

## Organizing Student or Student/Staff Study circles

A study circle is a tool to get input from diverse stakeholders and to develop relationships, awareness, and strategies that address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement.

Student study circles give administration a rare opportunity to hear directly from a wide range of students about what they see as the school's strengths and challenges around racial and ethnic issues. Facilitators engage students in various activities that help them to learn about different cultures, develop relationships, and have respectful and productive conversations about race and its impact on achievement.



### WHAT IS THE FORMAT?

- While adult study circles are six weekly sessions, student circles work best when they are one full day or two half days.

### WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY CIRCLE?

- Each study circle should have between 15 and 20 participants:
- Students should represent the racial/ethnic diversity of the school, as well as the academic diversity.
- DO NOT JUST PICK THE "GOOD" STUDENTS. All academic levels and behaviors need to be included.
- A minimum of 3 staff members also need to be included in the study circles. At least one staff member should be an administrator or staff development teacher. Staff needs to participate for the entire session. It does not work for staff to take turns being in the circle.

### WHAT COMES AFTER THE STUDY CIRCLE?

- All study circles conclude with a 30 to 45 minute presentation to the leadership and staff by the students.
- The study circle should become an advisory committee for the principal, meeting at least once a month.
- Many study circles want to continue meeting as a group either as a club or to work on an action. For example, some study circles may want to create a video about diversity that is shown on the morning announcements.
- The school is responsible for having a sponsor for a club and assisting in next steps. Department of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP) will provide support and ideas for next steps.



### WHO LEADS THE STUDY CIRCLES?

- Trained facilitators from DFCEP lead the study circles. The facilitators follow a set curriculum designed specifically for MCPS students and staff.

### WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL'S TIME COMMITMENT?

- Assign a staff member to coordinate the study circle and communicate with DFCEP.
- Meet once with the DFCEP to plan out the goals and schedule, and again after the study circle.
- Support the action steps/suggestions that come out of the study circle.
- Meet with the study circle once a month as a Principal Advisory Committee.

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COORDINATOR?

- Communicate with DFCEP and principal regarding timetable, recruitment, logistics and action
- Work with DFCEP and school staff to recruit participants by designated time.
- Provide DFCEP with participant contact information a week prior to the Study Circle.
- Organize a 30 minute information meeting for participants that will be presented by DFCEP.
- Handle logistics such as meeting space, communication with students, food, transportation, etc.
- Work with the students to prepare for presentation to staff.
- Support students in future action meetings.
- Arrange for appropriate food for the study circles. One day circles should have a light breakfast, lunch (pizza), and snacks.

### WHERE DO STUDY CIRCLES TAKE PLACE?

- The one-day study circles work best when they are at an off-campus site like a local community center.
- Six-session study circles can be done at the school. It needs to be in a room where chairs can be moved around in a circle. If possible, having access to a Promethean Board is useful.

### ARE THE STUDENT GROUPS ALWAYS CALLED STUDY CIRCLES?

- No, many schools use other names. For example, *Talk It Out*, Roundtables...