

NCSALL Study Circle Guide:

Learner Persistence in Adult Basic Education

DECEMBER 2003



National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is a collaborative effort between the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and World Education. The University of Tennessee, Portland State University, and Rutgers University are NCSALL's partners. NCSALL is funded by the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, Award Number R309B60002, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

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 effort to help connect research and practice in the field of adult basic education and adult literacy.

This Study Circle Guide—Learner Persistence in 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 Circle 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:

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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 Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

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, policy makers, 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 policy makers; *The 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 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:

<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu>

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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 Research and Study Circles, where practitioners can learn about, discuss, and/or try out ideas from research. The following diagram depicts this process:

Research produces:

Theories, concepts
and ideas in

- Articles
- Reports
- Presentations

Practitioners need:

Techniques, strategies,
and suggestions in

- Articles
- Workshops
- Web Sites

Translation through:

Practitioner Research and Study Circles
that produce practical recommendations for
instruction and policy

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 G, 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 use 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 ABE, GED, and 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 don't recommend running a Study Circle with less than five or more than 10 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 NCSALL 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, or
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 10 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 Learner Persistence Study Circle should include the seven 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 Learner Persistence in Adult 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: Greg Hart, “Power, literacy, and motivation,” *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 2, Issue A, March 1998
7. Reading #2: Michael Pritza, “Getting into groups,” *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 2, Issue A, March 1998

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 phone 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 F. These readings are from the Study Circle 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 talk the Study Circle over beforehand with someone from NCSALL, we’d be happy to discuss it with you. We can be reached at:

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

Feel free. 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 learner 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 other Study Circles we produce in the future. Also, hearing from Facilitators lets us know who is doing what around the country. Please consider sending us the feedback form (in Appendix G), 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: Learner Persistence in Adult Basic Education

This NCSALL Study Circle addresses learner persistence, motivation, and retention in adult basic education. It is based on the findings of NCSALL's research on learner persistence, which was directed by John Comings at Harvard Graduate School of Education, and on articles from *Focus on Basics*, NCSALL's quarterly magazine for practitioners.

In Session One, the Study Circle group will share information about their interest and experience with learner persistence and how the topic relates to their own work contexts. Participants will examine strategies that two authors employed to increase learner involvement in their classroom and then discuss the impact of selecting methods to address learner persistence. The Study Circle members will take part in an activity that models one way of finding out from learners about the forces in their lives that help or hinder them in their persistence.

Session Two gives participants the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of three perspectives on learner persistence, motivation, and retention – (1) dispositional barriers, (2) stopping out versus dropping out, and (3) turbulence in attendance. Participants will discuss strategies for increasing learner persistence. The group will look at the NCSALL Persistence Study results and compare their own ideas with learners' ideas (from the study) about the forces that improve or hinder persistence.

In the final session, Session Three, the group will examine ways to hear from learners about the forces that support and hinder their persistence. Four supports for learner persistence will be reviewed and participants will continue to develop a list of practical ideas for addressing the issue of learner persistence. Participants will receive a handout with strategies and resources for addressing learner persistence, motivation, and retention.

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 Group participants.

Learner Persistence in Adult Basic Education Study Circle: Outline

Session One

- OBJECTIVES:
- Participants will get to know one another and learn how the Study Circle will be run, including setting ground rules for participation.
 - Participants will discuss how the issue of learner persistence affects their classrooms and programs.
 - Participants will discuss issues in the readings about the topic.
 - Participants will experience gathering information on forces affecting learner persistence.
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|-------------------|--|
| <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>35 minutes</i> | 4. Your Experience in Relation to the Topic |
| <i>15 minutes</i> | BREAK |
| <i>50 minutes</i> | 5. Discussion of First Readings |
| <i>30 minutes</i> | 6. Learners' Force Field: Brainstorming Forces |
| <i>10 minutes</i> | 7. Evaluation, Readings for Session Two, and Closure |

Session Two

- OBJECTIVES:
- Participants will gain a deeper understanding of three perspectives on learner persistence, motivation, and retention.
 - Participants will reflect on strategies for increasing learner persistence.
 - Participants will compare educators' and learners' ideas on forces that affect learner persistence.
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|-------------------|---|
| <i>10 minutes</i> | 1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda |
| <i>45 minutes</i> | 2. Key Concepts From the Readings |
| <i>15 minutes</i> | BREAK |
| <i>50 minutes</i> | 3. Increasing Persistence: Discussing Strategies From the Research |
| <i>45 minutes</i> | 4. NCSALL Persistence Study: Comparing Educators' Ideas With Learners' Ideas of Forces That Improve or Hinder Persistence |
| <i>15 minutes</i> | 5. Evaluation, Readings for Session Three, and Closure |

Session Three

- OBJECTIVES:
- Participants will gain a greater understanding of the forces that support and hinder learner persistence, and of how to discuss with their own learners the forces that affect them.
 - Participants will discuss ways of addressing learner persistence, motivation, and retention in their classroom/program.
 - Participants will continue generating a list of practical ideas for addressing learner persistence, motivation, and retention.
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|-------------------|--|
| <i>10 minutes</i> | 1. Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda |
| <i>45 minutes</i> | 2. Review Activities for Hearing From Learners |
| <i>30 minutes</i> | 3. Four Supports for Learner Persistence |
| <i>20 minutes</i> | 4. Sponsors as Support for Learner Persistence |
| <i>15 minutes</i> | BREAK |
| <i>25 minutes</i> | 5. Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence |
| <i>25 minutes</i> | 6. Sharing Learning with Others and Next Steps |
| <i>10 minutes</i> | 7. 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.16) Objectives for Session One (p.17) Session One Agenda (p.17) Discussion Questions: Strategies (p.19) Techniques for Improving Learner Persistence (title only) (p.20) Analysis Questions (p.21) GOAL: Learners Continuing to Pursue Their Educational Goals (p.22) Three Barriers to Learner Persistence (p.23) Useful – How To Improve (p.24)	[Handouts A-D were sent to participants in the pre-meeting packet.] [Handouts E and F are in Appendix C] Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules” Handout F: “Readings for Session Two”	[Prepare two or three extra copies of Readings #1 and #2. that were sent to participants in the pre-meeting packet. These readings are in Appendix B.] Reading #1: “Power, Literacy, and Motivation” Reading #2: “Getting into Groups” [Prepare one copy for each participant of Readings #3 - #5. These readings are in Appendix C.] Reading #3: “The K-12 School Experiences of High School Dropouts” Reading #4: “Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out” Reading #5: “Getting to Class and Completing a Semester Is Tough”	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	Objectives for Session Two (p.28) Session Two Agenda (p.28) Analysis Questions (p.29)	[Handouts G-J are in Appendix D] Handout G: "Key Concepts Related to Learner Persistence" Handout H: "Table 1: Negative Forces" Handout I: "Table 2: Positive Forces" Handout J: "Readings for Session Three"	[Prepare two or three extra copies of Readings #3 - #5 listed above in Session One. These readings are in Appendix C.] [Prepare one copy for each participant of Readings #6 and #7. These readings are in Appendix D.] Reading # 6: "Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports" Reading #7: "Sponsors and Sponsorship"	Three signs: AGREE, DISAGREE, NOT SURE Newsprint from Session One: "GOAL: Learners Continuing to Pursue..." Blank newsprint sheets Newsprint easel Markers, pens, tape
Session Three	Objectives for Session Three (p.36) Session Three Agenda (p.36) Questions on Needs Assessment Activities (p.38) Four Supports for Learner Persistence (p.38) Discussing Supports for Learner Persistence (p.39) Three Kinds of Sponsors (p.40)	[Handouts K-R are in Appendix E] Handout K: "Brainstorming and Prioritizing" Handout L: "Acting It Out" Handout M: "Classroom Discussion" Handout N: "Snowball Consensus" Handout O: "Affinity Diagramming" Handout P: "Learner-To-Learner Interviews" Handout Q: "Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence"	[Prepare two or three extra copies of Readings #6 and #7 listed above in Session Two. These readings are in Appendix D]	Newsprint from Session One: "Techniques for Improving Learner Persistence" 4" x 6" sticky note pads in two colors Blank newsprint sheets Newsprint easel Markers, pens, tape

Session Guide for Facilitating the Learner Persistence in Adult Basic Education Study Circle

Session One – Preparation



Newsprints (Prepare ahead of time)

- ___ Purpose of NCSALL Study Circles (p.16)
- ___ Objectives for Session One (p.17)
- ___ Session One Agenda (p.17)
- ___ Discussion Questions: Strategies (p.19)
- ___ Techniques for Improving Learner Persistence (p.20)
- ___ Analysis Questions (p.21)
- ___ GOAL: Learners Continuing to Pursue Their Educational Goals (p.22)
- ___ Three Barriers to Learner Persistence (p.23)
- ___ Useful – How To Improve (p.24)



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

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



Readings

(Make a few extra copies of Readings #1 and #2 for participants who forget to bring theirs. These readings are in Appendix B.)

