MENTORING MOMENTS: USING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTION AND GROWTH

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Appreciative Inquiry at a Glance

As the end of the school year quickly approaches, many school districts gather their mentors and NTIP teachers together to reflect upon their learning as well as celebrate their collaboration.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an "attributes-based" approach that can be used to facilitate reflective conversations either during the types of formal professional learning sessions described above or as part of the ongoing dialogue between beginning teachers and their mentors.

At the core of AI is the belief that all participants come to mentoring relationships possessing many strengths and that by building on these assets, the answers to the issues and challenges they face can be collaboratively constructed.

Appreciative Inquiry provides a framework for the intentional sharing of knowledge and practice. This thinking is why AI always begins with an examination of what is working well in current practice (themes of success). Many of these themes can then be applied as actual strategies to collaboratively address specific challenges and issues.
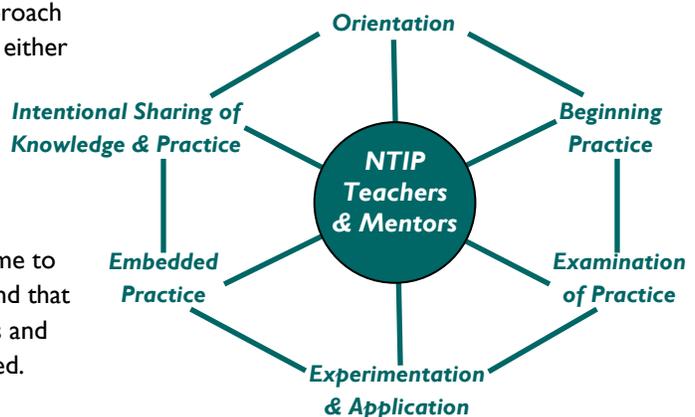
Appreciative Inquiry Conversation Map

Below you'll find some practical ideas for using AI. The Appreciative Inquiry Commons is a great place to explore the concept of AI in greater depth: http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu

Big Idea	Considerations
Before the Conversation: Power of Listening 	• At its core, listening shows we care. It is a powerful tool for establishing and building the relational trust essential for any mentoring relationship • Reviewing the elements of listening sets the context for Appreciative Inquiry conversations and promotes an open, non-evaluative atmosphere conducive to meaningful sharing of thoughts and ideas • A succinct overview of the elements of listening can be found in the October 2011 Mentoring Moments

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Beginning the Conversation: Themes of Success 🔹 **What's already working well?** *As you think about your commitment to making a difference for students, tell a story about the best experience you have had so far in your work this year?* ➢ *Without being humble, what skills, values, and attitudes do you bring to your work that contributes to your ability to support and mentor others?*	• Often in our practice we can focus on what is not working –creating time for paired conversations about what is working well can help bring to the fore the strengths and attributes of both NTIP teachers and mentors and the successes they've experienced in the school year • Following this segment of the conversation, participants may note common threads or themes that ran through their stories of success • Some of these "themes of success" may actually provide useful strategies for the challenges and issues participants encounter
Continuing the Conversation: Issues and Challenges 🔹 **What's not working so well?** *What issues you are encountering?* ➢ *Looking ahead what are the "wishes" you have for your role?*	• Acknowledging the "real world" challenges both NTIP teachers and mentors encounter in their work brings authenticity to the AI process • As the listener in the conversation, it is important for mentors to remember their role is non-evaluative and supportive
Concluding the Conversation: Practical Ideas and Next Steps 🔹 **Collaborative Strategy Harvest of Ideas** *What specific ideas / strategies / resources are you considering to address the issue or concerns expressed?* ➢ *So What / Now What – share an individual action plan of possible next steps (next day / next week / next month)*	• Often when someone expresses a challenge they have already given the issue a great deal of prior thought • For mentors, awareness of flexibility of stance and role is critical at this point of the process • Based on what they are hearing, mentors may decide to: ➢ Consult (offer support and resources) ➢ Collaborate (create challenge and encourage growth) ➢ Coach (facilitate professional vision) • For practical ideas of what the 3 Cs could look like in action, see the October 2012 Mentoring Moments

What's powerful about the "glass half full" approach that underlies Appreciative Inquiry is the basic elements outlined above *(What's Working / What's Not / Collaborative Strategy Harvest)* can be applied to so many mentoring and professional learning contexts. We invite you to contribute your ideas to Strategy Harvests developed by board NTIP teams during our Adobe Connect professional learning sessions this year by joining the conversations on the Mentoring Moments NING at: http://mentoringmoments.ning.com/forum.

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