REVITALIZING SCHOOLS THROUGH GENERATIVE LEARNING:

AN APPRECIATIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL REFORM

by

Elaine Susan Colgate

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1991

Professional Development Program, Simon Fraser University, 1991

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

COUNSELLING

© Elaine Colgate, 2000

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 2000

Abstract

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an innovative approach to discovering, understanding and fostering innovations in organizational development. At its core AI is based on the gathering of positive stories and images of the organization's past, which are then used to design possibilities for the future. AI seeks out the very best in an organization to help ignite a collective imagination of what could be realized in the future. The aim is to generate new knowledge, which expands the "realm of the possible", and to help members of an organization envision a collectively desired future. The process carries forth that vision in generative ways, which successfully translate images of possibility into reality, and beliefs into practice. This project is comprised of two components, a background paper and the curriculum outline for a one-day workshop. The paper provides a rationale for the use of Appreciative Inquiry as a school reform initiative. In providing this rationale, the major trends in educational reform are presented along with the parallel shifts in the theoretical models from which each reform initiative was founded. The argument is made that, should educational reform continue to develop parallel to theoretic models in the social sciences, the next reform initiatives will likely be based on social constructionist theory. Appreciative Inquiry is presented as a practical application of social constructionist theory as it relates to organizational development. It is presented here as a potential social constructionist approach to school reform. In addition to this paper, the project includes the curriculum outline for a one-day workshop for school administrators on the application of Appreciative Inquiry in schools.

The curriculum provides participants with the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of this approach and an opportunity to actively participate in an abridged version of an Appreciative Inquiry. The intent of the workshop is to engage school administrators in the AI process and to open possibilities for them to apply this process in their schools.

Table of Contents

Curriculum

List of Figures

Acknowledgement

I am deeply indebted to many friends, colleagues, and family members for the strong and enduring support they gave me during my time in the masters program.

First I would like to thank the members of my project committee. Dr. Robert David made important contributions by providing a practical perspective, which has given this work professional validity. His enthusiasm and support lends credence to an appreciative approach to educational reform, undoubtedly this will assist me in carrying this work forward. Sandra Kike's thoughtful critique and attention to detail has contributed to the academic quality of this project and for this I am most grateful. Ms. Kioke's encouragement during the final stages of this project has been heartfelt and most appreciated. Finally, my project advisor, Dr. Tom Strong has served as a source of encouragement and wisdom throughout the writing of this project. His enthusiasm and dedication to social constructionist ideas has helped me to appreciate the power of discourse and has reaffirmed my belief in what is possible between people. Dr. Strong challenged me to stretch intellectually and to engage in a process that has made a positive and significant contribution to my life and my profession.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the members of my family. To my mother and father, sisters and brothers for their enduring belief in me. To my daughter, Alexis who is a tremendous source of strength, pride and inspiration. Finally, I want to thank and dedicate this project to my partner, Bill. Many times during the course of this project Bill's listening ear and encouraging works were my primary source of strength and endurance. Thank you Bill, for your contribution to this project and to my life.

Background

Statement of the Problem

Education has spent the last 100 years implementing one reform initiative after another in an attempt to keep pace with the ever increasing demands and changing needs of our society. In this quest education has taken a number of philosophical shifts as leaders in the field looked to contemporary theoretical models as a means for improving schools. Educators have sought to improve their instructional practices by leaping from one philosophical bandwagon to another as each new set of "best practices" was prescribed. Within the last twenty years alone, education has undergone dramatic changes in pedagogical practices and one failed reform initiative after another. Despite persistent attempts to reform public education, there is little evidence that schools have become significantly more effective in meeting the challenges that confront them. The failure of these reform initiatives has led to heightened disillusionment with public schools (Barth, 1990; Carlson, 1996; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Elmore, 1995; Fullan, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994; Walter & Lambert, 1995).

> Educators have become increasingly defensive and often either blame the problems of public education on factors beyond their control or challenge the premise that problems actually exist. While these responses are understandable, they do little to improve the effectiveness of schools" (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 17).

Education is in need of a more energizing, restorative and inspirational way to deal with the ever increasing and complex demands placed on the institution. Our lack of success in meeting these demands has caused workplace burnout (Mellish, 1999).

The organizational climate is one of resistance, reluctance toward change and has people feeling increasingly overwhelmed, hopeless and cynical (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan 2000; Mellish, 1999). "While corporate rhetoric about new direction, compelling visions, common values and important operating systems is relentless, the hearts and minds of participants in change processes frequently remain unengaged, non-committed and, at best, compliant" (Mellish, 1999, p. 2). This project will present: (1) a background paper outlining a rationale for a new approach to school reform initiatives, and the theoretical underpinnings and practical description of a potential model for this reform. (2) The curriculum for a one-day workshop designed to engage school administrators in this model's approach.

Historically, educators have followed a problem-solving model to school reform. In doing so, we have surrounded ourselves with language that emphasizes deficit and deficiency. The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, obtain a diagnosis and find a solution. The primary focus has been on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them (Hammond, 1998). By focusing on what is wrong we emphasize the negative, and in looking for a cause, we seek to blame. This approach has a tendency to unleash huge amounts of anxiety and defensiveness and, as a consequence, leaves little generative energy or enthusiasm to pursue effective change. David Cooperrider (1998) sums up a problem solving mentality this way, "we are not searching to create new knowledge of better ideals, we are searching how to close gaps; and in human terms problem solving approaches are notorious for generating defensiveness" (p. 148). In addition, as each new reform initiative is mandated, new

ways of thinking and new sets of skills are required of educators, often with little input or commitment from those who are expected to implement these changes. As each change initiative fails to bring about transformation hope diminishes while anxiety and defensiveness rise, as a result, finding the energy and enthusiasm to launch the next initiative becomes more onerous.

I believe the generative energy required to overcome defensiveness and lack of enthusiasm can be mobilized. This can be accomplished by implementing change initiatives that help to revitalize and inspire our educators and in doing so restore hope to the educational institution as a whole. To actively engage educators in an effective and sustainable change initiative we must go beyond adapting to challenges and solving problems, and instead focus on imagining possibilities and generating new ways of looking at the world. We must provide opportunities for educators to feel inspired, to fulfill their hopes and dreams as individuals trying to make a meaningful impact on the next generation. We cannot expect them to accept one imposed change initiative after another without being resentful. In order to make effective, long lasting change, we must seek change initiatives that are based more on the principles of alliance and partnership than on authority and control. Educators must be "empowered" to take initiative and make decisions. The proponents of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an innovative approach to organizational development, have developed a process that I believe can help us to do just this. AI "assumes that every living system has many untapped, rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 3).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a rationale for the use of Appreciative Inquiry as a school reform initiative. In providing this rationale, the major trends in educational reform are presented along with the parallel shifts in the theoretical models from which each reform initiative was founded. The argument is made that, should educational reform continue to develop parallel to theoretic models in the social sciences, the next reform initiatives will likely be based on social constructionist theory. This theory is based on the notion that our perceptions are social inventions. Social constructionism assumes that we construct our understandings socially, through language and discourse (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; McNamee, 1998). Appreciative Inquiry involves the application of social constructionist theory as it applies to organizational development (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998) and therefore could effectively be used as a social constructionist approach to school reform. In addition to this paper, the project includes a curriculum outline for a one-day workshop for school administrators on the application of Appreciative Inquiry in schools. This curriculum provides participants with the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of this approach and an opportunity to actively participant in an abridged appreciative inquiry. The objective of the workshop is to engage school administrators in the AI process and to open possibilities for them to apply this process in their schools.

<u>Historical Context of Education Reform</u>

Over the last century, as the theoretical underpinnings of social disciplines have undergone philosophical shifts, those shifts have been mirrored in educational

philosophy and pedagogical practices. During the first half of the twentieth century, school reform initiatives were guided by the principles of the scientific and behaviourists paradigms (Carlson, 1996). Over the past 20 years, much of the focus has concentrated on changes in the structures and systems of educational institutions (Becvar & Becvar, 1993). Recently, some educators have recognized the limitations of structural changes and have sought to reform schools through an epistemological approach (Pare, 1995). Such initiatives, derived from constructivist approaches, have focused on the study of knowledge and how meaning is constructed. The underlying assumption of the constructivist approach is that there are multiple ways to understand social phenomena and the meanings we have are ever changing. How we understand is a function of our social interactions and our belief systems (Becvar & Becvar, 1993). As school reform grapples with the implementation of constructivist reform, the new millennium ushers in new theoretical models that further advance the study of meaning making to include the social construction of our perceptions and understandings. Social constructionism, one form of constructivism, holds our perceptions are social inventions. We socially construct our "reality" by bringing our experiences together with other's experiences in ways that contribute to the formation of combined yet unique understandings. To illustrate, imagine people discussing their understanding of the same event. As conversational participants share their experience, each contributing unique detail and context, the perception of the event will not be the same as it was prior to the discussion, for the participants. The meaning of this event will continue to change as long as people continue to engage in dialogue about its happening. That is, our perceptions about the way things are, or will be, are continually being changed or

modified through social interaction and discourse. Thus, change occurs in the direction of the ideas and perspectives brought to conversations and results in the social construction of new understanding (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; McNamee, 1998).

The "Scientific" Era

At the turn of the last century, the ideas of the scientific revolution dominated scientific and educational inquiry. Theoretical models were largely guided by the principles of scientific positivism. These theories focused on "functionalism, rationality, and an objective social world that is controllable" (Carlson, 1996, p.6). The machine metaphor was central to the organizational theories of this paradigm. School structures took on assembly line mentalities, including student divisions, departments, special services, time schedules with central focus reflecting control and time on task (Carlson, 1996). Central to the scientific philosophy is the idea that the world is comprised of fixed truths, that knowledge is comprised of discrete chunks of information, and that experts pass on this knowledge to learners (Becvar & Becvar, 1993). Schools of this era were characterized by the "jug and mug" theory of learning. That is, teachers were seen as expert holding the jug, and their role was to "pour" knowledge "into" students. The major focus in education was on top-down teaching methodologies, teaching discrete sets of skills, uniform curriculum, obedience, respect and loyalty. Leadership in the traditional school was hierarchical, with the principal holding all of the decision-making power and teachers were expected to conform to the status quo as directed by the principal (Walter & Lambert, 1995).

Toward the middle of the century a great surge of quantitative research on human behaviour emerged, and so ushered in the "behaviourist" paradigm. This research concluded that "behaviour can be predicted; that intelligence is fixed and innate; that differences in intelligence can be accurately measured and based on these measurements, universally applicable learning 'treatments' can be prescribed" (Walter & Lambert, 1995, p. 10). With the behaviourist approach came the standardized test movement in education. Teachers focused on breaking down large concepts into parts and teaching and testing discrete skills. Much of the instructional approach was geared at shaping student behaviour through positive and negative reinforcements. Educational leadership also followed this line of thinking. "The principal was viewed as being responsible for the quality of teacher performance and for using rewards and sanctions to ensure that teachers maintained standards" (Walter & Lambert, 1995, p. 10).

The "Modern" Era

The 1960s saw a period of major social transformation throughout the western world. The women's and civil rights movements exemplified the outcry of people who wanted to have a say. One response to this outcry resulted in the development of theories with a dramatically different worldview. "Modern" theories emerged as the social sciences recognized that human dilemmas were interactional in nature and more complex than can be explained by theories based on stimulus / response feedback loops. Systemic models were developed that focused on interactions between hierarchy, structure and function (Becvar & Becvar, 1993). Within these models, complicated sets of rules and guiding principles were developed to describe how the hierarchical

systems were structured, function and ultimately, could be adjusted (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Philosophical shifts in education within this paradigm included: the effectiveness and excellence movements, instructional leadership, as well as the restructuring and reform initiatives (Doss, 1998; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Elmore, 1995; Fullan, 2000). These reform movements focused on finding patterns of effective schools, which then could be defined and described. The preferred attributes of effective schools were identified and then implemented in other schools. The emphasis in the classroom focused on practices related to student achievement. Learning was driven by an instructional formula of small pieces, clear expectations and; a carry over from the behaviourists, rewards for approximations of desired behaviours. Leaders in this paradigm were expected to articulate a well-defined vision, to align educational process with the vision and to have high expectations for performance. "The systemic model can be seen as that of a template, superimposed on schools, their leader, and classroom teachers to promote equity and increase achievement" (Walker & Lambert, 1995, p.14).

