

NCSALL and Goodling Institute
Study Circle Guide:

Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education

R. Jones

July 2005



National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy



National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

NCSALL Training Materials are funded by the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, Award Number R309B960002, as administered by the Institute of Education Sciences (formerly Office of Educational Research and Improvement), U.S. Department of Education, through contract to Harvard University. The content of *NCSALL Training Materials* does not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Institute of Education Sciences, or the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy

The Goodling Institute, housed within The Pennsylvania State University's College of Education, works collaboratively with the College's Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) in Louisville, Kentucky. Operating funds for the Goodling Institute are available through an endowment established at Penn State through a \$6 million federal appropriation.

Contents

Introduction to the Study Circle Guide	v
Information about NCSALL.....	vi
Goal of NCSALL Study Circles.....	1
Tips for Study Circles.....	3
Who Should Participate?	3
How Long Is the Study Circle?.....	3
How Do I Recruit Participants?	3
How Do I Select Dates for the Study Circle?	4
How Do I Organize the First Session?.....	4
What Kind of Support Can I Expect?	5
What If I Want to Change the Activities Listed in the Guide?.....	6
What Should the Outcomes of the Study Circle Be?	6
How Can I Share the Experience of Running the Study Circle?	6
Introduction to the Study Circle: Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education.....	7
Study Circle Outline: Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education.....	9
Facilitator’s Session Schedule/To-Do Form: What To Have Ready.....	13
Session Guide for Facilitating the Study Circle: Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education.....	15
Session One.....	19
Session Two	33
Session Three	43
Appendices.....	51
Appendix A: Study Circle Flyer	53
Appendix B: Pre-Meeting Packet of Readings and Handouts	57
Appendix C: Session One Materials	71
Appendix D: Session Two Materials	113
Appendix E: Resources for the Facilitator.....	149
Appendix F: Feedback Form for NCSALL	169

Introduction to the Study Circle Guide

This study circle guide was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The guide is part of NCSALL's efforts to help connect research and practice in the field of adult basic education and adult literacy.

This study circle guide—Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education—is one of a series of study circles that NCSALL has developed. The purpose of the study circles is to help staff developers and practitioners organize and conduct study circles that help practitioners read, discuss, and use research to improve their practice.

Each study circle guide is divided into the following parts:

1. Goal of NCSALL Study Circles
2. Tips for Study Circles
3. Introduction to the Study Circle
4. Study Circle Outline
5. Schedule/To-Do Form: What to Have Ready
6. Session Guide for Facilitating the Study Circle
7. Study Circle Readings and Handouts
8. Study Circles Resource Center Materials

We welcome your comments and advice about this study circle and about NCSALL. For more information about NCSALL study circle guides or NCSALL's work, contact:

Cristine Smith, Deputy Director
NCSALL
44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1211
(617) 482-9485
ncsall@worlded.org

Or visit our Web site:

www.ncsall.net

Information about NCSALL

The Mission of NCSALL. NCSALL's purpose is to improve practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma. NCSALL is meeting this purpose through basic and applied research, dissemination of research findings, and leadership within the field of adult learning and literacy.

NCSALL is a collaborative effort between the Harvard Graduate School of Education, World Education, The Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (formerly Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

NCSALL's Research Projects. The goal of NCSALL's research is to provide information that is used to improve practice in programs that offer adult basic education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner motivation, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) staff development, and (4) assessment.

Dissemination Initiative. NCSALL's dissemination initiative focuses on ensuring that practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and scholars of adult education can access, understand, judge, and use research findings.

NCSALL publishes *Focus on Basics*, a quarterly magazine for practitioners; *Focus on Policy*, a twice-yearly magazine for policymakers; *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*, an annual scholarly review of major issues, current research, and best practices; and *NCSALL Reports* and *Occasional Papers*, periodic publications of research reports and articles. NCSALL also sponsors the Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research (CPPR) Initiative, designed to help practitioners and policymakers apply findings from research in their instructional settings and programs.

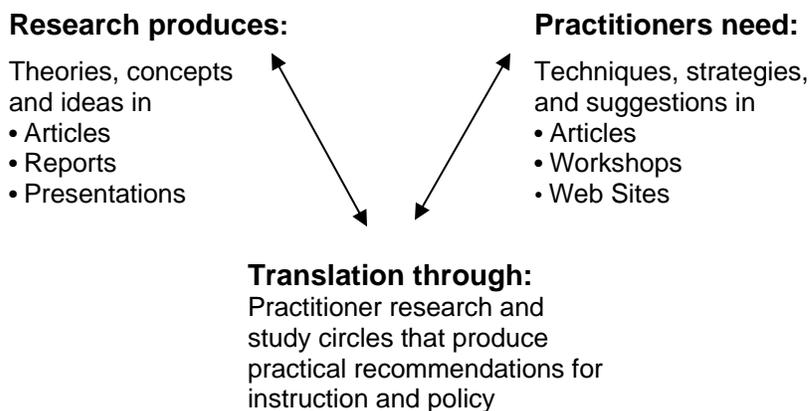
For more information about NCSALL, to download free copies of NCSALL publications, or to purchase bound copies, please visit:

www.ncsall.net

Goal of NCSALL Study Circles

The goal of NCSALL is to improve the quality of practice in adult education through research (both university-based and practitioner 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 circles is to help adult education practitioners, in a small group setting, learn about research findings, theories, and concepts from NCSALL’s research and discuss how these can be applied to practice and policy in adult education.

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



We at NCSALL believe that we need to do more than publish and disseminate magazines, reports, and research updates if research is to inform practice and policy. We have a responsibility to help design and sponsor “live” mechanisms for practitioners to really read, think about, and discuss with each other what research findings mean and whether they are useful or applicable to adult education instructional settings and programs.

We welcome feedback from you about how the NCSALL study circle guides work as part of this process and how they can be improved. In Appendix F, you’ll find a “Feedback Form for NCSALL.” We hope you’ll take a moment after running your study circle to fill it out and send it to us. Or, call us and talk to us about how it went.

Thanks for being part of the process of connecting practice and research.

Tips for Study Circles

Who Should Participate?

The study circles are designed for any practitioners who work in adult basic education programs: teachers, program directors, counselors, volunteers, or others. Most of the study circles deal with topics that are broad enough to be of interest to adult basic education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) practitioners in a variety of delivery settings: community-based organizations, local educational authorities, libraries, correctional facilities, etc. The design of the study circle and the readings should be appropriate for both new and experienced practitioners; however, some of the readings have acronyms that may need to be reviewed with participants.

The study circles are designed for approximately eight participants. We do not recommend running a study circle with fewer than five or more than 15 people, as discussions are harder to facilitate with too few or too many participants.

How Long Is the Study Circle?

Each study circle is designed for nine hours, divided into three sessions of three hours each. The study circle could be longer, depending on the participants' interests, with more meetings among the participants themselves. If participants want to keep meeting on their own and finding and selecting their own readings on the topic, they can set that up during the last session.

How Do I Recruit Participants?

NCSALL has produced a sample flyer that provides information about this study circle. That flyer is included at the end of this study circle guide in Appendix A. The flyer presents an overview of the topic and a brief description about what will be covered in each of the three sessions. 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 will be taking place. Or, you can create your own flyer, using the NCSALL flyer as an example.

