

PLANNING TO FACILITATE A HEALTH LITERACY STUDY CIRCLE⁺





Planning to Facilitate a Health Literacy Study Circle⁺

Planning*

A successful study circle requires careful preparation and planning in partnership with adult education programs. This section of the Introduction to the Health Literacy Study Circles⁺ is designed to assist you to prepare for and conduct a Health Literacy Study Circle⁺.

Facilitators play an important role in the success of study circles. They guide discussion, make certain that everyone has an opportunity to participate, and model processes and approaches that others can use in their own teaching. Even for the experienced facilitator, preparing for and conducting a study circle on a complex topic such as health literacy can be daunting. Commitment and effort are required to plan and successfully coordinate a study circle. The information in this guide is meant to help you succeed in your role as a facilitator.

In order to plan and prepare for a study circle, you will need to complete a range of administrative tasks and make some decisions before the study circle begins.

This section includes a checklist that you can use to make sure you have adequately prepared for the study circle sessions. It also includes a sample timeline to guide you through the preparation process.

*The format of this guide has been adapted from the Sun Microsystems Open Gateways Curriculum for Teachers. Retrieved from http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/comm_invest/ogp/training/downloads/workshop_logistics.pdf

The topics covered include:

- Organizing the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺
- Finding a Location
- Scheduling and Timing of Sessions
- Recruiting Participants
- Setting Expectations for Participation
- Preparing Materials
- Sample Recruitment Flyer/Registration Form
- Sample Timeline

Organizing the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺

Working with programs: In many cases, program directors play an important role in the success of study circles. You may need to rely on their help to recruit teachers, and to support teachers' efforts to follow through with new ideas. Furthermore, program directors may have opportunities to offer material as well as leave time support for these activities. Thus, we strongly recommend that you establish a good relationship and open lines of communication with program directors at the very beginning stages of recruitment.

Here are a few strategies you might use to foster an effective relationship with program directors:

- Do you have contact information for local adult education programs and program directors?***

- Request a face-to-face or phone meeting with program directors to review the goals and the format of the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺ and address any questions and concerns that the directors may have. Make sure the directors have your contact information.
- As soon as the dates are determined, share the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺ schedule with program directors to make sure that it does not interfere with any major previously scheduled events.
- Ask directors to help you recruit individual teachers to participate in the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺ by distributing the flyers within their programs.
- After the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺ is over, send thank you notes to the program directors for their help in coordinating it.

Scheduling and Timing of Sessions

- Have you discussed the schedule with program directors and teachers to avoid conflicts with previously scheduled events?*
- Have three hours been scheduled for each session?*
- Did you allow at least two weeks between sessions to give participants time to complete their assignments?*

SCHEDULING

Try to meet on the same day and time each week (e.g., always on Tuesday nights, or always on Friday mornings). Check to make sure that the study circle schedule does not conflict with other previously scheduled events or program vacations. Try to set all the dates before the sessions begin so that participants know what they are signing up for. Once the time and dates are set, do not change the schedule.

Participants need time between sessions to complete activities and assignments. We recommend that you allow at least two weeks between sessions, although the interim period will likely depend on the time of year and location.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS

- *Before Session One*, participants are asked to read background articles and to mail in a completed Participant Expectations sheet to you.
- *Following Session One*, participants carry out a needs assessment activity in their classes.
- *Following Session Two*, participants try out a sample health literacy lesson and discuss unit ideas.
- *Following Session Three*, participants develop and try out lessons of their own creation and draft plans for health literacy units.
- *Following Session Four*, participants share their teaching experience and consider health literacy units. They also consider how to define and measure their students' health literacy skills. After Session Four, participants use a template to help them outline the design and evaluation of health literacy units.

TIMING

Each study circle session lasts approximately three hours (15 hours total if you facilitate all five sessions). We have kept the time frame to roughly three hours in an effort to be sensitive to the time demands placed on teachers by their regular teaching responsibilities. While it is possible to devote more time than allotted in the *Facilitator's Guide*, we strongly recommend that no less than three hours be scheduled for each session.

In addition, you should encourage participants to arrive 5-10 minutes before each session. You may also want to provide some light refreshments for participants before the session begins. This time can give participants coming from different programs an opportunity to get to know each other.

Recruiting Participants

The Health Literacy Study Circles⁺ are geared towards teachers of adult learners. A good size for a working group would be about 15 participants. Try to recruit participants from three to five learning centers and include two or three people from each center. This will encourage teachers to make connections with each other and continue their work on health literacy after the study circles end.

Participants should be actively engaged in teaching adult learners because they will be asked to complete activities with their students between the study circle sessions. Participants are also expected to attend all sessions.

You can use the sample recruitment flyer and registration form included at the end of this section as a template to give helpful information about the Health Literacy Study Circles⁺ to potential participants. Tailor the flyer to include the specific information about the study circle you will be facilitating.

Be sure to include your contact information on the registration form so participants can return the form to you.

You can send out the flyer via mail, email, or post it on a Web site to let practitioners know when and where the Study Circle will be taking place, or you might recruit participants through local adult education programs.

- Have you prepared a recruitment flyer and distributed it to potential participants?*
- After participants have signed up, have you contacted them to confirm the time and date of the first meeting?*

When participants sign up to take part in the study circle, be sure to get their full names, phone numbers, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses, and ask about their preferred form of communication.

When you feel that you have solid commitments from enough participants, contact them to confirm their participation and confirm the date, time, and location of the first meeting. Also let them know that you will be sending a packet of handouts for them to read before the first session.

Setting Expectations for Participation

The Health Literacy Study Circles⁺ are designed to be informative, intensive experiences for the participants.

