

What is a Study Circle?

It...

- Is a small diverse group of eight to twelve people.
- Meets together for 2, 2-hour sessions or 4, 1 hour sessions
- Sets its own ground rules. This helps people respect each other and get results.
- Considers the issue from many points of view.
- Helps people see where they agree and have common ground.
- Is led by a facilitator who won't take sides, and who helps manage the discussion. He or she is not there to teach the group about the issue.
- Starts with personal stories, then helps the group look at a problem from many points of view. Next the group talks about how they want things to be. Finally, they make plans for action and change.

How will this study circle help?

It will...

- Build trust and connections between a variety of people.
- Deepen our understanding of why people in our community do or do not succeed.
- Help people respect each other and listen to different ideas. Help people find common ground for solutions and actions.

How will this study circle program work?

- Many circles will meet at the same time.
- Each group will be made up of 8-12 people from different backgrounds.
- Groups will meet together for 4, 1-hr sessions or 2, 2-hour sessions
- Each group will move forward with the help of a facilitator and this discussion guide.

Why might a study circle program work for our community?

- People care about their communities. They want to make things better.
- Complex problems call for many kinds of solutions.
- People from all backgrounds and all parts of society have something to offer.
- When everybody is included in public life, everybody benefits.
- When people talk with each other face-to-face, they get to know each other and trust each other. New ideas and plans are born.
- When people consider different points of view on a complex issue, they find common ground and better solutions.
- When people know their voice counts, they are more likely to take part in creating and carrying out ideas for community change.
- The more people who involved, the bigger the impact.
- Community change is stronger and deeper when people work together.

Where will this lead?

In the last session of each study circle, people will develop ideas for action. These ideas will be presented at a large community “action forum.” This takes place after all the circles finish. Those people who want to stay involved will work together to put these ideas into action.

Steps in the Dialogue

In a study circle, each session builds on the one before it. Here is how the sessions fit together:

Session 1: Meet Each Other

Get to know and understand one another.

Talk about what a good education means to us.

Be given information about how our community is doing.

Session2: Explore the Problem

Discuss how our community is doing.

Talk about what we see as some of the road blocks to success.

Session 3: Set Goals

Crte a “picture” of a community where everyone is well educated.

Session 4: Plan for Action

Talk about how to make our visions from Session 3 happen. Some of these ideas will be actions that people can do alone, or in groups. Others will be things that schools or the community can do.