

Training Guide:

# *Study Circle Facilitators*

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**National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy**

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# ABOUT NCSALL STUDY CIRCLE FACILITATORS TRAINING

## Who created this study circle facilitators training?

This training guide was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The guide is part of NCSALL's effort to help connect research and practice in the field of adult education and family literacy. The *Training Guide: Study Circle Facilitators* is one of a series of teaching and training materials that NCSALL has developed.

## Why was this study circle facilitators training created?

NCSALL study circles are designed to be facilitated by any experienced adult education practitioner. While facilitator training is not necessary, the training offers practice and support.

The purpose of this guide is to help experienced professional developers and others organize and conduct professional development that trains facilitators of NCSALL study circles. Facilitators of the study circle facilitators training should be experienced trainers. This guide includes the information and materials you will need to conduct the training, but not background information on planning and facilitating training.

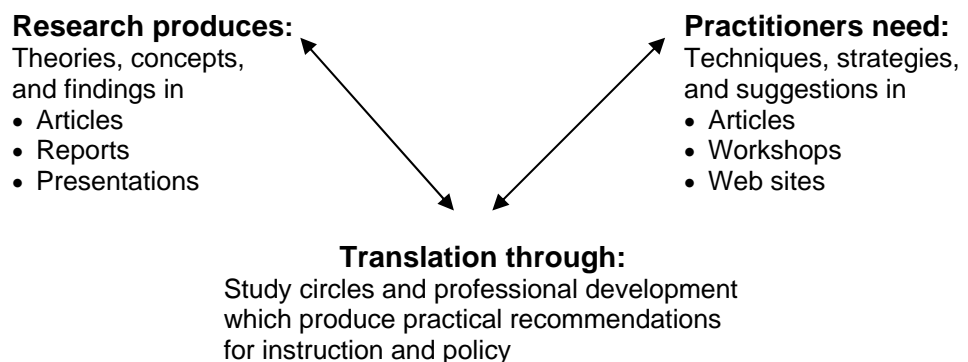
A NCSALL study circle is a professional development activity for adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), or adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) practitioners. The study circles are designed to bring practitioners together to:

- Read research articles presenting findings from adult education studies
- Discuss the relevance of the findings for the students with whom they work
- Discuss strategies for applying the findings in their classrooms and programs

- Make plans for trying strategies or changing their practice

The goal of NCSALL is to improve the quality of practice in adult education through research. We want to ensure that practitioners—teachers, counselors, program administrators, and others—have an opportunity to access, understand, judge, and use research in their work. Therefore, the goal of the NCSALL study circle facilitators training is to train new facilitators. Participants will understand NCSALL efforts to connect research and practice, understand how study circles support these efforts, and learn how to facilitate a study circle.

When we have talked to practitioners in the field of adult literacy about research, they ask for techniques, strategies, and practical suggestions that they can use immediately. Yet, research often produces reports, articles, and other documents that provide primarily findings, theories, concepts, ideas, and sometimes implications for practice. NCSALL believes that there should be a process that “translates” research findings into practical suggestions and that practitioners should be involved in that process. The prime vehicles for translating research into practical suggestions for practitioners are professional development activities such as practitioner research training and study circles, where practitioners can learn about, discuss, and/or try out ideas from research. The following diagram depicts this process:



## What is the study circle facilitators training?

Study circle facilitators training is a professional development activity to train facilitators of NCSALL study circles who will then facilitate study circles for practitioners (teachers, tutors, counselors, support staff, and program administrators) from programs that

provide adult students with adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education services.

This training uses the topic of reading and focuses on the NCSALL study circle on research-based adult reading instruction. However, the training can be adapted to prepare facilitators for NCSALL study circles in general or on another topic. If you are adapting the study circle facilitators training, substitute similar activities from other study circle guides and prepare materials accordingly. If you are doing a general training, have a variety of study circle guides with enough for each person. If you are preparing for a particular study circle, have copies of that study circle guide for each participant.

The study circle facilitators training on the topic of reading uses the format depicted below:

Participants will:

- Learn about ways teachers approach research and reflect on their own thinking about research
- List features of effective professional development and study circles
- Examine NCSALL's *Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* (or a study circle guide on another topic)
- Participate in and talk about typical study circle activities— introductions, reading discussion, “live” Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation
- Consider how to handle problem participants and other challenges in facilitating study circles
- Review the next steps and logistics for facilitating a study circle in their programs, regions, and/or states

## What should the outcomes of the study circle facilitators training be?

We hope that the participants will understand NCSALL efforts to connect research and practice and how study circles support these efforts. Also, we hope the participants will learn how to facilitate NCSALL study circles.

