



ALLIANCE for SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION

# Local SDE Groups Handbook

Updated June 2019

## Introduction

The Alliance for Self-Directed Education (ASDE) supports local organizers to help catalyze the formation of groups aimed at supporting and promoting Self-Directed Education in their local communities. These groups are autonomous entities and may or may not choose to incorporate. Local groups are legally distinct from the Alliance for Self-Directed Education, but are free to use the website and resources of the Alliance to further their local efforts and to communicate. While we use the term “local SDE group” in this Handbook and on our website, we ask that each group to create its own name, which we use for the group’s listing in our online Resource Directory.

In response to the needs of the community, we have created this resource to help local SDE group organizers form groups. If you have any questions or ideas for what else could be included in this handbook, do not hesitate to contact our local SDE group coordinator, Bria Bloom, at [bria@self-directed.org](mailto:bria@self-directed.org).

Many of the ideas in this handbook have come from collaborative meetings with local SDE group organizers actively engaging in this work. These are some ideas to get you started, and are not meant to be part of a formula of requirements for forming a local group.

Sincerely,  
*The Alliance Organizing Team*

## Listing Requirements

Each local group will have its own specific agenda and purposes. To be considered a local SDE group that is both allied with ASDE, and listed in our Resource Directory, the group must have the following characteristics:

- Its members must be involved in the practice or advocacy of Self-Directed Education. This means that the group is oriented toward allowing children and teens to direct their own education rather than be subject to an imposed, enforced curriculum either at a school or at home. (See: *What is Self-Directed Education?\**)
- To receive Alliance support, the group must designate a contact person who is a member of the Alliance and who will communicate regularly with the Alliance about group activities. Attending our online meetings for group organizers is optional but encouraged.
- Participation in the group must not require any sort of financial contribution.

- Groups may not be affiliated with a specific political party, political candidate(s), or political office-holder(s). ASDE is a nonpartisan organization, and will support groups that are inclusive and not based in specific political parties, candidates, or office-holders.

### *Suggested but not required:*

We manage a forum on the Alliance website where local group members, who are also members of the Alliance, can share thoughts emanating from their groups. We encourage all local group members to register as members of the Alliance, so they can access the forums and other members-only website features, and join thousands of other Alliance members in advancing the SDE movement.

### *Naming of Groups:*

Each local SDE group name should ideally reflect the locality and purpose of the group. The name may include “Self-Directed Education” or “SDE” but it should not include “Alliance” or “ASDE,” because ASDE’s legal structure does not currently support local “chapter” groups. Here are some examples of names that groups have chosen:

- Nashville Self-Directed Education Community Group
- Monterey SDE Community of Practice
- Eastside SDE Advocacy

Not sure what to name your group? Feel free to ask ASDE for feedback.

## Group Purposes and Activities

We envision that groups will serve two related purposes:

1. To serve the needs and interests of the group itself. As examples, groups might:
  - meet to share their philosophy and concerns, and support one another in their SDE pursuits; provide opportunities for SDE children and teens to meet one another, play, and form friendships and special interest groups
  - organize shared family trips, game nights, and other enjoyable group adventures
2. To advocate for SDE within the community. The means of such advocacy would be up to the group, but possibilities might include educating the public about SDE:
  - creating news stories for local media about SDE
  - leaving fliers or bookmarks with SDE information at places where curious people might pick them up
  - presenting talks or films relevant to SDE at the local public library
  - inviting curious friends and neighbors to special meetings of the group aimed at explaining SDE practices and answering questions
  - connecting with local policymakers to advocate for the interests of self-directed learners

Each group will be unique in how they choose to best serve the needs and dreams of their community. Some groups may want to meet and share ideas, some may need a lot of support in their individual and family SDE journeys, some may want to educate the community about SDE, and some may want to be involved in advocacy for SDE. These are just a few examples of the many possible purposes for groups. Talk to the potential members of your group to best decide what group activities will serve your needs.

#### *Consider holding meetings and public events in the local public library:*

One of ASDE's most exciting current projects is what we are calling the Library Initiative. Local SDE groups can greatly facilitate this initiative, and benefit themselves and their community, by holding meetings and events at their local public library. Most libraries have public meeting rooms, which can be scheduled even for evening and weekend events. This would help familiarize the library staff with SDE and the members of the local group with the library and its offerings. The local group could also organize a book discussion club, at the library, open to the public, which could include books on self-directed education, trustful parenting, and the like, and could show SDE-relevant films and sponsor SDE-relevant talks open to the public.

For more on the Library Initiative, see Peter Gray's blog post on this topic\*, and the discussion of this, in the ASDE Advocacy and Activism Forum.\*

When meeting at the library is not possible or convenient, or does not provide the resources required for a particular event, other possible meeting places include cafes, parks, schools, churches, a member's house or backyard, or any local community center.

## **Tools for Forming and Operating Groups**

#### *Initial steps:*

- Gather initial interest by using some of the tools listed below
- Choose a date by finding a few interested people you know can make it on that date
- Create flyers, or virtual flyers, to give background information about your group
- Decide on and obtain whatever resources you want to provide at your first meeting
- Know, prior to the meeting, what you want to talk about, and how you will stay in touch with the people who attend

#### *Platforms for advertising and gaining interest:*

- Create an event or group on Meetup\*
- Make a Facebook event and/page
- Use Eventbrite's\* free ticket option to create an event that people can sign up for.
- Reach out to your local homeschooling community
- Reach out to local SDE communities and learning centers

#### *Platforms for online communication:*

- ASDE forums
- Facebook groups
- Google groups

#### *Ideas for Group Meetings:*

- Start by asking everyone to share what they are hoping to get out of this group
- Clarify and reiterate what Self-Directed Education is and means.
- Ask people to share a "Why I'm interested in or already practicing SDE" statement
- Have a specific SDE-related topic to talk about. (The ASDE Member Forum is a great source for ideas.)
- Create a shared group purpose
- Invite an ASDE organizing team member to facilitate a discussion, be involved in a discussion, or give a presentation of some kind
- Show an SDE-related film
- Share SDE media – an article, book, or podcast – and discuss it
- Ask members to bring their concerns and struggles to the discussion so the group can offer resources, ideas, and support to one another

#### *Possible Topics for Group Meetings (suggestions from group organizers):*

- Family support (and lack thereof) and how to handle it
- Explaining SDE to new people in our lives: Our "elevator speeches"
- SDE/unschooling parent support: ask group members what their biggest struggles are and form discussions around these topics
- Common myths around socialization, learning math, learning to read, etc.
- Deschooling as adults
- SDE as a form of social justice
- SDE/unschooling and teens: How do you make the mental shift into the teen years, and the negative societal expectations that accompany them?
- Technology and SDE: A controversial subject
- Entrepreneurship and SDE: Supporting our kids to do their thing(s)
- Community and SDE: Freedom within communities
- Making friends online- how to support and guide our kids
- State laws: How to unschool while navigating laws and requirements of the state

#### *\*Links:*

- *What is Self-Directed Education?* [www.self-directed.org/sde/](http://www.self-directed.org/sde/)
- Library Initiative (Peter Gray article) [psychologytoday.com/node/1116210](http://psychologytoday.com/node/1116210)
- Library Initiative info (ASDE members' forum) [bit.ly/sde-libraries](http://bit.ly/sde-libraries)
- Meetup (group event platform) [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)
- Eventbrite (event ticketing) [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com)