



COLLEGIAL CIRCLE ANNOUNCEMENT

2021-2022

The Waterloo Teacher Center Policy Board is happy to announce the availability of an exciting professional development opportunity. The program *Collegial Circles* provides teachers with structured time for reflection on classroom practices. **The program enables teachers to take responsibility for identifying and satisfying needs for professional growth.** It establishes a formal teacher support vehicle for sharing expertise through group processes.

Groups of three to four will identify a common area of interest to study and to satisfy common professional classroom needs. Funding for the program will be competitive and requires the submission of a formal application.

Applications must be completed and sent to the Teacher Center at Waterloo High school or emailed to wtrc@waterloocsd.org. The following Collegial Circle schedule has been adopted for the 2021-2022 school year:

Nov. 1, 2021 (Mon.) <u>3 p.m.</u>	Submission of Collegial Circle Application [All applications must be <u>sent to WTRC by 3 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 1, 2021</u>
Nov. 17, 2021 (Weds.)	Policy Board approval letters out to successful applicants
April 1, 2022 (Fri)	Final Reports Due to Teacher Center
April 18, 2022 (Mon)	Report Results at Teacher Center Policy Board meeting Please have a written report as well as oral presentation prepared. Can be a PPTX, Slide show, SWAY or Word Doc.

All questions regarding this announcement should be directed to Matt Parker or Sandy Ahart, Waterloo Teacher Resource Center, wtrc@waterloocsd.org or x4182

2021-2022

COLLEGIAL CIRCLES

AN ALTERNATIVE INSERVICE PROGRAM

A **Collegial Circles Program** provides teachers with structured time for reflection on classroom practices. The program enables teachers to take responsibility for identifying and **satisfying needs for professional growth**, and establishes a formal support process for sharing expertise and for problem solving through group processes. Active participation is expected and attendance will follow policies established by the Teacher Center. Teachers may form groups of **four** members by agreed upon common interests and needs.

Each group must submit a proposal and the accompanying form, Collegial Circle Application Coversheet, to the Teacher Center for approval. Each participant will receive a written confirmation on the approval or non-approval of the application.

A Facilitator must be selected and will be responsible for maintaining focus, recordkeeping (forms enclosed), and notifying group members of meeting dates, etc. Groups must plan to meet for a minimum of ten (10) hours in sessions ranging from 1 to 2 hours each. A log of all sessions will be kept by the facilitator, including dates, times, attendance, and brief summaries for each meeting. A stipend of \$400 will be paid to the facilitator.

Participants will be provided a stipend of \$250. An attendance of 100% is expected. One excused absence, up to two hours, will be accepted. Upon completion of the group meetings, **each participant must submit a Personal Evaluation accompanied by examples of the potential impact on their classroom resulting from the Collegial Circle program to the Teacher Center Policy Board.**

Participants are also required to state how they will share their experience with professional colleagues.

COLLEGIAL CIRCLE APPLICATION COVERSHEET

2021-2022

Date: _____

Directions: The group’s Facilitator should complete one application for the group. Separate applications for each member are not necessary. Please **send a completed application to Waterloo TRC**

Project Title: _____

Participants: Groups should have a **maximum of four (4) and no fewer than three (3).**
(Please provide name and school district.)

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

Name of Facilitator: _____

Dates and times of meetings: _____

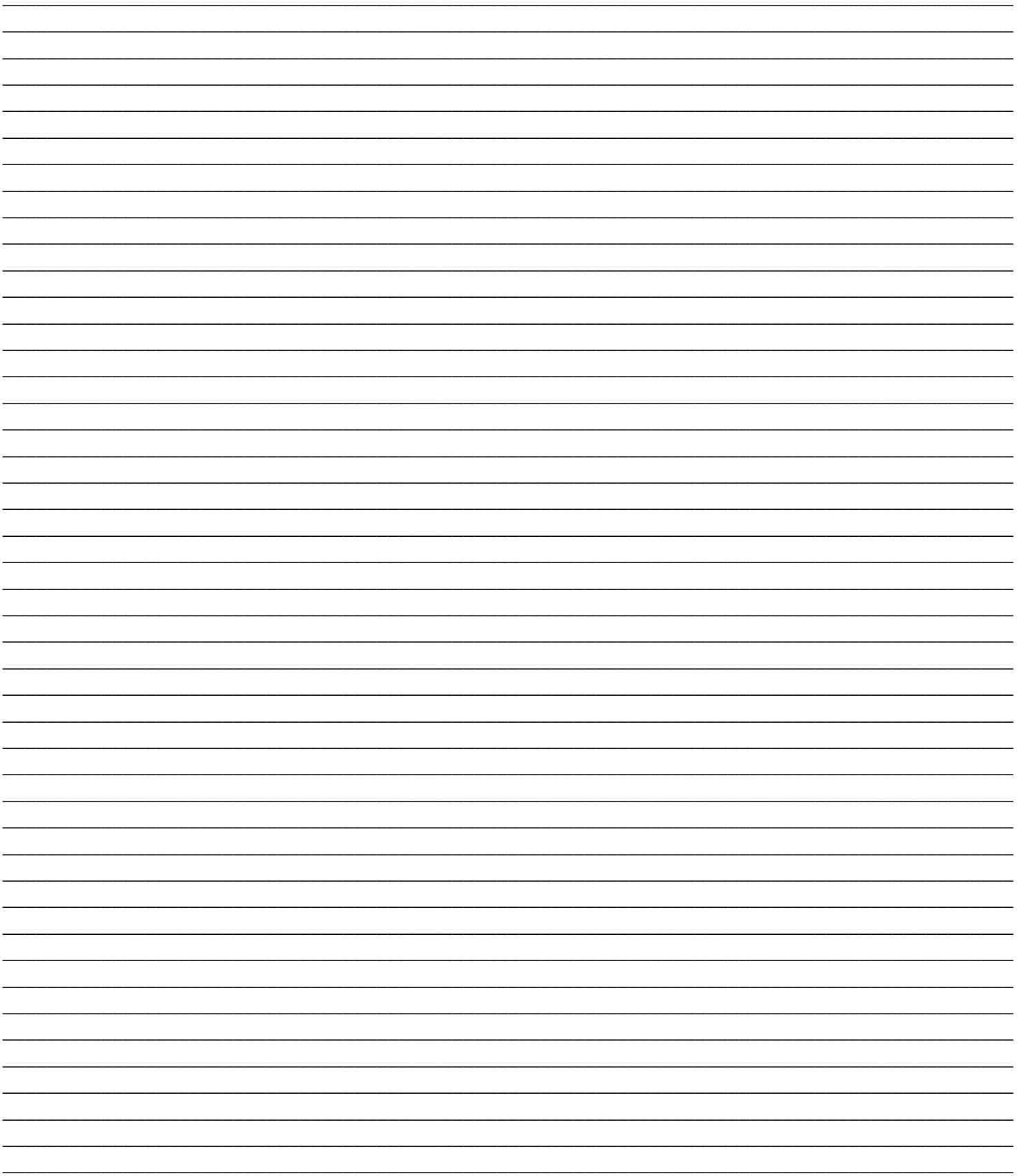
Location of meetings: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

*Project proposals submitted with this coversheet should be focused on research issues aligned to the State’s Initiatives such as: Using Multiple Sources of Data to Inform Instruction (DDI), Implementing Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and Use of Technology to Support Instruction. Questions should be addressed to your school's Teacher Center Policy Board members or Matt Parker and Sandy Ahart at the Teacher Center.

Statement of Purpose:

Please write a general statement of purpose (i.e. goal). Then **attach this coversheet to your proposal.** (Be sure to enter the **title** of your project). In your proposal, reference each of the criteria on the enclosed rubric. Particular emphasis should be given to criteria #4 and #5.



COLLEGIAL CIRCLE PROPOSAL REVIEW

All proposals will be evaluated by the Teacher Center's Policy Board. Each proposal will be reviewed and receive a score based on the attached Collegial Circle Proposal Assessment Rubric. Please note that the Rubric criteria are expected to be addressed in the proposal. Funding will be competitive and approved based on the highest total scores.

WHAT ARE COLLEGIAL CIRCLES?

Collegial circles are small communities of learners among teachers and others who come together intentionally for the purpose of supporting each other in the process of learning. These circles can be made up of groups of teachers, students, parents, community members, administrators, or other professionals and can be a combination of members from any or all of these groups. In this project we focus on learning circles that are typically made up of teachers or other educators who are **engaged in their own professional development**.

