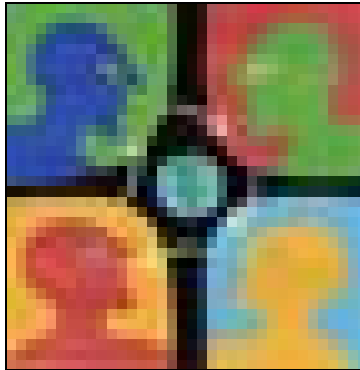


Words Create Worlds, August 2005



Appreciative Inquiry is like a search engine, searching for the "positive core"--the strengths and successes--of the human system under study. When the positive core is linked to ***any agenda for change***, rapid, sustainable and transformational change is possible!

~ Congratulations are in order for **Bill Lamb** <blamb@jccc.net>, **Jennifer Clark** <jdaustin@uncg.edu>, **Kristen Christman** <kpthomps@uncg.edu>, **Kathy Becker** <Kathy@COE.net>, **Jim Pulliam** <Jim@COE.net>, and **Linda Watkins** <linda.watkins@sjcd.edu> for completing their practicums and submitting their reports.

Bill was in the Denver Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training (AIFT©); **Jennifer** and **Kristen** were in the Port St. Lucie AIFT; **Kathy** and **Jim** were in the Stockton 2 AIFT; and **Linda** was in the Eugene AIFT. That makes **98 people** who have completed a practicum and a report to date, 12% of the 664 people who have participated in one of Company of Experts.net's 26 AIFTs. Remember: ***there is no time limit for completing your practicum and report!***

Before sharing their wonderful stories of success, let me briefly share a story about one of the participants in the Portland Training, **Paul Hill**, Interim President of Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus. **Paul** hasn't yet found an opportunity for a full-blown inquiry, but he definitely has made the ***"paradigm shift!"*** My guess is, his ***"Everyday AI"*** is creating stories of success, every day, on the Sylvania Campus.

~ **Trigger "an avalanche of creativity" in everyday conversation on your campus**

Savvy community college leaders have learned to ask people on campus to come to them with solutions, not problems. **Paul Hill** <phill@pcc.edu>, Interim President of Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus, takes it one step further. When an individual (an administrator, faculty, support staff, or student) or a group (cabinet) surfaces a problem, **Paul** intentionally flips the dialogue into an

exploration of what the person or group wants more of, what is desired. He then asks what he calls an affirmative question, one that triggers "an avalanche of creativity" related to the topic. The affirmative question calls forth the person's own "best practice" story relating to the topic. For instance, if someone were dealing with a difficult working relationship, the question might be as simple and straightforward as, "Tell me a story about your best experience, or success, in a relationship that worked exceptionally well. What did you do? What did they do?" The questions generate possibilities, rather than problems.

As **Paul** says, an affirmative question "allows people to tell their stories, share their successes." It "triggers an avalanche of creativity based on an exciting and affirming history of past successes." He believes that "the well-placed appreciative question can dramatically change the dialogue, moving away from energy draining, negative griping to energizing and exciting stories and conversations. It can generate exceptional creativity that is grounded on a foundation of real successes."

So, even if you haven't found an opportunity to facilitate a full-blown inquiry, you can **make the shift** with "Everyday AI".

- **Bill's** story is about an inquiry he facilitated for volunteers and staff of a non-profit sports club. The club requested anonymity, so their name is not being used here. It serves 5,000 young people and is getting ready to build a new complex. The Inquiry resulted in "design elements" for the new complex, a very interesting use of AI.

The Core Group decided to do an inquiry on the topic of "The Best XX Complex in the U.S." Once the participants in the inquiry brainstormed their high-point themes, they put them on index cards, then sorted them into seven categories: fields, maintenance, visitor support, parking, traffic, age group needs, and revenue sources. Their Provocative Proposition is:

"The XX is a XX park where players and families want to come to enjoy both the game and the fellowship of other players and families."

The group also developed five strategic intentions and/or design elements (which I won't share out of request for anonymity).

Nice use of the process, Bill.

- **Jennifer and Kristen**, both at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, co-facilitated an inquiry for 22 students who serve as Orientation Leaders (OL) for other newly-admitted students. The inquiry topic was "Connecting to the Campus and Utilizing Your Resources." The small groups developed several Provocative Propositions, then worked together to synthesize it into one statement:

"As an OL, I am building relationships through leadership, while displaying person and professional integrity."

Jennifer and Kristen's personal best moment occurred when they helped the group form a single provocative proposition from six that really meant something to them. They wrote the proposition on flip chart paper "and it was as if you could feel closure and excitement all at the same time as they created that statement. One of the leaders said, 'It's like our purpose statement'". **Kristen and Jennifer** said, "It made us feel as though they felt like they accomplished something and we just helped lead the way. It was exciting. "

~ **Kathy and Jim's** story of success took place in a community college. Because of the nature of the Inquiry, the college will remain anonymous. The CEO had called on **Jim and Kathy**, the new co-owners of **Company of Experts.net**, to help strengthen the college's executive team and cabinet. Cabinet members were asked to identify their individual "social styles" ahead of time, using an inventory that assessed their "pace" (fast or slow) and "priority" (task or relationship). Then Interview Guides were developed for each of the four social styles: Analytical, Amiable, Driver, Expressive, and the secondary styles; the guides were then used in face to face paired Appreciative Interviews to help everyone appreciate and build on the strengths of each other's social styles.

