FOUND IN OZ, THE RUBY SLIPPERS TO EMBRACING DIGITAL CLASSROOMS THROUGH APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Within the context of a global pandemic and challenges of adapting ped-agogical practice to virtual instruction, four higher education profes-sors came together to share observations and review student feedback regarding their online learning experiences. Using an Appreciative In-quiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) theoretical framework, research-ers mapped the journey of transforming their instruction and delivery by collectively re-envisioning the upcoming semester's online teaching ap-proach. This paper documents outcomes of the study offering the reader a framework to harness professional capital, as well as replicable online instructional strategies, with implications related to the course, student, and instructor.

Context and Dorothy as Metaphor

During the first full week of March 2020, four teacher preparation faculty from a publicly funded four-year institution of higher education in New England left their classrooms to enjoy a respite during the college's spring break. As in previous semesters, lecture and practicum courses in special education, elementary, and early childhood education were sched-uled to be delivered via a face-to-face format. Though the instructors' courses aligned to a research-supported quality assurance framework for online course delivery (Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric, 2013), and course materials supported preservice teachers' fluency in classroom technology based on ISTE standards (Crompton, 2017), online course in-struction was considered supplemental and not the primary delivery model scheduled for the Spring 2020 semester.

Instead of returning to classrooms after the break, the instructors along with thousands of colleagues in schools across the country were asked to pivot to online teaching, as work and learning environments were effectively closed due to the global impact of the COVID-19 virus. Re-gardless of the assigned grade level, educators from early childhood edu-cation through higher education met the formidable challenge of adapting their pedagogical practice to virtual instruction seemingly overnight. In addition to providing students with engaging and rigorous online learning experiences, educators also provided social-emotional support to alleviate anxiety by instilling a sense of normalcy through virtual classroom prac-tices as they completed the academic year (Fox, Bryant, Lin, Srinivasan,

2020; Rhode Island College, 2020).

The global pandemic drew attention to the inequities in education that negatively influence student academic outcomes. One such injustice was the lack of access to technology such as a home computer or viable internet availability, known concerns prior to the pandemic, but now critical course tools required to successfully complete assignments and maintain engagement in online learning. To bridge these gaps, some states created innovative partnerships to ensure all K-12 students had access to computers and internet capability at home (RIOI, 2020), thereby reducing some of the more glaring barriers to learning. However, many comprehensive supports provided by public schools (social-emotional initiatives, breakfast and lunch to offset food scarcity, and services for individuals with special needs) were far more difficult to address during ex-tended periods of school shut-downs and statewide quarantines (Stein & Strauss, 2020; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2020).

It is within this context four higher education instructors came together at the conclusion of the Spring 2020 semester to share observations and review student feedback regarding their online learning experiences. Though the instructors were seasoned and knowledgeable of their respective content, virtual learning environments, applications, technology, and novel approaches to online teaching and learning were not the familiar education landscape. Without their physical classrooms situated within brick-and-mortar schools the researchers kept returning to the metaphor of Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, realizing they were no longer in Kansas.

This paper highlights the faculty collaboration (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018) anchoring the action research conducted during an unprecedented time in education. Using an Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) theoretical framework, the researchers mapped the journey of transforming their instruction and delivery by collectively re-envisioning the upcoming semester's online teaching approach. This paper documents outcomes of the study offering the reader a framework to harness professional capital, as well as replicable online instructional strategies, with implications related to the course, student, and instructor.

Research Questions

Two overarching research questions guided this study:

1) In what ways did an Appreciative Inquiry framework inform a collaboration among teacher preparation faculty to transform online teaching practices?

2) What changes were made to online course delivery based on results of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology?

The next sections provide an overview of the theoretical framework of the study, followed by a review of the literature specific to collab-

oration and professional capital.