The "Postmodern" Era

Toward the turn of this century, the systemic paradigm came under serious criticism. Systemic school reform initiatives, known as "structural reform" made the mistake of assuming that by changing school schedules, guidelines and policies, changes in teaching practice and student learning would be produced (Fullan, 2000). Research on structural reform and student learning presents a much more pessimistic and complex view. What is now evident is that the application of a template model, or

restructuring of schools, "makes no difference in the quality of teaching and learning" (Fullan, 2000, p. 582). Without recognition of the complexity of school change as it relates to quality instruction and student learning, the systemic paradigm of school reform was limited. (Barth, 1990; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Elmore, 1995; Fullan, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994; Walter & Lambert, 1995).

During the 1980s, a momentous shift in how theorists conceptualized knowledge ushered in a new set of assumptions. Within this new theoretical context, school reform shifted from a focus on structural change, to concentrating on learning and the culture in which effective learning occurs. This "postmodern" view focused on epistemology, the study of knowledge and how we come to know, given our life experiences (Pare, 1995). This epistemological perspective supports a worldview that suggests that there are many ways of knowing, that there are multiple answers to any given problem and that knowledge is created as individuals interact with one another within the context of their culture and community. Postmodern theorists denounced previously held assumptions that there is a fixed reality based on universal truths (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; McNamee, 1998; Pare, 1995).

Among postmodern thinkers is a group of theorists who see the world from a "constructivist" perspective. Consistent with postmodern thinking, this group operates from the assumption that what we know is based on our belief system and the experiences we bring forward in relating to any given situation. Constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed, not transmitted. Individuals make sense of their world and everything they know by constructing their own representations or models of their

experiences (Becvar & Becvar, 1993). Today's educational reform initiatives are very much guided by these principles (Walker & Lambert, 1995). The constructivist notion, that knowledge is constructed rather than a fixed concept, informed major shifts in pedagogical practice. In the "constructivist classroom", the teacher, no longer supplies most of the questions. Instead, the student's interests and inquiries lead the direction of classroom discovery. Teachers organize their classrooms to make the students, rather than the teacher, the center of learning. Children's understandings, rather than correct responses to factual information, become the dominant themes of teacher-students interaction. Learning experiences emphasize hands/minds on cooperative group activities, rather than the traditional independent, competitive skill and drill activities that dominated classroom practice since the inception of formalized schooling (Elmore, 1995). The constructivist view has advanced challenging assumptions to the field of education. Deborah Walker and Linda Lambert (1995) assert, the postmodern view recognizes,

> (1) the capacity to learn is not fixed or innate, (2) the social construction of knowledge actually changes intelligence; therefore learning must be an active and interactive process, (3) student and adult learning are both fluid and linked; (4) achievement is increased when the culture of the school supports learning for both students and adults; and (5) new norms need to be developed that foster collaboration and shared inquiry (p. 15).

The metaphor of school as a community of learners has evolved from constructivist assumptions and is the theoretical grounding for the latest reform initiatives in education. A community of learners is built on the notion that learning is an inclusive process and that the most authentic and meaningful learning occurs through interactions which involve the active participation of all those involved (Barth, 1990;

Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1994). Strong arguments are presented in support of the "community of learners" as a reform initiative. Michael Fullan (2000) posits, "restructuring, by itself makes no difference in the quality of teaching and learning. What does make a difference is reculturing: the process of developing professional learning communities in the school" (p. 582). Dufour and Eaker (1998) argue, "if schools want to enhance their organizational capacity to boost student learning, they should work on building a professional community that is characterized by shared purpose, collaborative activity, and collective responsibility among staff" (p. 24). Barth (1990) states, "Only a school that is hospitable to adult learning can be a good place for students to learn. A community of learners implies that school is a context for everyone's lifelong growth, not just for growth among K-12 students" (p. 46).

The principal takes a critical role in the development of the learning community. The premise on which the constructivist leader operates is that it is the principal who promotes, supports and maintains the impetus for the establishment of a collaborative learning culture in schools. "The principal is a key figure in determining the ultimate success of any effort to develop school personnel and thus plays a major role in school improvement" (Dufour, 1991, p. 8). Constructivist leadership is conceptualized as the act of engaging others in building a common vision and in working collaboratively, in a culture of learning. These leaders work to enable individuals to improve their effectiveness by strengthening the individual's skills and developing their best attributes. They seek to develop collaborative relationships with students, parents and staff in order to enhance learning through the shared reflection of pedagogical practices

(Barth, 1990; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994; Walter & Lambert, 1995). "The essence of the constructivist leadership is to foster a learning environment in which all people within the community take on a serious, committed, sustained, lifelong and cooperative attitude to the learning process" (Barth, 1990, p. 9).

Social Construction Theory

Historically, changes in educational reform and pedagogical practice have paralleled the shifts in theoretical paradigms within the social sciences. Should this trend continue, future school reform initiatives may be guided by social constructionism. Social constructionism, a particular form of constructivism, has yet to take a firm hold in the field of education, however, in the fields of psychology and business, social constructionist theory has transformed counselling practices and organizational development initiatives (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 1992; Gergen, 1994; McNamee, 1998). Social construction theory assumes that our conversations help to create multiple perceptions of our experiences. Each understanding is seen to be a construction, created by individuals through conversations that expand possibilities and existing beliefs. Based on these premises, social constructionists believe solutions can be created by engaging people in dialogue that facilitates the construction of new ways of conceptualizing their present view of the world. The idea that our understandings can be constructed in conversation opens up a powerful way to view problems, for it suggests that even persistent and entrenched ways of knowing are open to more viable

reconstructions (Anderson, 1997). As possibilities are explored in conversation, the potential to create more viable ways of viewing the world emerge. The underlying assumption is that problems exist when the prevailing narratives, or ways of constructing and communicating understandings, are narrow and fixed, thus blocking more prosperous and desired perceptions. The aim of social constructionist interventions is to facilitate an environment where alternatives to tightly held narratives (stories, beliefs and ways of talking) can be experienced thereby replacing such prevailing views with more viable options (Anderson, 1997). As an organization experiences, through dialogue, alternatives and possibilities, new meaning is created, thus allowing for the construction of new narratives and ultimately new perceptions (Cooperrider, & Whitney, 1998).

Expanding the range of possible experiences and alternate perceptions is achieved through the creation of "dialogical space". Dialogical space refers to a metaphorical space created between conversational participants. This space is created when participants will allow for tentative narratives to be expressed and then shaped by each participant. This shaping takes place as the partners engage in exchanges that allow room for multiple perspectives, viewpoints and understandings. It is a space not unlike that created in brainstorming, where ideas are generated for later scrutiny. A distinction can be made between discussion and dialogue. Discussion is like popcorn; one disjointed idea popping up after another. Dialogue on the other hand constructs new meaning and new possibility when people are engaged "in full voice", when discourse allows room for all perspectives, understandings and viewpoints. When

participants are connected in full voice, they create not just new worlds, but better worlds (Anderson, 1997).

Critique of Constructivism

The major difference between constructivist and social constructionist practice is the greater emphasis social constructionists place on relationships, interactions, the power of language, and discourse as a medium for change (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; McNamee, 1998). When applied to operational development, the ideas behind social constructionism have been credited for generating the energy, commitment, and passion necessary to create and sustain large-scale change initiatives (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998; Hammond, 1996). Although constructivist practices are still very much a part of contemporary school reform initiatives (Barth, 1990; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994; Walter & Lambert, 1995) social theorists have criticized the focus it places on essentialism (McNamee, 1998). "Essentialism refers to our long-standing tradition of locating attributes, motives, intentions, desires, emotions and virtually all psychological qualities, traits or characteristics within the individual" (McNamee 1998, p. 101). This perspective does not account for the untapped potential that exists as a result of dynamics created in relationships between people. It is the relationship dynamic that is the foundation of social constructionist theory and the motivating force behind change in people and in organizations (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; McNamee, 1998).

This dynamic was clearly illustrated for me when I applied an appreciative approach to a school reform initiative, after a disheartening experience trying to motivate a school staff from a constructivist perspective. My school had been working diligently on a constructivist approach to school reform. As the principal of this school, I had facilitated students, parents, community members and school staff to develop a collective vision for our school and to collaboratively set goals related to this vision. Using the Professional Learning Communities model (Durfour & Eaker, 1998) we worked for many days. Using this constructivist approach, I facilitated discussions around the purpose of school, our assumptions about student learning and criteria for effective vision and goal statements. We then collaboratively constructed a vision and goal statements based on the work we had generated together. We went back to school with what I thought was a renewed commitment to our work and a clear direction of what we needed to do to be more successful. I was surprised and somewhat disheartened to find that the staff was far less enthusiastic than I had hoped. They verbally had committed to the new direction and had spoken in favour of implementing the changes we saw to be necessary to be more successful. However, when it came time to actually initiating the changes there was a strong sense they felt it was going to be too much work and they were already tired. They were resistant and I was frustrated.

A turning point occurred after one particularly negative experience. We had gathered as a staff to celebrate the conclusion of an intervention we had implemented. This intervention focused on decreasing the amount of disrespectful language spoken by students. In my estimation, the intervention had been quite successful and I was looking forward to the meeting. During the meeting however, staff were more focused

on what had not worked than they were on what had worked. The meeting concluded with a deflated sense that we were not making any sort of real difference in the climate of our school. I left the meeting feeling furious. I was disappointed with my staff for I attributed their negativity to a lack of commitment, initiative and enthusiasm.

During this time I had been reading about social constructionism and the ideas around focusing on solutions rather than problems, and encouraging open discussion as a means of socially constructing viable futures. I became particularly interested in how this could be applied to organizations and in particular to my school. I began reading about Appreciative Inquiry and about the power of appreciation as an agent for energy, enthusiasm and change. After my first introduction to AI, I was so inspired I went back to the staff and at the very next meeting asked them to engage in a discussion about our intervention again. This time I brought to the meeting an appreciative focus. I invited each staff member to come to the meeting with at least one heartwarming story about the initiative we had implemented. At first staff were reluctant, stating they had only small stories or stories they were not sure counted for this purpose. I encouraged them, saying that I would appreciate any heartwarming story, big or small. As each member took their turn telling their heartwarming story, we smiled and laughed and the stories brought out more details from other's stories and reminded people about things they had forgotten. The staff was encouraged by hearing the stories, they learned things they were not aware of; times when community members had participated or given support, where students who were particularly difficult had behaved positively and that some of their colleagues were feeling better about the school climate. Where the atmosphere in

the room during the previous meeting had been negative and energy draining, this meeting was positive and invigorating.

From these stories of appreciation we extrapolated the driving forces that made the intervention a success, for now it was clear it was a success! We came to realize how powerful bringing the community in on our initiative had been. We recognized that by focusing our initiative in a positive way we could dramatically alter the behaviours of the students in our school. Someone in the group said, "Imagine, if we use these kinds of strategies we could be successful doing things we never thought possible before!". I couldn't believe this was the same staff I had been so disappointed in only a week prior to this. Here was the inspiration, enthusiasm and commitment required to make effective long lasting change.

