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Reading Guide for *Narrowing the Literacy Gap*

The following guide has been designed to support our reading and discussion of this book. Everyone is asked to read the entire book, but we will divide up responsibility for leading the discussion of chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Everyone, please read Chapter 1, guided by the following questions:

1. Barone identifies a number of reasons for conducting the study that she reports in this book. As you read Chapter 1, please record the goals Barone identifies for this study; what purposes does she want this study to serve?
2. How does the school that Barone studied compare to the school(s) you attended when you were in elementary and middle school? How does it compare with the school(s) in which you have done your field work?
3. As you conclude chapter 1 and acquire a sense of what this book is about, what are you curious about? What questions are you bringing to your reading of this book?

The group responsible for reporting on Chapter 2:

1. On pages 26 to 32, Barone presents literacy achievement information for the children whose progress she is following from kindergarten through grade 6. What patterns do you notice as you look at the descriptions of the children's achievement? You may find it helpful to notice the similarities and differences among the children as they begin school. You may find it interesting to choose two children and study their change across grade levels. Another comparison would be to look at some aspect of the achievement of children who enter school speaking English and children who enter school speaking a language other than English.
2. After providing a description of the literacy learning opportunities by grade level, Barone summarizes what happened at each grade level and what the students' impressions were. What do you find interesting about these descriptions and about the students' responses?
3. What concerns did these observations raise for Barone?

The group responsible for reporting on Chapter 3:

1. On pages 81 to 84 Barone characterizes the teachers and shares their specific issues. What similarities and differences do you discern among the teachers' issues?
2. In this chapter, Barone is critical of some of the teachers. Keep a list of the reasons why she is critical of certain teachers' practices, so that we can discuss these in class.

3. As you read this chapter, what thoughts do you have about Barone's claim that "teachers at high poverty schools are especially critical to academic success....?"

The group responsible for reporting on Chapter 4:

1. In this chapter, Barone introduces three perspectives from which to study literacy development: social constructivist, positioning theory, and resilience theory. What does each lens attend to?
2. Choose the lens that you find especially compelling. Why do you think this lens is perhaps especially valuable to understanding school performance?
3. Which of these lenses seems closest to the way that you think about teaching/learning situations?

Everyone, please Chapter 5, guided by the following questions:

1. In this chapter, Barone discusses some of the sociopolitical forces at work in the lives of teachers and children. Choose one that you find particularly interesting, either because it is one you are quite familiar with, or one that was totally unfamiliar to you. What is interesting about this force?
2. How does Barone's description of two exemplary teachers inform your thinking about how you might become an exemplary teacher of literacy?