Our Journey with Positive Psychology and Appreciative Inquiry
Rosanne Kerr, M.Ed.
Bruce Gordon, Ph.D.
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Canada
Some Introductions

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. – Margaret Mead
Every Good Introduction Begins with a Spectogram
Outcomes for This Workshop

“One among several purposes behind the use of stories in positive psychology is to bring research to life.”

D.J. Tomasulo and J.O. Pawelski (2012)
Canadian Positive Psychology Association (CPPA)

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of what enables individuals and communities to thrive.

Inaugural Conference
July 20 and 21, 2012
Positive Psychology 101 Our Partners:
The Saskatchewan Model
“In a nine-day course, we first taught the teachers to use the skills in their own lives – personally and professionally – and then we gave examples and detailed curricula of how to teach them to children.” (Seligman, 2011)
Some Key Outcomes of the Positive Psychology 101 Conference

• Partnerships initiated founded on positive psychology principles

• Research Opportunities (U of S & U of R)

• Formation of Positive Psychology Saskatchewan (2012)

• Continued collaboration with CPPA
Key Outcomes of Positive Psychology 101 Conference

• Appreciative Inquiry Summits
• Positive Psychology 101 in Regina
• Increased positive psychology training opportunities for school division staff

• Positive Psychology Keynote at STA Convention – 3000 teachers (2013)
• STA Parent Talk in 2014 (2014)
Positive Psychology Benefits Students
Bishop James Mahoney High School
BJM – IBT and Positive Psychology
Appreciative Inquiry

- Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a collaborative search to identify and understand an organization’s strengths, its potentials, its greatest opportunities, and people’s hopes for the future.
It’s often been said that strengths perform, but how about the idea that…. strengths do more than perform, they transform.
AI Has Four Key Processes

- Discovering – strengths
- Involving – all stakeholders
- Redesigning – considering the first two
- Using – energy
Over 30 Published Applications Of Appreciative Inquiry

**STRATEGIC Opportunities**
- Strategic Planning and Visioning
- Sustainable Enterprise
- Customer Service
- Product Development
- Marketing and Branding
- Mergers, Alliances and Customer Partnering
- Process Improvement

**ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**
- Whole Systems Change
- Culture Change
- Organizational Design
- Innovation and Creativity
- Diversity Programs
- Cross Cultural Communications
- Performance Management
- Developing High Performance Teams

**TEAM AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**
- Collaborative Networks
- Conflict Resolution
- Rapid Design Events
- Partnerships and Alliances
- Leadership Development
- Executive Coaching
- Life/Career Coaching
- Management Education
Appreciative Inquiry Summit

May 7, 2013
Our Objectives

• To honor and celebrate diversity in GSCS and in the broader community

• To foster positive relationships among English Language Learners and their families and all community stakeholders

• To create a shared responsibility with our stakeholders for success of ELLs
EAL Enrollment from 2007

- High School
- Elementary
- Kindergarten
- Total

Graph showing enrollment from June 2007 to January 2013.
Our Diversity

We Are The World!
Our Students’ Stories
Our Stakeholders Include

- Students
- Parents and extended family members
- School personnel
- School and Parent Council Members
- Clergy
- Settlement agencies
- Cultural associations
- Reps from government (municipal, provincial, federal)
- Saskatoon Health Region
- Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program sponsors
- SIAST College and University of Saskatchewan
- Saskatoon Police
Why is AI Effective?

“We have reached the end of problem solving as a mode of inquiry capable of inspiring and sustaining human system change. The future belongs to methods that affirm, compel, and accelerate learning while including the voices of all the people who will be affected by the change.”

David Cooperrider
Model the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Process for Change

Discover
“What gives life?”
Appreciating the best of what is…

Dream
“What might be?”
Brainstorming for our vision…

Design
“What should be?”
Designing new models…

Destiny
“How to empower, learn and create/adjust?”
Sustaining momentum …

Affirmative Topic Choice
What Matters Most in Doing Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

The IMAGINE CHICAGO Story

What questions should we ask?
The Discovery Phase

• What are our strengths?
• What is the best of what is?
• What should we keep as we move into the future?
Interview Questions

• Tell me a story about how someone in your school made you happy or welcome.
Research on Positivity

• Barbara Fredrickson’s Research

• Discovery Phase begin by focussing on the positive core of your organization
The AI 4-D Model of Positive Change

**Discovery**
- STRENGTHS
- The Best of What Is

**Destiny**
- RESULTS
- Sustaining Momentum
- Initiatives & Pilots
- Measures

**Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools**

**Design**
- ASPIRATIONS
- Brainstorm Opportunities
- Design New Models

**Dream**
- OPPORTUNITIES
- Images of the Future
- Our Purpose & Vision

Leveraging the Power of Our Community
Outcomes from the “Building Connections for Newcomer Success Summit”

• The application of positive psychology research and Appreciative Inquiry has allowed GSCS staff to shift their attention from a deficit focus, to building on student, staff, and organizational strengths.

• Increased our awareness of the importance of providing opportunities to broaden our outreach to both inside and outside stakeholders when establishing or rebuilding programs.
It Created a Buzz

Headline in Saskatoon StarPhoenix on May 8, the day after the summit …

“Meeting the EAL Challenge”

& Global Evening News Story
Bishop Filevich Summit
January 2014
Our Objectives

• To open doors to communication within the community
• To address needs of families
• To explore the best ways of attending to language needs
• To enhance supports to reflect the input of participants
• To use the energy of the AI process to make improvements
Lessons Learned

• It is important to launch the day well.

• The student voice presentation and keynotes anchored people in the purpose of the day.

• Create a buzz with the media if possible and it will help raise awareness and support for the issue at hand.
Lessons Learned

• Providing training and information for your small group facilitators and recorders before the event is time well-spent.

• It is important to get the stakeholders right and watch the composition of the small groups.

• Follow-through with your commitment to summit participants.
Ways We Have Applied Appreciative Inquiry

• Team meetings
• Program reviews
• Professional growth plans – Feedforward Interview Technique
• Large-scale community consultation through an AI Summit
It Is Time to Re-think Human Organization & Change Leadership

• “The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths…making a system’s weaknesses irrelevant”. Peter Drucker

(Interview with David Cooperrider)
In Conclusion

Like all good stories, we end where we began. “Happily ever after” is traditionally the ending of a fictional story. But in positive psychology, it is the beginning of the real story, because the writing and rewriting of the narratives of our lives is one of the most powerful means available for moving toward greater happiness.

» D. J. Tomasulo and J. O. Pawelski (2012)
Questions