Appreciative Inquiry and the 5-D Cycle

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was developed as part of David Cooperrider's PhD dissertation and expanded in collaboration with his mentor, Suresh Srivastva from Case Western Reserve University (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Grieten et al., 2018). Together they developed a collaborative inquiry model that appreciated the best of what an organization offered (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The original study examined a new collaboration instituted at the Cleveland Clinic when its physicians demanded greater involvement in all aspects of managing the organization, moving beyond surgery and medical care, to also include administrative responsibilities. As part of the evaluation study of the shared management model, Cooperrider was charged with identifying gaps and deficits to be further addressed by hospital administration. Interestingly, it was only once Cooperrider reviewed stories he had curated in an interview database that he was led to
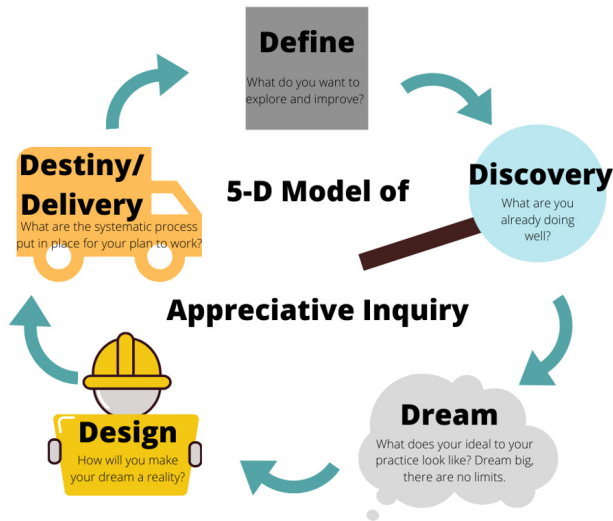
> ...literally set aside all the deficiencies and looked only at the things that were giving life to the system when it was most alive. Then I took the best of the best to then speculate and leap to ideal-type possibilities for the future—to build a theory of possibility: not a theory of yesterday's world but of tomorrow's possibilities (Greiten et al., 2018, p. 103).

The inquiry-based protocols of the AI model grounded his study in appreciation of what was already happening and served as the intervention. In the same interview conducted by Greiten et al. (2018), Cooperrider pointed out, "our questions are fateful: once posed, questions do their work; they cannot be stopped. We become what we inquire into. When people co-inquire into the life-giving, the good and the possible, they simultaneously change their system in that direction" (p. 104).

AI literature highlights its foundation in social constructivism, as Bloom (2013) and her colleagues noted there are deep roots with Dewey's philosophy that "education is not an affair of 'telling'...but an active and constructive process" (Dewey, 1916, p. 46). Though much of the literature in Appreciative Inquiry resides in organizational development research, there are also applications to higher education where AI is applied to evaluate organizational planning and assessment within student affairs (Fifolt & Lander, 2013), it is also used to understand the influence of teaching practices on student well-being (Lane et al., 2018), as well as to evaluate educational leadership and management education (Lambrechts et al., 2011).

Figure 1

The 5-D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry

The 5-D cycle of appreciative inquiry (AI) includes define, discover, dream, design, and destiny/delivery. Individuals utilizing AI carefully go through each step to successfully implement the model. Adapted from Buchanan (2014); cooperrider & Whitney (2006); Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College (2020).

   The literature points to five phases of the Appreciative Inquiry cycle, also referred to as the 5-D cycle (Figure 1.), each with its own purpose and guiding questions: Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny/Delivery (Smith, 2006). At the start of the project, stakeholders must first Define the objectives of their inquiry, establishing the scope and focus of what they want to learn. Then the process moves to the Discovery and Dream cycles inviting participants to reflect and share success stories to then re-envision these appreciated practices into what could be within the organization. The innovative approaches are then mapped to turn the dream into reality in the Design phase, identifying structures needed to ensure what should be in the organization. The Destiny/Delivery phase is the final portion of the iterative cycle and represents what will be by placing systemic structures in place to ensure sustainability and continued growth and development of the organization (Clarke & Thornton, 2014; Fifolt & Lander, 2013; Smith, 2006; Acosta & Douthwaite, 2005).

   The faculty intentionally selected the Appreciative Inquiry model to avoid deficit-based thinking and to guide rich discussions as a strategy to first recognize and then build on effective teaching practices already in place. The dialogue served as a positive space to create a shared vision for professional online learning and helped to alleviate feelings of isolation

from colleagues and students (Giles & Kung, 2010) experienced by many during the Covid-19 pandemic (Fox et al., 2020).