If participants leave the group with a clear plan for facilitating a study circle, the study circle facilitator training is a success.

## **Who should participate?**

The study circle facilitator training is designed for any practitioner who works in an adult education program: teachers, program directors, counselors, volunteers, or others. It is broad enough to be of interest to ABE, ASE, and ESOL practitioners who work in a variety of delivery settings: community-based organizations, local educational authorities, libraries, correctional facilities, etc. The design of the study circle facilitator training and the readings should be appropriate for both new and experienced practitioners.

The training is designed for approximately 20 participants who will be serving as study circle facilitators.

## **How long is the study circle facilitator training?**

The study circle facilitator training is designed for one, six-hour session and includes one-hour for lunch.

## **How do I recruit participants?**

NCSALL has produced a sample flyer that provides information about this NCSALL study circle facilitator training, which you can find on page 7. The flyer presents an overview of the topic and a brief description about what will be covered in the training. It also includes a registration form for practitioners to mail back to you.

You are welcome to use the flyer to send out via mail or on a Web site to let practitioners know when and where the study circle facilitator training will be taking place. Or, you can create your own flyer, using the NCSALL flyer as an example.

## **How do I organize the training?**

When you feel that you have solid commitments from the number of participants you are seeking, contact them to confirm their participation in the study circle facilitators training. At this time, reconfirm the times, date, and location of the study circle facilitators training with the participants.

As mentioned above, this study circle facilitators training has been designed for a group of practitioners to meet for one



session that is a day long. Because one session's worth of time is such a limited period for a group to meet, we suggest that several short readings and a brief cover letter with information about the study circle facilitators training be sent to practitioners to read before the training.

After confirming their participation, send each participant the packet of information and materials to read before the training (Pre-meeting Packet of readings and handouts on pages 17-38). Participants need to receive this packet at least 10 days before the training.

You, as the facilitator, will also want to review the entire guide and read over the Pre-meeting Packet so that you are ready for the training and for questions that participants may have. You need to be familiar with all of the readings and with facilitating study circles.

One of the final activities in this training is a review of the plans for study circles in the participants' particular programs, regions, or states. You will need to be certain that you have the information or that someone who does participates in the training.

Be sure that you arrive early for the training in order to set up the room; arrange your newsprint; and organize handouts, pens, tapes, etc. It's nice to have some sort of refreshment, such as juice, coffee, or water. Check out where the restrooms are so you can tell participants where they are located, and make sure the heating or cooling in the room is appropriate.

Always bring at least two or three extra copies of the readings for participants who forget to bring their own. You should have (or compile during the training) a list of participants and their telephone numbers or e-mail addresses so participants can contact one another after the training.

## **What kind of support can I expect?**

If you want to discuss the study circle facilitators training beforehand with someone from NCSALL, we'd be happy to do so. We can be reached at:

STUDY CIRCLE FACILITATORS

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We'd love to hear how it went so that we can improve this and other trainings we produce in the future. We welcome your feedback about how this NCSALL study circle facilitators training guide worked and how it could be improved. Contact us (telephone, e-mail, or letter) and tell us how it went and what you'd do differently next time.

(SAMPLE FLYER)

**Study Circle  
Facilitators  
Training**

**Interested in facilitating a study circle on research-based adult reading instruction (or another topic)?**

Questions about what research says about teaching adults and organizing programs are particularly relevant as programs and teachers struggle with choosing the most effective ways to develop adults' skills. **[insert name of your organization]** is sponsoring a study circle facilitators training to train participants to conduct study circles.

In this study circle facilitators training, you will understand NCSALL's efforts to connect research and practice and how study circles support these efforts. You, together with other practitioners, will meet to:

- Learn about the key elements of NCSALL study circles—professional wisdom, research, and their application to practice
- Experience typical study circle activities—introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation
- Name the supports and challenges of conducting study circles and identify ways to deal with the challenges
- Use the *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*
- Prepare to organize and facilitate a study circle in your state, region, or program

The study circle facilitators training is organized into one, six-hour training. We ask that you attend the entire training.

During the training you will examine teachers' attitudes toward research, explore the study circle guide on research-based adult reading instruction, list the challenges and supports of facilitating study circles, and address some facilitation challenges.

The study circle facilitators training is a staff development activity. Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) or Professional Development Points (PDPs) may be available.

The date and location of the study circle facilitators training is:

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If you would like to join the study circle facilitators training, please complete this form and send it to: **[insert facilitator's name]**, **[insert facilitator's address]** by **[insert deadline]**. I can also be reached at **[insert facilitator's phone number]** and **[insert facilitator's e-mail]**.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

