

## LEARNING EXCHANGE PROTOCOL

### OPENING CIRCLE

#### *Inner Circle Outer Circle Format*

*Note: All protocols have multiple origins. The strength of a protocol is in the ability of facilitators or planners to adjust/revise for use in your context. <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/free-resources/protocols/a-z> is a good source of multiple protocols for school, district, community and organizational use.*

Opening circles for learning exchanges can be accomplished in multiple ways. Of course, it is always important to have everyone participate in some way, but the group size may not permit everyone sharing in the same way with the entire group.

The purpose no matter what process is the same – to engage everyone in the room in a circle relationship so that we feel the power of the circle, the lack of dominance that a circle engenders, the democratic structure it creates, and the possibility that the circle holds for holding us, our feelings and ideas, and hopes.

This INNER CIRCLE OUTER CIRCLE (ICOC) process can be used in a learning exchange opening that has over 40-50 people.

#### STEP ONE:

No more than 20 people stand or are seated in *inner circle*. The people represent teams present at the learning exchange. All other persons will stand or place their chairs in *outer circle* so as to have contact with inner circle (probably no more than 3 people per inner circle person).

NOTE: If your learning exchange team is more than 4, you could have two representatives in inner circle and cluster other persons with them.

The facilitator will model a response to the prompt for the inner circle. The question for inner circle: \_\_\_\_\_ . Everyone listens to inner circle responses.

STEP TWO: The inner circle will turn chairs around or stand and talk to 2-3 persons in outer circle. Each person will pose this question to the small group:  
*What did you hear in opening circle that resonates with you?*

STEP THREE: Small group (inner circle) discusses what they heard that is significant. Everyone does not have to respond.

STEP FOUR: Debrief the process.