

# Engaging Racially Diverse Parents, Staff, and Students in Dialogue and Problem Solving



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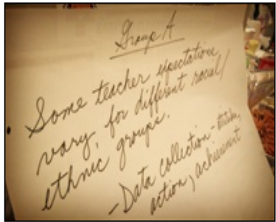
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**Everyday Democracy** Ideas & Tools for Community Change

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## How Can Schools and Communities Work Together to Meet the Challenge?


Today, when we consider the new challenges confronting education--and our whole society--it seems especially difficult to know what we should expect from our schools. Challenges such as the gap in student achievement, violence and racial and ethnic tensions have a powerful and immediate impact on our schools. What do we want our students to know and be able to do? What can schools do to help them achieve these goals? What can we do, as a community, to help improve education?



Community members and schools need to work together to make education in their community all that it can be. Dialogue-to-change programs can help people build the trusting relationships necessary for long-term change. People from diverse backgrounds and experiences develop trust, understand each other's experiences, and work together on solutions.

➔ [Read profiles of programs making a difference on education in their communities](#)

**SUCCESS STORIES** **RESOURCES**



**ISSUES**  
Find ways to make progress on...

- Racial Equity
- Education**
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- Diversity
- Immigration
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- Violence

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Study Circles

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Division of Family & Community Partnerships → Study Circles

## Study Circles Program



The Study Circles Program is a dialogue and action program that addresses racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement.

Trained facilitators help participants to build trusting relationships, learn about each other's cultures, have honest conversations about race, find common ground, and develop action steps to help all students succeed.

Study Circles are offered in different formats to meet the needs of the school or audience. Please click on a link below to get started.



Working With Parents



Hearing From Students



Offices & Staff Dialogue

Study Circles News

Pictures of Study Circles

View Our latest Newsletter

Resources

Find Out About Ongoing Study Circles

View A Video about Student Study Circles

Learn About Study Circles

Information in other Languages

What is a Study Circle and how does it help schools?

- About Study Circles
- How Study Circles Work
- How Study Circles Help Schools

Brochures

- English
- español
- français

# Montgomery County, MD

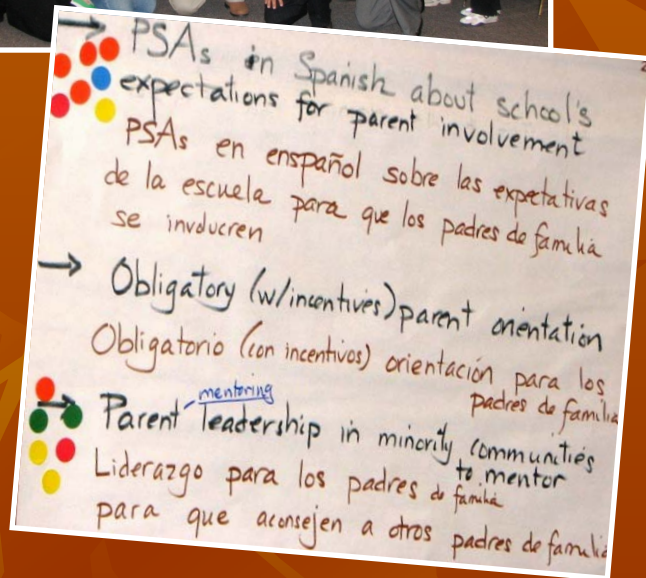
- Borders Washington, DC
- Has urban areas, suburban, and farmland
- Nearly 1,000,000 residents
- County-wide public school system
  - 200 schools
  - 137,745 students
    - African American: 22.9%
    - American Indian: 0.3%
    - Asian American: 15.2%
    - Hispanic: 21.5%
    - White: 40.1%



# Why Study Circles?

- Poor communication between parents and staff from different backgrounds
- School and parent leaders struggle to get participation from parents all racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Many parents do not feel comfortable at the school
- Many African American and Latino students are not doing as well as white and Asian students

# Objectives



- To build a unified group of diverse parents, teachers, and students that understand the challenges and benefits of a diverse school.
- To create personal and group action steps that address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement.
- To encourage an environment in which racial and ethnic issues are talked about openly and productively.

