

Study Circles on Learner Persistence
CALPRO

Planning For Follow-Up

Project Descriptions

CALPRO's October 2005 follow-up meeting for study circle facilitators and their administrators focused on identifying ways that programs can respond to the ideas generated in study circle meetings. Small groups drafted action plans that addressed the following questions, each of which is essential in implementing change:

- What change would you propose to address learner persistence issues?
- What problem does the change address?
- What sources of information provide background on the problem, the proposed change, or both?
- What relevant data is available?
- What are potential resources to draw on when instituting the change?
- What barriers might a program may face in trying to make this change?
- What are some ways to address the barriers?

The groups prepared action steps for three projects: (1) institute teacher reflective practice; (2) improve goal-setting by involving students in an ongoing process; and (3) examine the intersection of persistence and high quality teaching. For each action step, the groups identified the following:

- Individuals responsible;
- Length of time required to complete the step;
- Required resources; and
- Criteria for evaluating progress towards completion of the step.

The project descriptions and draft actions plans are presented here as examples of how to respond to the ideas generated in study circle discussions. CALPRO welcomes any comments on the structure or content of these plans, on the process of learning from study circles, and on how professional development activities (such as study circles) can support systemic change. Email us at calpro@air.org.

Project 1

Proposed action:	Institute teacher reflective practice. Click here to see an outline of action steps. Click here for information about reflective practice (CALPROgress, Fall 2005, Pg. 4)
Problem addressed:	Staff development should be a cyclical process that allows teachers to reflect on what they've learned and done. Programs must address the needs of teachers who are resistant to systemic change.
Sources of information:	National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL); Feedback from managers, students, peers, and mentors; and Review of relevant literature and research.
Relevant data:	Persistence rate; Student learning that occurs; Success rates; and
Resources to draw on:	Videotapes of teachers in the classroom; Coworkers; Staff development workshops; CALPRO; Teacher observation checklists; Reflective practice checklists; and Department meetings.
Potential barriers:	Fear of the unknown; Fear of results being used against oneself; Resistance to the idea of persistence; Resistance to accepting personal responsibility; Inaccurate self-perception Skepticism about the value of reflective practice; and The amount of work required to institute teacher reflective practice.
Ways to address barriers:	Staff development; Support at all levels; Clear objectives; Top-down and bottom-up processes; and Non-threatening peer presenters at instructional levels.

Project 2

Proposed action:	Improve goal setting by involving students in an ongoing process. Click here to see an outline of action steps.
Problem addressed:	Lack of goal setting, poor follow-up, or both; and Students “floundering.”
Sources of information:	Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN); CALPRO; and Print and online materials.
Relevant data:	Learner progress data; and Learner persistence data.
Resources to draw on:	Assessments to determine whether the goal is attainable; and Successful teachers and programs.
Potential barriers:	Inexperience among teachers in teaching goal setting; Inexperience among students in setting goals; A feeling of lack of progress; and Failure to revisit the stated goals.
Ways to address barriers:	Integrate goal setting into lesson plans; Spend time in class analyzing a progress chart; and Revisit the stated goals.

Project 3

Proposed action:	Examine the intersection of persistence and high quality teaching. Click here to see an outline of action steps.
Problem addressed:	Understanding which teaching strategies support or detract from learner persistence is essential to addressing the issue.
Sources of information:	NCSALL; OTAN; CALPRO; Student surveys; Tracking of Programs and Students (TOPSpro); Teachers’ feedback; Classroom observation; and

Relevant data:	Attendance data; Learning gains; and Results of student and teacher surveys.
Resources to draw on:	Teachers mentoring other teachers; Non-teaching staff; Professional development centers; NCSALL research; English as a Second Language (ESL) Institute; Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA); Credential clearing coursework; Student advisory committee; and Mentoring grants.
Potential barriers:	Lack of funding; Lack of time; Teacher resistance; Turnover of part-time teachers; Scheduling issues; Challenges of identifying mentors; and Lack of administrative support.
Ways to address barriers:	Grants; Flexible scheduling; Involvement teachers prior to implementation; Activities to build collaboration in organization (e.g., sharing best practices); Peer (buddy) pairings; Coaching; and Pay or other incentives (e.g., food) for participation.