It was at this moment that I truly began to see the power of change initiated from the heart. My constructivist approach had been an intellectual exercise, one based on the collaborative collection of sound intellectual ideas. Ideas that are logical, reasonable, make sense and are shared by the group. The exercise seemed useful and productive at the time, nobody refuted or questioned it until it was time to implement the ideas. It is clear to me now, no matter how sound ideas could be if people are not inspired to implement them, they were doomed. What had inspired this group was the power that was created as each of us realized that our collective successes, no matter how small each member had contributed had contributed to something we did not believe possible when we started the intervention. When it became clear that we had been successful and that the driving forces behind our success could be duplicated, people were inspired to do more. What became apparent to me is that success, has a

powerful impact on people's motivation and willingness to be innovative. Success feeds our soul and breathes life into our existence. However, success must be publicly recognized and appreciated to be most powerful. If it is not, much of its potential is not realized, instead all too often it is forgotten.

Applying Social Constructionist Ideas to School Reform

As we move away from the essentialism of constructivist approaches, we abandon the idea that our organizations are led by individuals who embody transformative knowledge. This allows us to see our organizations as communities whose ultimate source of strength is within the many "voices", (perspectives, beliefs and backgrounds) of its members. "There are many voices that each organizational member brings to the conversation. Our task is to find ways for these discursive communities both within and around our organization to be heard" (McNamee, 1998, p. 107). As we seek to "hear a multiplicity of voices", we displace our reliance on correct methods or approaches when operating within organizations. As our reliance on having one person take the lead, solve the dilemma, or chart the course for the future is abandoned, we displace our tendency to plan, to prepare and to know in advance the direction of the organization. Instead, what is required is that we act, "into the conversation". That is, we come prepared with plans, preparations, and relational understandings and we anticipate that they will be altered, discarded, and reinvented with those with whom we engage. "We appreciate the uncertainty of our worlds as we seek avenues toward certainty. We appreciate our vulnerability and learn how that

vulnerability positions us with in the process of creating, with our partners, the realities that we live" (McNamee, 1998, p. 107).

To apply social constructionist ideas to school reform means the role of leadership takes a "relational" focus. Although organizational authority sets the tone for the rest of the organization, it is important to note, that the most effective change occurs when social constructionist leadership is practiced by everyone, regardless of his or her "level", in the organization (Barrett, 1995). Instead of being facilitators of ideas, the social constructionist leaders become facilitators of relationships. This is different than the constructivist leader, who focuses on facilitating a community of learners where member's ideas are cultivated and then massaged, by the leader, to a "collective vision". The social constructionist leader relies on fostering relationships, between organizational members, that enable diverse points of view to open the range of possibilities, which are then collaboratively applied to the development of organizational goals (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998; McNamee, 1998). The social constructionist leader welcomes the co-construction of organizational direction by all levels of the organizational membership. The old command and control models for managers are replaced with new sets of tasks that foster highly committed working relationships. Creating this environment requires the membership to be relationally connected, innovative and to seek the possible and to strive for the creation of new ideas and new knowledge (Barrett, 1995). The primary responsibility of the constructionist leader is to establish and maintain a climate that encourages generative dialogue focused on newness and possibility, between organizational members (Anderson 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; McNamee,

1998). Social constructionists believe that an expanding energy for change or "change core" is created when people engage in generative dialogue that focuses on imagination, innovation and possibility. It is this change core that is capable of energizing and sustaining change initiatives. "The single, most prolific, thing a group can do if its aims are to liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future is to make the positive change core the common and explicit property of all" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 4).

"High-performing organizations create appreciative learning cultures that hold a disrespect for hierarchy and other boundaries to inclusion and involvement" (Barrett, 1995, p. 46). They seek to deliberately create access to decision-making forums by fostering norms that legitimize members' right to question and provoke at all levels of organizational activity. By creating systems that foster dialogue about possible actions and initiatives, they encourage members to think creatively, question commonly accepted definitions, and go beyond previous conceptions. By legitimizing conversation about organizational vision and direction, they allow for the development of joint discovery (Barrett, 1995). A liberating force is achieved by tapping into the unleashed potentials in people as they are given opportunities to participate in new ways of talking. A powerful energy for change or "change core" is ignited when people engage in sustained, meaningful dialogue that appreciates the positive, looks to possibility while creating compelling and attainable views of a better future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998). This change core is substantially different from the motivation behind many other change initiatives. Traditionally, organizational change initiatives have focused on the power of the intellect to initiate reform. Social

constructionist practices, however, involve processes that stretch the individual and the group not only to make strategic and procedural commitments, but also to make commitments based on imagination, innovation and possibility. It is these commitments that encourage people to access their core personal values, beliefs and dreams. It is the commitment of the heart and the soul that are the most powerful sources of sustained change.

Appreciative Inquiry: The Practical Application of Social Constructionism

Appreciative Inquiry, as a philosophy and orientation for organizational development in business, was originally developed by David Cooperrider and his associates in the late 1980s, at the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. AI is founded on social constructionist theory, and subscribes to the following notions; constructing solutions is infinitely more productive than seeking to solve problems, through relational discourse people can co-construct realities of hope and possibility that inspire commitment and sustain continued development in organizations (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998). AI is a method for discovering, understanding and fostering innovations in organizational development. The core of this process is based on the gathering of positive stories and images of the organization's past, which are then projected to possibilities for the future. AI seeks out the very best of what is happening in an organization to help ignite the collective imagination of what could be realized in the future. The aim is to generate new knowledge that expands the "realm of the possible" and help members of an organization envision a collectively desired

future. The process then seeks to carry forth that vision in ways, which successfully translate images of possibility into reality and beliefs into practice.

Appreciative Inquiry is a compelling way to harness the power of people's collective aspirations in ways that can mobilize visions to fruition within communities, corporations and perhaps even schools. AI has been effectively implemented in numerous corporations and nonprofits organizations around the world including: Amnesty International, Deloitte and Touche, Greenpeace and governmental agencies such as the South African government under Nelson Mandela (Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan & VanBuskirk, 1999). Cooperrider and Whitney (1998) report: In Brazil, Nutrimental Foods used AI to make major organizational changes that brought about a 300% increase in profits. In Chicago, over 1 million appreciative interviews were conducted, with hundreds of grassroots organizations coming together to improve the future of Chicago's youth. GTE Telephone Operations won the 1997 Society for Training and Development award after 54,000 employees were engaged in Appreciative Inquiry and subsequently made significant and measurable changes in stock prices, morale survey measures, as well as customer and union relations. AI has also been reported as being effective in dealing with such sensitive issues as sexual harassment in the workplace, empowering third world villages to develop local initiatives for improvement, and engaging members of housing projects to become more involved in improvement initiatives (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998; Hammond, 1998).

Appreciative Inquiry is a four-stage process designed specifically for organizations, for promoting development and sustained growth. The four phases of AI include: discovery, dream, design and destiny. The process begins with initiating

dialogue about discovery, seeking to understand "the best of what is" in an organization. Carefully constructed questions, presented to participants, invite them to examine what organizationally works, what is inspiring and what core values are shared by the group. Participants are asked to describe in detail stories that highlight the success of the organization. From these stories of appreciation, common themes or "affirmative topic choices" are selected for further inquiry. From the affirmative topics, participants are asked to dream, to project a vision of the future, incorporating "what the world is calling for" as well as their mutual desired results. The next phase asks participants to design the structures and policies necessary to create the ideal organization, one capable of magnifying the positive and realizing the articulated new dream. Finally, inquiry is focused on destiny, the structures, qualities and elements of an organization's positive core that will sustain people to effect positive change and growth (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998).

Firmly grounded in social constructionist theory, the Appreciative Inquiry process is founded on five guiding principles that help to give clarity and direction to the application of this approach. These principles are; the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the poetic principal, the anticipatory principle and the positive principle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998).

Appreciative Inquiry's Guiding Principles

The Constructionist Principle is based on the social constructionist notion that when dealing with human sciences, language and relationships are the locus of knowledge. Therefore, Appreciative Inquiry is not so much about finding new

knowledge; it is more about constructing new ways of knowing. Effective change is initiated when organizations are seen as human constructions in the process of creating ways of knowing that generate possibility and brighter futures.

The Principle of Simultaneity states that inquiry is intervention. This principle is based on the notion that human systems grow in the direction of what is highlighted, talked about and inspiring. Thus, the power of appreciation is that it draws our eye toward life, stirs our feelings and sets in motion our curiosity, providing inspiration to the envisioning mind.

> The seeds of change, that is, the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future, are implicit in the very first question we ask. The questions we ask set the stage for what we find, and what we discover becomes the linguistic material, the stories out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998 p.15).

In other words, inquiring is intervening and AI intervenes to create preferred futures from appreciated past and present organizational experiences.

The Poetic Principle highlights the notion that there are no right or wrong directions to organizational life. Thus, we are reminded there are no correct notions to aspire to, instead organizations are free to create the reality that is appealing and inspiring to them.

> An organization's story is constantly being co-authored. Moreover, pasts, presents, or futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration, or interpretation - precisely like, for example, the endless interpretive possibilities in a good piece of poetry or a biblical text (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998 p. 16).

The Anticipatory Principle is based on the notion that positive thoughts, feelings and images bring about positive action. Cooperrider and Whitney (1998) cite examples

from the literature such as the Pygmalion dynamic in classrooms, where children's academic success is related to their teacher's expectation of this success, as well the relationship between optimism and good health and positive inner dialogue and personal and relational well-being are cited as example of this principle. "Our positive images of the future lead our positive actions, this is the increasingly energizing basis and presupposition of Appreciative Inquiry" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998 p.17).

The Positive Principle is founded on the idea that generative energy is created when inquiry is focused on appreciating the positive, searching for possibilities, and exposing that, which is inspirational. The key to cultivating this generative energy is in posing unconditionally positive questions.

> Building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding, things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together. What we have found is that the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long lasting and successful the change effort (p.17).

The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry

The Discovery Phase (Appreciating)

An Appreciative Inquiry is initiated within an organization, by asking a series of carefully constructed questions, often in an interview format. These questions encourage organizational members to relate their peak experiences, times when they felt most alive, engaged and productive, within their organization. Questions will be tailored to each organization, however three classic questions, as described by Sue Annis Hammond, (1996, p. 56) are:

1)   Think back through your career in this organization. Locate a moment that was a high point, when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe how you felt, and what made the situation possible.

2)   Without being humble, describe what you value most about your self, your work, and your organization.

3)   Describe your three concrete wishes for the future of this organization.

It is from these questions that stories of appreciation are generated and shared with the group. Each person is asked to share the best story, or the most "quotable quote". From the stories common themes of success, referred to as "topic choices", are extrapolated and then become the focus for further inquiry planning and strategizing. Topic choices are the most important part of an Appreciative Inquiry for they embark on the orientation and mindset of the participants in the inquiry. This can be a messy process, wading through a mass of unorganized information. Transforming the information into a usable form will follow in the next stage, but first, the themes of success have to surface, and this occurs through the time consuming process of sharing participant's stories (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998; Hammond, 1996).

It is the principle of simultaneity that drives the initial stages of an Appreciative Inquiry. Since what we study becomes our reality, and what we focus on is magnified by our attention, we want to be sure we are magnifying something worthy. "If, in fact, knowledge and organizational destiny are as intricately interwoven as we think, then isn't it possible that the seeds of change are implicit it in the very first question we ask?" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 5). This statement makes clear the premise that the questions we ask set the stage for what we find and that what we discover

creates the material out of which the future is conceived, conversed about and constructed.

What is most important, is that the topic choice be that which the organization feels gives life to the system, those things that members of the organization feel to be strategically and humanly of core importance. Typically organizations will embrace 3 to 5 topic choices for further inquiry.

The Dream Phase (Envisioning Results)

During the dream phase of Appreciative Inquiry, participants are encouraged to imagine "what the world is calling us to become" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 9). The group begins by talking and dreaming about what could be, based on what has already happened. During this time the group also creates "provocative propositions". Provocative propositions describe an ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate that creates the possibilities to do more of what works. Sue Annis Hammond (1996) describes criteria for the development of effective provocative propositions (p.44):

1) Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge or innovate?

2) Is it grounded in examples?

3) Is it what we want? Will people defend it or get passionate about it?

4) Is it stated in affirmative, bold terms and in present tense (as if it were already happening)?

The purpose of provocative propositions is to keep our best at a conscious level. They are symbolic statements because they have meaning well beyond words,

reminding us of what is best about the organization and how everyone can participate in

creating more of the best. Provocative propositions are derived from stories that

actually took place in an organization. "This grounding in history, tradition, and facts

distinguishes Appreciative Inquiry from other visioning methods in which dreams serve

as the primary basis for the vision" (Hammond, 1996, p. 39) Organizational

participants are invited to create a clear, results-oriented vision. This vision is an image

of the future, which has emerged out of grounded examples from the organization's

positive past. It is forged as the group's discourse constructs a future reality based on a

newly discovered potential for the future, grounded in successes from the past

(Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998). This stage of the inquiry is key to organizational

transformation (Hammond, 1996). For it is through the co-construction of the

organization's future reality, that individual will moves to group will. "Group will

occurs when the group shares a clear goal that all members believe will happen and

accordingly behave to make happen. This occurs only if the entire group is part of the

process and thus takes time" (Hammond, 1996, p. 47).

The Design Phase (Co-constructing)

This stage of the inquiry is dedicated to the development of how to.

"Participants co-construct their new reality based on their articulation of the direction,

principles, and strategic framework. Questions relate to what would be ideal, how we

can make it work and what conceptual, behaviour, operational changes we need to

make" (Mellish, 1999, p. 5). It is at this stage that organizational participants are

encouraged to examine all of the structures and status quo assumptions underlying the

design of the organization; and, to socially construct a design that maximizes the qualities of the positive core and enables the accelerated realization of the organization's dream. "When inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organization that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 10). There is no prescribed "how to" with respect to the design process. It is just that, a process, one that must be creative, innovative and thus is often spontaneous. Unlike other methodologies that are recipes, the results of Appreciative Inquiry are invented in the moment and thus each experience is different (Hammond, 1996).

The Destiny Phase (Sustaining)

Finally, inquiry is focused on destiny, the structures, qualities and elements of an organization that will facilitate people to continue to appreciate the power of the positive and to let go of the negative. "What is needed are the network-like structures that liberate not only the daily search into qualities and elements of an organization's positive core but the establishment of a convergence zone for people to empower one another, to connect, cooperate and co-create" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 13).

> Big performing organizations not only develop expansive scripts that inspire members' best efforts, they also create integrative systems that allow members to see that their efforts make a difference. The systems include elaborate and timely feedback so that members are able to sense that they are contributing to a meaningful purpose. In particular, it is important for people to experience progress, to see that their day-to-day tasks make a difference. When members experience that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal, they are more likely to feel a sense of hope and empowerment (Barrett, 1995, p. 22).

Appreciative Inquiry is a process of organizational development, which focuses on building on the positive aspects of an organization's history. The process seeks to bring to the forefront those times when members of an organization felt most productive, energized and inspired. These stories of appreciation are then used to extrapolate common themes from which to build a more prosperous, viable future. "Through a workshop format, the participants stir up memories of energizing moments of success creating a new energy that is positive and synergistic" (Hammond, 1996, p. 7). They walk away with the knowledge that they have been successful in the past and the confidence that this success can be recreated in the future. This sense of communal affirmation stimulates a desire to create more success and a commitment to doing so. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been. Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success.

The Limitations of this Approach

A word of caution. Appreciative Inquiry may not be seen as useful for those who do not believe appreciative relationships can be powerful enough to initiate and sustain organizational change. In addition, those who rely on solving problems as the central focus of reform will most likely find it difficult to buy into this approach. It is also unlikely Appreciative Inquiry will be useful for the organizational leader who is not willing to turn considerable control of the change process over to all members of the organization. Nor will it be useful to the leader who believes that transformation

initiatives are developed prior to being initiated. AI relies on the participation of those directly involved in the change process to develop the vision, goals, strategies and plans for organizational development. Certainly, Appreciative Inquiry is a "New World" way of thinking, believing and behaving, a world perhaps some are not prepared to participate in.

Conclusion

Educators know that the teaching and learning of skills and discrete chunks of knowledge is not sufficient to prepare student for today's complex society. Each reform initiative over the past 20 years has reminded us that we must teach students to be creative, innovative and to think critically. However, it seems to me, we have not sufficiently acknowledged what it takes for our educators to operate at this level of thinking and behaving. The challenge in creating this opportunity is in creating contexts in which educators are inspired and committed to continually learn and more importantly, to experiment. Education cannot survive on our past successes, we need to continually be innovative, to strive for the creation of new ideas and new knowledge. The community of learners approach has addressed the need to engage in continuous learning, however it has not addressed an important element necessary for our success. It is not enough for education to respond, adapt, and cope with the pressures of change. The necessity for innovation requires a different kind of learning, one that goes beyond adapting to challenges and solving problems and instead focuses on imagining possibilities and on generating new ways of looking at the world. This is appreciative learning, the art of valuing and inquiring into possibilities. "Appreciative learning

cultures nurture innovative thinking by fostering an affirmative focus, expansive

thinking, a generative sense of meaning and creating collaborative systems" (Barrett,

1995, p. 26)

Undeniably, the institution of education is in need of reform, reform capable of

inspiring our educators and building a more prosperous and viable future for the system

as a whole. David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney (1998) ask a fundamental question:

> Could it be, we have reached the end of problem solving as a mode of
> inquiry capable of inspiring, mobilizing and sustaining human system
> change and the future of OD (organizational development) belongs to
> methods that affirm, compel and accelerate anticipatory learning,
> involving larger and larger levels of collectivity? (p. 2).

I believe this to be true, we are ready for an approach that lifts our spirits and focuses

us on what is possible. It is my vision to bring educators together to dialogue openly

with one another, to share their core beliefs, values and aspirations, to create an energy

that will mobilize schools to higher levels of commitment and potential. The goal of

this project is to prepare a workshop that would bring school administrators together

with the intention of stirring memories of energizing moments of success, and to create

a new energy that is positive, generative and synergetic. The intent of the workshop is

to provide an opportunity for school administrators to engage in the process of an

Appreciative Inquiry and to open possibilities for them to apply this process in their

schools. The focus of this workshop will, therefore, be to engage administrators in a

process that offers them an opportunity to feel the power of appreciative dialogue. It

will demonstrate how this human dynamic can engage, inspire and facilitate the

construction of bright, viable visions of the future. It will provide administrators an

opportunity to create, with their staffs, the kind of energy that could overcome the

hopeless, overwhelmed and cynical attitudes that permeate many educational institutions today.

If you are an educator seeking innovative changes for your school district, I invite you to experience the energizing, positive and generative experience of Appreciative Inquiry. Experience the synergetic power that is created as people dialogue about heartfelt, core issues of importance in ways that appreciate the positive and expose the successes of their organization. I invite you to participate in the transformational dynamic that is produced as people expand on past successes to drive a vision of the future, based on collective dreams and aspirations. This experience has the potential to offer you and your district a renewed sense of commitment and enthusiasm for the future. You will leave this experience with a sense of confidence and affirmation. You will know clearly how to make more moments of success and how to build a legitimate, viable future for your organization.

References

Anderson, H. (1997). <u>Conversation, language and possibilities</u>. New York: Basic Books.

Anderson H., & Goolishian, H. (1988). Human systems as linguistic systems: Preliminary and evolving ideas about the implications for clinical theory. <u>Family Process, 27</u> (4), 371-391.

Barrett, F. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. <u>Organizational Dynamics, 24</u> (2), 36-50.

Barth, R. (1998). <u>Improving school from within</u>. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Brown, B. (1998). Imagine Chicago. In S. Hammond & C. Royal (Eds.), <u>Lessons from the field applying appreciative inquiry</u> (pp. 77-89). Plano, TX: Practical Press.

Carlson, R. (1996). <u>Reframing and reform: Perspectives on organization leadership and school change</u>. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D. (1998). <u>A positive revolution in change: Appreciative inquiry</u>. Taos, NM: The Taos Institute.

Cooperrider, D. (1998). Application of theory: Getting started. In S. Hammond & C. Royal (Eds.), <u>Lessons from the field: Applying appreciative inquiry</u> (pp. 147-159). Plano, TX: Practical Press.

Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). <u>Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement</u>. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Elmore, R. (1995). Structural reform and educational practice. <u>Educational Researcher, 24</u> (9), 23-26.

Freedman J., & Combs, G. (1996). <u>Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities</u>. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Fullan, M. (2000). The Three Stories of Education Reform. <u>Phi Delta Kappan, 81</u> (8), 581-584.

Hammond, S. (1996). <u>The thin book of appreciative inquiry</u>. Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing.

Hare-Mustin, R. (1994). Discourses in the mirrored room: A postmodern analysis of therapy. Family Process, 33, 19-35.

Gergen, K. (1994). Realities and relationships: Sounding in social construction. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (1995). The leadership challenge. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mellish, L. (1998). Appreciative inquiry. Training Journal, Nov., 12-16.

McNamee, S. (1998). Re-inscribing organizational wisdom and courage: The relationally engaged organization. In S. Srivastva and D. Cooperrider (Eds.). Organizational wisdom and executive courage (pp. 101-117). San Francisco, CA: The New Lexington Press.

Pare, D. (1995). Of families and other cultures: The shifting paradigm of family therapy. Family Process, 34, 1-19.

Ryan, F., & Soven, M., & Smither, J., & Sullivan, W., & VanBuskirk, W. (1999). Appreciative inquiry: Using personal narratives for initiating school reform. The Clearing House, 1999, 72 (3), 164-167.

Sergiovanni, T. (1994). Building community in schools. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Walter, D. & Lambert, D. (1995). Learning and leading theory: A century in the making. In L.Lambert, D. Walker, D. Zimmerman, J. Cooper, M. Lambert, M. Gardener and P.J. Slack (Eds). The constructivist leader (pp. 1-27). New York: Teachers College Press.

REVITALIZING SCHOOLS THROUGH

GENERATIVE LEARNING:

AN APPRECIATIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL

REFORM

WORKSHOP

by

Elaine Colgate

Introduction to the Facilitator

Education is in need of an energizing, restorative and inspirational way to deal with the ever increasing and complex demands placed on it. Our present lack of success in meeting these demands is causing workplace burnout, an organizational climate that can be characterized by resistance toward change and has people feeling increasingly overwhelmed, hopeless and cynical (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan 2000; Mellish, 1999). I believe the generative energy required to overcome this resistance and lack of enthusiasm can be mobilized. This can be accomplished by implementing change initiatives that; revitalize, inspire, and restore hope to the educational institution as a whole. To actively engage educators in an effective and sustainable change initiative we must go beyond adapting to challenges and solving problems. Instead we need to focus on imagining possibilities and generating new ways of looking at the world. We must provide opportunities for educators to feel inspired, to fulfill their hopes and dreams as individuals trying to make a meaningful impact on the next generation. In order to make effective, long lasting change, we must seek change initiatives that are based more on the principles of alliance and partnership than on authority and control. Educators must be "empowered" to take initiative and make decisions.

The proponents of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an innovative approach to organizational development, have developed a process that I believe can help us to do just this. AI "assumes that every living system has many untapped, rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998, p. 3). Appreciative Inquiry, as a philosophy and orientation for organizational development, was originally developed by David Cooperrider and his associates in the late 1980s, at the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. AI subscribes to the following notions; constructing solutions is infinitely more productive than seeking to solve problems, through meaningful dialogue people can co-construct realities of hope and possibility that inspire commitment and sustain continued development in organizations (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1994; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1998). AI is a method for discovering, understanding and fostering innovations in organizational development. The core of this process is based on the gathering of positive stories and images of the organization's past, which are then projected to possibilities for the future. AI seeks out the very best of what is happening in an organization to help ignite the collective imagination of what could be realized in the future. The aim is to generate new knowledge that expands the "realm of the possible" and to help members of an organization envision a collectively desired future. The process then seeks to carry forth that vision in ways, which successfully translate images of possibility into reality and beliefs into practice.

