90% of teachers could transfer the new skill (Dale, 1969).

It is critical to create an ongoing environment of support for educators that are learning new skills (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2011). Murphy (1995) developed a Whole-Faculty Study Group approach where all teachers are members of small groups, no larger than six, that meet on a regular basis to focus on teaching and learning. Murphy's design has five principles to guide the process: 1) Students are first; 2) Everyone participates; 3) Leadership is shared; 4) Responsibility is equal; and 5) the work is public (Murphy, 1995). Murphy's model provides a way for an entire school or system to implement an innovation at the same time, at the same level, for the same purpose.

Henriquez- Roark (1995) researched study groups in a public school district in Georgia and then applied what she found to the Seventh-day Adventist setting. She defines the study group as a team of four to six teachers who meet together and

follow four specific steps: a discussion of theory or rationale with the content of the innovation, demonstrations of the innovation, practice and feedback, and coaching. As the teachers participate, practice, give feedback, and coach each other, they begin to develop meaning, skills, and the ability to transfer the new practice into their normal teaching repertoire. While providing the practice necessary for the transfer of skills and strategies, study groups also exert the pressure and motivation required to continue to practice. Research studies have found that cooperative settings, when compared to competitive settings, promote more mutual liking, more sharing, and more positive relationships (Henriquez-Roark, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 2006).

Individual Change and the Study Group Model

In her study, Henriquez- Roark (1995) found that teacher study groups promoted specific change in individuals. An average of 85% of the teachers participating in Henriquez-Roark's study reported growing professionally because of participating in study groups. They used study groups to plan, share new ideas, and solve problems. The teachers expanded their teaching repertoire. There was more emphasis on curriculum and instruction because they were not afraid to borrow from their peers or share ideas. They were accountable to each other and felt they were becoming better teachers.

Additional professional benefits included an individual increase in reading, more sharing of ideas, and trying each other's ideas, with an openness to share challenges and problems. Teacher study groups provided a forum where they processed their thinking for support and guidance, which facilitated more communication between peers and fostered a better ability to see things from the

other person's point of view. Some teachers even experienced a change in their conceptual beliefs and discovered personal leadership qualities (Henriquez-Roark, 1995).

Murphy's model (1995) is a student-driven approach to staff development. These Whole-Faculty Study Groups facilitate a deeper understanding of academic content; help to implement district wide initiatives in curriculum, instruction, and technology; integrate and give coherence to a school's instructional program and practices; target school wide instructional needs; study research on teaching and learning; monitor the impact or effects of instructional initiatives on students; examine student work with colleagues; and reflect on current teaching practices.

Organizational Change and the Study Group Model

When teacher study groups lead to the professional and personal development of individual teachers through a collaborative process, these educators influence organizational growth and success. Margaret Wheatley (2002, p. 9) states "that when we begin listening to each other, and when we talk about things that matter to us, the world begins to change. . . . All change, even very large and powerful change, begins when a few people start talking with one another about something they care about." Robert Quinn (1996) in referring to organizational change states that there must be provision for enough encouragement, help, and support so the people have courage to try the change. Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, AAA, peer support groups, and Meet up Groups are becoming available in many places creating subcultures, which help thousands of people to change and grow.

Teacher study groups develop a subculture where teachers share and act upon common values and beliefs. Thirteen components define these groups (Henriquez-Roark, 1995):

1. A group of four to six.

2. Long-term focus and common purpose.

3. Focus on implementing an innovation.

4. Innovation focused on increased student achievement.

5. Regularly scheduled during the school day.

6. A written agenda.

7. Leadership responsibilities pre-determined and can be rotated.

8. Assignments given and participants report back on progress.

9. Administrative personnel participate.

10. Includes modeling, demonstration, practice, feedback and coaching – emphasis is on student results.

11. Risk-free collaborative environment.

12. Establishes a connection between initial training and follow-up activities.

13. Meet regularly following this pattern: once per week for 1 hour / bi-weekly for 2 hours / once a month for four hours.

Murphy's (1995) Whole-Faculty Study Groups focuses on the following 15 guidelines:

1. Group size is between three and six.

2. Membership determined by addressing an identified student need.

3. Regular weekly or every two weeks meetings.

4. Established group norms.

5. Rotating leadership to all members.

6. Develop a Study Group Action Plan.

7. Complete a Study Group Log for each meeting.

8. Requires members to routinely examine/observe student work in classrooms.

9. Make a comprehensive list of learning resources.

10. Multiple professional development strategies.

11. Reflection on the study group's work and impact on student performance.

12. Recognize all study group members as equals.

13. Expect transitions.

14. Assess study group work to determine what evidence there is that student needs have improved.

15. Establish a variety of communication networks and strategies

Teacher study groups, Whole-Faculty Study Groups, or similar groups can form a subculture. This can give rise to what Gladwell (2000) refers to as the *tipping point*, or the permeating of the organization, creating organizational change.

Relationship of Organizational and Individual Change
In The Study Group Model

We know that organizational change directly relates to individual change. Quinn (1996) found a surprising link between change in the individual level and change at the organizational level. Transformation of a system cannot take place without leaders taking risks viewed as unacceptable. This appears to be a top-down

process. However, Quinn goes on to state the opposite is also true: change can come from the bottom up. Neitham (2005) says that "Everyone is a leader of everyone; everyone a follower of everyone." If it is true that change can come from either top-down or bottom up, and if it is true that everyone at times is either a leader or a follower, then it follows that using the study group model could ensure change for both the individual and the organization whether it was initiated by established administration or by various individuals. However, administrative support of the program is critical for the survival and success of the study group/ Whole-Faculty Study Groups. There should be specific times regularly scheduled during the school day for meetings. It is job-embedded, and every faculty or teacher should be a member of a group (Henriquez-Roark, 1995; Murphy, 1995).

Whenever an organization tries to implement a change, individuals are required to also change (Quinn, 1996). When the new initiative requires new understanding and skills of its employees, Henriquez-Roark (1995) points out the critical role of the study group model for supporting and ensuring that change happens. Organizational change and individual change are dependant on each other for successful transitions.

<center>Virtual Teams, Bionic eTeams,
And the Virtual Study Group Model</center>

Kostner (2001) says that if we can reduce travel without compromising quality of interaction it is almost like buying time. She believed teams that have exchanged the physical meeting place for meeting through technology would create tomorrow's success. The Carolina Conference Virtual Study Groups, in a sense, have

bought time by not traveling distances for most meetings. Teacher observations and comments, along with results, indicate a preservation of quality or even improvement in some groups. However, there is no present study to substantiate this claim. While virtual groups have definitely improved the time and cost involved with teacher study groups, I do not believe we will ever get away from the need to meet face-to-face for social interaction (Fisher & Fisher, 2001).

While virtual teams have technology around them as tools for communication and sharing, Bionic eTeams use technology as an extension of themselves embracing technology as power to make things happen fast (Kostner, 2001). Could moving the Virtual Study Group model towards, shall we say, a "Bionic eStudy Group" transform the function of the group to a higher level? Could they shift from using technology as a mechanical tool for conducting a meeting to focusing on using technology in creative ways as an extension of themselves to accomplish their goals? Technology, now viewed as confining, would become empowering, making things happen in ways that could not happen without technology. According to Kostner, (2001, p. 5) "The need for teams to evolve to Bionic eTeamwork isn't optional. It's mandatory." Creating "Bionic eStudy Groups" would require special skills in leading and managing because of the complexity of the virtual environment (Duarte & Snyder, 2006).

While the study group model does not fit into any of the categories outlined by Duarte and Snyder (2006), there are similarities when it comes to leading and managing them. They mention four myths in particular that apply to the virtual study group model. One myth is that virtual team members do not need attention. However,

accountability to each other and to the leader is even more critical for accomplishing given tasks. There must be ways to connect with the group in order to facilitate productivity.

When you cannot see people on a regular basis, another myth believes it is difficult to help them with assignments. Assignments, in the case of virtual study groups, are activities that transfer to the classroom instruction as opposed to task performed on the job. The classroom is where each teacher can "show case" his or her skills. In the business world, a person's skills may not be as easy to see because some assignments are more visible than others (Duarte & Snyder, 2006). In this respect, it may be easier to help teachers through virtual study groups with assignments than to help employees with their assignments in the business world. The overlap of classroom supervision and study groups results would both happen in the classroom.

A third myth states that networking matters less because it is only about results. We know that everyone is smarter than any one of us (Kostner, 2001). With technology affording contact much quicker than physical travel, how ironic that we would believe that networking would not be necessary for optimal performance. Especially in the 21st century with the hyper speed environment, I believe it is imperative for educators to become networkers, sharing the workload of lesson preparation and problem solving, if we are going to offer an education to our children that will prepare them for a workplace tomorrow that may not exist today.

And a fourth myth says the added complexity of using technology to mediate, communicate, and collaborate over time and distance is greatly exaggerated. One only has to try to facilitate such a feat to understand that unique problems arise, which

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are a challenge to solve. Getting the right technology is only 10 percent of the solution. The other 90 percent is getting the people trained to use the technology (Fisher & Fisher, 2001). Moreover, there are many interconnected pieces, which have to work together correctly to be successful. One little glitch can consume the time needed to be productive.

In conclusion, the study group model is a critical part of ongoing staff development (Henriquez-Roark & Green, 1996). It has a significant role in accomplishing change in individuals and then in systems. Moving the study group model towards becoming "Bionic eStudy Groups" could aide in narrowing the technology generation gap between the Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y teachers. It could aid the teachers in helping students prepare for and be productive in the hyper speed society in which we live.

Future Possibilities/Applications:
The Carolina Virtual Study Group Model

As the 2011-2012 school year is approaching, I am thinking about ways to move the Virtual Study Groups to a higher level of functioning. The Facebook utility and networking activities are big socioeconomic functions in today's society. How could I use the study group model, Facebook, and networking to move the Carolina Conference educational system into a more current connection with each other, their constituents, and ultimately their community? How might this promote healthy partnerships for producing and promoting quality Adventist Education?