- 
- A group of approximately 15-20 people, including students, parents, and staff, are sitting in a circle in a school hallway. They are engaged in a discussion, with some looking at each other and others looking down at papers or notebooks. The hallway has a tiled floor and a blue curtain in the background.
- 15 to 20 participants
    - Students, parents, and staff
    - Represent the racial/ethnic diversity of the school community
  - 6 two-hour sessions, full day, or 2 half days
  - Two facilitators to keep everyone safe and conversation productive
  - Follows a discussion guide
  - Mixes small and large group activities

# Sessions Build on Each *Other*

**Create Action Plans  
That Address Racial and Ethnic Barriers**

Session 6

**Prioritize Barriers and Action Steps**

Session 5

**Discuss How Racial and Ethnic Differences  
Impact the School Community**

Session 4

**Talk About Race, Racism, and Stereotypes**

Session 3

**Share Information About Our  
Cultures and Backgrounds**

Session 2

**Set Ground Rules and Work on Building Trust**

Session 1

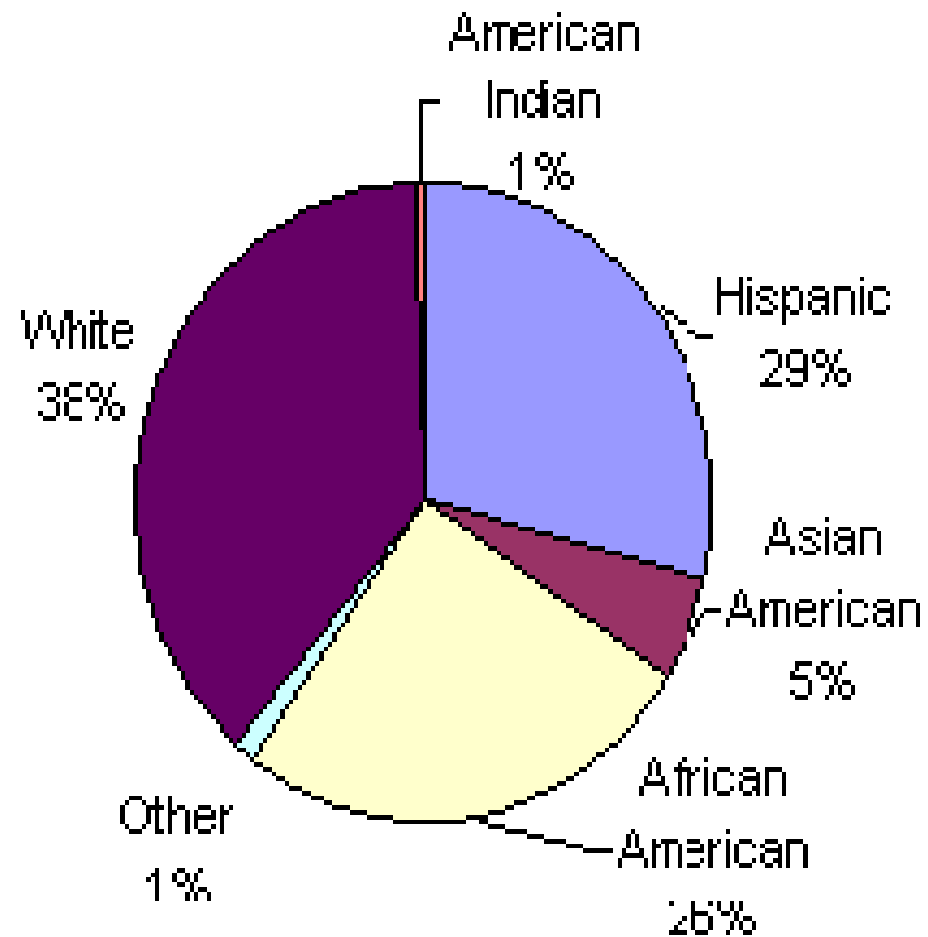


# Participants

- ❑ 1600 participants in past year
- ❑ 57 countries represented
- ❑ Spanish-language and student Study Circles