Each study circle is informative in that no knowledge of health literacy skills is presumed, since we anticipate that participants will have varying levels of expertise and experience with health content and health literacy.

The Health Literacy Study Circles⁺ focus on skills and not on health content. Participants are not expected to be health experts, nor will they be asked to serve in this capacity after the study circle is completed. Instead, they are asked to apply their existing expertise – helping adult learners develop and hone literacy-related skills – within the health context.

Each Study Circle⁺ is also intensive, as it requires a good deal of discussion and reflection. Participants will be asked to think about health literacy skills and adult education in some new and unfamiliar ways.

Each study circle session includes whole-group discussions of the readings and participants' experiences, as well as partner or small group work. New information is conveyed through group activities in each session. In addition, activities in later sessions build on ideas generated in earlier sessions. For these reasons, it is important to the success of the study circle that participants:

- Arrive promptly
- Attend all scheduled sessions
- Complete assignments for each session

- Did you inform all participants about the expectations for their participation?*

Preparing Materials

The *Facilitator's Guide* contains all the instructions and handouts you will need to facilitate each session of the Health Literacy Study Circle⁺.

Before the study circle begins, you will need to send out Session One readings and handouts to all participants so they can prepare for Session One (see Overview and Preparation for Session One in the *Facilitator's Guide*). You can distribute all other handouts during each session.

SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

Be sure to gather the necessary supplies before the first session. Each session includes a variety of activities that require some of the following materials:

- Name tags.
- Flipcharts or large pads of newsprint.
- Markers.
- Transparencies (if you want to use an overhead projector).
- A three-hole punch.
- Masking tape (for posting flipcharts on the wall).
- Post-it notes (3" x 3" or 3" x 5").
- Extra loose-leaf paper.
- Extra pens.
- A watch for timing activities.
- Small dot stickers (1/2" or smaller).
- If possible, purchase binders for participants to organize all study circle materials. Otherwise, ask participants to bring binders for their handouts.
- (Optional) Purchase snacks for each session or ask volunteers to provide snacks.

Do you have the necessary supplies for session activities?

— Sample Recruitment Flyer —

HEALTH LITERACY STUDY CIRCLE⁺

*(Insert the title of the Study Circle⁺ you are conducting here — example:
Skills for Health Care Access and Navigation)*

Join us for a professional development program for adult educators interested in incorporating health literacy skill development into instruction.

(Insert one of the following brief descriptions of the study circle here)

The **Health Care Access and Navigation Study Circle⁺** prepares participants to help their students develop basic skills needed for gaining access to health-related services and for navigating health care systems. These skills include filling out forms, reading signs, and interpreting rights and responsibilities.

The **Chronic Disease Management Study Circle⁺** prepares participants to help their students develop basic skills needed for managing any chronic disease. These skills include using clocks and calendars for scheduling, using charts and graphs to monitor change, and reading and using labels, charts, and measurement tools.

The **Disease Prevention and Screening Study Circle⁺** prepares participants to help their students develop basic skills needed for engaging in disease prevention and screening activities. These skills include decision-making, using graphs and charts, calculating percentages, and interpreting risks and probability.

The Health Literacy Study Circles⁺ are organized into five sessions of approximately three hours each. You will be asked to read articles or complete assignments with your students between sessions. There is space for up to fifteen participants, and we ask that you attend all sessions.

During this study circle, participants will:

- Develop a shared definition of “health literacy.”
- Identify literacy-related barriers and issues that prevent people from getting the health care they need.
- Analyze health-related tasks to identify the basic literacy skills required.
- Teach sample lessons designed to build students’ literacy and numeracy skills.
- Create original lessons based on students’ needs.
- Outline a health literacy unit and draft a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the unit.

Where and when the Study Circle⁺ will meet*

Location: _____

Dates: _____

Time: _____

**Note: Attendance at all sessions is required.*

REGISTRATION FORM

for _____ (title of study circle)

If you would like to join this Health Literacy Study Circle, please complete this form and send it to the facilitator listed below by (deadline date):

Your Name: _____

Program Title: _____

Position: _____

Home address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____

Work phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Indicate the best way to contact you.

For more information, please contact:

Facilitator's Name
Facilitator's Address, City, State, Zip
Phone Number
E-mail Address

— Sample Timeline —

PREPARING TO FACILITATE A HEALTH LITERACY STUDY CIRCLE⁺

6 months prior to the Study Circle⁺

- Read the Overview carefully with special attention to the Planning and Facilitation Tips.
 - Locate and reserve a site.
 - Select dates and times for Study Circle⁺ sessions, allowing two to three weeks between sessions.
 - Develop recruitment flyer.
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At least 3 to 6 months prior to the Study Circle⁺

- Send a letter to program directors describing the goals and structure of the Study Circle⁺.
 - Distribute recruitment flyers.
 - Follow-up with program directors to discuss the Study Circle⁺ and answer any questions the directors may have.
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At least 3 months prior

- Send confirmation letters to registered participants.
 - Follow up confirmation letter with phone call or email to participants.
 - Re-advertise if not enough participants register by deadline.
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2-3 weeks prior

- Read carefully all the assigned readings and familiarize yourself with the particular Facilitator's Guide that you will be using.
 - Mail packet of materials for Session One to participants
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1-2 weeks prior

- Review the *Facilitator's Guide* for Session One and Session Two carefully to make sure you understand the activities and have time to prepare all the materials.
 - After you mail the material for Session One, follow up with a phone call to participants to make sure the packets have arrived.
 - Purchase supplies (e.g., flipcharts, markers, pens, overhead transparencies, and 3-hole paper).
-

1 week prior

- Create a list of contact information of all registered participants so that they can contact you and each other.
- (Optional) Order refreshments for break times.

