Learning Circles for Adult Education, including basic skills, ESL/ESOL, Citizenship Preparation, ASE, and Transition to college

MCAE Network
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David J. Rosen
djrosen@newsomeassociates.com
Who’s here?

How many of you are:

• Teachers?
• Tutors?
• Program level administrators?
• State level administrators?
• Librarians?
• Other?
Why are you here?

- What attracted you to this session?
- What do you hope you will learn here?
Who has taken an online course?
What happened?
There are many online course providers...
Peer to Peer University (www.p2pu.org)

- Not-for-profit organization
- Distributed community of volunteers and partners
- 8-year track record working in open education
- Supports learning circles across the U.S. and in a few other countries (France, Kenya, India, Eastern Europe)
Peer to Peer University (www.p2pu.org)

- Uses open education tools and resources to support high-quality, low-cost, lifelong learning
What is a learning circle?

- Blended/hybrid learning model including face-to-face and online learning
- Online learning, typically a short, free-to-the learner online course, usually 4 – 12 weeks
- Face-to-face learning is typically once-a-week, 90-minutes, facilitated by a trained volunteer who is not necessarily an expert in the course subject matter
- A main purpose: support for peer-to-peer learning
Range of Learning Circles

• Primarily in libraries and adult basic skills programs, but sometimes also in homes

• Content may include:
  • Fundamentals of Public Speaking;
  • Writing for Publishing;
  • The Rise of Superheroes and their Impact on Pop Culture;
  • The Art of Storytelling;
Range of content

- Acting on Climate Change: Steps to Individual, Community and Political Action; Resume, Networking and Interviewing Skills
- English language learning
- Basic Computer Skills
- How to Cook Healthy meals
- High School Equivalency Preparation
- Typing tutorials
- and more
Chicago Public Library 2015 pilot

- 65% first time online learners
- 45%-55% retention over 6-8 weeks
- 80% of learners learned online outside learning circle face-to-face meetings
- 25 branches have now run learning circles
- Program is run internally now by library’s economic advancement team
Promote your learning circle

Master new skills. Together. In the library. For free.

Edgewater Branch Library is hosting study groups for learners who want to complete online courses together, in-person at the libraries. These are free, peer-supported courses designed to be taken by anybody.

GED® Prep Math begins Thursday, May 7 @ 6PM
Academic Writing begins Tuesday, May 12 @ 6PM

GED® Prep Math
Thursday nights
May 7 - June 11
6PM-7:45PM
6000 N. Broadway
2nd Floor

Academic Writing
Tuesday nights
May 12 - June 16
6PM-7:45PM
6000 N. Broadway
2nd Floor

Register online at http://chicago.p2pu.org

Sign up for Finance for Everyone: Smart Tools for Decision-Making

In this introduction to finance course from Michigan learn to apply frameworks and smart tools for understanding and making everyday decisions.

at Harold Washington Library Center 5th floor, North Meeting Room, Chicago, Illinois, United States
Facilitated by James Teng
Course content from edX
This Learning Circle meets every Tuesday from 11AM to 12:30PM CDT starting 5 April for 6 weeks.

Name*
Email address
Phone Number for SMS

In one sentence, please explain your goals for taking this course.*
A successful study group requires the support of all of its members. How will you help your peers achieve their goals?*
Can you bring a laptop and headphones to the Learning Circle each week?*
Select one of the following

How comfortable are you doing the following tasks?
“[The best thing about my Learning Circle was] knowing that I was not the only one out there with a dream of writing and being able to share this with my fellow Learning Circle members.”
English Now! Pilot

• The problem that World Education and P2PU are trying to solve: an inexpensive way to help adults on waiting lists for English classes

• 18-month Pilot project, funded by the Dollar General Foundation, to customize learning circles to meet needs of adult ESL learners on waiting lists, and the programs that serve them

• Five ESL/ESOL pilot sites: Portland (Maine) Adult Ed; Immigrant Learning Center, Malden, MA; YMCA International Services, Boston; Notre Dame Education Center, Boston; Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative, Providence
Learning Circle Meeting Structure

● Before: Facilitator briefly reviews material

● During:
  ○ Check-in (10 mins)
  ○ Coursework (60 mins)
  ○ Activity (15 mins)
  ○ Wrap Up (5 mins)

● After: Facilitator shares feedback on her/his dashboard
Implementation of Learning Circles

- Needs Assessment
- Internal/External Connections
- Learner Recruitment or Waiting list
- Facilitator (teacher or volunteer)
- Resources: Content, Technology, Facility and logistics
- Instructional Strategy and Assessment

*Learning circle at Notre Dame Education Center, Boston*
Online Content
Citizenship Learning Circle
English Now! Findings

• Participants like the learning circle model, often wish learning circles were longer than 6-8 weeks
• Carefully selected and trained volunteers who are not English language teachers can facilitate learning circles effectively
• Learning circles can meet basic level ESOL/ESL needs, but also advanced ESOL/ESL needs, including to help prepare learners for citizenship
• Surprisingly, the use of computers and portable digital devices has not been a challenge, but providing computer access is very important.
Outcomes

The English Now! customized Learning Circles model has:

- Reduced waiting lists for adult ESOL/ESL learners
- Provided a way that adult basic skills programs and prospective students can judge the fit of the student and program
- Led to greater learner success, including greater learner persistence in classes
- Led to skills in using technology, skills for online learning, and skills needed for successful peer learning.
Learning Circles Around the World
Blog article and Video Resources

- Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative Citizenship Learning Circles Video
  http://info.p2pu.org/2017/08/14/citizenshipcircles/
- Chicago Public Library Third Round of Learning Circles
- Learning Circles Address Wait Lists for English Classes a blog post by Priyanka Sharma -
  https://thewell.worlded.org/learning-circles-address-wait-lists-for-english-classes/
How could you use (or are you using) learning circles?

• For learners on waiting lists
• As a supplementary learning experience
• In other ways at your program or school
• In partnership with a public library, or in other settings

Learning circle at Portland Adult Education, Portland, ME
Questions and Discussion

• What questions do you have about learning circles?
• How could you use a learning circle model for learners on waiting lists, as a supplementary learning experience, or in other ways at their programs, in partnership with a public library, or in other settings?
• How could you use learning circles for ASE Preparation or College Transition programs?
For more Information or to express interest in participating in a scale-up

- priyanka_sharma@worldded.org