

Learning Circles

<http://www.iearn.org/circles/>

How To Become a Participant?

To join iEARN Learning Circles, you must first be a member of iEARN and complete an iEARN Learning Circle placement form (<http://www.iearn.org/circles/lc-placement.html>) two weeks before the beginning of the session. Once you complete the placement form you will be placed in a circle for the next session.



The Learning Circle Concept: An Overview

A Learning Circle is created by a team of 6-8 teachers and their classes joined in the virtual space of an electronic classroom. The groups remains together over a 3-4 month period working on projects drawn from the curriculum of each of the classrooms organized around a selected theme. At the end of the term the group collects and publishes its work. Then, just as any class of students does, the Learning Circle comes to an end. Each session begins with new groupings of classes into Learning Circles.

Learning Circles promote theme-based project work integrated with the classroom curriculum. Working with Learning Circle partners from around the world helps students develop important interpersonal skills. Learning Circles also encourage interactions among teachers providing a very different model of professional development.

The core of the Learning Circle experience is the development of collaborative projects and the exchange of student work. The goal is for each school to sponsor a project and for every other school to respond in some way by exchanging student research and stories. Even though Learning Circles is primarily a literary project there are ample opportunities for collaborative art and media work. The promotion of project-based learning and the development of a community of learners is an important part of the Learning Circle model.

Schedule for Learning Circles

Session 1 (September to January):

Begins mid-September and ends in mid-January (16 weeks with a 2-week break in December). Learning Circle Placement forms are due in early September.

Session 2 (January to May):

Begins late January and ends in late May (15 weeks with a 1-week break in Spring). Learning Circle Placement forms are due early January.

Phases of a Learning Circle

- * Getting Ready for Learning Circles
- * Opening the Learning Circle
- * Planning the Learning Circle Projects
- * Exchanging Student Work on Learning Circle Projects
- * Organizing the Circle Publication
- * Closing the Learning Circle



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Learning Circle Projects:

My Hero New for 2006 - 2007

My Hero Learning Circles is a joint venture between Learning Circles and the My Hero project (www.myhero.com). This Circle brings together student and teachers who are interested in collaborating with other schools on this topic through writing, photography, and digital video.



Computer Chronicles

The Computer Chronicles Learning Circle creates a motivating context for students' writing by providing communication goals and a diverse audience. To accomplish these goals, teachers and students share a task - the creation of a Learning Circle newspaper called "Computer Chronicles". Each class has the opportunity to sponsor a section of the newspaper as a Learning Circle project. Each school solicits articles from partner classes. The articles are then edited to create one section of the newspaper. The different sections are combined to form a complete newspaper or Circle publication.



Places and Perspectives

Places and Perspectives Learning Circles encourage students to explore history, culture, government and geography by sharing their knowledge with people from different locations. The goal of this Circle is to expose students to places beyond their own schools and communities in order to expand their outlook on life and broaden their views. Each classroom sponsors a project connected with curriculum for a section in the places and perspectives review. For instance, a history class may sponsor a section on local legends, interviews with native inhabitants or senior citizens, or descriptions of the historical attractions of the area.



Mind Works

Mind Works Learning Circles join together students and teachers who want to develop creating and expository writing skills. The project-based format of Learning Circles help provide a meaningful context for student writing. The Circle Publication for Mind Works is a literary magazine: Creative Mind Works. Students work on writing projects designed by their partner schools. These projects help them learn how to communicate their thoughts and feelings in writing, and compare them with students from distant places.



Educational Benefits

Classrooms work together on the network for a relatively short period of time, but the links made when teachers and students share ideas and feelings often last longer than the Learning Circle. As a consequence of this collaboration, both students and teachers find their interest in learning renewed. Teachers have reported many lasting benefits from working in the Learning Circle environment:

Enhances Student Learning - Students gain rich insights from the geographic diversity and cross-cultural exchanges.

Develops Reading/Writing Skills - Students use written communication skills to exchange ideas with distant peers.

Enhances Teaching Curriculum - Learning Circle projects provide an exciting and innovative forum for teaching traditional subjects.

Stimulates Teacher Creativity - Teachers develop new instructional techniques by sharing project ideas with colleagues around the world.

Expands Teaching and Learning Horizons - Learning Circle projects take students beyond the classroom to draw on family and community resources for information, making them more aware of their social and physical surroundings.

Integrates Computer and Telecommunications Technology - Teachers and students learn technical skills as they use telecomputing to work cooperatively with people in distant locations.

Specific Educational Benefits are also listed by theme:



- * [Places and Perspectives](#) (History, Geography, Social Science)
- * [Computer Chronicles](#) (Journalism, Computer Publishing, English, Creative Writing)
- * [Global Issues](#) (Government, Politics, Environmental Studies, Writing)
- * [Society's Problems](#) (Social Science, Writing, History, Statistics/math)
- * [Energy and the Environment](#) (Science, Social Science)
- * [Mind Works](#) (Creative Writing, Literature, Social Science)