Collaboration and Professional Capital to Address Covid-Related Shifts in Education

In March 2020, radical changes were made in the delivery of education, as teachers and students retreated to home settings to complete the academic year online. Teachers across the education continuum worked tirelessly to teach the required content, while simultaneously investigating and implementing recent technology to deliver curriculum. Results from a national survey designed to evaluate the experience of pivoting from face-to-face to online teaching documented the experience of 4,000 faculty employed in higher education. An overwhelming 91% of the instructors moved their courses online (Fox et al., 2020) and noted "keeping students engaged and motivated to learn in a remote environment" was their greatest challenge (Fox et al., 2020, p. 7).

In a similar survey conducted of 1,008 undergraduate students during this same time, students confirmed their struggle to stay motivated and "missed receiving feedback from instructors and collaborating with fellow students" (Means & Neisler, 2020, p. 3). In addition to issues related to connection and motivation, faculty also noted concerns with equity and access to reliable technology as students reported using mobile phones to complete assignments because they lacked a home computer or adequate internet capacity. "These access issues, in addition to challenges with family and work responsibilities and financial and health concerns brought on by the pandemic, compromised student learning" (Fox et al., 2020, p.9).

Findings from these national survey results mirrored the experiences of the researchers of this study. As their courses shifted from in-person to online delivery, they found engaging with students in this new format challenging, especially as they simultaneously learned new features of applications and technology that had not yet been mastered. They were also aware from student feedback that issues related to lack of equitable access to course materials needed to be addressed. With these concerns in mind, the instructors gathered at the conclusion of the semester to share student feedback with the intent of using this informal data to make significant changes to their upcoming fall courses which would also be delivered online.

Research points to the effectiveness of school improvement efforts that are holistic and engage teachers through their relationships with one another as an effective strategy to influence change (Gulosino, Jones, & Franceschini, 2016). According to Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018), collaborative professionalism encourages "enhanced motivation, commitment to change...and tenacity in the face of obstacles" (p. 12), necessary

supports when addressing issues of student engagement, motivation, and the design of online instructional practices to minimize inequities in learning. Collaborations are a powerful strategy to create effective organizational change while increasing teacher retention in the field (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). In response to significant changes in their teaching, the researchers designed a community of inquiry, committed to a shared vision through reflective dialogue about teaching and learning (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, 2002) and focused on "professional capital" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) that assumed "good teaching is technically sophisticated and difficult … [and is] perfected through continuous improvement" (p. 14).

The study adhered to Appreciative Inquiry protocols that provided the framework for weekly discussions to evaluate and modify teaching approaches in a fully virtual environment. The next section guides the reader through the AI Define, Discovery, and Dream cycles, serving as data collection for the study and includes agenda topics, guiding questions, highlights of meeting minutes, and decisions from the participating researchers. Results of the study are provided in the Design and Delivery cycles, detailing responsive pedagogical changes made to courses across their respective teacher preparation programs scheduled the following semester.

Methodology - Define, Discovery, and Dream...Steps Along the Yellow Brick Road

Define

Over a 15-week period between May and August 2020, the researchers met weekly cataloging responses to agenda topics and guiding questions that aligned to the 5-D cycle from the Appreciative Inquiry framework (see Appendix A: Appreciative Inquiry 5-D Guiding Questions in Education). The first cycle of the AI 5-D model is to define one's focus and objectives for the change process. The researchers were invigorated by the challenge of moving to full-time virtual learning and passionate about the success of their students. Using informal reflections and feedback from the researchers and their students regarding aspects of instruction that had positive impacts on students during face-to-face settings, the authors identified and defined four categories for their study: an expressed need for community, transparent course organization, equitable access, and meeting diverse learner needs.