I believe we are ready for an approach that lifts our spirits and focuses us on what is possible. It is my vision to bring educators together to dialogue openly with one another, to share their core beliefs, values and aspirations, to create an energy that will

mobilize schools to higher levels of commitment and potential. The goal of this workshop is to bring school administrators together with the intention of stirring memories of energizing moments of success, and to create a new energy that is positive, generative and synergetic. The intent of the workshop is to provide an opportunity for participants to engage in the process of an Appreciative Inquiry and to open possibilities for them to apply this process in their schools. Therefore, the focus of this workshop will be to engage administrators in a process that offers them an opportunity to feel the power of appreciative dialogue. It will demonstrate how this human dynamic can engage, inspire and facilitate the construction of bright, viable visions of the future. It will provide administrators an opportunity to create, with their staffs, the kind of energy that could overcome the hopeless, overwhelmed and cynical attitudes that permeate many educational institutions today.

If you are an educator, looking to make innovative changes in your school district, I invite you to experience the energizing, positive and generative experience of Appreciative Inquiry. Experience the synergetic power that is created as people dialogue about heartfelt, core issues of importance in ways that appreciate the positive and expose the successes of their organization. I invite you to participate in the transformational dynamic that is produced as people expand on past successes to drive a vision of the future, based on collective dreams and aspirations. This experience has the potential to offer you and your district a renewed sense of commitment and enthusiasm for the future. You will leave this experience with a sense of confidence and affirmation. You will know clearly how to make more moments of success and how to build a legitimate, viable future for your organization.

Workshop Goal and Objectives

GOAL:

To engage educators in a process that creates new energy and generates

potential for a renewed sense of commitment, confidence and affirmation.

Participants will be able to demonstrate how to generate this kind of experience

in their own schools.

OBJECTIVES:

1)   To instruct workshop participants on the philosophical foundations and the

process of Appreciative Inquiry.

2)   To provide an opportunity for workshop participants to feel the positive

energy and synergy that is created through Appreciative Inquiry.

3)   To provide workshop participants an opportunity to gain skills in

appreciative learning so they will be able to use these ideas in their school.

Teaching Strategies

Think Pair Share

This is a paired activity which is effective in maximizing participant engagement

Request that each participant find a partner. Give each pair a topic to talk about together. After some time ask that each pair share their ideas with the large group.

Jig Saw

This is a small group activity which facilitates the efficient learning of large amount of information

Small groups are established. Each group is assigned a portion of a piece of information to read and then to teach the rest of the group. This activity facilitates the learning of large amounts of information in a short period of time.

Sort and Categorize

This activity facilitates the organization of large amounts of information

Often used in conjunction with a brainstorming activity, but can be used whenever large amounts of disjointed information needs to be organized in some fashion. Information is written on separate pieces of paper, group participants are asked to then categorize the information under specific headings. These headings can be decided prior to placing the information or the headings can be determined after the information is gathered. An effective method for this approach is to place each statement on long strips of paper that can be moved from one category to another as desired by the group.

Brainstorm

Is effective for generating ideas on a topic

The intent of this exercise is to ask participants to think freely about a given topic in order to generate as many diverse ideas as possible. The ideas are recorded without scrutiny during the brainstorm. Later after the idea generation is complete, the ideas can be grouped, discarded or expanded on.

Debrief

This strategy is used to share ideas, feelings and reactions

During a debrief participants are asked to share their reactions, ideas or feelings about a topic with others in the group.

Revitalizing School Through Generative Learning

Workshop Outline

Welcome and Introductions   (15 minutes)

Adaptive vs. Generative Learning   (30 minutes)
     A   Description
     B   Activity

The Problem with Problem Solving   (30 minutes)
     A   Quotable quotes
     B   Handout
     C   Activity

Appreciative Inquiry   (30 minutes)
     A   What is Appreciative Inquiry?
     B   The founding principles of AI
     C   A description of AI in action

Break   (15 minutes)

Appreciative Inquiry in Action   (60 minutes)
     A   Discover: Appreciative Stories and Common Themes

Lunch   (60 minutes)

Appreciative Inquiry in Action cont....
     B   Dream: Possibility Statements (60 minutes)

Break   (15 minutes)

     C   Design: Changing Structures   (45 minutes)
     D   Destiny: Sustaining Change   (45 minutes)

Reflections   (15 minutes)
     A   Activity

Closing

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Length, Materials and Activities	Suggested Script
15 minutes **Welcome and Introductions**	**Greet participants** *and welcome them.* **Introduce the workshop:** *If all participants are from the same school district review the background and reasons for the meeting, citing whatever local concerns and events have led them to become interested in the Appreciative Inquiry model of school improvement.* *Ask each participant to stand and introduce him or herself and if time permits, briefly explain his or her personal objective for attending the workshop.* **Inform participants** *of the day's agenda.*
Call attention to: **Handout # 1:** *"Workshop Agenda"* *Welcome and Introductions* *Adaptive vs. Generative Learning* *A Description* *B Activity* *The Problem with Problem Solving* *A Quotable quotes* *B Handout* *C Activity* *Appreciative Inquiry* *A What is Appreciative Inquiry* *B The founding principles of AI* *C The four phases of an AI* **Break** *Appreciative Inquiry in Action* *A Discover: Appreciative Stories and Common Themes* **Lunch Break**	

B	Dream:	Possibility Statements	

Break

C	Design:	Changing Structures	
D	Destiny:	Sustaining	

Reflections

Tell participants*:*
This workshop is designed to introduce a new concept of school improvement. This concept, borrowed from the school of business, looks at improving organizations by focusing on generating creative and innovative possibilities for a better future. Appreciative Inquiry is a process for developing and energizing an organization's potential for sustained growth. Through calling the organization's attention to the best it has experienced in the past and imagining the potential for the future, Appreciative Inquiry facilitates organizational participants to engage in an energized and innovative plan for the future, based on proven practices from the organization's past.

30 minutes
Part 1
 Generative Learning through Appreciative Inquiry

Display Slide #1:

"Modern organizations must create contexts in which members can continually learn and experiment, think systemically, question their assumptions and mental modes, engage in meaningful dialogue and create visions that energize action"
                    Frank Barrett

Display Slide #2:

Successful organizations are ones that innovate rather than merely adapt; they

"learn how to learn".
                                        Peter Senge

Call attention to Handout #2: *"Adaptive vs. Generative Learning"*

Adaptive vs. Generative Learning

Adaptive learning *focuses on responding to and coping with environmental demands in an effort to make incremental improvements to existing services, products, and markets. This kind of learning focuses on solving current problems without questioning the framework that generated them.*

Innovation on the other hand, requires ***generative learning****, which emphasizes continuous experimentation, systemic rather than fragmented thinking, and a willingness to think outside the accepted limitations of a problem. Generative learning goes beyond the framework that created current conditions. Adaptive learning takes these conditions for granted.*

Display Slide #3:

"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it"
                                        Albert Einstein

Teaching strategy "Think Pair Share"
Ask:
What do the words on the overhead screen mean to you? For example, what is the difference between adapting and innovating? Where have you seen the words "learn how to learn" before and what do these words mean as they apply to the development of your school district?

Teaching Strategy "In groups of four"
Ask:
What do you think of the distinction between adaptive and generative learning? On a scale of 1 to 10 (where one is a total

adaptive environment and 10 is totally generative) where do you think education, as an institution, operates today? What changes, if any, would be necessary to create an environment where teaching professionals operated in a generative learning environment?

Display Slide #4 :

"High performing organizations that engage in generative, innovative learning are competent at appreciating potential and possibility. They surpass the limitations of apparently "reasonable" solutions and consider rich possibilities not foreseeable within conventional analysis".

Frank Barrett

Tell participants:
Generative learning requires a different mindset. Generative learning involves the ability to see radical possibilities beyond the boundaries of problems as they present themselves in conventional terms. Generative learning requires thinking outside of the box.

30 minutes
Part 2:
The Problem with Problem Solving

Tell Participants:
An appreciative approach to organizational developments makes a shift away from problem solving approaches and focuses instead on what is working well within the organization. By focussing on what is working well, people are more able to think outside the box and look toward innovation and possibility.

Display Slide #5:

"We often spend so much time coping with problems along our path that we only have a dim or even inaccurate view of what's really important to us"

Peter Senge

Display Slide #6:

"The problem-solving approach directs attention to the "worst of what is," constantly examining what is wrong with an organization. The assumption is that if the problems are fixed, then the desired future will automatically unfold"

David Cooperrider

Display Slide #7:

"In problem solving it is assumed that something is broken, fragmented, not whole, and that it needs to be fixed. Thus, the function of problem solving is to integrate, stabilize, and help raise to its full potential the workings of the status quo"

David Cooperrider

Display Slide #8:

"All of the facts belong only to the problem, not to its solution"

Wittgenstein

Display Slide #9:

"A problem solver tries to make something go away, while a creator tries to bring something new into being"

Frank Barrett

Call attention to Handout #3: *"The Problem with Problem Solving"*

The Problem with Problem Solving

In the rational tradition of the post-Enlightenment era, we have developed a capacity to analyze situations and solve problems. We notice what is wrong, search for causes, and propose solutions. This mechanistic approach to inquiry hinges on the belief that problems can be isolated, broken down into parts, repaired, and then

restored to wholeness. Unfortunately, the isolated parts often appear to have no interconnection. While analytic problem solving works well for improving technical difficulties and has led to many of the advances we enjoy today, this approach to learning and innovation has limitations:

Dwelling on Problems is Inherently a Conservative, Limiting Approach to Inquiry.

We often approach problems from the very mind set that created them in the first place. Accepting the constraints that generated the problem rarely leads to a permanent solution; instead, it often leads to patterns of coping. People learn to live with diminished expectations, enduring the limitations that generated the problems that they continue to anticipate. They learn to do what is feasible, rather than inquire into creative possibilities. Operating from a problem-solving mentality risks reaffirming the status quo.

A Problem Focus Furthers a Deficiency Orientation

Operating in a problem oriented framework, we assume that something must be wrong somewhere in the system. Our deftness with problem-oriented language draws attention to the inevitable breakdowns. In fact, managers often learn to think of themselves as problem solvers, basing their self-worth on what problems they found and what solutions they proposed. As a result, they fail to develop a way of talking about the strengths of a system. Organizations that expend great energy fixing what is wrong often create the sense that no matter how many problems are solved, something is bound to go wrong soon. Such an approach might generate a cadre of problem experts and heroes, but it can also lead to a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness: no matter how well we do, something will always go wrong.

Problem Solving Results In Further Separation Between Stakeholders

A problem-oriented mindset often does not facilitate a cooperative approach to learning. If a breakdown occurs, the fault lies elsewhere. When inquiry is focused on fixing someone else's problem – combined with the goal of arriving at the "correct" solution – people often develop defensive postures, seeking to escape blame, competing for the honour of being the one who solved the problem. Such defensive spirals cause greater separation between people than the problem itself did, making it difficult to build trust. People become invested in defending their positions, rather than in asking themselves how their thinking is creating the problem at hand.

Teaching Strategy: "Jig Saw"
Have participants break into four jig saw groups, assign one group to read each section of the handout. Ask each group to discuss the section and then to share what they found with the whole group. Encourage participants to give personal examples of where the ideas presented may have occurred in their own work places.

30 minutes
Part 3: Appreciative Inquiry

Introduce Appreciative Inquiry
Tell participants: *Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational development (OD) intervention. The goal of an appreciative inquiry is to facilitate the development of sustained growth and innovation within an organization. This intervention takes a unique approach to organizational reform. Instead of seeking to solve problems within organizations AI focuses on what is working well and seeks to expose and enhance the positive aspects of the organization. AI is based on the premise that generative and innovation energies are created when*

organizations take an appreciative approach to development and growth.

Display Slide #10:

If problem solving mentality leads to adaptive learning and re-establishing the status quo what kind of thinking leads to generative learning and innovation?