- ___ Reading #1: “Power, Literacy, and Motivation”
- ___ Reading #2: “Getting into Groups”

[Prepare one copy for each participant of Readings #3 - #5. These readings are in Appendix C.]

- ___ Reading #3: “The K-12 School Experiences of High School Dropouts”
- ___ Reading #4: “Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out”
- ___ Reading #5: “Getting to Class and Completing a Semester Is Tough”

Materials

- ___ Blank newsprint sheets
- ___ Newsprint easel
- ___ Markers, pens, tape

Session One – Process

- OBJECTIVES:**
- Participants will get to know one another and learn how the Study Circle will be run, including setting ground rules for participation.
 - Participants will discuss how the issue of learner persistence affects their classrooms and programs.
 - Participants will discuss issues in the readings about the topic.
 - Participants will experience gathering information on forces affecting learner persistence.

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. If time permits, you can do a VERY brief icebreaker (no more than five minutes) in addition to the introductions.
- **Make sure that participants know** where bathrooms are located, when the session will end, when the break will be, and any other “housekeeping” information.

Another Idea

Ask participants to briefly describe one obstacle they had to overcome to be here today.

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.

-  **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 Learner Persistence Study Circle.** (See “Introduction to the Study Circle: Learner Persistence in Adult Basic Education,” p.8 of this Study Circle Guide.)

Note to Facilitator

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

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 and learn how the Study Circle will be run.
- Discuss how the issue of learner persistence affects their classrooms and programs.
- Discuss issues in the readings about the topic.
- Experience gathering information on forces affecting learner persistence.

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

Session One Agenda

- Introductions (Done!)
- Overview of Study Circle Purpose (Done!)
- Objectives for Session One (Done!)
- Overview of Agenda (Doing)
- Participant Expectations and Group Norms
- Your Experience in Relation to the Topic
- BREAK
- Discussion of First Readings
- Learners' Force Field: Brainstorming Forces
- 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?

- **Go around the circle and ask each person to make a short statement in response to this question.** Write their statement on newsprint as they say it. 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 a little later in the meeting.
- **After everyone has made a statement, summarize what you hear** 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, 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
 - 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 or isn't or about the design of this one.

- **Next, explain that one of the things that help Study Circles to run smoothly** is an agreement among participants about ground rules to follow during the meetings and discussions.

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.

-  **Distribute Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules.”** After giving participants a few minutes to look it over, 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.

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.

4. Your Experience in Relation to the Topic (35 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.
- **Post the “Discussion Questions: Strategies” newsprint.** Use these questions to facilitate a discussion of participants’ experiences with learner persistence.

Discussion Questions: Strategies

- Tell us about one strategy you or your program have implemented, or have considered implementing, in order to increase learners’ persistence.
- What impact did implementing this strategy have on learner motivation and persistence (or what impact do you think it would have)? Why do you think it had/would have this impact?

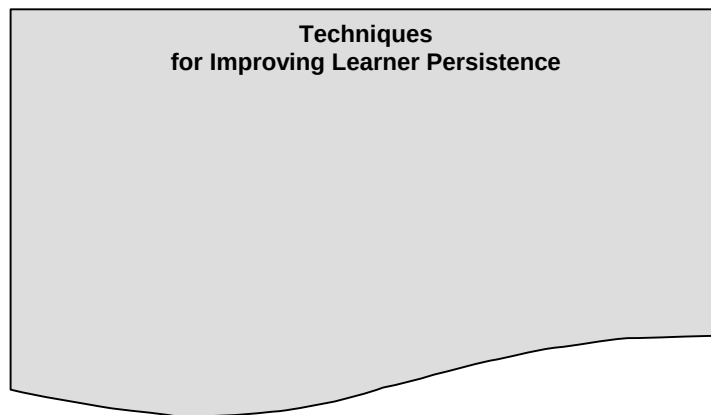
Note to Facilitator

Learner motivation and persistence may have different meanings for the Study Circle participants.

The group may wish to develop a definition for each these terms.