For the purpose of this paper, community is defined as the relationship built and maintained between the student and her teacher, her fellow students, and the course itself. Research supports the importance of building positive relationships in educational settings, as they empower individuals, provide a sense of responsibility to the classroom environment, as well as contribute to a sense of safety within it (Muñoz & Dos-

sett, 2016). Research examining the most effec-tive components of Dan-ielson's Framework for Teaching (2015) shows that "support, discipline, and trust were significantly correlated with student achievement in a posi-tive way" (Muñoz & Dossett, 2016, p.14). Building on this objective, the researchers identified ways to build community within a virtual environ-ment so students would feel confident, safe, and able to participate in a predictable virtual classroom that facilitated their ability to take control of their learning.

Transparent course organization was specifically identified as a strategy to present how course materials were made visible and acces-sible to students. The online course instructor holds many roles including that of course facilitator and manager (Martin, et al., 2019) responsible for the "nuts and bolts" of the course in a transparent manner. For students this translates into their course materials being well-organized, the deliv-ered content is accessible, assignments are collected and graded, and that attendance and participation are noted within the learning manage-ment system.

Access and equity addressed how students were able to engage with the online platform. For instance, do all students have a stable inter-net connection? Are there interventions that allow all students to have eq-uitable opportunity and access to materials or lectures (i.e., can a deaf stu-dent access the content and instruction equally to his peers?). Do students have access to the necessary practicum experiences? Equitable access en-sures "all materials and tools are accessible in multiple formats" (Darby & Lang, 2019, p.68) so that learning is made easier using various technolo-gies, not more difficult.

Throughout the remaining cycles of the AI model these four cate-gories: an expressed need for community, transparent course organization, equitable access, and meeting diverse learner needs served as the frame-work for the changes to course design and delivery developed through this study.

Discovery

Discovery, the second cycle of the AI 5-D model, asks individu-als to identify through stories what they already do well. The Discovery stage allowed for engagement through storytelling and analysis of each of the researchers' most positive moments in their teaching history. The per-sonal stories celebrated the expertise of the instructors and allowed them to learn from and about each other. Reminiscing about these shining mo-ments as educators, common threads emerged from the narratives. In all examples, students were engaged and invested in their learning and the instructor provided learning opportunities that were tailored to specific learner needs. This portion of the AI framework facilitated two key ele-ments of their work. First, it informed the researchers' future course revi-

sions. It also facilitated a sense of community between the instructors as they more fully appreciated the skills and professionalism each brought to their work in teacher preparation.

Dream

The third cycle of the AI 5-D model is Dream, during which individuals were challenged to take their identified past achievements and dream them forward. Guiding questions included imagining what the new learning environment might include and a description of the roles individuals would have within this space. In this re-envisioned educational landscape, they also asked what collaboration would look like between faculty.

Amabile and Kramer (2011) discussed how one uses small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity in the classroom. With this in mind, each researcher envisioned her dream using her strengths to positively transform each of the identified components of virtual instruction. At the conclusion of the Dream cycle of the 5-D model, statements were written in the present as if having already achieved the vision for their work. For example, one researcher wrote

> I am able to provide each student with a feeling of safety that encourages them to take risks in and out of the virtual classroom to enrich their understanding of course topics. Students begin to make connections between what we do in our class and transform knowledge into practice when working in supervised practicum in classroom environments.

The collaborative discussion that emerged from the Dream cycle resulted in a greater degree of mutual support and encouragement between members of the team. The iterative frame-work of reflecting and sharing professional experiences that were known and had proven to work well, served as steps along the proverbial yellow brick road, moving them closer to a re-envisioned teaching and learning environment. Several creative ideas surrounding the instructor, student, and course related to building community, transparent course organization, equitable access, and meeting diverse learner needs were further developed and are discussed in the next section focusing on the design and destiny cycle of the AI model.

Findings - Design and Destiny

The final sections of the AI 5-D model, Design and Destiny, outline results of the researchers' work that translated into shared beliefs and teaching practices of the instructors, a shift in roles that included greater student accountability, as well as co-constructed revisions implemented in their respective courses as a result of the iterative Appreciative Inquiry model.