How Do I Select Dates for the Study Circle?

There are two ways to select dates for the study circle.

1. Select all three dates at the very beginning and advertise all three in the recruitment flyer.
2. Select and advertise the first date and set the second and third dates with participants during the first meeting of the study circle.

In general, we recommend the first option since it is sometimes difficult for even a small group of people to find a common date once they are together. If all three dates are set from the beginning, only people who can make all three dates will, in all likelihood, sign up to attend the study circle.

In general, it's best to have the three dates regularized (e.g., all on Tuesday nights or all on Friday mornings), as someone who is free at a certain time of week is more likely to have that same time free every week.

How Do I Organize the First Session?

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. At this time, reconfirm the times, dates, and location of the study circle with the participants.

As mentioned above, the study circles have been designed for a group of practitioners to meet over three sessions, with each session being three hours long. Because three hours is a fairly short period of time for a group to meet, we are suggesting that a small number of very short readings and a brief cover letter with information about the study circle be sent to practitioners to read over before the first meeting.

After confirming their participation, send each participant the packet of information and materials to read before the first meeting (“Pre-Meeting Packet of Readings and Handouts” in Appendix B).

Participants need to receive this packet at least ten days before the first meeting of the study circle.

You, as the facilitator, will also want to read over the packet so that you are ready for the first session and for questions that participants may have.

The Pre-Meeting Packet for the Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education Study Circle should include the six items listed below. All of these items are found in Appendix B. We do not provide folders; however, we suggest that you organize study circle guide materials in two-sided pocket folders and distribute

a folder of materials to each participant. Here are the items found in Appendix B:

1. Cover letter: “Information about the Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education Study Circle”
2. “What is a Study Circle?” by Study Circles Resource Center (Handout A)
3. “What Study Circles Are and Are Not: A Comparison” by Study Circles Resource Center (Handout B)
4. “The Role of the Participant” by Study Circles Resource Center (Handout C)
5. “Schedule/To-Do Form” (Handout D)
6. Reading #1: Reder, S. and Strawn, C. “Program Participation and Self-Directed Learning to Improve Basic Skills,” *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 4, Issue D, April 2001

Be sure that you arrive early for each session in order to set up the chairs in a circle; 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 may also want to have (or start during the meeting) a list of participants and their telephone numbers or e-mail addresses so participants can contact one another during the course of the study circle.

What Kind of Support Can I Expect?

For advice on facilitating a study circle, please review the handouts on facilitation included in Appendix E. These readings are from the Study Circles Resource Center in Pomfret, Connecticut, an expert resource in conducting study circles. We thank them for their guidance in facilitating study circles.

If you want to review the study circle with someone from NCSALL, we’d be happy to discuss it with you. We can be reached at:

Cristine Smith, NCSALL Deputy
Director
NCSALL/World Education
44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1211
(617) 482-9485
ncsall@worlded.org

Beth Bingman, NCSALL Coordinator
Center for Literacy Studies
The University of Tennessee
600 Henley Street, Suite 312
Knoxville, TN 37996-2135
(865) 974-6618
bingman@utk.edu

What If I Want to Change the Activities Listed in the Guide?

These guides are intended to help first-time facilitators who want a lot of guidance. They are not intended to be a script that must be followed. If you have a different idea for how to do an activity, you should use it. To help you, we have offered alternate ideas for several of the activities.

What Should the Outcomes of the Study Circle Be?

First and foremost, we hope that individual practitioners learn more about what the research says about Adult Student Persistence and come away with ideas and a plan for how to apply what they've learned in their own classrooms and programs.

Secondly, we hope that the group is able to generate practical ideas or recommendations for teaching and program practice that can be disseminated to other practitioners and researchers. By sharing the practical ideas or recommendations that come from discussions about how research theories, concepts, and ideas can be used in instructional settings and programs, study circle participants play a role in the larger process of “translating” research into practice.

How Can I Share the Experience of Running the Study Circle?

We'd love to hear how it went so that we can improve this and future study circles. Also, hearing from facilitators lets us know who is doing what around the country. Please consider sending us the feedback form (in Appendix F), along with any practical ideas, recommendations, or other documentation from your study circle. Or, feel free to give us a call to let us know about your experience.

Introduction to the Study Circle: Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education

This NCSALL study circle addresses issues around organizing learning services for students in ways that make sense for them, and what the research says about it. The focus is on the structure and organization of instruction and how we can broaden the range of options that students have so that classes aren't the only option.

In Session One, Program Participation and Self-Directed Learning, the study circle group will share information about their interest and experience with program participation and self-directed learning and how the topic relates to their own work contexts. Participants will examine research from NCSALL's Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL), which addresses these two issues in adult literacy and education. The study circle members will take part in an activity that begins to deconstruct what it means to participate and engage in self-study efforts.

Session two, Delivery Systems and Student Participation, gives participants the opportunity to engage with current research and find its relevance to their own practice by (1) exploring the notion of "delivery systems," (2) making personal connections to research, and (3) discussing implications for curriculum and program design. The group will look at the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study results and examine ways the results relate to larger program and learning issues.

In the final session, Session Three, Diversity in Adult Learning and Education, the group will focus on the idea that people learn in different configurations. Three different types of programs will be examined: (1) online, (2) distance, and (3) face-to-face. Participants will be asked to apply the research they have read to different situations.

Each session includes activities to help participants discuss the readings and to generate ideas for applying what they've learned in their classrooms and programs. The direction that the discussions go will vary with the concerns of each group. It is important that discussions and activities meet the needs of all the group members. The facilitator needs to be flexible and may need to modify some activities to fit the needs and learning styles of study circle group participants.

Study Circle Outline: Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education

Session One

OBJECTIVES: Participants will...

- Get to know one another, learn how the study circle will be run, and set ground rules for participation.
- Identify examples of self-directed learning in their classrooms and programs.
- Review the research on self-directed learning.
- Analyze their own and others' teaching contexts in relation to instruction and participation.

<i>10 minutes</i>	1. Welcome and Introductions
<i>10 minutes</i>	2. Purpose of the Study Circle, Session One Objectives, and Agenda
<i>20 minutes</i>	3. Participant Expectations and Group Norms
<i>30 minutes</i>	4. Your Experience in Relation to the Topic
<i>15 minutes</i>	BREAK
<i>35 minutes</i>	5. Discussion of First Readings
<i>30 minutes</i>	6. Self-Study: Increasing Intensity of Instruction
<i>20 minutes</i>	7. Making Connections
<i>10 minutes</i>	8. Evaluation, Readings for Session Two, and Closure

Session Two

OBJECTIVES: Participants will...

- Review the research and analyze the notion of “delivery systems.”
- Reflect on their personal connections to what they have read and list implications for curriculum and program design.
- Examine the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study results and identify ways in which the results relate to larger program and learning issues.
- Demonstrate alternative ways to present key ideas and concepts that are discussed throughout the research.

<i>5 minutes</i>	1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda
<i>15 minutes</i>	2. Considering Delivery Systems
<i>40 minutes</i>	3. NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study: Relating it to Student Participation, Delivery Systems, and the Organization of Learning Services
<i>25 minutes</i>	4. Classroom Relevance and Implications
<i>15 minutes</i>	BREAK
<i>45 minutes</i>	5. Understanding Key Issues from the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study
<i>20 minutes</i>	6. Making Connections
<i>15 minutes</i>	7. Evaluation, Readings for Session Three, and Closure

Session Three

OBJECTIVES: Participants will...