Display Slide #11:

High performing organizations have learned to escape from problem solving patterns of inquiry, finding ways to nurture "a new and stronger life force" that inquires into new possibilities.

Display Slide #12:

Appreciative Inquiry begins with the assumption that something in the organization is working well. When engaged in appreciative learning, managers attempt to discover, describe, and explain those exceptional moments in which the system functioned well. The inquiry is then focused on how successes from the past can be built on to provide insight and direction for an innovative future for the organization.

Introduce Theoretical Foundations
Appreciative Inquiry is firmly grounded in the theoretical underpinnings of social construction theory. Social constructionism is a contemporary theory developed by social scientists. Appreciative inquiry is founded on five guiding principles. These principles help to give clarity and direction to the application of this approach.

Display Slide #13:

Constructionist Principle
It is possible to create or construct a change

|	
in the way a group experiences their organization by engaging people in conversations about it.	
Display Slide #14:	
Simultaneity Principle	
Human systems grow in the direction of what is highlighted, talked about and inspiring. "The questions we ask set the stage for what we find, and what we discover becomes the linguistic material, the stories out of which the future is conceived, conversed about and constructed."	
Copperrider and Whitney	*Tell the story of "Imagine Chicago"*
Display Slide # 15:	
Poetic Principle	
There are no right or wrong directions to organizational life. Organizations are free to create the reality that is appealing and inspiring to them. "An organization's story is constantly being co-authored. Moreover, pasts, presents or futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration or interpretation – precisely like, for example, the endless interpretive possibilities in a good piece of poetry or a biblical text."	
Cooperrider and Whitney	*Tell the story of "Avon Mexico"(from Cooperrider and Whitney)*
Display Slide # 16:	
Anticipatory Principle	
Positive thoughts, feelings and images bring about positive action.	
Example: Pygmalion effect in classrooms.	
Display Slide #17:	
Positive Principle	
Generative energy is created when inquiry is focused on appreciating the positive, searching for possibilities and exposing that which is inspirational.	*Tell the story of my school experience with Appreciative Inquiry (from background paper)*

Display Slide #18: *Appreciative Inquiry "4D Cycle"*

Figure 1
Appreciative Inquiry "4D Cycle"
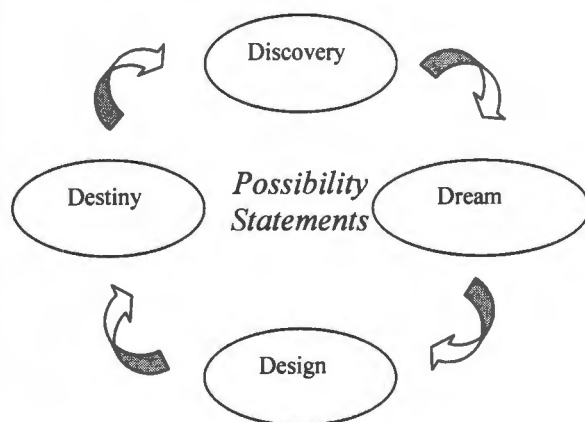
Introduce Appreciative Inquiry Process
Appreciative Inquiry is a four stage process designed specifically for organizations, to promote development and sustained growth. The process begins with initiating dialogue about discovery; seeking to understand "the best of what is" in an organization. Carefully constructed questions, presented to participants, invite them to examine what organizationally works, what is inspiring and what core values the group shares. Participants are asked to describe, in detail, stories that highlight the success of the organization. From these stories of appreciation, common themes or "statements of possibility" are selected for further inquiry. From these statements participants are asked to dream, to project a vision of the future, incorporating "what the world is calling for", as well as their mutual desired results. The next phase asks participants to design the structures and policies necessary to create the ideal organization, one capable of magnifying the positive and realizing the articulated new dream. Finally, inquiry is focused on

destiny; the structures, qualities and elements of an organization's positive core that will sustain people to effect positive change and growth.

Ask participants to refer to Handout #4: *"The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry" and to take a moment to read through it. Tell them they will have an opportunity to experience a mini Appreciative Inquiry based on their own stories of appreciation after the break.*

Materials:
1) *Handout #4: "The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry"*

Call attention to:
Handout #4: *"The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry"*

The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry

The Discovery Phase
An Appreciative Inquiry is initiated within an organization by asking a series of carefully constructed questions, often in an interview format. These questions encourage organizational members to relate their peak experience, times when they felt most alive, engaged and productive, within their organization. Questions will be tailored to each organization, however three classic questions are:
1) *Think back through your career in this organization. Locate a moment that was a high point, when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe how you felt, and what made the situation possible.*
2) *Without being humble, describe what you value most about yourself, your work, and your organization.*
3) *Describe your three concrete wishes for the future of this organization.*

The Dream Phase

During the dream phase of AI, participants are encouraged to imagine what the world is calling them to become. The group begins by talking and dreaming about what could be, based on what has already happened. During this time the group also creates "statements of possibility". These statements describe an ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate and create the potential for people do more of what works. Criteria for the statements of possibility are:

1) *Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge or innovate?*
2) *Is it grounded in examples?*
3) *Is it what we want? Will people defend it or get passionate about it?*
4) *Is it stated in affirmative, bold terms and in present tense (as if it were already happening)?*

The Design Phase

This stage of the inquiry is dedicated to the development of how to. Questions related to what would be ideal, how we can make it work and what conceptual, behaviour, operational changes we need to make, are asked. It is at this stage that organizational participants are encouraged to; examine all of the structures and status quo assumptions underlying the design of the organization, work together to construct a design that maximizes the qualities of the positive core, and enable the accelerated realization of the organization's dream.

The Destiny Phase

Finally, inquiry is focused on destiny; the structures, qualities and elements of an organization that will facilitate people to continue to appreciate the power of the positive and to let go of the negative. Systems are developed that include elaborate and timely feedback so that members are able to sense that they are contributing to a meaningful purpose. In particular it is important for people to experience progress,

to see that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal; they are then more likely to feel a sense of hope and empowerment.

Whole Group Debrief:
Ask participants to debrief the Appreciative Inquiry process as a whole group. Refer to "chart display".

Chart Display:

On a separate piece of chart paper write each phase of an Appreciative Inquiry. For each of the phases ask the group to answer the following questions:
  1) *What do participants do in this phase?*
  2) *What is the intended outcome?*

Break (15 minutes)

Part: 4 Applying Appreciative Inquiry

60 minutes
  A) **Discovery Phase: Appreciating the best of "What is"**

Ask participants *to work in groups of three: Participants will work in triads. Each person will take a turn at the following roles: interviewee, interviewer and recorder. The interviewer will ask the interviewee questions from Handout # 5. During this time the recorder will take summary notes capturing the flavour of the interview with descriptive statements, notable ideas and quotable quotes. At the conclusion of the interviews, the recorder will retell the highlights of the interview to the whole group.*

Relate to the group:
As you participate in the interview in each of the three roles, you will probably find that you want to ask other questions, share your experiences, or otherwise actively

participate in the conversation; you are encouraged to do so. This is the difference between inquiry and standard rules of interviewing. For those trained in interviewing techniques, one tries to be the neutral, unbiased recorder. In Appreciative Inquiry, you do not have to follow that rule because one of AI's underlying assumptions is that by asking questions of an organization or group, we influence the group in some way. It is therefore OK to converse with your partner in the excitement of the moment.

Note to the facilitator: *Conducting quality "appreciative interviews" is not as easy as it looks. Simply talking about "peak" experiences can easily degenerate into social banter and cliché-ridden interactions. The hallmark of successful appreciative interviews is that the interviewee has at least one new insight into what made it a peak experience. To facilitate this the interviewer must suspend his or her own assumptions and not be content with superficial explanations given by the interviewer. It is most helpful if the interviewer questions the obvious as if they were an outsider engaged in a "first time" experience.*

Materials:
   1) Handout #5: " The Appreciative
        Interview"
   2)   Pencil or pen

Call attention to:
Handout #5: *"The Appreciative Interview"*

The Appreciative Interview

It is important that this interview becomes less of a traditional question and answer exercise and more of a rich story telling experience. It is from the rich details of personal stories of peak experiences, that we are able to expose the motivating forces

behind an organizations past successes. It will be these forces that will help us pave the way to a more energized and prosperous future for our school district.

It is therefore the interviewer's role to probe for detail and to encourage the interviewee to provide the details of the experience. Imagine you have never worked in a school system and listen to the story with a curious ear. Don't be content with superficial explanations given by the person you are interviewing, try to elicit details. It is also quite acceptable to contribute to the interviewee's story by relating similar experiences or interjecting with inquisitive responses.

It is the interviewee's role to respond to the interview questions with as much personal detail and story like quality as possible.

Task: Working with an interview partner and a recorder, take turns interviewing each other with the following questions.

1) *Reflect on your time with this school district.*
    i) *What have been the high points for you?*
    ii) *Select one high point, a time when you felt most alive, most happy; a time when you felt you were making a difference and doing creative, useful, meaningful work.*
    iii) *Describe the story around the moment.*

2) *Co-operative Relationships*
    i) *Identify a scenario, which you feel demonstrates the positive aspects of working together, co-operating to get something done.*
    ii) *What was the scenario?*

       iii) *Who was involved, why did it work?*
       iv) *What were you doing?*
       v) *What were other people doing?*

3) *Types of communication*
       i) *What do you value most about effective communication?*
       ii) *When does this happen for you?*
       iii) *Who and what is involved in the best types of communication?*
       iv) *Why is effective communication good for you and the district?*

4) *Hopes for the future*
       i) *What does a new direction for the district have the capacity to become?*
       ii) *How could working together make a difference?*
       iii) *What do you see as priorities?*
       iv) *What part could you play in making these priorities happen?*

5) *What do you value most about:*
       i) *Yourself?*
       ii) *The people that you work with?*
       iii) *The school district?*

6) *What are your positive images for the future function and form of the district?*
       i) *List 3 wishes.*

Summary Notes for the Recorder:

Please record highlights from the interview. This can include statement summaries, quotes

or important, thoughts, feelings and ideas.
***Lunch Break** (60 minutes)*

60 minutes
  A) Discovery Phase cont…
  *Common Themes: The Energizing
  Forces!*

Welcome Participants back
*Tell the group that we have now launched
into an Appreciative Inquiry and that the
afternoon will be spent continuing through
the process. This process is an abridged
version. The goal is for the group to get a
sense of the power of this approach and to
hopefully intrigue people into looking
further into the potential benefits of
Appreciative Inquiry for their schools.*

Display Slide #19:

Discover

*"The telling of stories helps create a sense of
wonder; hearing a good story fills one with
delight. Stories get beyond the hard
quantifiable data and language of
organizational assessments to the most
inspiring moments of organizational life.
They carry meaning and truths, which elude
even the most sophisticated information
systems. Members then extract from the
stories core values and best practices upon
which to build a vision of the future. This
stage is called Discovery"*
<div align="right">

Claudia Liebler
</div>

Display Slide #20: "Motivating Forces"

*The common themes and unique circumstance
of success from the post are the motivating
forces that will mobilize people to do more of
what has worked. These motivating forces
will provide the energy and commitment to
drive a desired vision of the future.*

***Ask Participants** to share their findings:
When the trios finish the inquiry, there is a
lot of information between them. Each story
will have personal meaning, but also will*

have common meaning. It is important at this point that individual stories are shared with an ear for uniqueness as well as for common themes. The unique stories of success will provide new insight; the "data" for new possibility and potential. The goal is to share that information with the larger group in order to uncover common themes of circumstances when the group performed well and to stretch the groups thinking about how business could be done in the future. We want to uncover these circumstances in order to know how to do more of what worked and to bring new ideas and insights to the forefront. The common themes and unique possibilities become the motivating forces from the past that will propel a vision for the future

*If the size of the group permits, have all members share the most exciting information they learned from their interviews. You might ask each person to share the best story, or the most "quotable quote". **Encourage participants to use full sentence quotations and even small stories.***

***Ask participants** to listen to the stories with an ear for common themes, things that have been experienced as strengths in the organization, the unique circumstances of success.*

Note to the facilitator:
Sharing information to uncover themes is messy. There is no checklist to follow; you have to work the process. This can make people very nervous. They may initially regard the process as a waste of time, because they can't see what they are going to do with the unorganized mess of information. Transforming the information into a usable form follows, but first, the themes must surface. And this will happen if you see the process through: Sharing will reveal common threads of success and new

insight will occur.