I envision future study groups to be the environment for facilitating three things. First, to continue being the structure in place for supporting teachers as they

seek to improve instruction in the classroom. The Carolina Virtual Study Groups are presently functioning in this capacity and need continual monitoring for success. Second, each study group would broaden their learning experience by sharing with those outside of their group through a Facebook page set up for the Carolina Conference eStudy Groups. Because Facebook is presently one of the most powerful forces in the world, this would be an opportunity for each group to support each other in learning how to use Facebook properly and expose a distinctly Adventist Educational flavor to Facebook and ultimately the world. It could be a powerful source for promoting our school system, which offers a unique holistic approach to education (Kido, 2010). Third, I want to see study groups networking with other study groups for problem solving and learning. This connection could promote sustainability of a quality program among the teachers while broadening growth for ongoing improvement at the same time.

My philosophy in action for change is "Take Baby Steps" moving in the direction you want to go. The first "Baby Step" for this next year would be to ask each study group to post one comment per meeting on the Carolina Conference eStudy Group Facebook page, which I set up. These posting would be success stories of teacher and students in the Carolina Conference. In addition, I would ask that each study group network with a "sister" study group. Their assignment will be to find out two things from their "sister" group. One, what is the most important thing their group is going to do to improve their function for this year? Two, what is their biggest goal as a group for the year? Each group will work on their answers in their August Face-to-Face meeting. I will help them network with a "sister" group and

share those answers with their "sister" group and me. I will ask them to determine a method for networking with each other on their own at least one time in each semester. Each time they network, they will process the following questions: What are you presently doing? How is that helping you reach your goal? What might you need to do differently? Each group should prepare for sharing their answers before networking with their "sister" group.

In April, each group will reconnect with their "sister" group to report on how well they met their goals. In the May face-to-face meeting, all of the Carolina Conference teachers will creatively feature their "sister" group's accomplishments during the year. It will be a fun and validating experience, a celebration of the successes accomplished because of the study groups.

My purpose in beginning this way is to provide a manageable assignment, which will get them used to using Facebook for promoting Adventist Education and networking with others for improvement of teaching. Once this is accomplished, I will be able to brainstorm with the teachers in the May meeting for ideas of where we might want to go next. Thus, change will begin to happen in a sustainable manner as teachers help guide the direction and purpose of networking and the use of Facebook through Bionic Teacher eStudy Groups.

Summary

Study groups are powerful because they help meet personal and social needs along with professional needs (Henriquez-Roark & Green, 1996). Study groups also provide the support structure for teachers to practice moving from passive teaching methods to participatory teaching methods. This facilitates the teacher's ability to

transfer the new strategy or structure into their classroom teaching. Through the improved instruction, students' can retain the information or skills they learn more easily. Study groups are a critical piece of the puzzle in making staff development effective (Henriquez-Roark & Green, 1996).

Moving teacher study groups from face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings with only two face-to-face meetings per year has disadvantages and advantages. It can be a challenge to connect personally over technology, although the Carolina teachers have done well for the most part. They pray and share together and are a real support and help to each other even over technology. I believe this is in part due to the face-to-face meeting at the beginning of each year. The fact that most of the teachers have been working together in their group for more than one year would also contribute to the connectedness.

The biggest disadvantage of having virtual study groups is the loss of face-to-face time with each other. This can mean loss of nonverbal clues such as body language, which can lead to communication difficulties especially with sensitive issues. It is always more difficult for members to connect who have never physically met than when meeting face-to-face. Even knowing what someone looks like can help the connecting process. Social interaction cannot be eliminated because is important to the success of the team (Fisher & Fisher, 2001).

There are several advantages of the virtual meetings. There is no travel time, the cost is significantly less, and the teachers have become problem solvers with technology challenges. These experiences seem to give the Carolina teachers a cutting edge when they transfer to another setting because of experience in areas where many

teachers are limited. It would be good to conduct research on the virtual study groups and their effectiveness. I may do that in the future. For now, I will focus on moving the study groups to Bionic Teacher eStudy Groups as a new level of functioning and see what happens.

I also believe there is application of the principles of teacher study groups to the business world. I would love to form several small groups of four to six people that want to bring change into their lives and see how the model would work for those who are not educators. This is something I have thought about for a long time and I keep thinking about it. This is something I will probably try in the future, since I love working with people and supporting them reaching their full potential. I believe study groups could provide the support and courage that many need in order to discover and have the courage to make the changes they desire. The study group model may also help an organization make the changes desired or needed. By establishing change in the individuals through the study group model, the whole organization can move towards solid and systemic change.

Kostner quotes Steve Ballmer who says, "The first phase of the Internet was all about the browser, web sites, and electronic mail. The second phase will be about even more deeply helping people connect with one another, enhancing communication between people in business in the richest of ways" (Kostner, 2001, p. 39). I believe that leading the Carolina Conference Virtual Study Groups to be Carolina Conference Bionic Teacher eStudy Groups will provide a cutting-edge advantage to the Carolina teachers. It will help expedite the process of change and afford the teachers a better understanding of the technological world in which our

students live. Possible accomplishments through combining the study group model

and technology are only limited by the imagination!

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