- Explain the idea that people learn in different ways.
- Design a case study based on research.
- Recommend practical ideas for promoting alternative concepts of instruction and participation.

<i>5 minutes</i>	1. Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda
<i>10 minutes</i>	2. Ways People Learn
<i>20 minutes</i>	3. What the Research Says
<i>60 minutes</i>	4. Case-Study Development and Presentation
<i>15 minutes</i>	BREAK
<i>15 minutes</i>	5. Making Connections
<i>30 minutes</i>	6. Action Planning
<i>15 minutes</i>	7. Sharing Learning with Others
<i>10 minutes</i>	8. Final Evaluation

Facilitator’s Session Schedule/To-Do Form: What To Have Ready

Session	Newsprints (Prepare ahead of time)	Handouts (One copy for each participant)	Readings	Materials
Session One	Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles (p. 20) Objectives for Session One (p. 21) Session One Agenda (p. 21) Quotations (p. 23) Discussion Questions (p. 24) Analysis Questions (p. 25) Making Connections (p. 27) Useful – How To Improve (p. 27)	<i>[Handouts A–D were sent to participants in the Pre-Meeting Packet.]</i> Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules” Handout F: “Readings for Session Two” <i>[Handouts E and F are in Appendix C.]</i>	Reading #1: “Program Participation and Self-Directed Learning to Improve Basic Skills” <i>[Make a few extra copies of Reading #1 for participants who forget to bring theirs (it was sent in the Pre-Meeting Packet). This reading is in Appendix B.]</i> Reading #2: “Supporting the Persistence of Adult Basic Education Students” For Further Reading (optional): “Adult Participation Related to Outcomes in Family Literacy Programs” <i>[Make one copy for each participant of Reading #2 and the optional reading. These reading are in Appendix C.]</i>	Three signs: AGREE, DISAGREE, NOT SURE (p. 26) Blank newsprint sheets Newsprint easel Markers, pens, tape

Facilitator’s Session Schedule/To-Do Form: What To Have Ready

Session	Newsprints (Prepare ahead of time)	Handouts (One copy for each participant)	Readings	Materials
Session Two	<p>Objectives for Session Two (p. 34)</p> <p>Session Two Agenda (p. 34)</p> <p>Passage Discussion Questions (p. 36)</p> <p>Discussion Questions: Relevance and Implications (p. 37)</p> <p>Making Connections (p. 38)</p> <p>Useful – How to Improve (refer back to p. 27)</p>	<p>Handout G: “Article Discussion Protocol”</p> <p>Handout H: “Readings for Session Three”</p> <p><i>[Handouts G & H are in Appendix D]</i></p>	<p><i>[Make a few extra copies of Reading #2 listed above in Session One. This reading is in Appendix C.]</i></p> <p>Reading #3: “Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education”</p> <p>Reading #4: “Distance Learning Extends the Reach of ABE Providers”</p> <p>Reading #5: “Building Participation in Workplace Learning Programs”</p> <p>Reading #6: “Will Cooperative Learning Affect GED Retention?”</p> <p>Reading #7: “Improving Student Drop-Out Rates Through Student Observations and Peer Contacts”</p> <p><i>[Make one copy for each participant of Readings #3 – #7. These readings are in Appendix D.]</i></p>	<p>Blank newsprint sheets</p> <p>Newsprint easel</p> <p>Markers, pens, tape</p> <p>Notebook paper</p> <p>Manipulatives: e.g., modeling clay, feathers, glue, construction paper <i>(These materials are up to the facilitator. Choose things that are available to you and interesting in terms of potential final product.)</i></p>
Session Three	<p>Objectives for Session Three (p. 43)</p> <p>Session Three Agenda (p. 44)</p> <p>Discussion Question (p. 44)</p> <p>Discussion Questions on Action Research and Online Distance Education (p. 45)</p> <p>Presentation Guidelines (p. 46)</p> <p>Making Connections (p. 47)</p> <p>Next Steps (p. 47)</p>		<p><i>[Make a few extra copies of Readings #3 – #7 listed above in Session Two. These readings are in Appendix D.]</i></p>	<p>Blank newsprint sheets</p> <p>Newsprint easel</p> <p>Markers, pens, tape</p> <p>4” x 6” sticky note pads in two colors</p>

*Session Guide
for Facilitating
the Study Circle:
Rethinking
Instruction and
Participation for
Adult Basic
Education*

Session One – Preparation

Newsprints (*Prepare ahead of time.*)

- ___ Purpose of NCSALL Study Circles (p. 20)
- ___ Objectives for Session One (p. 21)
- ___ Session One Agenda (p. 21)
- ___ Quotations (p. 23)
- ___ Discussion Questions (p. 24)
- ___ Analysis Questions (p. 25)
- ___ Making Connections (p. 27)
- ___ Useful – How to Improve (p. 27)

Handouts (*Make copies for each participant. These handouts are in Appendix C.*)

- ___ Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules”
- ___ Handout F: “Readings for Session Two”

Readings

- ___ Reading #1: “Program Participation and Self-Directed Learning to Improve Basic Skills
(*Make a few extra copies of Reading #1 for participants who forget to bring theirs. This reading is in Appendix B.*)

- ___ Reading #2: “Supporting the Persistence of Adult Basic Education Students”
- ___ For Further Reading (optional): “Adult Participation Related to Outcomes in Family Literacy Programs”
(*Make one copy for each participant of Reading #2 and the optional reading. These readings are in Appendix C.*)

Materials

- ___ Three signs: AGREE, DISAGREE, and NOT SURE (p. 26)
- ___ Blank newsprint sheets
- ___ Newsprint easel
- ___ Markers, pens, tape

Session One

OBJECTIVES: Participants will...

- Get to know one another, learn how the study circle will be run, and set ground rules for participation.
- Identify examples of self-directed learning in their classrooms and programs.
- Review the research on self-directed learning.
- Analyze their own and others' teaching contexts in relation to instruction and participation.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

- **Welcome participants** to the first meeting of the study circle.
- **Introduce yourself** and state your role as facilitator of the study circle. Explain how you came to facilitate this study circle and who is sponsoring it.
- **Ask participants to introduce themselves briefly** (name, program, role) and to say whether they have ever attended a study circle in the past. Ask them to share what they think of when they hear the words “instruction” and “participation.” Explain that this relates to the larger theme of the study circle, and that you will continue to come back to it over the course of the next couple of sessions.
- **Make sure that participants know** where the bathrooms are located, when the session will end, when the break will be, and any other housekeeping information.

Note to Facilitator
Since time is very tight, it's important to move participants along gently but firmly if they are exceeding their time limit for introductions.

2. Purpose of the Study Circle, Session One Objectives, and Agenda (10 minutes)

- **Post the “Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles” newsprint and go over the purpose** with participants.

Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles

1. To help practitioners read, discuss, and use research to improve their practice.
2. To generate recommendations and practical suggestions for other practitioners about how to translate research into practice.

Note to Facilitator

Participants should have read this handout in advance since it was included in their Pre-Meeting Packet.