Assign participants to groups of 6
Teaching Strategy *"Sort and Categorize"*

Step #1: Determine the Motivating Forces
After all participants have had an opportunity to share the highlights of their partner's story, assign them to groups of 6. Each group will have two tasks. The first is to identify and discuss as many common themes from the stories as they can remember and to write each theme on a separate strip of paper. The second task is to identify and discuss the unique circumstances of success, and to write a statement about each circumstance on a separate slip of paper.

Step #2: Sort the Motivating Forces
Ask a member from each group to read out their common themes and unique circumstances. The strips should then be brought to the front of the room and placed on large pieces of chart paper with pieces of tape. Ask participants to sort their themes by placing them with like statements presented by other groups.

Step #3 Categorize the Motivating Forces
Read off the statements on each piece of chart paper. Ask the group if all the statements belong together. If some statements do not belong, take them off the chart paper and place them on the appropriate chart. Ask the participants to name a category for each group of statements, and then move to the next group and so on.

Step #4 Discover New Insight
Ask each group to discuss any new insights each member may have come to by participating in the appreciative interview and by listening to the other participant's experiences. Ask that one member from

Materials:
   1) Long strips of paper
   2) Felt markers
   3) Chart paper
   4) Tape

each group share these new insights with the whole group.

Background for facilitator
Creating possibility statements is a key step of organizational transformation. We take what we know and we talk about what could be. We stretch what we are to help us be more than what we have already been successful at. We envision a future that is a collage of the "bests." Because we have derived the future from the reality of the past, we know it can happen. We can see it, we know what it feels like, and we move to a collective, collaborative view of where we are going. You can't skip the step of engaging the entire group to write the statements, because this is where the momentum occurs. Through the conversation necessary to reach agreement on the possibility statements, everyone leaves their stamp.

*The idea behind the group creation of possibility statements is to move **the individual will** to **group will**. Group will creates the synergy that results in a group achieving more than the sum of what individuals could. Group will occurs when the group shares a clear goal that all members believe will happen and accordingly behave to make happen. This occurs only if the entire group is a part of the process and this takes time. Once people become excited about the process through the questions, they will make the time to have the group discussion. They realize quickly that this is not another fad of the month.*

A Note of Caution!
When you ask people appreciative questions, you touch something very important in them. They don't always give politically correct answers. They give heartfelt answers because we ask soulful

questions. *This information should be treated with dignity and respect or the process can result in more harm than good to the morale of organizational members.*

B) Dream Phase: Envisioning "What Might Be"

Relate to the group: *The next step is to transform the energizing forces into actions that will build on the successful circumstances from the past to create possibilities for a prosperous future. To do this, the group begins by talking and dreaming about what could be, based on what has already happened. During this time the group also creates "statements of possibility". Statements of possibility describe an ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate that creates the potential to do more of what works.*

Display Slide #21:

Dream
"Use the interview data as an artist uses a palette of colours – to create an image. These images emerge from a connection to the best of the past that the appreciative interviews have uncovered. With these moments actively in mind, members create a vision of the future organization and its impact in the world by developing (statements of possibility) that stretch the realm of the status quo, challenge common assumptions or routines, and suggest real possibilities"
Claudia Liebler

Display Slide #22:

Crafting Statements of Possibility

Crafting statements of possibility about the appreciative topic will capture people's energy and excitement. We're not trying to extract themes from the data or categorize responses and add them up. We're trying to

generate new theory that will have high face value to members of the organization.
                                                    Gervase Bushe

Materials:
  1) *Chart paper*
  2) *Felt markers*
  3) *Tape*
  4) *Handout #6: "Statements of Possibility"*

Handout # 6: "Statements of Possibility"

Statements of possibility are based on our successes from the past combined with our new insights and dreams for the future.

Part A:
Discuss with your group the following questions:
  1) *What is "education" calling us to become?*
     (recall our earlier discussion regarding generative learning)
  2) *What are our dreams for the future of our school district? (List as many as you can).*

Working in groups of 6
Teaching Strategy: "Brainstorm"
Ask participants to brainstorm their ideas and answers to the questions on Handout # 6 Part A: "Statements of Possibility".

Ask participants to share their group's ideas with the whole group.

Working in the same groups of 6
On large pieces of chart paper, ask each group to write statements of possibility based on the "motivating forces" listed on one of the categories. Each group will be assigned one category and will develop one or more statements based on the criteria in Handout # 6: Part B: "Statements of Possibility".

Materials:
1) Chart paper, felt markers
2) Handout #6: Statements of Possibility

Handout #6: *"Statements of Possibility"*

Statements of possibility are based on our successes from the past combined with our new insights and dreams for the future.

Part B:

Use the common themes or "motivating forces" brought forward by the group and write at least one statement of possibility. Here are some guidelines to follow:
1) Given the stories of success from our past, with your group, envision what might be an idealized future for the school district.
2) When writing the statement of possibility, apply "what if" to all the common themes your group has before you. Then write affirmative present-tense statements incorporating the common themes.

Remember the criteria for possibility statements:
1) Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge or innovate?
2) Is it grounded in examples?
3) Is it what we want? Will people defend it or get passionate about it?
4) Is it stated in affirmative, bold terms and in present tense (as if it were already happening)?

Some examples:

1) We contract out more mundane tasks, allowing employees to develop their skills.
2) We follow up with the client and ask

them how the product was used, whether it was effective, and if they would have done anything differently. We put this on a tracking system.

3) *Whenever we get feedback from a client, we send e-mail to everyone.*

Display Slide #23:

Five Point Scale

(5) I would get passionate about and defend

Ask Participants to Share their Statements

After each group has come up with at least one possibility statement that they feel has captured the common themes and motivating forces they have been assigned, ask that each group share their statement with the rest of the group. Allow time for group participation to contribute to the construction of a statement that reflects input from the entire group.

Ask Participants to Give Input to the Statements

After each statement of possibility has been read and has received input from the group, display the statements along the walls of the room.

Ask Participants to Prioritize the Statements.

Inform participants that today we will be focusing on bringing only one of the statements forward, as we continue the Appreciative Inquiry. Should we actually be going through the process as an organizational reform initiative, we would be looking to include between three and five statements for further inquiry.

In order to select one statement ask participants to rate each of the statements from one to five. (See slide #23). Give participants time now to roam the room and to give a rating of 1 to 5 for each statement.

this statement.
(4) My heart would fully engage in this statement.
(3) I would support this statement.
(2) This statement does not intrigue my heart.
(1) I would have trouble being engaged in this statement.

Break *(15 minutes)*

Reconvene Group
Tell participants that the group must now choose one of the possibility statements to carry forward into the next phase of the Appreciative Inquiry. Choose the statement that the group has the strongest commitment to.
Selection suggestions:
   1) The statement with the most #5's
   2) The statement with the least #1's
   3) Statements with zero #1's

Note: The group may want to wordsmith a statement prior to taking it forward, feel free to do so.

C) _Design Phase:_ Designing "What Should Be"

Ask participants *to refer back to Handout #4: "The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry". Read together the description of the design phase from the slide.*

Display Slide #24 :

The Design Phase

   This stage of the inquiry is dedicated to the development of how to. Questions related to what would be ideal, how we can make it work and what conceptual, behaviour, operational changes we need to make are asked. It is at this stage that organizational participants are encouraged to; examine all of the structures and status quo assumptions underlying the design of the organization, to work together to construct a design that

maximizes the qualities of the positive core, and enable the accelerated realization of the organization's dream.

Materials:
1) *Chart paper*
2) *Felt pens*

Working in groups of 6
Ask participants to discuss with their group two or three fundamental changes required for the new vision to be launched in the district. Ask each group to record their ideas on a piece of chart paper. Remind the group that they are to be innovative and in doing so may find it necessary to restructure existing process or to invent completely new ones. Ask each group to share their ideas with the whole group. When each group has shared their ideas, by a show of hands, vote on the top three fundamental changes that are required for the new vision to succeed. Provide time for group discussion!

Inform the group *that they will be divided into "innovation teams" to look at the short term; mid term and long term processes that will be needed to implement the possibility statement. Remind them to base their planning around the three fundamental changes the group decided on.*

Divide the participants into three "innovation teams".
Team one will focus on "immediate innovations", team two, on" innovations requiring six to eight months to establish" and team three "innovations to carry the district into the next year and beyond". Then subdivide these teams into groups of 4 or 5.

Call attention to Handout # 7: *"Creating a New Vision"*

Creating a New Vision

You and your group are part of an innovation team assigned to develop the actions, policies

and structures required to implement the new direction your district is taking. Recall, that your district has decided to implement the following statement as part of this new direction:

(Write possibility statement here)

    My team is working on the following:

☐ *Immediate innovations (next two months).*

☐ *Innovations requiring six to eight months to establish.*

☐ *Innovations to carry the district into the next year and beyond.*

    1) *What steps will we need to take?*
    2) *How will we take them?*
    3) *Who will need to take what steps?*
    4) *When will each step be taken?*

Ask Participants to:
Step 1: Combine sub teams
Ask sub teams to come together and combine their ideas.
Step 2: Present the New Vision Plan
Ask each team to present their part of the plan to the whole group.

Allow time for discussion.
Perhaps even pose the questions: Could these things really happen? Could some of them? What would it take? What would each of us need to do to contribute?

D) **_Destiny Phase: Innovating "What Will Be"_**

Ask participants *to refer back to Handout #4: "The Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry". Read together the description of the destiny phase from the slide.*

Call attention to Slide #25:

    The Destiny Phase

Finally, inquiry is focused on destiny; the structures, qualities and elements of an organization that will facilitate people to continue to appreciate the power of the positive and to let go of the negative. Systems are developed that include elaborate and timely feedback so that members are able to sense that they are contributing to a meaningful purpose. In particular it is important for people to experience progress, to see that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal; they are then more likely to feel a sense of hope and empowerment.

Call attention to Handout #8: *"What is our Destiny?"*

What is Our Destiny

Performance
1) *What decisions about the future of our school district did the group make today? (List a few)*
2) *What are some performance indicators for our new direction?*
3) *How will we know we have made a successful transition to the new direction?*

Communication
1) *How can we communicate our intentions for the district?*
2) *To whom will we communicate what?*
3) *When will we communicate these intentions?*

Achievements
1) *What key achievements, initiatives, processes, products, and relationships are we prepared to be measured by?*
2) *By whom?*
3) *When?*

Ask participants *to go back into their "sub team" groups of 4 or 5 and to complete the assignment on Handout # 8: "What is our destiny?"*

Personal Commitment
   1) *What are the steps I need to take as an individual to contribute to the new direction of our school district?*

Ask someone from each group *to report out. After everyone has shared their group's ideas, encourage discussion with the whole group. Does this feel real? What would make it more real?*

Note to the facilitator: *It can be very helpful for people to have an opportunity to reflect after learning or experiencing something new. This is especially powerful if this reflection can then be shared through discussion, with the group. Evaluating one's own experience and learning from other's experience provides a forum for solidifying the concepts learned and presents a greater potential that the new skills will be transferred.*

Tell participants *that you would like some feedback on their thoughts and feelings about their experience with Appreciative Inquiry and that you are curious about how they might use these ideas in their schools. Tell them you would like them to reflect on their experience and to ponder how they might use the ideas in their schools. Ask participants to share with the group in order that others may benefit from their creative ideas.*

Call attention to handout #8: *"Reflections"*

Thank you for taking part in the Appreciative Inquiry into this school district. I am interested in your reflections on this process and would very much appreciate your feedback.