- If the group is small (five to seven people), conduct this discussion with the whole group. If the group is larger (eight to ten people), divide the group into two smaller groups. If you divide them into small groups, allow 20 minutes for the small group discussions. Then reconvene the entire group for short reports back from each small group.
- **Post the “Techniques for Improving Learner Persistence” newsprint.** Ask participants to brainstorm a list of techniques that have worked in their classrooms. List ideas on the Techniques for Improving Learning Persistence newsprint and save the newsprint for Session Three. Encourage participants to take notes.

Examples of techniques could include goal setting, peer tutoring, and monitoring of progress on wall charts.



BREAK (15 minutes)

Note to Facilitator

To ensure you are able to start up again in 15 minutes, suggest that they return in ten minutes to be ready to go.

5. Discussion of First Readings

(50 minutes)

- **Explain that in this next activity participants will reflect on the readings for today's meeting.** They will be guided by the same questions they used to think about their own experiences with learner persistence. If necessary, allow them five minutes to review Reading #1: "Power, Literacy, and Motivation." Then ask participants to form into two groups.
- **Post the "Analysis Questions" Newsprint.** Explain that the groups will use these Analysis Questions to discuss the readings. They will have 15 minutes to spend on each article. Indicate that each group should be prepared to share the results of their discussions.

Analysis Questions

- What did the author of the article do to increase learner persistence?
- What impact did implementing this strategy have on learner motivation and persistence? Discuss possible reasons for this impact.

- **After 15 minutes, prompt participants to begin discussing Reading #2: "Getting into Groups."** Again, provide time for participants to review the article if necessary.
- **After another 15 minutes, reconvene the whole group.** Ask one member of each group to give a five-minute summary of his or her group's discussion. Then facilitate a 20-minute discussion, using the following questions as a guide:
 - ? On what basis did the author of each article choose a strategy for increasing learner persistence and motivation (for example, on the basis of attendance patterns, on what learners told him/her)?
 - ? On what basis did you or your program choose?
 - ? What do you think are the most effective ways of choosing?

Another Idea

Ask participants if they have seen other material about the topic. Encourage them to share copies of other articles with the Study Circle group by bringing them to the next session.

- Explain that, for Session Two, they will be reading about three researchers' attempts to learn more about the issues of motivation and persistence. Ask participants to focus their attention on the implications this research has for how programs should address these issues.

6. Learners' Force Field: Brainstorming Forces (30 minutes)

- **Explain that, in this next activity, participants will begin to think about what supports and what hinders learners in their persistence.** Ask them to think quietly for a few minutes about their learners (or a particular learner with whom they work) and to consider the forces that both help and hinder the learners in continuing to pursue their educational goals.
- **Rationale for activity:** Explain that, whereas this activity will be done by imagining what learners might say, a NCSALL study actually did a force field analysis with 150 learners in pre-GED classes throughout New England. Point out that they will examine the results of NCSALL's force field analysis in future meetings and compare the results with their speculation from this session.
- **Post the "Goal: Learners Continuing to Pursue Their Educational Goals" newsprint.** This newsprint will provide a format to record the information.

Another Idea

Another way to ask this question is: What supports learners to come to class, to participate in class, or to see themselves as successful, lifelong learners? What hinders them from being able to do so?

If it is difficult for participants to speculate about their learners, have them give a few examples from their own lives about what makes it difficult or easier for them to attend sessions like this study circle.

Goal: Learners Continuing To Pursue Their Educational Goals	
+	-

- **Lead the group in brainstorming** the negative forces that hinder learners in reaching their educational goals and record these on the newsprint. Do the same with the positive forces. Explain that during the brainstorming, there should be no commenting on the forces chosen in any way. Participants should just concentrate on thinking about the forces from the learners' point of view.

Continue the brainstorming for 15 minutes. This should allow enough time for participants to come up with seven or eight positive forces and seven or eight negative forces.

- Spend the next 15 minutes facilitating a discussion using the following three questions as a guide.

? Was it easier to name the positive or the negative forces?

? If you did this brainstorm with your students, how might their answers be similar? How might their answers be different? Why?

? Do the forces form any categories or groups that you can see?

- **Post the “Three Barriers to Learner Persistence” newsprint.**

Three Barriers to Learner Persistence

Situational: These barriers include transportation, family responsibilities, financial obligations, and related issues that impede learners' abilities to enroll and stay in classes.

