

Appendix B

Pre-meeting Packet of Readings and Handouts
To be sent to participants two weeks before first session

CONTENTS:

- Cover letter *Information about the Performance Accountability Study Circle*
- *What is a Study Circle?* by the Study Circle Resource Center (Handout #1)
- *What Study Circles are, and are not: A comparison* by the Study Circle Resource Center (Handout #2)
- *The role of the participant* by the Study Circle Resource Center (Handout #3)
- Juliet Merrifield, *Contested Ground: Performance Accountability in Adult Basic Education* (Reading #1)
- Folder for holding all readings and handouts

Dear Participant:

Thank you for registering to participate in the Performance Accountability Study Circle. I really look forward to meeting with you. This Study Circle was developed by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), through its Practitioner Dissemination and Research Network (PDRN). The goal of the PDRN is to develop partnerships between university researchers and practitioners, promote practitioner research, and help practitioners use research results in their work in adult basic education.

I believe there will be NUMBER OF teachers participating in the Study Circle. We will meet three times. The first meeting is at LOCATION on MONTH/DAY/YEAR at TIME.

At each session, we will be discussing readings about performance accountability. Some of these have been produced by NCSALL and some are from other sources. I will be providing you with copies of both types of readings.

Before the first meeting, I'd like to ask you to read the three handouts on Study Circles. Also, **please read pages 1-25** in Juliet Merrifield's report *Contested Ground: Performance Accountability in Adult Basic Education*. We will be discussing these at the first meeting.

I have enclosed a folder for you to keep all of the materials for this Study Circle. Please bring this and all readings with you to all of our meetings.

If you have any questions about the Study Circle in general or about what to do before our first meeting, please call me at YOUR PHONE NUMBER or send me an email at YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS.

I'm looking forward to some great discussions with all of you.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME AND TITLE



What is a study circle?

A study circle:

- is a process for small-group deliberation that is voluntary and participatory;
- is a small group, usually 8 to 12 participants;
- is led by a facilitator who is impartial, who helps manage the deliberation process, but is not an "expert" or "teacher" in the traditional sense;
- considers many perspectives, rather than advocating a particular point of view;
- uses ground rules to set the tone for a respectful, productive discussion;
- is rooted in dialogue and deliberation, not debate;
- has multiple sessions which move from personal experience of the issue, to considering multiple viewpoints, to strategies for action;
- does not require consensus, but uncovers areas of agreement and common concern;
- provides an opportunity for citizens to work together to improve their community.



What study circles are, and are not: A comparison

A study circle IS:

- **a small-group discussion** involving deliberation and problem solving, in which an issue is examined from many perspectives; it is enriched by the members' knowledge and experience, and often informed by expert information and discussion materials; it is aided by an impartial facilitator whose job is to manage the discussion.

A study circle is NOT the same as:

- **conflict resolution**, a set of principles and techniques used in resolving conflict between individuals or groups. (Study circle facilitators and participants sometimes use these techniques in study circles.)
- **mediation**, a process used to settle disputes that relies on an outside neutral person to help the disputing parties come to an agreement. (Mediators often make excellent study circle facilitators, and have many skills in common.)
- **a focus group**, a small group usually organized to gather or test information from the members. Respondents (who are sometimes paid) are often recruited to represent a particular viewpoint or target audience.
- **traditional education with teachers and pupils**, where the teacher or an expert imparts knowledge to the students.
- **a facilitated meeting with a predetermined outcome**, such as a committee or board meeting with goals established ahead of time. A study circle begins with a shared interest among its members, and unfolds as the process progresses.
- **a town meeting**, a large-group meeting which is held to get public input on an issue, or to make a decision on a community policy.
- **a public hearing**, a large-group public meeting which allows concerns to be aired.



The role of the participant

The following points are intended to help you, the participant, make the most of your study circle experience, and to suggest ways in which you can help the group

- **Listen carefully to others.** Try to understand the concerns and values that underlie their views.
- **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or not considered in the past.
- **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do.
- **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant.
- **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** Make sure you are giving others the chance to speak.
- **Address your remarks to the group members rather than the facilitator.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.
- **Communicate your needs to the facilitator.** The facilitator is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he/she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are, you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.
- **Value your own experience and opinions.** Don't feel pressured to speak, but realize that failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.
- **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with, and don't take it personally if someone challenges your ideas.

Click [here](#) for:

NCSALL Report #1
Contested Ground:
Performance Accountability
in Adult Basic Education

by

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