These circles might be smaller groups within a larger community of learners but usually are a distinct group of teachers who are gathered together to support each other's learning. Such learning circles can be short-term or long-lived.

Teachers have choice, can take responsibility for their own development as professionals, and set their own agenda for studying learning and changing their teaching. **Teachers who team together at a grade level or in multilevel clusters could already be in learning circles.** The power of members of small groups to support one another as learners is an intrinsic part of our social and organizational fabric. Generally, such groups are informal and based on work, friendships, or relationships among people who do similar things, have similar interests, or interact with each other on a regular basis during the course of their lives.

Central to the collegial circle is its role in providing the time and context for serious and deep thought about ourselves as both learners and teachers. We learn from a variety of perspectives about learning and teaching. As teachers, we learn from our students by observing and interacting with them in work and play and conversation. As learners, we are constantly constructing what we know from our thoughts. As teachers, we interact with others through our conversations, questions, and reflections shared in collegial circles to reconstruct what we know. The participants model ways to share knowledge they have constructed through individual learning and to reconstruct what they know through collaborative learning.

Professionals continue to use dialogue to make meaning of their experiences. Teachers carry powerful images of life in classrooms in our minds and hearts as we formally enter the profession. Many years of participant observation as students in schools have given us a backlog of memories, values,

and understandings (craft knowledge) about what it means to teach. If we are fortunate, our student teaching or intern experience was a time for us to place language and meaning around events, feelings, and new knowledge. **Sadly, very few practicing teachers find themselves in professional settings where they can reflect on and describe their learning to another professional.**

From: Learning Circles, Collay, Dunlap, Enloe, Gagnon, 1998.

The collegial circle must:

1. Build and sustain conditions of trust and safety
2. Build conditions of collegiality that support all learners
3. Sustain an atmosphere of learning that encourages risk taking

First, it is important that individuals feel they can trust the other members of the learning circle to support new learning. We must feel safe enough to take risks in new knowledge or behavior. Building and sustaining conditions of trust and safety not only support the feeling of belonging to a community but also allow learners to experiment in a safe setting.

Second, if others are experimenting with their own learning, freely making “errors” in order to learn, it is easier for us to learn new things. In addition to feeling it is safe to make a “mistake,” we feel membership in the company of others who support learning. It is important to know others are cheering us on in our quest for knowledge and will not judge us a “failure” as we experiment with new behavior or techniques. Unfortunately, part of the definition of being “adult” is being someone who is competent and who knows how to get through each day with success. Few of us let the need to be seen as competent drop away so that we can learn a new skill. Learning with others allows each learner to act as guide, supporter, and coach to the others.

Third, it is important to develop and sustain conditions in the learning circle that support and encourage risk taking. We know that support and encouragement are necessary to learning and growth and that the culture of a learning circle must be established and nourished so it can sustain its members. Without careful development, the collegial circle will not be a source of sustenance and will limit rather than extend possibilities for learning.

The need for individual choice and small group interaction during activities that extend personal and professional development is well documented. Too often, staff development efforts focus on a “one size fits all” in-service model, where district leadership inoculates the entire staff with the same medicine. Forms of staff development that respect individuals are those where teachers choose a workshop, a study group, a degree program, or specialized training for themselves and implement new learning with a colleague group to sustain them.

From: Learning Circles, Collay, Dunlap, Enloe, Gagnon, 1998.

The following six conditions are common to healthy communities of learners:

- Building Community
- Constructing Knowledge
- Supporting Learner
- Documenting Reflection
- Assessing Expectations
- Changing Cultures

Building Community whereby a group of interested educators agree to meet and collectively address the following questions:

- How does real learning occur?
- How do new capabilities develop?
- How do learning communities interconnect theory, practice, concept, and capability?
- How do they sustain themselves and grow?
- What are the norms or values and traditions for

ways people treat each other?

- How do they define the nature of the learning community environment in which they live and grow?
- Who leads and how are roles defined?
- What is the degree of professional collegiality and capacity for change?
- What is the quality of critical assessment, reflection, and collaborative learning?
- How and to what degree do we transform staff development experiences into classrooms?