- **Refer to Handout C: “The Role of the Participant”** by the Study Circles Resource Center. Ask participants to review the handout very briefly. Then ask if they agree with this role and whether they would like to add or change anything about their role in this study circle.
- **Give participants a brief overview of the three sessions of this Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education Study Circle.** (See “Introduction to the Study Circle: Rethinking Instruction and Participation for Adult Basic Education,” p. 7 of this study circle guide.)
- **Mention briefly** that NCSALL hopes that each study circle produces a “product,” for example, a list of recommendations for practice for other practitioners. In the final session (Session Three), the group may want to spend some time generating this “product.” Be sure that people understand that the product grows naturally out of the study circle group’s discussions and that it is not something that will require extra work for them outside of the study circle.

- **Post the “Objectives for Session One” newsprint and go over the objectives** briefly with the group.

Objectives for Session One

Participants will:

- Get to know one another, learn how the study circle will be run, and set ground rules for participation.
- Identify examples of self-directed learning in their classrooms and programs
- Review the research on self-directed learning
- Analyze their own and others' teaching contexts in relation to instruction and participation

- **Post the “Session One Agenda” newsprint and describe each activity briefly.** Ask if people have any questions about the agenda.

Session One Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions (Done!)
- Purpose of the Study Circle, Session One Objectives, and Agenda (Doing)
- Participant Expectations and Group Norms
- Your Experience in Relation to the Topic
- BREAK
- Discussion of First Readings
- Self-Study: Increasing Intensity of Instruction
- Making Connections
- Evaluation, Readings for Session Two, and Closure

3. Participant Expectations and Group Norms

(20 minutes)

- **Direct people’s attention to the handouts** they received before this first session on what a study circle is:

- Handout A: “What Is a Study Circle?”
- Handout B: “What Study Circles Are and Are Not: A Comparison”

Ask people to respond to the following question:

? What do you hope to get out of the study circle?

Another Idea

Ask participants to choose another person to talk with about the question. After three or four minutes, reconvene the group and ask each pair to briefly state what they hope to get out of the study circle. Write their statements on newsprint.

Note to Facilitator

Remind participants how important it is to read the materials before each session.

Explain that if participants have not read them, they will be asked to listen to the discussion about the material but not to contribute. Explain that this will help ensure that participants attend to the readings instead of focusing only on their own experiences.

Another Idea

Invite participants to set the ground rules to be followed for the study circle. Write each ground rule on newsprint as participants say it.

After five minutes or so, distribute Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules” and ask participants if there are any ground rules on this handout that they would like to add to their list. Add these to the newsprint.

- **Go around the circle and ask each person to make a short statement in response to this question.** Write their statements on newsprint as they say them. If someone begins to talk about a topic not directly related to this question (for example, his or her teaching situation), point to the Agenda and remind them that there will be a chance to talk about that topic a little later in the meeting.
- **After everyone has made a statement, summarize what you heard** and talk about how and where in the three-meeting Study Circle Agenda their needs will be met. Also, be clear with participants about the things they might have stated they were expecting to learn that are *not* part of the study circle. For example, **the study circle is not a training that will provide them with handouts or demonstrations on teaching techniques, or materials for teaching.**
- **Reiterate that the study circle is for talking about three things:**
 - theories and concepts from the research or readings about the topic,
 - their context and experiences in relation to the topic, and
 - their ideas about the implications of these theories and concepts for their own and other practitioners’ practice, policy, and further research.

Ask if there are any questions about what a study circle is and is not or about the design of this one.
- **Next, explain that one of the things that helps study circles to run smoothly** is an agreement among participants about ground rules to follow during the meetings and discussions.
- **Distribute Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules.”** After giving participants a few minutes to review the handout, ask if there are any ground rules they would like to add to or delete from the list. Write these on newsprint as they are mentioned.

- **Ask if everyone agrees with these ground rules.** Use the “I can live with that one” criterion, i.e., you might not be crazy about one or more of these but you can “live with it” and agree to abide by it. The discussion should be only around those ground rules that participants find objectionable and “can’t live by.”
- **Draw a line through ground rules participants decide they “can’t live by.”** Ask participants to make the ground rule changes on their copy of Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules.”
- **Let participants know** that it is your job, as facilitator, to remind them of these ground rules if you see them being broken. Ask participants to bring Handout E to each session to review briefly.

4. Your Experience in Relation to the Topic

(30 minutes)

- **Explain that this first activity is designed to allow participants to talk about their own experience** in relation to this topic *before discussing the theories and concepts* contained in the readings.
- **Participants should break up into groups of two or three** depending on the number of participants. Allow 20 minutes for the small-group discussions.
- **Post the “Quotations” newsprint.** Use these quotations in conjunction with the “Discussion Questions” newsprint to facilitate a discussion of participants’ experiences with self-directed learning efforts.

Quotations

- “Individuals with higher skill levels are less likely to have engaged in self-study efforts to improve their skills or prepare for the GED. Individuals at the lowest levels of skills are the most likely to engage in such self-study efforts...”
- “...a substantial reservoir of individuals may be actively trying to improve their skills, and programs are not reaching or are unable to serve them through their current offerings.”

(Quotes from “Program Participation and Self-Directed Learning to Improve Basic Skills” by Stephen Reder & Clare Strawn. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 4, Issue D, April 2001, p. 17.)

Discussion Questions

- What evidence have you seen in your program to support or disprove the finding that “individuals at the lowest levels of skills are the most likely to engage in such self-directed learning efforts”?
- What do you think the authors mean when they say “reaching” in the second quote? How does your program or classroom “reach” students?
- How can your program augment the efforts of students engaging in self-directed learning?

- **Explain to the groups that they should focus on their own experiences** and not spend time right now trying to pull from the reading.
- **Share.** Reconvene the whole group for short reports back from each of the small groups. End this activity by extending the opportunity for any final comments from individual participants.

Note to Facilitator
 To ensure you are able to start up again in 15 minutes, suggest that the participants return in ten minutes to be ready to start.

BREAK (15 minutes)

5. Discussion of First Readings (35 minutes)

- **Explain that in this next activity participants will reflect on the reading for today’s meeting.** They will be guided by the same questions they used to think about their own experiences with self-directed learning. If necessary, allow five minutes for review of Reading #1: “Program Participation and Self-Directed Learning to Improve Basic Skills.”
- **Post the “Analysis Questions” Newsprint** and read through the questions, making sure to explain what is meant by longitudinal research in the first question. Explain that the groups will use these Analysis Questions to discuss the reading. Indicate that each group should be prepared to share the results of their discussions. Participants should break back into the groups they were in during the first half of the session and **choose at least three questions to discuss.**

Analysis Questions

- Why do you think longitudinal research is used to examine the self-study efforts of adult students?
- Why do you think “patterns of participation” are important when studying adult students?
- Why do you think the authors recalculated the participation hours of the adult students in this study?
- How might this recalculation affect how participation is understood?

