

## How will this study circle program help?

Good communication is essential to finding solutions that work. Study circles promote good communication by:

- Building trust and connections between the school, home, and community.
- Helping families and educators respect each other and listen to different ideas.
- Deepening our understanding of why students do, or do not succeed in school.
- Sharing concerns and ideas, finding common ground, and looking for ways to make things better.

Whether your school is struggling or a success story, these elements can help improve your community's schools as well as schools all across Arkansas.



## Praise for Building Bridges for Early Learning

*Research has proven time and time again, that quality early care and education programs for young children build a strong foundation for success. Study circles will provide a tool for communities to develop a deeper understanding of what quality early care and education should look like as well as how their individual community might go about creating opportunities for all young children to have access.*

Tonya Russell, Director  
Division of Child Care & Early  
Childhood Education  
Arkansas Department of Human Services

Do you want to be part of the action?

If you are interested in having study circles in your community, contact Arkansas Study Circles Project at (800) 482-1212 or (501) 372-1415 or [studycircles@arsba.org](mailto:studycircles@arsba.org)

## Building Bridges for Early Learning Birth to School

**Schools & Communities Working Together So Every Child Will Start School Eager to Learn & Ready to Succeed**



A guide for public dialogue & problem solving.

A program of the Arkansas Study Circles Project.

# Study Circles on Schools & Communities Working Together So Every Child Will Start School Eager to Learn and Ready to Succeed

Our children are our future. For those of us who have small children, their welfare is an issue of obvious importance. However, the readiness of children—and more specifically, their ability to be successful in school when it is time to enter kindergarten—is a public issue that affects all of us. Being prepared to enter kindergarten is not entirely dependent on knowing letters, numbers, and colors. It is just as, or even more important, for children to feel healthy, safe, and prepared socially, emotionally, and physically.



## What are Study Circles? Study Circles:

- are groups of 8-12 people who meet multiple times to discuss a critical issue facing their community, school district or school.
- bring people from many viewpoints and backgrounds together for honest and helpful talks.
- give people a chance to build trust and find common ground for solutions and action.
- build on good work that is happening already.
- are organized by a diverse working group of people within the community.
- are guided by a neutral facilitator, recorder and a discussion guide.

## What does this guide offer?

In addition to four discussions sessions written in clear, simple language, the guide for this discussion offers:

- tips for study circle facilitators and recorders.
- tips for study circle participants.
- pointers on how to move from dialogue to action.
- resources for further discussion and action.

## The Discussion Topics:

- 1. What Does Early Learning Mean to Each of Us?**
  - Explore early learning from a personal perspective.
  - Explore research on early learning.
  - Explore five critical areas of School Readiness.
- 2. Why Are So Many Children Starting School Without the Attitudes and Abilities They Need to Do Their Best?**
  - Explore statistical information on children in Arkansas.
  - Explore what it means to be “ready for school”.
  - Explore different views on what keeps children from developing the attitudes and abilities they need to succeed in school.
- 3. Picture a Community That Helps All Children Start School Eager to Learn and Ready to Succeed.**
  - Explore what quality early care and education looks like.
  - Explore how a community would look if everyone was involved in helping all children develop the attitudes and abilities they need to get ready for school.
- 4. Making a Difference: What Specific Actions Do We Want to Take?**
  - Explore and prioritize specific action ideas for developing a community that helps all children start school eager to learn and ready to succeed.