

## Quality Circles

When you have an additional assistant with your group, such as a program assistant, volunteer, or teenaged youth helper, you can take advantage of this additional layer of leadership by engaging your assistant in an embedded assessment technique called a quality circle.

### **Quality circles should happen when:**

- There is a fairly high level of trust in the program.
- The educator is genuinely open to feedback and will not feel bad to hear of some program improvements that ought to be made.

### **How a quality circle works:**

- After each program session, ask the assistant to select four to five youth to stay after the program for a 5 - 10 minute quality circle.
- When this occurs, you should not be present, so that you're not aware of which participants have remained.
- Ideally, over the course of the program, all students have the opportunity to participate in a quality circle.

### **The assistant should prep the group by letting them know that:**

- this will be a constructive conversation;
- all feedback is welcome;
- the participants will remain anonymous; and
- less is more – in other words, they should focus on the most significant learnings or barriers to those learnings in the program.

### **The assistant should then ask the group:**

- During the session today, did you learn something? Was it enjoyable?
- If so, what was it that you learned or enjoyed? If not, why not?
- What were the "highlights," and what were the "lowlights?"

The participants can have a brief discussion about these questions with the assistant.

### **Specific quality circles:**

The educator may occasionally pose specific questions for the quality circle to consider. They can pass these questions along to the volunteer or assistant to ask the group. For example, "today I tried a new thing by having you work

cooperatively in small groups. How did this compare to working as a whole group last week? Did you enjoy it? Did you learn more that way?"

**Follow-up:**

The assistant can write up a summary of the discussion in an email to the educator, or meet them to discuss it in person. It's always good to ask the assistant to present the highlights first, followed by the lowlights!

If concerns were raised during the quality circle, try to address them as soon as possible, so that the participants know that their feedback has been heard and respected.