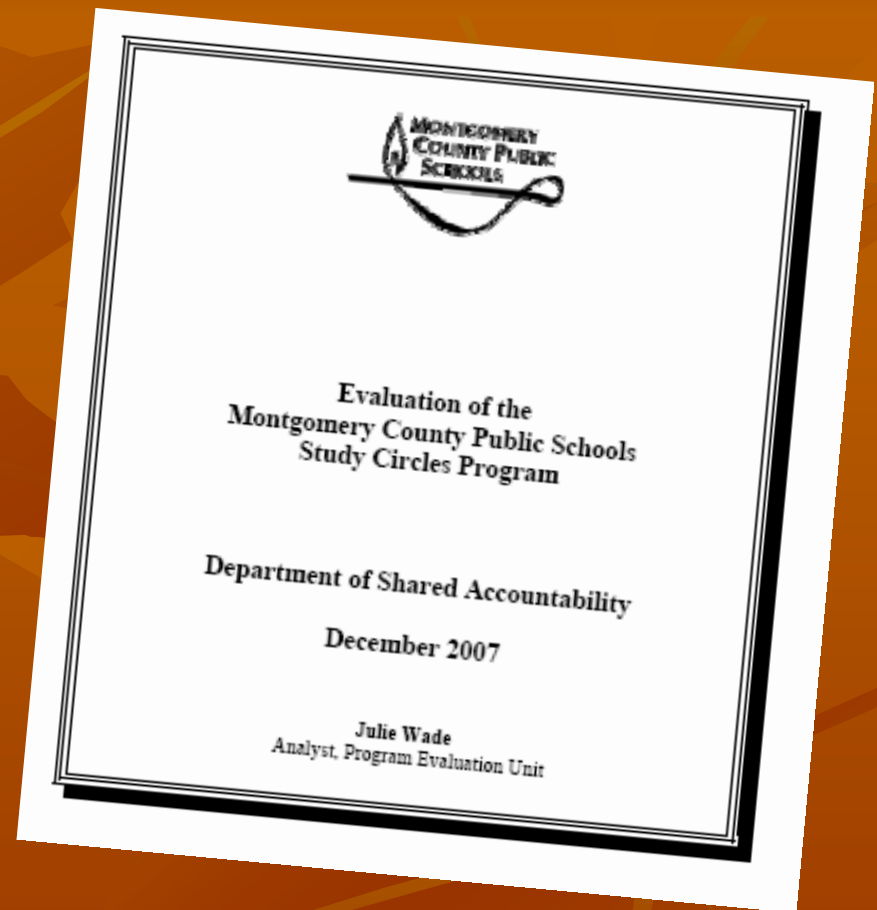


### *Demographics of Participants, Fall 2009*



# Outcomes

- New relationships
- Awareness
- Changed Attitudes
- Personal Actions
- Action Teams
- New policies and practices