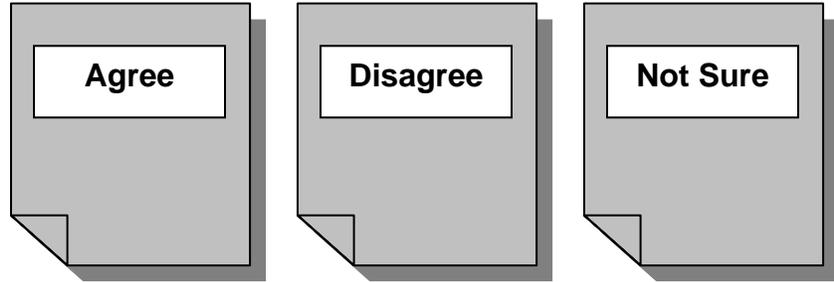
Helpful Hint

If you find that participants don't have follow-up questions or seem quiet, you should begin to ask questions which you feel can facilitate more discussion in the large group format.

- **After 20 minutes, reconvene the whole group.** Each group takes one question to share in greater detail with the group (determined by the facilitator as he or she observes and listens to group discussions). After each group presents, there should be time allotted for questions and comments from other groups (this should be encouraged by the facilitator).

6. Self-Study: Increasing Intensity of Instruction (30 minutes)

- **Explain that the next activity is also based on the reading that the participants were assigned to read for today.** The deeper their understanding of the material, the richer the “live Likert scale” discussions will most likely be.
- **Arrangement.** Place three signs up on the walls. On one wall, AGREE, on the opposite wall, DISAGREE, and on the back wall, NOT SURE. Next ask everyone to stand up, moving chairs if necessary so that people can easily move around the room.
- **Directions.** Explain that this activity is purely for promoting discussion and there are no right and wrong answers. Read each statement aloud twice. Participants will listen to the statement and then move to the sign that corresponds to how they *feel* about the statement: **AGREE, DISAGREE, or NOT SURE.** *Emphasize that the statements have deliberately been written to generate discussion.*



Another Idea

If discussion is slow, consider asking the following questions related to statements one to three

Statement 1

- What are the prevailing notions of why adults do or do not attend formal education programs?
- How does Reder's LSAL research support or contradict these ideas?
- How do the experiences of the adults in NCSALL's LSAL study differ from those experiences of the adults in your classrooms and programs?

Statement 2

- When we say "self-study efforts," what does that mean to you?
- What might a "meaningful" lesson be?
- Are there ways to promote self-study efforts in a classroom lesson? What are some examples?

Statement 3

- What do you think of when I say "formal instruction?"
- What are the most commonly used alternatives to formal education? In your opinion, are these effective?
- In your experience, what are some ways that adult education programs try to improve on their educational services?

- **Statements**
 - If adults are engaging only in self-study efforts, then they cannot find a program which meets their needs.
 - Teachers and program staff should not worry about the self-study efforts of their adult students as long as teachers are providing meaningful lessons in class.
 - The way adult education programs can provide better services for their participants is to promote alternatives to formal instruction.
 - Lower literacy students tend to need more assistance with self-directed learning.

- **Process.** After everyone is standing near a sign, the facilitator should ask one or two people near the AGREE sign to explain why they agree with the statement. Tell participants that, if they change their mind after listening to the explanations, they may move to stand near another sign that reflects their new opinion. Continue around the room to the NOT SURE and the DISAGREE signs, asking one or two people standing near each sign why they are standing there. Feel free to let participants dialogue with each other from different sides of the room; in other words, they are not trying to convince the facilitator, but each other.

- **Closing.** Draw the discussion of a statement to a close after approximately ten minutes and read another statement. Continue until all three statements have been discussed or until 40 minutes have passed, whichever comes first. If the discussion around one statement is particularly rich, you may want to let it go and skip one of the other statements. Similarly, if there is little discussion about a statement, just move on to the next.

7. Making Connections

(20 minutes)

- **Explain to participants that this is a time to reflect on today’s discussions** and to begin to think about what it means to them. Break participants up into triads and have them discuss for about ten minutes the following questions, which should be posted on newsprint:

Making Connections

1. How might today's discussions relate to your practice?
2. How have today's discussions contributed to the way you think about instruction and participation?

- **Once the group comes back together,** take about ten minutes to share some of the thoughts and opinions from the small groups. *The facilitator should record these ideas on newsprint.*

8. Evaluation, Readings for Session Two, and Closure

(10 minutes)

- **Explain to participants that, in the time that’s left, you would like to get feedback from them about this first session.** You will use this feedback in shaping the next two sessions of the study circle.
- **Post the “Useful/How to Improve” newsprint.**

Useful	How to Improve

- **Ask participants first to tell you what was useful or helpful** to them about the design of this first session of the study circle.

Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under “Useful.”

Note to Facilitator

Save this newsprint and copy participants’ comments into the Feedback Form you submit to NCSALL at the end of the study circle.

- **Then ask participants for suggestions on how to improve the design** of the session. Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under “How To Improve.” If anyone makes a negative comment that’s not in the form of a suggestion, ask the person to rephrase it as a suggestion for improvement, and then write the suggestion on the newsprint.
- **Do not make any response to participants’ comments during this evaluation.** It is *very* important that you do not defend or justify anything you have done in the study circle or anything about the design, as this will cut off further suggestions. If anyone makes a suggestion you don’t agree with, just nod your head. If you feel some response is needed, rephrase their concern: “So you feel that what we should do instead of the small group discussion is . . . ? Is that right?”
- **Distribute Handout F: “Readings for Session Two,” and the reading for Session Two:**

Reading #2: “Supporting the Persistence of Adult Basic Education Students”

Another Idea

Ask each participant to explain the next assignment to a partner to make sure everyone is clear about what they need to read in preparation for Session Two

- **Inform the participants that to prepare for next week’s discussion, they should choose a passage from the reading** that speaks to them in some way and let them know that they will be sharing that passage with members of the group in the next session.
- **Distribute the optional reading for Session Two.** Participants may find this article relevant and want to read it in preparation for Session Two.

For Further Reading: “Adult Participation Related to Outcomes in Family Literacy Programs”

- **Refer participants to Handout D: “Schedule/To-Do Form”** that was included in the packet they received before the first session. Find out if they have any questions about what they are to do before the next session. **To the best of your ability, be sure that the participants are clear about what they should read before the next meeting. Request that they bring all the readings to the remaining two sessions.** Thank them for the preparation they did for this first session.

- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next meeting.** If applicable, explain to the participants the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the next meeting in the event of bad weather. Be sure that you have everyone's home and/or work telephone numbers and email addresses so that you can reach them in case of cancellation.

Session Two – Preparation

Newsprints *(Prepare ahead of time.)*

- ___ Objectives for Session Two (p. 34)
- ___ Session Two Agenda (p. 34)
- ___ Passage Discussion Questions (p. 36)
- ___ Discussion Questions: Relevance and Implications (p. 37)
- ___ Making Connections (p. 38)
- ___ Useful – How to Improve (refer back to p. 27)

Handouts *(Make copies for each participant. These handouts are in Appendix D.)*

- ___ Handout G: “Article Discussion Protocol”
- ___ Handout H: “Readings for Session Three”

Readings

- ___ Reading #2: “Supporting the Persistence of Adult Basic Education Students”
(Make a few extra copies of Reading #2 for participants who forget to bring theirs. This reading is in Appendix C.)