Institutional: These barriers include program fees, “red tape,” scheduling problems, and other roadblocks inherent in institutional structures.

Dispositional: These barriers include learners' attitudes, negative experience with schooling, values, and perceptions about schooling that Quigley suggests affect learners' motivation to enroll in and stay in school.

- Explain to participants that, for the next session, they will be reading about forces and barriers that affect learner persistence, motivation, and retention in adult basic education. Many researchers refer to a framework outlined by B. Allan Quigley in which he identifies three categories of barriers to learner persistence. They are summarized on this newsprint.
- Briefly go over these summaries, and ask participants to keep them in mind as they read the articles for the next session. Indicate to participants that this information on barriers is listed on Handout F.

Note to Facilitator

If participants would like to read more about Quigley's categories of barriers to learner persistence, refer them to the following article: B. Allan Quigley, "The first three weeks: A critical time for motivation," *Focus on Basics*, Vol.2, Issue A, March 1998.

His three categories of barriers are listed on Handout F: "Readings for Session Two."

7. Evaluation, Readings for Session Two, and Closure

(10 minutes)

- **Explain to participants that, in the time 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.**

<u>Useful</u>	<u>How To Improve</u>

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."

- **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: "List of Readings for Session Two," and the three readings for Session Two:**
 - Reading #3: "The K-12 School Experience of High School Dropouts"
 - Reading #4: "Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out"
 - Reading #5: "Getting to Class and Completing a Semester Is Tough"
-  **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 they 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 them 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 phone numbers and email addresses so that you can reach them in case of cancellation.

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.

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.

Session Two – Preparation



Newsprints (Prepare ahead of time)

- ___ Objectives for Session Two (p.28)
- ___ Session Two Agenda (p.28)
- ___ Analysis Questions (p.29)



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

- ___ Handout G: “Key Concepts Related to Learner Persistence”
- ___ Handout H: “Table 1: Negative Forces”
- ___ Handout I: “Table 2: Positive Forces”
- ___ Handout J: “Readings for Session Three”



Readings

(Make a few extra copies for participants who forget to bring theirs. These readings are in Appendix C.)

- ___ Reading #3: “The K-12 Experience of High School Dropouts”
- ___ Reading #4: “Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out”
- ___ Reading #5: “Getting to Class and Completing a Semester Is Tough”

[Prepare one copy for each participant of Readings #6 and #7. These readings are in Appendix D.]

- ___ Reading #6: “Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports”
- ___ Reading #7: “Sponsors and Sponsorship”

Materials

- ___ Three signs: AGREE, DISAGREE, NOT SURE
- ___ Newsprint from Session One, “GOAL: Learners Continuing to Pursue Their Educational Goals”
- ___ Blank newsprint sheets
- ___ Newsprint easel
- ___ Markers, pens, tape

Session Two – Process

- OBJECTIVES:**
- Participants will gain a deeper understanding of three perspectives on learner persistence, motivation, and retention.
 - Participants will reflect on strategies for increasing learner persistence.
 - Participants will compare educators' and learners' ideas on forces that affect learner persistence.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda

(10 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:

- Gain a deeper understanding of three perspectives on learner motivation, retention and persistence.
- Reflect on strategies for increasing learner persistence.
- Compare educators' and learners' ideas on forces that affect learner persistence.

- **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

- Objectives for Session Two (Done!)
- Overview of Agenda (Doing)
- Key Concepts From the Readings
- Break
- Increasing Persistence: Discussing Strategies From the Research
- NCSALL Persistence Study: Comparing Educators' Ideas With Learners' Ideas of Forces That Affect Learner Persistence
- Evaluation, Readings for Session Three, and Closure

2. Key Concepts From the Readings

(45 minutes)

-  **Distribute Handout G: “Key Concepts Related to Learner Persistence.”** Divide participants into two groups. Tell groups they are to review the key concepts summarized on Handout G and discuss their reactions to these concepts. Tell them they will have 20 minutes for this discussion.
- **After 20 minutes**, ask each group to report back a brief summary of their reactions.
- **Post the “Analysis Questions” newsprint.** Facilitate a 20-minute discussion using the two questions as a guide

Analysis Questions

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

BREAK: (15 minutes)

Note to Facilitator

During the break, put up around the room three signs in large letters as follows:

- on one wall: AGREE
- on the opposite wall: DISAGREE
- on the back wall: NOT SURE

3. Increasing Persistence: Discussing Strategies From the Research

(50 minutes)

-  **Explain that the next activity is also based on the readings** which they were assigned to read for today and which were summarized in Handout G: “Key Concepts Related to Learner Persistence.”
 - Reading #3: “The K-12 School Experience of High School Dropouts”
 - Reading #4: “Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out”
 - Reading #5: “Getting to Class and Completing a Semester Is Tough”

In the last activity, participants discussed the key concepts from these readings. Now give them about five minutes to quietly review the readings. The deeper their understanding of the material, the richer the “live Likert scale” discussions will most likely be.

