

# WINDOWS ON YOUR WORLD

## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

### AN OVERVIEW



'The Seeing Project' uses 'Appreciative Inquiry' as the primary method of exploration for all workshops. This method of engagement encourages active conversation between teacher, parents and children.

### What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry is about the purposeful search for the best in people, in situations and in places. It invites us to explore our strengths, successes and best practices through story, to learn from them and then to use that learning to reach for our greatest hopes and dreams.

Appreciative inquiry is strength-based and possibility-orientated. It is collaborative and conversational in style, building confidence and motivation in the group. It invites us to co-create aspirational images of the future, the organization or the place that we want – and then to apply the learning gleaned from our stories (from our own experience) to make them happen. It unleashes the positive potential within people and situations through attention and focus on their positive core.

For additional information on Appreciative Inquiry visit the Case Western Reserve University AI website at [www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu) or [www.AppreciativeLiving.com](http://www.AppreciativeLiving.com)

### How does Appreciative Inquiry work in The Seeing Project?

Appreciative Inquiry achieves effective learning by drawing out and sharing participants' existing strengths, successes, experience and knowledge through:

- Creating a series of carefully crafted, and positively framed questions that invite 'high-point stories' from people's own experience.
- Inviting people to respond – to share their stories and memories- in their own words from their own experiences.
- Encouraging detailed description of the situation or the place including recall of positive feelings and emotions.

- Framing early questions to identify children's existing knowledge and extent of architectural memory.
- Framing later questions to expand thinking and open possibility.

## **What are the benefits?**

### **Confidence building**

By inviting people to mine their own experience and memories and then search earnestly for the learning arising from it, the Appreciative Inquiry approach places value on everyone's experience. It amplifies people's sense of the value of their own contribution and focuses people on collaborative learning. The emphasis on learning from the stories or memories is critical.

### **Creates a safe learning environment**

Appreciative Inquiry provides space for people to be heard and allows everyone to express what they know and say what they think - without premature judgement. It creates a positive inner dialogue, opens up thinking and builds relationship.

### **Everyone's experience is valid**

Everyone's experience is valuable. It is 'inquired' into with the expectation that there is learning to be gleaned from it. When you search for learning in any story or situation you find it. Everyone, whatever their status, is invited to listen carefully and expectantly to their pair buddy or to other group members as they speak. Together the group is seeking insight. This may come at any moment from any comment or interaction. Together they are a genius.

### **Fosters Creativity**

Appreciative Inquiry liberates participants' innate creativity by:

- Enthusing people with a sense of the value of their own experience and then opening up people's minds to future possibility
- Offering freedom to choose methods of expression best suited to individual talents and personal strengths such as:
  - o Talking
  - o Writing
  - o Drawing
  - o Painting

- o Acting
- o Singing
- o Poetry
- o Dance
- o Music

• Fostering styles of self-expression that are unregulated by conventional approaches to techniques such as colouring-in, drawing, collage or painting. Appreciative Inquiry positively encourages people to work with spontaneity and passion. Sometimes even very young children (and adults!) will ask permission questions like:

‘Is it okay to have the page landscape (or portrait)?’

Positively encouraging participants to decide themselves what way to orient their sheets or use their materials nurtures creativity and spontaneity. So let them go over the line!

### **Thinking Skills**

Appreciative Inquiry fosters thinking skills by giving space and time for participants’ answers. It fosters skills in inquiry and a passion for ‘good’ questions that lead to learning.

Our opinion is our opinion.

Our awareness is our awareness.

Both can change and grow.

### **Together we are a genius**

### **Conclusion**

Simply asking more and more positively framed questions gives teachers and parents an excellent tool to expand participants’ knowledge and awareness. This supports participants’ active engagement in conversations about real live issues at their own level.

The approach creates a learning experience that is dynamic and highly enjoyable for children, teachers and parents alike. Everyone is free to express their opinions and ideas in their own ways, from their own perspective, without censorship or being told they are ‘wrong’.

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## Recommended Reading

- The Thin book of Appreciative Inquiry, Thin book publishing company, Sue Annis Hammond.
- Appreciative Living- the principles of Appreciative Inquiry in personal life  
Jacqueline Bascobert Kelm
- The Appreciative Facilitator- A handbook for facilitators and teachers  
Cheri B. Torres
- Reframing evaluation through Appreciative Inquiry Hallie Preskill, Tessie Tzavaras  
Catsambas.