- ___ Reading #3: “Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education”
- ___ Reading #4: “Distance Learning Extends the Reach of ABLE Providers”
- ___ Reading #5: “Building Participation in Workplace Learning Programs”
- ___ Reading #6: “Will Cooperative Learning Affect GED Retention?”
- ___ Reading #7: “Improving Student Drop-Out Rates Through Student Observations and Peer Contacts”
(Make one copy for each participant of readings #3 – #7. These readings are in Appendix D.)

Materials

- ___ Blank newsprint sheets
- ___ Newsprint easel
- ___ Markers, pens, tape
- ___ Notebook paper
- ___ Manipulatives (for final activity): modeling clay, silly putty, feathers, glue, paper, etc.

Session Two

OBJECTIVES: Participants will...

- Review the research and analyze the notion of “delivery systems.”
- Reflect on their personal connections to what they have read and list implications for curriculum and program design.
- Examine the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study results and identify ways in which the results relate to larger program and learning issues.
- Demonstrate alternative ways to present key ideas and concepts that are discussed throughout the research.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda

(5 minutes)

-
- **Welcome participants** back to the study circle. If the group is more than a few people and a significant amount of time has passed since the last meeting, you may want to ask participants to re-introduce themselves.
 - **Ask participants to refer to Handout E from Session One and briefly review** the ground rules. Remind participants that it is your job, as facilitator, to remind them of these ground rules if you see them being broken.

- **Post the “Objectives for Session Two” newsprint.** Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

Objectives for Session Two

Participants will:

- Review the research and analyze the notion of “delivery systems”
- Reflect on their personal connections to what they have read and list implications for curriculum and program design
- Examine the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study results and identify ways in which the results relate to larger program and learning issues
- Demonstrate alternative ways to present the key ideas and concepts that are discussed throughout the research

- **Post the “Session Two Agenda” newsprint.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask if people have any questions about the agenda or additional thoughts or comments from the first meeting.

Session Two Agenda

- Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda (Doing)
- Considering Delivery Systems
- NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study: Relating it to Student Participation, Delivery Systems, and the Organization of Learning Services
- Classroom Relevance and Implications
- BREAK
- Understanding Key Issues from the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study
- Making Connections
- Evaluation, Readings for Session Three, and Closure

Note to Facilitator

The purpose of this protocol is to keep people focused on the topic. For this reason, it is wise to only allow about 2 to 3 minutes of discussion between questions.

2. Considering Delivery Systems (15 minutes)

- **Participants should find a partner.** Then instruct the pairs as follows: “When I ask a question, one member will give the answer to his or her partner. Each participant will get up to 30 seconds to answer. As each member speaks, the other will listen silently. *No one responds to anyone else’s answer.*”

- **Explain that this “answer-share” is not a conversation.** This is a time for each member to share his or her thoughts and opinions individually. There will be time in between each question for a brief discussion with their partner.
- **Pose a series of questions for both members of the pair to answer:**
 - What do you think about when I say “delivery system?”
 - How do you think your program’s structure might build upon its existing delivery system?
 - What’s the first thing you think about when I say “student participation?”
 - What comes to mind when considering the “promotion of student participation?”
- **Once each partner has had a chance to answer a question,** participants should be given a couple of minutes to discuss their partners’ responses. This process should be repeated until all four questions have been discussed.
- **Following the question-answer discussion, debrief with the whole group:**
 - What has the group learned from this first exploration of the topic at hand?
 - What, if anything, do you think we might have to unlearn?

3. NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study: Relating It to Student Participation, Delivery Systems, and the Organization of Learning Services (40 minutes)

- **Remind the participants that they were asked to choose a passage from Reading #2 that spoke to them** in some way and that they will be sharing that passage during this activity.
- **Explain that the purpose of the protocol is for everyone to have an equal chance to speak** and to provide structure so that groups stay on topic. Provide a short list of the steps involved (Handout G: “Article Discussion Protocol”).
- **Introduce the whole protocol for this activity before beginning.**
- **Post “Passage Discussion Questions”** for the groups to refer to during the activity.

Passage Discussion Questions

- Why did you choose this passage?
- Was there anything that did not make sense to you or that you questioned?
- How do you think this passage relates to the larger issues of student participation, delivery systems, and the way we organize learning services for students?

Note to Facilitator

In order for this protocol to be effective, the facilitator may need to encourage further discussion following it.

- **Participants should form groups of three.** Assign an order of presentations if necessary or desired. Each group should have a timekeeper, or the facilitator could serve as the timekeeper for all the groups. Keep in mind that might detract from the facilitator’s ability to move around freely and monitor discussions.
- **The first group member presents the passage that he or she has identified,** reading aloud and having people follow along on their copies. (This can be done silently too, but should be determined and done the same way with each small group.) The presenter addresses, uninterrupted, the discussion questions for the allotted time, as determined in advance (3 minutes).
- **Once the presenter has finished, each listener then has an opportunity for one, uninterrupted minute to reflect back on what the presenter has said.** The facilitator should explain that reflecting back means exploring the ideas which the presenter has touched upon, not adding one’s own interpretation. A listener might say something like, “From what you have said, I can see that you are concerned about...”
- **The round ends** with two minutes of uninterrupted time for the presenter to respond and react to what the listeners have said.
- **After each present-reflect-final-word round completes,** the next participant should present and address the discussion questions. Then discussion begins again.

Another Idea

A final question to raise with the group, if it doesn’t come up, would be:

Are there any suggestions from this report with which you strongly agree or disagree? Why?

- **Once all presentations and reflections have occurred**, the small group members should freely comment on the points they found interesting, controversial, etc.
- **Remind the participants that the small group should determine what they would like to share** with the larger group about their discussions (10 minutes).
- **The small groups should come back together** as a whole, and sub-groups can share what they discussed.

4. Classroom Relevance and Implications (25 minutes)

- **Explain to participants that this activity is to share thoughts** about the relationship between this topic and their own programs.
- **Post the “Discussion Questions: Relevance and Implications” newsprint** and ask participants to write to these questions for approximately five minutes. *Let participants know that they will be asked to share some of their ideas, but will not be asked to read what they have written.*

Note to Facilitator

Writing about the questions before discussing the concepts in a group will help participants to collect and organize their thoughts. This aids in facilitating a more organized and enriching discussion.

Discussion Questions: Relevance and Implications

- In what ways are these concepts relevant to you in your classroom/program?
- What might be the implications for curriculum and/or program design?

- **Once everyone has written something** (when relevant the facilitator is encouraged to write as well) facilitate a 15-minute, whole-group discussion using the questions and the writing. For example, the facilitator could ask “How do you see relevance between these concepts and your classrooms?” This is **not** a time for people to just go around and share what they wrote. The purpose of the writing is to help them *collect their thoughts* before engaging in a discussion. **Do not ask people to read what they wrote.**

BREAK (15 minutes)

5. Understanding Key Issues from the NCSALL Adult Student Persistence Study (45 minutes)

Note to Facilitator
 As participants are discussing ideas in their groups, give each group a set of “creativity materials.”