- **Use the “live Likert scale” format** for a discussion of strategies for increasing learner persistence that were presented in the research. Refer participants to the three signs in large letters that you put up during the break: on one wall, “AGREE,” on the opposite wall, “DISAGREE,” and on the back wall, “NOT SURE.”
- **Ask everyone to stand up, moving desks or chairs if necessary so that people can move easily around the room.** Explain that this next activity is purely for promoting discussion and there are no right or wrong answers. You will read a statement aloud twice. They 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 ambiguously in order to generate discussion.

- **After everyone is standing near a sign, 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 reflecting their new opinion. Continue around the room to the NOT SURE and 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 you but each other.
- **Draw the discussion of a statement to a close** after approximately 10 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 on and skip one of the other statements. Similarly, if there is little discussion about a statement, just move on to the next.

The three statements for discussion with the “live Likert Scale” activity are:

Statement 1

Since there is no difference in K-12 school experience between those who enroll in adult education and those who don't, teachers should focus on other barriers to persistence, not on past negative school experiences.

Statement 2

Teachers and program staff should not worry too much about the persistence of learners who have “stopped-out” or are considering “stopping out” because of forces that hinder them outside of the program.

Statement 3

The best way programs can improve persistence is to reduce turbulence by using closed enrollment.

Another idea

If the discussion is slow, consider asking the following questions:

Statement 1

- What is the prevailing notion about the K-12 experiences of adult basic education students who have dropped out of high school?
- How did the initial findings of NCSALL's Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL) contradict this prevailing notion?
- How do the experiences of high school drop outs who participate in adult basic education programs compare to those who choose not to enroll in ABE classes?

Statement 2

- What accomplishments do students who “stop out” see in themselves?
- How could ABE programs assist students who need to “stop out”?

Statement 3

- What factors contribute to turbulent classrooms? What are some benefits of a stable classroom?
- What is the relationship of the classroom educational focus and learner persistence?

4. NCSALL Persistence Study: Comparing Educators' Ideas With Learners' Ideas of Forces That Improve or Hinder Persistence

(45 minutes)

-  **Explain to participants that NCSALL used an analytical framework called a “force field analysis”** during a study on learner persistence to generate a list of forces that learners themselves identified. Tell participants that, in the last session, they experienced a force field analysis when they developed a list of supports and barriers they thought may be influencing their learners.
- **Post the newsprint created in Session One, “GOAL: Learners Continuing to Pursue Their Educational Goals,”** that lists the supports and barriers generated by Study Circle group. Refer participants to that list.
-  **Distribute Handout H: “Negative Forces” and Handout I: “Positive Forces.”** Ask participants to spend five minutes reading over the forces in the tables from the NCSALL study and reviewing the forces they brainstormed at the last meeting, posted on newsprint. Point out that, in these two tables, the learners were able to articulate many positive forces; however, many learners did not articulate negative forces.
- **Facilitate a 25-minute discussion** using the following questions as a guide:
 - ? What are your general impressions of the forces listed in these two tables?
 - ? In what ways are the learners' forces similar to the forces you brainstormed? In what ways are they different? What might account for the differences between your perceptions of learners' forces and the forces listed by the group of learners?
 - ? What forces, if any, do you think are absent from the NCSALL research or from your brainstorming? What might account for those absences?
 - ? What are some possible reasons for the researchers' finding that learners did not name negative forces? What are the implications of this for program practice?