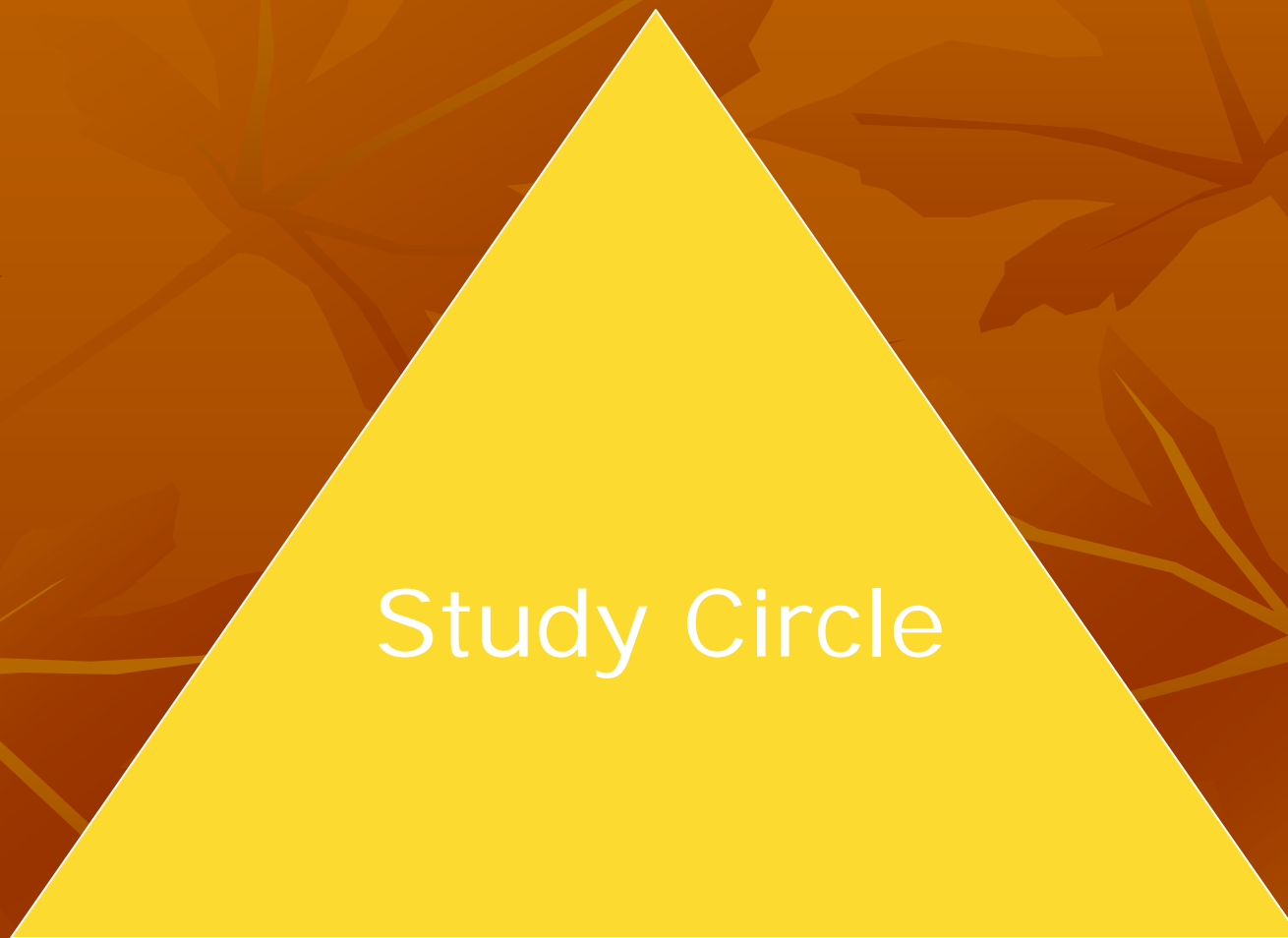


Outreach

Study Circle

Dialogue

Action





### School Agreement and Check List

The checklist below outlines all the tasks and dates required of the school. Please send a completed form to the Study Circles Program to indicate your readiness to organize a study circle program this year.

Contact: John Landesman  
 (301) 278-3455  
[John\\_Landesman@mcpemd.org](mailto:John_Landesman@mcpemd.org)

#### Get Started

- ☐ Assign a staff person to coordinate logistics including:
  - Timely communication with Study Circle staff
  - Space and needed equipment
  - Coordination of action teams
- ☐ Schedule a meeting with Study Circle staff, principal, and school contact person
- ☐ Schedule a date for presentation at a school staff meeting (20 minutes)
- ☐ Set date for information meeting at your school:
  - Usually the school provides pizza & drinks at 6:30 pm
  - The meeting is usually held from 7-8:30 pm
- ☐ Set dates for six weekly sessions
  - Please make sure there are no other important school or community events on the same evenings
  - Session 1 is 2 ½ hours. School provides pizza or some kind of light dinner.
  - Sessions 2 - 6 are two hours each starting at 6:30 or 7 pm.
  - (Participants will take turns bringing in snacks for sessions 2 to 6).

#### Plan For Information Meeting

##### General Outreach

- ☐ Announce at Back To School Night or other school meetings
- ☐ Send out flyers to the whole school community
- ☐ Put announcement in newsletter
- ☐ Put announcement on website and list serves
- ☐ Send announcement through PTA, NAACP Parents Council, other parent and student groups
- ☐ Send email to all staff

##### Targeted Outreach

- ☐ Send personal letter to 60 to 75 participants
  - Include both involved and not-so-involved parents (Ask guidance counselors, teachers, EBOL teachers for suggestions)
  - Represent the racial/ethnic diversity of the school
  - Teachers, support staff, and other staff members
- ☐ Send names, phone numbers, to Study Circles staff
  - Include race and language spoken
  - Study Circle staff needs list at least 3 weeks before Information Meeting
- ☐ Study Circles staff will make follow up and reminder phone calls

##### Logistics for Information Meeting

School is responsible for:

- ☐ Pizza, (or light dinner), drinks, plates and cups
- ☐ Arranging child care (if needed)
- ☐ Setting up chairs in semicircle, no tables
- ☐ Providing LCD Projector and speakers to show video

Study Circles will provide an interpreter (if needed) and all handouts

#### Plan Study Circle Session

School is responsible for:

- ☐ Arranging childcare (if needed) for each session
- ☐ Pizza or light dinner at first study circle session
  - This is in addition to the pizza provided at the information meeting
  - Participants will take turns bringing in snacks for sessions 2 to 6)
- ☐ Designating a room in which 15 to 20 adult chairs are placed in a circle
- ☐ Providing an easel
- ☐ Providing school data (for session 4)

Study Circle Program will:

- ☐ Provide two facilitators, an interpreter and translation equipment if needed, chart paper, and all handouts
- ☐ Send Confirmation Letters and reminder phone calls

Please fill in the names and dates below and send to John Landesman  
 Fax: (301) 278-3816 or Email: [John\\_Landesman@mcpemd.org](mailto:John_Landesman@mcpemd.org)

Contact People		
Principal		
School Coordinator for Study Circle		
Person who can provide school data for session 4 (A sample data sheet will be provided)		
Dates		
	Date	Time
Meeting with Principal, Coordinator, and SC staff		
Presentation to school staff		
Information Meeting		
Study Circle Dates – Six consecutive weeks		
Session One		
Session Two		
Session Three		
Session Four		
Session Five		
Session Six		
Study circles usually report their plans to staff and community		
Presentation to Staff on SC results		
Presentation to Parent Community		
We will provide facilitators for follow up meetings if needed. Dates can be adjusted after the study circle.		
1 <sup>st</sup> follow up action planning/reporting meeting (1 month after 6th session)		
2 <sup>nd</sup> follow up action planning/reporting meeting (3 months after 6th session)		

\_\_\_\_\_(School Name) wishes to implement the MCPS Study Circles Program and will commit to providing the support outlined above.

Principal Signature

Date

**Imagine a school where racial and ethnic differences are not barriers to success.**



Stereotypes keep some students from being successful.



For many parents, our school is not all.

**Parents, teachers, and students from Roberto Clemente Middle School are coming together to make sure all students succeed and all families feel welcome.**



Some people think racism is a race and nothing to do with it.

**Please come to an Information Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 11, 2007  
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.**

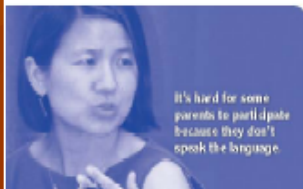
**Free dinner at 6:30 p.m.**

**Childcare and Translation Provided**

**Questions? Please speak to Helen Nixon at  
Roberto Clemente MS 301-801-0344**



[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studycircles](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studycircles)  
A Program of the Division of Family and Community Partnerships in the Department of Communications



It's hard for some parents to participate because they don't speak the language.

**Imagínese una escuela donde las diferencias raciales y étnicas no sean barreras para el triunfo.**

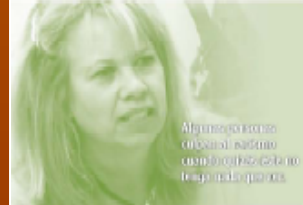


Los estereotipos impiden que algunos estudiantes logren triunfar.



Muchos padres creen que la escuela es todo.

**Los padres, maestros, y estudiantes de Roberto Clemente Middle School se están uniendo para asegurarse que todos los estudiantes tengan éxito y que todas las familias se sientan bienvenidas**



Algunos piensan que el racismo es una raza y no tiene nada que ver.

**Les invitamos a que asista a una  
Reunión Informativa**

**Martes, 11 de Septiembre, 2007  
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.**

**La cena estará disponible a las 6:30 p.m.  
Tendremos cuidado de niños y traducción**

**Si tiene alguna pregunta favor llamar a Gladis Martínez del Programa  
Círculo de Estudio al 301-279-3455**



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070808 0008 100




Es difícil para algunos padres participar, dado que no hablan el idioma.

French

## Study Circles Program

Programme des Cercles d'Études

*Travaillons Ensemble Pour  
Éliminer les Barrières Raciales  
et Ethniques qui Empêchent  
la Réussite des Élèves et la  
Participation des parents*




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Department of Communications  
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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

## Study Circles Program

*Working Together to Remove  
Racial and Ethnic Barriers  
to Student Achievement and  
Parent Involvement*



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Montgomery County Public Schools  
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Chinese

## Study Circles Program

研究圈計畫

共同努力來消除阻礙學生成果  
及家長參與的種族和民族障礙




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Spanish

## Study Circles Program

*Trabajando Juntos Para Eliminar  
las Barreras Raciales y Étnicas  
Que Se Interponen al Éxito  
Académico de los Estudiantes*



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Montgomery County Public Schools  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND





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