There are a number of ways to organize a book study of *Young Investigators: The Project Approach in the Early Years*. The book is designed as a guide to facilitating the use of the project approach in the early years when children are not yet proficient in reading and writing (toddler through second grade). Although the book also can be used with teachers of older children, typically a switch to a specific content area approach such as that used in Problem Based Learning is used beginning in third grade. The book has three major components that are helpful for those new to project work.

**Flowchart of a project.** This uses the phases of the project approach to provide a structure to project work which can be used for planning. The flowchart can be photocopied, displayed, and used to track progress of the project. Sections (or pieces) of the flowchart are placed in the chapters of the book to guide readers’ thinking as they approach that particular point in the project and to facilitate finding information when needed.

**Planning Journal.** The planning journal is at the back of the book. It provides a step-by-step guide to the facilitation process. It is keyed to the chapters and to the flowchart by the sections placed on the pages.

**Project Descriptions.** There are many examples of learning experiences within projects. In addition there are complete projects which enable the reader to follow a project from beginning to end. These include the Camera Project, two toddler projects (Fire Hydrant Project and Signs Project), an Airplane Project which integrates STEM skills, and the Canada Goose Project which shows how projects can connect children with nature. These are entertaining and interesting to read; however, the real value of the complete project descriptions of projects if to enable teachers to analyze the project and discuss with others. The more projects a teacher observes or participates in (even vicariously) the easier it is for them to gain a deep understanding of the project approach and to facilitate meaningful projects.

 Readers should be encouraged to highlight and use post-its to mark information that they might want to access later.
Different Approaches to the Book Study

Preparing for a Group

There are many different ways to study *Young Investigators* using the components (book, journal, flowchart and projects) in different ways. To facilitate flexible use and enable study group facilitators to meet time constraints, the chapters have been grouped according to their focus. A group may create their own schedule and spend as long as desired on each unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Focus</th>
<th>Young Investigators Readings</th>
<th>Coordinating Planning Journal Pages</th>
<th>Topics Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit One: Introduction to Project Work</td>
<td>Preface, Ch 1, 2, (6 or 7) Camera Project Fire Hydrant Project Sign Project</td>
<td>1-11</td>
<td>Why project work, Topic selection, Child web, Child questions, Anticipatory Planning Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Two: Investigation</td>
<td>Ch 3, 4 (Ch 8 &amp; 9) Canada Goose Project (Nature) Airplane Project (STEM)</td>
<td>12-24</td>
<td>Preparing for investigation, Representations, Updating of webs and questions, Field site and/or expert visits, Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Three: Documenting, Culminating and Evaluating</td>
<td>Ch 5 &amp; 10</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Sharing documentation, Culminating events or experiences, Evaluation of a project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Planning Journal

The Planning Journal is one of the most valuable components of the book. It was developed by observing and discussing with teachers how they managed facilitation of project work. Drafts of the journal were then used by both beginning and experienced teachers and revised. The finished journal provides a “workbook” for teacher organization, checklists for each phase, and space for journaling. The journal can be photocopied from the back of the book or an electronic copy may be downloaded from tcpress.com. A teacher should create a new project journal for each project facilitated. Many schools and programs keep blank Planning Journal notebooks printed and stocked so when a topic emerges, teachers can just grab a new journal.

The Project Planning Journal should be printed or photocopied duplex on three-hole paper (or punched after copying). Three-hole notebook binders work well because other information can be inserted as needed. Adding some lined notebook paper is helpful for writing notes about expert contacts and resources. Three to five clear page protectors can be added to hold photos and children’s work. A pocket folder, 3 hole punched and placed in the notebook, encourages the saving of children’s work.
Study Group Formats

**Read, Reflect and Respond**

The easiest and most typical way to organize a study group is to divide the chapters into segments according to the time available to read and discuss, then use the Read and Reflect Questions included in this guide to facilitate conversation. This works well when the study occurs outside of the school calendar year. This is also a good approach for integrating into a course of study, such as a curriculum class.

**Read, Reflect and Respond then follow-up using the Planning Journal**

In this approach, the book is read in its entirety using the Read, Reflect and Respond questions for discussion. Then when school is in session, the Planning Journal is used to implement a project in each classroom and teachers gather to discuss their progress, sharing the journal and student work. They will want to revisit the chapters in *Young Investigators* as needed. This works well for programs that are reading the book in the spring or summer before fall implementation.

**Read, Apply while Reading, Share and Reflect**

The best way for teachers to learn how to facilitate project work is to read how to do projects while they are guiding a project in their own classrooms. Teachers read *Young Investigators* while they are experiencing a first project in their classrooms. The three units are spaced over a two ½ month period to allow teachers to pursue a project in their programs and then come back for the fourth session to share and celebrate the work of their children. Participants learn how to use the *Project Planning Journal* and to facilitate a project from first topic identification to culminating experiences. This is a very meaningful way for teachers to develop a deep understanding of the project process and to develop skills for implementation. This is also an excellent approach to incorporating into a student teaching experience. A schedule for an 8 to 9 week book study while implementing is provided on the next page with expected work products to be shared with the book study participants.
## Schedule for an 8 – 9 week book study while implementing in the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Weeks Schedule</th>
<th>Unit Focus</th>
<th>Young Investigators Readings</th>
<th>Planning Journal Pages to Complete</th>
<th>Topics Discussed</th>
<th>Work Products to be shared with study group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 1-3</td>
<td>Preface, Ch 1, 2, (6 or 7) Camera Project Fire Hydrant Project Sign Project</td>
<td>Preface, Ch 1, 2, (6 or 7)</td>
<td>1-11</td>
<td>Why project work, Topic selection, Child web, Child questions, Anticipatory Planning Web</td>
<td>Topic Selected, Child Web, Child Questions Anticipatory Planning Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 3-6</td>
<td>Ch 3, 4 (Ch 8 &amp; 9) Canada Goose Project (Nature) Airplane Project (STEM)</td>
<td>Ch 3, 4 (Ch 8 &amp; 9)</td>
<td>12-24</td>
<td>Preparing for investigation, Representations, Updating of webs and questions, Field site and/or expert visits, Documentation</td>
<td>Representations, Any updating of webs and questions, Field site and/or expert visits, Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 7-8</td>
<td>Ch 5 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Ch 5 &amp; 10</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Sharing documentation, Culminating events or experiences, Evaluation of a project</td>
<td>Documentation shared, Culminating event or experience, Evaluation of project completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culmination Celebration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Projects can be shared at this time. Not all projects will culminate at the same time. All participants should share their project no matter what phase they are in</td>
<td>Project is shared with study group members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read, Reflect and Respond
Unit One: Introduction to Project Work

Chapter One:

1. Describe in your own words the difference between using the project approach and using a thematic approach to teaching?

2. What are the times in your classroom where you are more likely to observe and record interests of children for possible project topics?

Chapter Two:

3. What can you do when children seem to have very different interests?

4. How do you think you will use the Distance from Self diagram in facilitating project work?

Chapters Six and Seven Project Examples

Chapters six and seven present complete project descriptions. As you read the project description you can deepen your understanding of project work by thinking through these questions.

How did this project start?

Was the topic appropriate? Were you surprised by the topic?

How did the teacher use the environment to support project work?

What was the effect of the contact with experts or the field site visit on this project? What if there were no other adults in the project?

In what ways were children encouraged to represent their own thoughts about what they learned?

What ideas did you get from reading these projects for your own project work?
Chapter Six

3. What did Lora do that made the Camera Project so meaningful to children?

4. What ways did Lora integrate literacy in this project?

Chapter Seven:

5. How are toddler projects different from preschool and school age projects?
Read, Reflect and Respond
Unit Two: Investigation

Chapter Three:

1. How can you use the anticipatory planning web when you are planning for field trips and expert visitors?

2. What skills do you want to teach to children at the beginning of the year before you begin project work?

Chapter Four:

3. What changes will you want to make in your room for the investigation phase? What materials and resources will you want to be sure that you have?

4. List three ideas for more meaningful discussions that you want to apply in your classroom?
Chapters 8 and 9 present two more complete project descriptions. As you read these project descriptions you can deepen your understanding of project work by thinking through these questions.

How did this project start?

Was the topic appropriate? Were you surprised by the topic?

How did the teacher use the environment to support project work?

What was the effect of the contact with experts or the field site visit on this project? What if there were no other adults in the project?

In what ways were children encouraged to represent their own thoughts about what they learned?

What ideas did you get from reading these projects for your own project work?
Read, Reflect and Respond
Unit Three: Documenting, Culminating and Evaluating

Chapter Five:

1. What does *Young Investigators* say about why you should culminate a project? What are the benefits from culminating activities?

2. Which of the following ways of documenting projects will you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Documentation</th>
<th>How could you use this in projects in your classrooms?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Portfolios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of Progress or Performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Self-Reflections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative of the Learning Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What does *Young Investigators* say about why you should culminate a project? What are the benefits from culminating activities?

2. There are two forms provided in the Planning Journal to use when reflecting on a project. The first looks at project work as engaged learning. The second focuses on what the teacher learned about doing project work. If you have completed your own project use these forms to reflect and evaluate. If you are reading the book, choose a project described in the book and think through the evaluation of engaged learning. What did you learn?
Chapter Ten:

Chapter Ten addresses the concerns that teachers often have about implementing project work in their own classroom. “Yes, but” thinking is common when beginning project work. Were your concerns about these challenges reduced? What “Yes, but”s do you still have? Who can help you with these concerns?