5. 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 J: “List of Readings for Session Three” and the two readings for Session Three:**
"Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports," *Focus on Basics* , Volume 4, Issue A, 2000, and “Sponsors and Sponsorship,” *Focus on Basics*, Volume 6, Issue A, 2002.
Note: The first article is a distilled version of a longer report: “Persistence Among Adult Basic Education Students in Pre-GED Classes,” *NCSALL Reports #12*, December 1999. Comings, Parrella, and Soricone. Participants can locate the full report at <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/research/report12.pdf>
- Make the following points about the NCSALL Adult Persistence Study and report:
 - The study asked learners who were currently enrolled in programs not only about their barriers but also about their supports to persistence.
 - The report describes what the learners identified as their most important supports and barriers to persistence.
 - In the appendices of the report, there is an activity (similar to the activity we did at the first meeting) that teachers/program staff can use in order to find out their learners’ supports and barriers to persistence.

Explain that they will use the two readings as the basis for a discussion on what tools a teacher/program might use to find out from learners about their supports and barriers to persistence.

- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next meeting.** Explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling.

Another idea

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

Session Three – Preparation



Newsprints (Prepare ahead of time)

- ___ Objectives for Session Three (p.36)
- ___ Session Three Agenda (p.36)
- ___ Questions on Needs Assessment Activities (p.38)
- ___ Four Supports for Learner Persistence (p.38)
- ___ Discussing Supports for Learner Persistence (p.39)
- ___ Three Kinds of Sponsors (p.40)



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

- ___ Handout K: “Brainstorming and Prioritizing”
- ___ Handout L: “Acting It Out”
- ___ Handout M: “Classroom Discussion”
- ___ Handout N: “Snowball Consensus”
- ___ Handout O: “Affinity Diagramming”
- ___ Handout P: “Learner-To-Learner Interviews”
- ___ Handout Q: “Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence”



Readings (Make a few extra copies for participants who forget to bring theirs. These readings are in Appendix D.)

- ___ Reading #6: “Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports”
- ___ Reading #7: “Sponsors and Sponsorship”

Materials

- ___ Newsprint created during Session One, “Techniques for Improving Learner Persistence”
- ___ 4” x 6” sticky note pads in two colors
- ___ Blank newsprint sheets
- ___ Newsprint easel
- ___ Markers, pens, tape

Session Three – Process

- OBJECTIVES:**
- Participants will gain a greater understanding of the forces that support and hinder learner persistence, and of how to discuss with their own learners the forces that affect them.
 - Participants will discuss ways of addressing learner persistence, motivation, and retention in their classroom/program.
 - Participants will continue generating a list of practical ideas for addressing learner persistence, motivation, and retention.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda (10 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.
- **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.

Objectives for Session Three

Participants will:

- Gain a greater understanding of the forces that support and hinder learner persistence.
- Gain a greater understanding of how to discuss with their own learners the forces that affect them.
- Discuss ways of addressing learner motivation, retention, and persistence in their classroom or program.
- Continue generating a list of practical ideas for addressing learner motivation, retention, and persistence.

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

Session Three Agenda

- Objectives for Day Three (Done!)
- Overview of Agenda (Doing)
- Review Activities for Hearing From Learners
- Four Supports for Learner Persistence
- Sponsors as Support for Learner Persistence
- Break
- Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence
- Sharing Learning With Others and Next Steps
- Final Evaluation and Closure

2. Review Activities for Hearing From Learners

(45 minutes)

- **Point out that the authors of the NCSALL Study on Persistence** wrote about the importance of hearing from learners about their supports and barriers to persistence and then of coming up with a plan, together with those learners, to manage those forces over time.
- **Explain that, in this next activity, participants will** have a chance to review one of six ways to help individuals or groups think about the forces that hinder and help them in achieving a goal.
-  **Have copies of the following handouts available for distribution:**
 - Handout K: “Brainstorming and Prioritizing”
 - Handout L: “Acting It Out”
 - Handout M: “Classroom Discussion”
 - Handout N: “Snowball Consensus”
 - Handout O: “Affinity Diagramming”
 - Handout P: “Learner-to-Learner Interviews”

Explain that all the handouts describe activities that are forms of a needs assessment. Some activities include a force field analysis, but information is gained in different ways in each activity. Mention that, for this Study Circle, all these activities are meant to generate information about forces in learners’ lives; however, these activities could be used to discuss other issues as well.

- **Have participants divide into pairs and select one of the handouts to read together and discuss.** Each pair will be asked to share a summary of their discussion with the large group.

Note to Facilitator

These handouts are located in Appendix E.

Have enough copies available so each participant will receive a copy of each handout at the completion of the large group discussion.

- **Post the “Questions on Needs Assessment Activities” newsprint** and ask participants to discuss the questions together as they review the needs assessment activity they chose.

