Learning Circles

Learning Circles provide self-directed learning. The learning occurs through shared inquiry and dialogue. Participants progress at their own pace, drawing on their own experience. Life experience provides adults with a great deal of knowledge—usually more than they realise. The Learning Circles are a way of drawing this out and increasing participants' self-confidence. The discussions start where people are at and involve a spiralling process of reflection and action.

The participants in the Learning Circle decide what issues to explore and how much time to spend on particular topics. Some sessions might be guided by a facilitator, for example, a key person in the leadership team. Sometimes the role of facilitator may be shared around the group. The facilitator helps the group to frame their discussion and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate equally.

The Learning Circle group discussion may be supported by resource information, for example, some reflective questions or written texts. The group can decide what resources they will use—they may adapt material or find their own resources. The Learning Circles may need to have some rules and routines to be successful.

The Learning Circles are intended to lead action and change. They are democratic in spirit and encourage genuine participation. Experience has shown that Learning Circles have had the following outcomes:

- Highly satisfying aspects of participation for individuals who are sharing experiences, considering other viewpoints and learning more in a stimulating and thought-provoking environment.
- Participants who develop greater self-confidence and a more critical approach to their learning.

Some topics for discussion:

- How to get organised for curriculum implementation
- Establishing professional goals/vision …
- Innovations in practice
- Establishing philosophical understandings…

Some additional information:

