

Professional Development Tools
Facilitating Student Groups In Your Adult Basic Education Program



We have learned that nurturing a student group takes much

Evaluation Is Your Student Group Successful?

more staff time than is often expected. Is your adult education program getting a good return on your staff investment? How do you determine if your student group is successful? This brief professional development tool will help you think through an evaluation process for determining success. The guide below is an informal, qualitative evaluation process to help you and your program think through the issues affecting your student group's success. Fix yourself a snack, take a deep breath, relax, and take a moment to work think through these questions regarding your student group.

Ask Yourself the Basic Questions

1. What is your program's goal or purpose for this student group? Another way of asking this is, what would success look like?
 - Retention of high risk students (those who might drop out)
 - Socialization
 - Tutoring in specific subject (example: GED Preparation)
 - English conversation
 - Other: _____
2. Is your goal clear or are you trying to do more than one thing with this group?
3. How well are you meeting your goal?
 - We are meeting our goal very well.
 - We are not quite hitting the goal yet.
 - We are missing the mark.
 - Other: _____
4. What is helping you meet your goal?

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- There is regular and active participation in the group.
- Participants understand the goal of getting together. They know *why* we are in a group.
- The format of our time together is a good fit to help us realize our goal.
- The environment is very conducive to the members of the group participating in a way that helps us realize the goal.
- Participants are taking ownership of the group (bringing refreshments, making suggestions, or taking leadership, etc.).
- Other: _____

5. Consider your answers to the questions above. What thoughts come to your mind regarding the success of your student group(s) and how they might be improved?

Talk To Your Students

For those who do participate: Why do they participate in the student group? What do they enjoy? How have they improved or moved closer to reaching their goals? What would be one thing they would improve if they were in charge?

For those who do not participate: What prevents them from joining the group? What kind of support would be most helpful for them? Examples: specific help with homework, preparation for job, English conversation, talking to other people who have similar challenges.

Merge What You Have Learned

Take a moment and think about your answers and the answers from your students. Are there any themes that are emerging? One program learned that their tight agenda was not conducive to their goal for socialization. They needed a friendlier format than a business meeting model. Another program learned that they needed smaller groups pairing high risk students together than larger groups. The larger groups were too intimidating for those students who were close to dropping out. What is coming to mind as you consider your student group and its goal. Select one area you would like to work on and see if you can make improvements.