Constructing Knowledge is central to establishing perspectives about learning and teaching. We constantly construct what we know from our thoughts. As teachers, we interact with others through our conversations, questions, and reflections to reconstruct what we know. This professional action is paramount to the success of the collegial learning process. The focus is on what students will do rather than on what the teacher will say or tell them. Collegial Circles are de-signed to provoke teacher planning and reflection about the process of student learning.

From: Learning Circles, Collay, Dunlap, Enloe, Gagnon, 1998.

A Collegial Circle can become a safe place for the inherent differences in learning styles, degrees of risk taking, opportunities to express ideas and for making mistakes and correcting them. Members of a Collegial Circle benefit from receiving an educational practice of influential or interesting educators and then constructing a new learning experience for members of its circle.

Supporting Learners Learning for adults and children takes place within a rich fabric of social interaction not an isolated setting. High quality professional development should be a supportive, interactive exchanges that supports learning among adults. Often the richest and most meaningful learning experience take place in the company of other learners. Professionals use dialogue to make meaning of their experiences. However, few practicing

teachers find themselves in professional settings where they can reflect and describe their learning to another professional. It is important that individuals feel they can trust the other members of the circle to support learning. Supporting all learners within the circle provides an atmosphere where mistakes are turned into opportunities for new knowledge and enhancing the circle membership competency. Sustaining conditions that support risk taking provides the necessary support that promotes learning and growth which nourishes the culture of the Collegial Circle.

Documenting Reflection Reflection on one's performance is central to making meaning of work and becoming a professional. Reflective practice is a very important aspect of professional development. Often reflections take place as dialogues with colleagues about issues that impact the teaching/learning process.

Documenting collegial circle inquiry provides a basis for sustained interaction among members. Documenting reflection can be as open-ended or structured as the learning circle thinks useful. Information generated from documenting the activity of the circle can serve as the foundation for program evaluation. Evaluating the experience of a collegial circle is an opportunity for members to reflect on the professional worth of the circle experience and its possible impact on future teaching/learning.

Assessing Expectations It is important to use assessment that supports individual and group learning. Assessing the outcome of the collegial circle process is a matter of evaluating the professional growth of members as a result of the learning circle experience. The experience and impact of involvement in a collegial circle is best served by a members self-assessment. The self-assessment enables individual members of a circle to personalize the learning that took place as the result of his/her experience. Members may reflect on new knowledge gained, the positive aspects of the collegial circle process, encouragement to engage in future colleague professional discussions and effectiveness on the teaching process.

From: Learning Circles, Collay, Dunlap, Enloe, Gagnon, 1998.

Changing Cultures A collegial circle can provide a safe venue for learning, a safe place for experimenting and studying the basic assumptions about the relationship between teachers, learners, and knowledge in a supportive culture.

Participating in collegial circles provides teachers with a sustained uninterrupted opportunity to discuss an identified, mutually acceptable educational issue. Members grow and learn by sharing ownership and responsibilities. The ultimate value of the collegial circle culture is for the process to provide opportunities for members to gain insight based upon structured group experiences.

THREE BIG IDEAS THAT DRIVE A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

1. **Clarity of Purpose**

The fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. This focus on learning translates into three critical questions that drive the daily work of the school. If we are truly committed to helping all students learn, then

- What is it we want them to learn? What should each student know and be able to do as a result of each unit, grade level, and/or course?
- How will we know when each student has achieved the learning? Are we monitoring each student's learning on a timely basis? Have we identified the standard each student must achieve to demonstrate mastery?
- How will we respond when a student is not learning? What systematic process is in place to provide additional time and support for students who are experiencing difficulty?

2. **Collaborative School Culture: Essential to Sustained School Improvement**

- No school can help all students achieve at high levels if teachers work in isolation.
- Schools improve when teachers are given the time and support to work together to clarify essential student learning and develop common strategies for assessing learning.
- Identify and implement new practices for raising student achievement.

3. **Focus on Results**

- PLCs measure their effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions.
- All programs, policies, and practices are continually assessed on the basis of their impact on student learning.
- All staff receives relevant information on their effectiveness in achieving intended results.

Suggested Collegial Group Procedures*

IDENTIFY THE GOAL OF THE GROUP

- Discuss common needs/problems of the members relative to the focus of the study group.
- Analyze any available data that will help to narrow the focus of the group. (Setting a focus that is too broad may lead to frustration.) Such data might include samples of student work, standardized test results, responses to questionnaires/needs assessments by parents, teachers, students, and the status of current instructional initiatives in the District.