Questions on Needs Assessment Activities

1. In what ways do you think this activity would be an effective way to hear learners' forces and work with learners to increase their persistence?
2. What are some other ways you might hear from learners about the forces that affect them?
3. What concerns or fears do you have about asking learners what helps or hinders them from pursuing their educational goals?

- **Reconvene the whole group.** Ask each pair to give a brief summary on the activity they read and discussed, basing their comments on the newsprint questions they were asked to consider. At the completion of the discussion, distribute copies of all the handouts (K through P) to all the participants.

3. Four Supports for Learner Persistence

(30 minutes)

-  **Point out that, in Reading #6: “Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports,”** the authors identify four supports for persistence, based on their own research and on other research about this issue.
- **Post the “Four Supports for Learner Persistence” newsprint.**

Four Supports for Learner Persistence

- Management of the positive and negative forces that help and hinder persistence
- Self efficacy
- Establishment of a goal by the learner
- Progress toward reaching a goal

Point out that one support – management of the positive and negative forces – was addressed in the last activity. In this next activity the Study Circle group will discuss the remaining three supports.

- **Divide participants into three groups (or do as a whole group if your group is small).** Instruct Group One to review and discuss “self-efficacy,” Group Two: “establishment of a goal,” and Group Three: “progress toward reaching a goal.” Ask each group to review the description of their assigned “support” in the “Conclusions” section of Reading #6: “Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports.”
- **Post the “Discussing Supports for Learner Persistence” newsprint** and allow fifteen minutes for the groups to discuss the questions.

Discussing Supports for Learner Persistence

- What is your opinion about the importance of this support for learner persistence?
- How would you help learners achieve a sense of self-efficacy? OR
- How would you help a learner establish a meaningful goal? OR
- How do you help learners see their own progress in ways that are meaningful to them?

- **After fifteen minutes, reconvene the whole group.** Give each group a few minutes to report back a summary of their discussion. Then facilitate a 10-minute discussion, continuing to use the newsprint as a guide for the whole group.

4. Sponsors as Support for Learner Persistence (20 minutes)

- **Point out that, in Reading #7: “Sponsors and Sponsorships,”** the authors suggest that adult learners arrive in programs with the support of a specific person or a social network that helps “sponsor” them by providing important support. Further, they claim that “encouraging sponsorship” could be useful in increasing student persistence.
- **Post the “Three Kinds of Sponsors” newsprint.**

Three Kinds of Sponsors

1. Personal
2. Official
3. Intermediate

- **Briefly review the three kinds of sponsorship identified in Reading #7: “Sponsors and Sponsorships.”** Then ask participants to consider the following questions:
 - ? How can teachers identify sponsors that already provide support for students?
 - ? What is the program’s responsibility to provide support for sponsors’ forces?

BREAK (15 minutes)

5. Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence

(25 minutes)

-  **Distribute Handout Q: “Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence.”** Explain that, in this next activity, participants will review a list of strategies they can use to address issues in the area of learner persistence. This list is meant as an additional resource, and participants can modify it as they see fit, based on their own experiences and newly acquired knowledge.
- **Give participants about 15 minutes to read** over the graph and the list of strategies. Tell participants they may want to try out some of these strategies to address forces they have heard about from their own learners. Discuss as a group.
- **Suggest to participants that they take the handout home and look through it.** It will be most useful to them after they have heard from learners in their own classrooms about forces that affect their persistence. Suggest to participants that they then use the strategies listed to identify activities that will help learners increase their persistence.

6. Sharing Learning With Others and Next Steps

(25 minutes)

-  **Ask participants to think, from their viewpoint and based on their knowledge and readings in the study circle,** what practical suggestions they would give to other practitioners about how to address learner persistence. Write their suggestions on newsprint.
- **Then ask the group to think about how these ideas** could be shared with other practitioners. 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? Could they each take the ideas back to their own programs to discuss at a staff meeting?

7. 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:
 - the PROCESS (the activities, the way readings were organized, etc.) or
 - the CONTENT (the specific readings chosen, the clarity or richness of the readings or handouts, the focus of the discussions, 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** subscription forms for *Focus on Basics*, 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 they may be useful. Point out that almost all NCSALL publications are also available online at the NCSALL web site (see page ii of the Study Guide). They may also be obtained by contacting NCSALL at World Education (see page i 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 process activities and the second color for content.

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