The provocative proposition developed by the cabinet was:

"We commit to strengthening the cabinet by trusting and being trustworthy, behaving as a professional team respectively while protecting one another as we take risks to meet XX College's priorities."

One of the commitments agreed upon by all members was that they would listen more deeply to each other.

According to **Kathy and Jim**, "The process worked. The best experience was observing participants 'get it'. 'Get it' means building from a positive perspective or visiting the past, evaluating the present and changing the future."

Linda, president at San Jacinto College South in Houston, facilitated an inquiry into "Re-energized Teaching and Learning across the San Jacinto College District.+The District serves 22,000 credit students, primarily Hispanic, and is growing at the rate of 5 percent each semester. Linda formed a Planning Team of nine faculty from the three campuses: San Jacinto College Central in Pasadena, Texas, and San Jacinto College North and South in Houston. The Planning Team selected 30 key faculty from across the District who served as the Core Group. The Core Group identified the topic, modified the Generic Interview Guide to fit the topic, and planned the process to be used with all the

faculty. They began with the question: "Tell me a story about a deep learning experience you have had in your life."

San Jacinto College has a high-energy teaching and learning environment across the District. We offer leading-edge and dynamic instructional programming in an environment that is built upon mutual respect, continued learning, and passion for what we do.+

Linda said that her personal best experience was to "see the process 'run itself.' People enjoyed the process and, from the process, came the strategic initiatives. From this positive approach, people planned, enjoyed the time together, and left with strategic initiatives."

• **And, yes, Virginia, sometimes there IS good news in the media! Here are four stories!**

An Appreciative Inquiry Project wins a Canadian Media Award

John Drabble - CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio producer, attended a foundation workshop that **Jane Magruder Watkins, Ralph Kelly** and **Mo McKenna** facilitated in the fall of 2003. After attending the workshop, **Drabble** went back to Winnipeg and began an inquiry within the Manitoba school system. He won an award for 'excellence in news, information' at the CNMA (Canadian New Media Awards) on May 30, 2005. Here's an excerpt from the program.

How was School Today? CBC Manitoba. Over three months, a team of CBC journalists engaged 120 schools throughout Manitoba in an inquiry into what makes an effective school. The team held workshops with 132 teachers who in turn engaged their students in an interview process that produced stories about times when they had felt excited about learning. The team then used the best of these stories to produce the series. Ultimately, it resulted in a CD that was sent to all school divisions and to the faculties of education to be used as a learning resource. In all, the series generated 93 separate items, a number of which were broadcast on network radio and The National.

<http://www.cbc.ca/manitoba/features/manitobamatters/about.html>

Here's another story contributed by **Earl Bloor** a certified AI Facilitator at Cape Cod Community College who's leading the Summit:

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD-Youth workforce summit: Discovering what works

By David Augustinho, columnist@barnstablepatriot.com

Back in the early spring I wrote a column about a grant that the Workforce Investment Board received to develop strategies regarding youth services in our region. The name of the grant program is P-21, which stands for Productive by 21 years of age.

I am writing this follow-up because we have scheduled a Summit and started to round out the process that will help determine our priorities. The Summit is scheduled for Sept. 22 and will be held at the Cape Codder Conference Center in Hyannis.

The purpose of the Summit is to engage the entire system of organizations that contribute to creating a productive and fulfilled youth workforce in an inquiry about what works. Through the inquiry we will discover the life-giving forces of the network of helping organizations on the Cape, analyze it for common themes, and shape it into dreams of "what could be" and "what will be," The intended result is that the organizations currently providing services will maintain the best of the past by discovering what has worked and stretching it into the future.

Read the rest of the article here:

http://www.barnstablepatriot.com/workforce_investment_boardyouth_workforce_summit_discovering_what_works_news_15_7447.html

There's a story in the June/July 2005 ***Community College Journal*** about "**College-wide Planning That Works,**" co-written by **Pamela Transue**, President of Tacoma Community College in Washington State. Three people from TCC participated in an AIFT and served on the team that facilitated strategic planning/learning, using AI. In the story, Pamela said, "Several TCC board members were familiar with Appreciative Inquiry from their experience in the private sector and other venues, and were enthusiastic." So, the story about AI is spreading!

And, finally, a story about a Nobel Peace Prize possibility!

According to **Judy Rodgers**, a group of nonprofits that has done work in Nepal under the banner of "Imagine Nepal" has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, perhaps, she says, "some legacy of (AI Practitioner) Mac's (Odell) work in Nepal." Judy is the Executive Director at the Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit (BAWB) at the Weatherhead School of Business at Case Western Reserve University. BAWB is an ongoing, global Appreciative Inquiry.

Please send me your news for the September issue of Words Create Worlds. And, for those of you who work at schools and colleges, have a great academic year!

Best Wishes,



Nancy Stetson

Editor, Words Create Worlds