   1) *What did you like best about the process of Appreciative Inquiry?*
   2) *When you were the most comfortable*

about the process, what part of the process were you in, what were you doing, what was happening around you?

3) *If you were given three wishes about the experience, what would they be?*

4) *The purpose of this experience was to give you an opportunity to experience a unique approach to organizational development. From your perspective, do you think that this experience was valuable? How?*

5) *If you found value in this experience, what are three ideas you learned today you might try using in your school?*

Closure:

Relate to the participants that you hoped they found the day to be enlightening, encouraging and energizing. Summarize that Appreciative Inquiry is a new way of developing organizations and that it may feel strange or even somewhat unreal. However, the proponents of this approach stand behind its ability to motivate, energize and inspire to a renewed sense of commitment and innovation. This happens because the focus is on what the organization and the people in it are doing right, coupled with a forum that allows people to express their dreams and visions for a better future.

Thank participants for their hard work and wish them good luck in their future endeavours with Appreciative Inquiry. This may be a good time to make reference to the list of resources, which can be found at the back of their handout packages.

Revitalizing Schools Through Generative Learning

Workshop Agenda

Welcome and Introductions.

Adaptive vs. Generative Learning

    A   Description
    B   Activity

The Problem with Problem Solving

    A   Quotable quotes
    B   Handout
    C   Activity

Appreciative Inquiry

    A   What is Appreciative Inquiry?
    B   The founding principles of AI
    C   A description of AI in action

Appreciative Inquiry in Action

    A   Discover: Appreciative Stories and Common Themes

Lunch

Appreciative Inquiry in Action cont....

    B   Dream: Possibility Statements
    C   Design: Changing Structures
    D   Destiny: Sustaining Change

Reflections

Adaptive vs. Generative Learning

Adaptive learning focuses on responding to and coping with environmental demands in an effort to make incremental improvements to existing services, products, and markets. This kind of learning focuses on solving current problems without questioning the framework that generated them.

*Innovation on the other hand, requires **generative learning**, which emphasizes continuous experimentation, systemic rather than fragmented thinking, and a willingness to think outside the accepted limitations of a problem. Generative learning goes beyond the framework that created current conditions. Adaptive learning takes these conditions for granted.*

The Problem with Problem Solving

In the rational tradition of the post-Enlightenment era, we have developed a capacity to analyze situations and solve problems. We notice what is wrong, search for causes, and propose solutions. This mechanistic approach to inquiry hinges on the belief that problems can be isolated, broken down into parts, repaired, and then restored to wholeness. Unfortunately, the isolated parts often appear to have no interconnection. . While analytic problem solving works well for improving technical difficulties and has led to many of the advances we enjoy today, this approach to learning and innovation has limitations:

D welling on Problems is Inherently a Conservative, Limiting Approach to Inquiry.

We often approach problems from the very mind set that created them in the first place. Accepting the constraints that generated the problem rarely leads to a permanent solution; instead, it often leads to patterns of coping. People learn to live with diminished expectations, enduring the limitations that generated the problems that they continue to anticipate. They learn to do what is feasible, rather than inquire into creative possibilities. Operating from a problem-solving mentality risks reaffirming the status quo.

A Problem Focus Furthers a Deficiency Orientation

Operating in a problem oriented framework, we assume that something must be wrong somewhere in the system. Our deftness with problem-oriented language draws attention to the inevitable breakdowns. In fact, managers often learn to think of themselves as problem solvers, basing their self-worth on what problems they found and what solutions they proposed. As a result, they fail to develop a way of talking about the strengths of a system. Organizations that expend great energy fixing what is wrong often create the sense that no matter how many problems are solved, something is bound to go wrong soon. Such an approach might generate a cadre of problem experts and heroes, but it can also lead to a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness: no matter how well we do, something will always go wrong.

P roblem Solving Results In Further Separation Between Stakeholders

A problem-oriented mindset often does not facilitate a cooperative approach to learning. If a breakdown occurs, the fault lies elsewhere. When inquiry is focused on fixing someone else's problem – combined with the goal of arriving at the "correct" solution – people often develop defensive postures, seeking to escape blame, competing for the honour of being the one who solved the problem. Such defensive spirals cause greater separation between people than the problem itself did, making it difficult to build trust. People become invested in defending their positions, rather than in asking themselves how their thinking is creating the problem at hand.

The Four Phases of

Appreciative Inquiry

Discovery Phase

An Appreciative Inquiry is initiated within an organization by asking a series of carefully constructed questions, often in an interview format. These questions encourage organizational members to relate their peak experience, times when they felt most alive, engaged and productive, within their organization. Questions will be tailored to each organization, however three classic questions are:

1) Think back through your career in this organization. Locate a moment that was a high point, when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe how you felt, and what made the situation possible.

2) Without being humble, describe what you value most about yourself, your work, and your organization.

3) Describe your three concrete wishes for the future of this organization.

Dream Phase

During the dream phase of AI, participants are encouraged to imagine what the world is calling them to become. The group begins by talking and dreaming about what could be, based on what has already happened. During this time the group also creates possibility statements. These statements describe an ideal state of circumstances that will foster the climate and create the potential for people do more of what works. Criteria for statements of possibility are:

1) Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge or innovate?

2) Is it grounded in examples?

3) Is it what we want? Will people defend it or get passionate about it?

4) Is it stated in affirmative, bold terms and in present tense (as if it were already happening)?

Design Phase

This stage of the inquiry is dedicated to the development of how to. Questions related to what would be ideal, how we can make it work and what conceptual, behaviour, operational changes we need to make, are asked. It is at this stage that organizational participants are encouraged to; examine all of the structures and status quo assumptions underlying the design of the organization, work together to construct a design that maximizes the qualities of the positive core, and enable the accelerated realization of the organization's dream.

Destiny Phase

Finally, inquiry is focused on destiny; the structures, qualities and elements of an organization that will facilitate people to continue to appreciate the power of the positive and to let go of the negative. Systems are developed that include elaborate and timely feedback so that members are able to sense that they are contributing to a meaningful purpose. In particular it is important for people to experience progress, to see that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal; they are then more likely to feel a sense of hope and empowerment.

The Appreciative Interview

It is important that this interview becomes less of a traditional question and answer exercise and more of a story telling experience. It is from the rich details of personal stories of peak experiences, that we are able to expose the energizing forces behind an organizations past successes. It will be these energizing forces that will help us pave the way to a more energized and prosperous future for our school district.

It is therefore the interviewers role to probe for detail and to encourage the interviewee to provide the details of the experience. Imagine you have never worked in a school system and listen to the story with a curious ear. Don't be content with superficial explanations given by the person you are interviewing, try to elicit details. It is also quite acceptable to contribute to the interviewee's story be relating similar experiences or interjecting with inquisitive responses.

It is the interviewee's role to respond to the interview questions with as much personal detail and story like quality as possible.

Working with an interview partner and a recorder, take turns interviewing each other with the following questions:

1) Reflect on your time with this school district.

    i)   What have been the high points for you?

    ii)   Select one high point, a time when you felt most alive, most happy; a time when you felt you were making a difference and doing creative, useful, meaningful work.

    iii)   Describe the story around the moment.

2) Co-operative Relationships

i)   Identify a scenario, which you feel demonstrates the positive aspects of working together, co-operating to get something done.

ii)   What was the scenario?

iii)   Who was involved, why did it work?

iv)   What were you doing?

v)   What were other people doing?

3) Types of communication

     i)   What do you value most about effective communication?

     ii)   When does this happen for you?

     iii)   Who and what is involved in the best types of communication?

     iv)   Why is effective communication good for you and the district?

4) Hopes for the future

     i)   What does a new direction for the district have the capacity to become?

     ii)   How could working together make a difference?

     iii)   What do you see as priorities?

     iv)   What part could you play in making these priorities happen?

5) What do you value most about:

     i)   Yourself?

     ii)   The people that you work with?

     iii)   The school district?

6) What are your positive images for the future function and form of the district?

     i)   List 3 wishes.

Recorder' s Task

Please record highlights from the interview. This can include statement summaries, quotes or important, thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Statements of Possibility

Our Successes From the Past Combined with Our New Insights and Dreams for the Future

Part A: *Discuss with your group the following questions:*

1) *What is "education" calling us to become?*

   (recall our earlier discussion regarding generative learning)

2) *What are our dreams for the future of our school district? (List as many as you can).*

Part B: *Use the common themes or "motivating forces" brought forward by the group and write at least one statements of possibility. Here are some guidelines to follow:*

1) *Given the stories of success from our past, with your group, envision what might be an idealized future for the school district.*

2) *When writing statements of possibility, apply "what if" to all the common themes your group has before you. Then write affirmative present-tense statements incorporating the common themes.*

Remember the criteria for statements of possibility

1) *Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge or innovate?*

2) *Is it grounded in examples?*

3) *Is it what we want? Will people defend it or get passionate about it?*

4) *Is it stated in affirmative, bold terms and in present tense (as if it were already happening)?*

Some Samples

1) We contract out more mundane tasks, allowing employees to develop their skills.

2) We follow up with the client and ask them how the product was used, whether it was effective, and if they would have done anything differently. We put this on a tracking system.

3) Whenever we get feedback from a client, we send e-mail to everyone.

New Vision Plan

You and your group are part of an innovation team assigned to develop the actions, policies and structures required to implement the new direction your district is taking. Recall, that your district has decided to implement the following statement as part of this new direction:

(Write *statement of possibility here*)

My team is working on the following:

☐ Immediate innovations (next two months).

☐ Innovations requiring six to eight months to establish.

☐ Innovations to carry the district into the next year and beyond.

1) What steps will we need to take?

2) How will we take them?

3) Who will need to take what steps?

4) When will each step be taken?

Appreciative Inquiry

Reflections

Thank you for taking part in the Appreciative Inquiry into this school district. I am interested in your reflections on this process and would very much appreciate your feedback.

1) *What did you like best about the process of Appreciative Inquiry?*

2) *When you were the most comfortable about the process, what part of the process were you in, what were you doing, what was happening around you?*

3) *If you were given three wishes about the experience, what would they be?*

4) *The purpose of this experience was to give you an opportunity to experience a unique approach to organizational development. From your perspective, do you think that this experience was valuable? How?*

5) *If you found value in this experience, what are three ideas you learned today you might try using in your school?*

References

Barrett, F. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. Organizational Dynamics, 24 (2), 36-50.

Brown, B. (1998). Imagine Chicago. In S. Hammond & C. Royal (Eds.), Lessons from the field applying appreciative inquiry (pp. 77-89). Plano, TX: Practical Press.

Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D. (1998). A positive revolution in change: Appreciative inquiry. Taos, NM: The Taos Institute.

Cooperrider, D. (1998). Application of theory: Getting started. In S. Hammond & C. Royal (Eds.), Lessons from the field; Applying appreciative inquiry (pp. 147-159). Plano, TX: Practical Press.

Hammond, S. (1996). The thin book of appreciative inquiry. Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing.

Gergen, K. (1994). Realities and relationships: Sounding in social construction. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Liebler, C. (date unknown). Getting comfortable with appreciative inquiry. Unpublished Manuscript.

Mellish, L. (1998). Appreciative inquiry. Training Journal, Nov., 12-16.

Ryan, F., & Soven, M., & Smither, J., & Sullivan, W., & VanBuskirk, W. (1999). Appreciative inquiry: Using personal narratives for initiating school reform. The Clearing House, 1999, 72 (3), 164-167.

Senge, M. (1990). The fifth discipline. New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Wittgenstein, L. (1973). Lectures and conversations on aesthetics, psychology and religious belief. (Clifford Barrett, Ed.). Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

For more information on Appreciative Inquiry visit the following web sites:

1) www.aradford.co.uk

2) www.serve.com/taos/appreciative.htm/

3) www. mellish.com/

4) www.imaginechicago.org/