- **Explain to the participants that you are going to do one more activity today, which should highlight the key points** of the discussion. Ask participants to continue working with the same group they were working with for the previous activity.
- **In their groups, participants should discuss how they might finish this statement, “A key point of today’s discussion for us was…”**
- **Once they have identified their key point, the group should create a way to visually communicate their thoughts.** Ask participants to think, “*How can we communicate this key point without saying it explicitly, maybe even without using words at all?*” Provide some suggestions for groups who may be struggling with creating something. For example, a group may choose to do a drawing, act something out, etc. Participants should be encouraged to be creative.
- **The facilitator should provide a variety of “creativity materials”** and supplies for participants (e.g. modeling clay, silly putty, feathers, glue, paper, markers, etc.)
- **Small groups then share their creations and other groups will try to identify the key point** that is being highlighted and talk about the rationale for how they identified it. Leave time for discussion and questions about any concepts that need clarification or further discussion.

6. Making Connections (20 minutes)

Another Idea

If you have an evaluation technique that solicits the same information, feel free to use it.

- **Explain to participants that this is a time to reflect on today’s discussions** and to think about what it means to them. Break participants up into pairs and have them discuss for ten minutes the following questions, which should be posted on newsprint:

Making Connections

- How do today’s discussions relate to your practice?
- How have today’s discussions contributed to the way you think about instruction and participation?

- **Once the groups come back together,** take about ten minutes to share some of the thoughts and opinions with the large group. The facilitator should record these ideas on newsprint.

7. Evaluation, Readings for Session Three, and Closure

(15 minutes)

- **Do a brief evaluation,** using the “Useful/How to Improve” technique from Session One. Either take notes yourself on a piece of paper, or write their comments on newsprint for documentation.
- **Distribute Handout H: “List of Readings for Session Three” and the five readings for Session Three:**
 - “Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education”
 - “Distance Learning Extends the Reach of ABLE Providers”
 - “Building Participation in Workplace Learning Programs”
 - “Will Cooperative Learning Affect GED Retention?”
 - “Improving Student Drop-Out Rates Through Student Observations and Peer Contacts”
- Determine **new** small groups for next week and assign each group a different article to read, explaining that they will be responsible for sharing the article with the rest of the group in the following session. If participants have time, they may want to read all the articles for Session Three.
- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next meeting.** Explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the session.

Note to Facilitator

As a way to determine groups, people could choose which article they would like to read and get in groups that way. Make sure that there are at least two people per article.

Session Three – Preparation

Newsprints (*Prepare ahead of time.*)

- ___ Objectives for Session Three (p. 43)
- ___ Session Three Agenda (p. 44)
- ___ Discussion Question (p. 44)
- ___ Discussion Questions on Action Research and ODE (p. 45)
- ___ Presentation Guidelines (p. 46)
- ___ Making Connections (p. 47)
- ___ Next Steps (p. 47)

Readings

- ___ Reading #3: “Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education”
- ___ Reading #4: “Distance Learning Extends the Reach of ABLE Providers”
- ___ Reading #5: “Building Participation in Workplace Learning Programs”
- ___ Reading #6: “Will Cooperative Learning Affect GED Retention?”
- ___ Reading #7: “Improving Student Drop-Out Rates Through Student Observations and Peer Contacts”

(Make a few extra copies of Readings #3 – #7 for participants who forget to bring them. These readings are in Appendix D.)

Materials

- ___ Blank newsprint sheets
- ___ Newsprint easel
- ___ Markers, pens, tape
- ___ Two colors of 4”x6” sticky note pads

Session Three

OBJECTIVES: Participants will...

- Explain the idea that people learn in different ways.
- Design a case study based on research.
- Recommend practical ideas for promoting alternative concepts of instruction and participation.

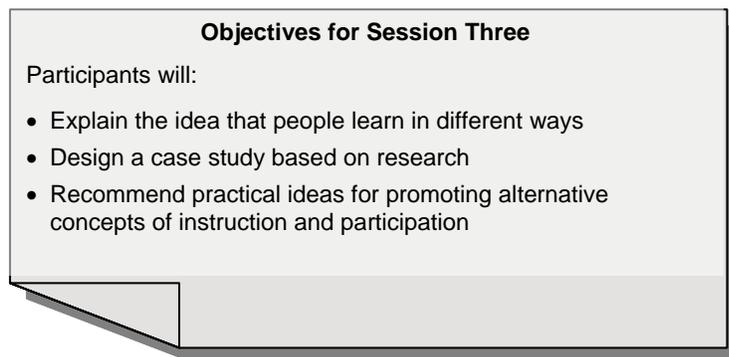
TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

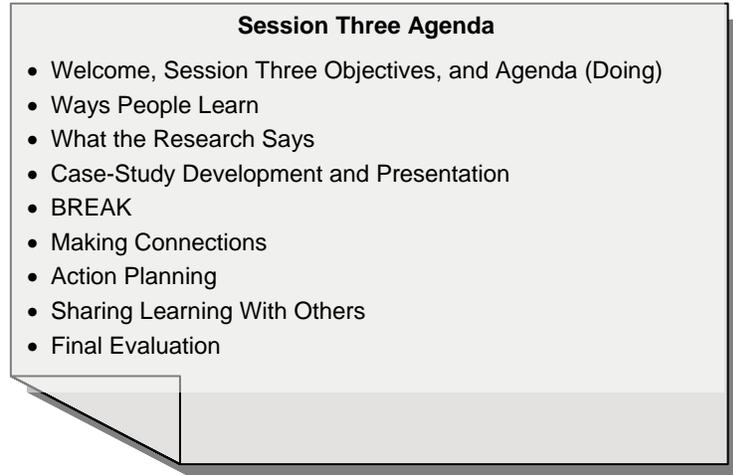
1. Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda

(5 minutes)

- **Welcome participants back to the study circle.** If the group is fairly large and a significant amount of time has passed since the last meeting, you may want to ask participants to re-introduce themselves.
- **Briefly review** the ground rules on Handout E from Session One that the group agreed upon. Remind participants that it is your job, as facilitator, to remind them of these ground rules if you see them being broken.
- **Post the “Objectives for Session Three” newsprint.** Go over the objectives briefly with the group.



- **Post the “Session Three Agenda” newsprint.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask if people have any questions about the agenda or additional thoughts or comments from the first two sessions.



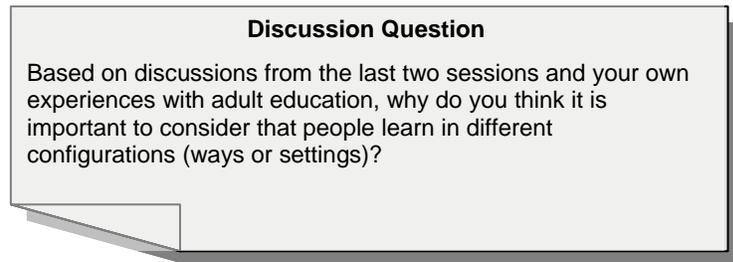
Session Three Agenda

- Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda (Doing)
- Ways People Learn
- What the Research Says
- Case-Study Development and Presentation
- BREAK
- Making Connections
- Action Planning
- Sharing Learning With Others
- Final Evaluation

2. Ways People Learn

(10 minutes)

- **Explain that today’s session focuses on the idea that people learn in different ways.** Then post the following “Discussion Question” newsprint:



Discussion Question

Based on discussions from the last two sessions and your own experiences with adult education, why do you think it is important to consider that people learn in different configurations (ways or settings)?