USE DATA TO GENERATE A LIST OF STUDENT NEEDS

- Cluster the needs into appropriate categories.
- Prioritize the categories.
- Choose the area for study from among the prioritized categories.

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE GROUP

- List the general category of study – the purpose of the Study Group.
- Specify student needs/issues that will be addressed.
- Note what participants will do when the Study Group meets to address the intended purpose. How will you proceed?
- State the intended results of the group's work, including what evidence will indicate that the intended purpose has/has not been met.
- Identify the resources that will be used in the group's work.

IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN (possible process)

- The group investigates a new strategy, set of materials, etc.
- Members use the new strategy or materials in their classrooms and share the results.
- Members monitor and adjust based on sharing of experiences.
- Members plan lessons together and actually teach lessons within the group to get feedback.
- Group members design materials together and share what has been developed in the past.
- Group members may visit each other's classrooms to observe student response to strategies and materials.
- Group members monitor the effects of the teaching strategies and materials on students by collecting information about student performance and participation.

EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF THE STUDY GROUP EFFORT

- What evidence is there that teaching practices have changed?
- What evidence is there that student achievement is improving?
- What evidence is there that the goals of the study group have been met?

*Adopted from the Teacher Center of Broome County

COLLEGIAL CIRCLE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

CRITERIA	4	3	2	1
1. Need for project	Proposal explicitly articulates the need for this Collegial Circle.	Proposal articulates the need for this Collegial Circle and describes it adequately	Proposal stated the need for this Collegial Circle in general terms	Proposal minimally articulates the need for this Collegial Circle
2. Learning Standards	Proposal explicitly identifies specific NYS Learning Standards and Strategic Plan initiatives addressed by this Collegial Circle.	Proposal adequately identifies NYS Standards and Strategic Plan initiatives.	Proposal broadly identifies NYS Standards and Strategic Plan initiatives.	Proposal minimally identifies NYS Standards and Strategic Plan initiatives and lacks specificity.
3. Group Action Plan	Proposal clearly identifies the area of study and what participants will do when group meets.	Proposal adequately identifies the area of study and what participants will do when group meets.	Proposal broadly identifies the area of study and what participants will do when group meets.	Proposal minimally identifies the area of study and what participants will do when group meets.
4. Curriculum and/or Instruction	Proposal clearly articulates the connection between the topic and the areas of <u>curriculum/instruction to be examined</u> .	Proposal adequately identifies the curriculum and/or instructional area to be examined.	Proposal broadly identifies the curriculum and/or instructional area to be examined.	Proposal minimally identifies the curriculum and/or instructional area to be examined.
5. Evaluation of Success	Proposal provides <u>clearly articulated outcomes to be achieved</u> . ex. new teacher knowledge	Proposal adequately describes the outcomes to be achieved.	Proposal broadly describes the outcomes to be achieved.	Proposal minimally describes the outcomes to be achieved

COLLEGIAL CIRCLE

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ARE ENCLOSING A CHECK LIST OF THE ITEMS REQUIRED IN YOUR FINAL REPORT.

_____ **Log Sheets**

_____ Brief summary of topics and shared ideas

_____ Master Attendance

_____ Personal evaluation **from each participant** (End of Project)

These items are to be sent to the Waterloo Teacher Center for review by the Policy Board. After their review, you will receive a stipend of \$400 as the facilitator.

Your group members will receive a stipend of \$250. An attendance of 100% is expected. One excused absence, up to two hours, will be accepted.

THE ATTACHED FORMS ARE MASTERS. BE SURE TO MAKE SUFFICIENT COPIES OF LOG SHEET AND PERSONAL EVALUATION FORM.

LOG SHEET

TO BE COMPLETED BY COLLEGIAL CIRCLE FACILITATOR

DATE _____

TIME _____

SIGN IN:

BRIEF SUMMARY OF SESSION/SHARED IDEAS:

COLLEGIAL CIRCLE PERSONAL EVALUATION

Please complete this one-page evaluation of your Collegial Circle experience.

What have you learned and what might the impact be on teacher/student performance?

How will you share this experience with your professional colleagues?