- **Participants should pair up** for an initial five-minute discussion of this question.
- **Pairs should come back together as a whole group** to share their thoughts for the remaining time (five minutes).

3. What the Research Says

(20 minutes)

- **Explain that since everyone was asked to read only one article critically, they are going to teach each other** about their articles.

The point is not just to learn what the research says, but to also apply the research to “real-life” situations.

- **Form groups of participants who read the same article.** The facilitator is the timekeeper and keeps groups on task.
- In preparation for their participation, **participants should discuss the research and address the “Discussion Questions on Action Research and Online Distance Education” newsprint.**

Note to Facilitator

These questions are intended to aid participants in understanding the research and organizing their thoughts in preparation for their presentations.

Discussion Questions on Action Research and Online Distance Education

What do you see as the purpose of this research?

- What were some of the barriers faced in conducting this research?
- What were the findings?
- What questions did this research raise for you?

For Action Research reading groups:

- What are some of the benefits of action research?
- Have you ever conducted action research in your classroom/program? If so, what did you do and what did you learn?
- While the article you read may not be relevant to your program directly, what connections might be made?

For Online Distance Education reading groups:

- What are some of the benefits of expanding access to adult literacy with online distance education?
- How do you see distance education being incorporated into your classroom/program? If it is already, how might it be expanded?
- While the article you read may not be relevant to your program directly, what connections might be made?

4. Case-Study Development and Presentation (60 minutes)

- **Participants stay in the same groups to create a scenario based on their real-life experiences. The scenario will include a student in a situation mentioned in their article.** Explain that the groups will be pulling out the key points of the article, highlighting them, and preparing to share with the

Note to Facilitator

Be sure to define what you mean by “case study.” Modeling a case-study idea of your own may be a good way to get the point across.

whole group the rationale for how they decided on the key points and highlights. (25 minutes)

- **Participants should be creating** a mock case-study of a student or learning situation. In other words, they should tie the reading to their own work using an individual case study to highlight and demonstrate the key point.
- **Post the “Presentation Guidelines” newsprint** and explain that when finalizing their case-study presentations, groups should address the following questions:

Note to Facilitator

Newsprint should be available to groups to aid in their presentations.

Presentation Guidelines

Your presentation should consist of three parts:

1. Summarize the article and highlight key points
2. Case-study
3. Closing discussion questions

Let this question guide you in planning your presentation:

- How is this research meaningful to your work?

- **Explain** that each group will have about five minutes to present their discussion and case-study and an additional five minutes for discussion afterward.
- **Each group makes its presentation.** Groups might ask the other participants about whether they have any examples from their own experiences that relate to their topic. Presentations should end with discussion around the groups’ closing discussion questions. In other words, after the group has listened to the research highlights and case-study, how would they answer these questions?

BREAK (15 minutes)

5. Making Connections

(15 minutes)

Another Idea

If you have an evaluation technique that solicits the same information, feel free to use it.

- **Explain to participants that this is a time to reflect on today’s discussions** and to begin to think about what it means for their own practice. Break participants up into pairs and have them discuss for about ten minutes the following questions, which should be posted on newsprint:

Making Connections

- How might today's discussions relate to your practice?
- How have today's discussions contributed to the way you think about instruction and participation?

- **Once the groups come back together**, take about ten minutes to share some of the thoughts and opinions from the group. The facilitator should **record these on newsprint**.

6. Action Planning

(30 minutes)

- **Post the “Next Steps” newsprint.**

Next Steps

Note to Facilitator

As a “product” of this study circle, participants might want to collect these next steps into a document that could be used as a discussion catalyst for other study circle groups.

- **Tell participants that in this next activity** they will be working towards developing a list of the next steps they would like to take for considering instruction and participation in their own instructional setting or program.
- **Explain** that for some people, the next step may be just to think more about whether alternative ways of organizing and learning is feasible for them. For others, it may include continuing to learn more about how to do it. Or, it may be to have a discussion with other teachers in their program about how to start. Some participants may have specific ideas about activities, techniques, or strategies that they could begin to use in their classes.
- **Divide the group into pairs or groups**, preferably pairing those who work in a similar context (e.g., two ESOL teachers,

Another Idea

Conduct a brainstorming activity with the whole group to generate this list.

two GED teachers, etc.) or the same program whenever possible.

- **Explain that they will have 20 minutes, working with their partner/group, to make a plan for the next steps or actions they will take to rethink instruction and participation in their work.** Groups should make notes on paper. Remind them that they will be asked to share things from their plan with the other participants.
- **Post the past two “Making Connections” newsprints, as this may help participants reflect on the previous sessions.**
- **After 20 minutes, reconvene the group. Explain that you will go around from group to group collecting ideas one or two at a time.** Ask the first pair/group to read aloud one of their ideas for next steps and write it on newsprint. (It may be necessary to paraphrase the ideas for the newsprint.) Ask the next pair/group to read aloud one of their ideas and add it to the newsprint list.
- **Continue** around the group, going back to every pair until a list of all the ideas has been written on the newsprint.
- **Have participants, as a whole group, consider the help they may need** to implement these next steps, for example, materials, resources, contact with other teachers, etc. Encourage discussion about ways to get the supports they will need.

7. Sharing Learning with Others (15 minutes)

- **Participants should form groups of three.** Preferably they will work with people they have not been with much today.
- **Ask participants to think, from their viewpoint and based on their knowledge and readings in the study circle, what practical suggestions they might give to other practitioners about addressing issues related to instruction and participation.** Each group should generate a list onto paper.
- **After about five minutes, ask the groups to think about how these ideas** could be shared with other practitioners and what it would entail to go about doing it. Provide examples: Is there a state newsletter in which they could be published? Could they be sent to the state literacy resource center for forwarding to the next study

circle held on the same topic? Could they each take the ideas back to their own programs to discuss at a staff meeting?

- **Groups should come back together as a whole and share some of their suggestions.**

8. Final Evaluation

(10 minutes)

- Go around the circle and **ask each person to comment on the most useful idea or concept** they will walk away with from this study circle.
- **Ask the following questions to the group as a whole:**
 - ? As a result of your involvement in this study circle, what suggestions or questions do you have for researchers?
 - ? What additional research would be helpful to you as practitioners in adult education?
- **Go around again and ask if anyone has suggestions for improving the study circle.** These suggestions may be related to topics, activities, readings, etc.:
 - Instruction (distance, online, etc.)
 - Participation (self-directed, self-study, duration, intensity, persistence, etc.)
- **Take notes** as people talk so that you can include them in your report back to NCSALL about the study circle. Feel free to add your own suggestions.
- **You may want to hand out** a copy of the NCSALL Publications List and Order Form, and any copies of NCSALL *Research Briefs* or other NCSALL-related handouts that you think may be useful. Point out that almost all NCSALL publications are also available online at the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net. The publications may also be obtained by contacting NCSALL at World Education (see page vi of the study guide).
- **Thank everyone** for coming and participating in this study circle.

Another Idea

Pass out pads of sticky notes in two different colors. Ask people to write down their ideas, comments, or suggestions, using one sticky note for each comment or suggestion. Use one color for instruction and the second for participation.

Then ask participants to stick them up on two blank sheets of newsprint. Give people time at the end to read the comments and talk with each other about them.