After recording and analyzing discussions related to their work

as faculty in higher education, several themes emerged within two broader categories: (1) the role of the instructor and (2) the collaboration established through the self-selected inquiry group. Across all themes that emerged, relationships stood as foundational to the work, including the notable professional capital gained through weekly virtual gatherings to discuss results of each AI phase. The process served as the intervention supporting the researchers through the rapid transition to online teaching precipitated by COVID-19. The design phase of AI moved shared recollections of effective teaching practices to co-constructed and re-imagined learning spaces that continued to hold students central to curriculum design and delivery.

The conversations culminated in actionable course revisions detailed in the Design and Destiny cycle. In the Design Cycle of AI, the researchers pooled together their dreams as they focused on central relationships: those between the teacher and student, between student and student, and also the students' connection to the course to implement a handful of significant adjustments to their classes.

Design

Student to Teacher. The instructors asked themselves, "How could their dreams be realized?" and "What tangible steps could be taken to better their classes?" "Almost all great breakthroughs come from focusing, working on a small number of ambitious goals, and creating something different and elegant in simplicity" (Fullan, 2012, p.17). In the Design Cycle, this "change knowledge" put forth by Fullan was implemented by the researchers as an iterative process to determine action steps for selected goals.

The researchers decided to shift some of their synchronous class time to address community building and to provide additional opportunities for connecting with students. One strategy provided a space for the instructor to have a "check-in" time with the students through community building activities, such as using apps such as Flipgrid, Voicethread, and Screencastify to respond to questions virtually, sharing their reactions to course content that provided the instructors with informal assessment data and snapshots of student satisfaction.

Clear expectations were always required in course design, but without regular "face-to-face" contact, what students could anticipate through virtual connections needed to be explicitly stated. For example, defining expectations surrounding turnaround time for emails, student questions, and grades were established. The instructors wanted to ensure students received consistent and timely responses to their questions. while also maintaining professional boundaries and expectations related to student emails. For example, one researcher prescribed the following: (1) instructors would respond to emails within a given time period. (2) Students

would identify who they were, the nature of the email, and list the course they were enrolled in, thereby saving the instructor's time, and provided additional context to accurately respond to student questions. (3) Students were explicitly told that grades would not be discussed via email, but if there was a question surrounding a posted grade the student should schedule a meeting with the professor to discuss at that time.

The instructors also chose to implement weekly online "coffee hours." At designated times, students could virtually drop in to chat with one another and their professors. Pedagogical research supports these "small investments in targeted relationships with students pay off with high-yield motivational and achievement results" (Fullan, 2012, pps. 3-4). These student-to-teacher investments served as preventative measures that demonstrated students' questions and concerns matter and needed to be addressed. Moreover, the policies set a precedent for the instructors ensuring consistency in responding to students across departments within the school of education.

Student-to-Student. The researchers desired to see students actively engaged or what Nipper (1989) identified as "noisy" within their online learning environments. One instructor introduced a strategy to encourage active engagement between students. To encourage characteristics of successful online learners, students identified as willing to speak up and seek assistance, the instructor shared a protocol for students to follow when they had questions about the course. Students were encouraged to first check with a 'study buddy' and check the course Q&A Discussion Forum on Blackboard for answers to their questions or to post a question. Students could then reach out to the instructor, if needed, but the strategy's purpose was to promote student development of their "noisy" selves by becoming more autonomous and actively engaged in their learning.

In their discussions the researchers often returned to the interpersonal relationships that allowed for a cycle of modeling, practice, and implementation. In order to see students engaged in meaningful learning in the online context, the researchers envisioned a community of learners with deep connections and trust that would allow for members of the class to put themselves on the line by teaching in front of each other, providing constructive peer review and feedback that would influence their development as teacher candidates. This was actualized through small group activities and assignments promoting collaboration during synchronous sections using breakout rooms via Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate (Markowitz, 2005).

The researchers envisioned their students engaged in an inquiry-based online class willing to be active and creative in the learning process, trying out teaching methods and critically reflecting on those experiences. By prioritizing the teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships in these activities, the objective was to enhance students' focus and attention to the online classroom.

Student-to-Course. The researchers also prioritized the student to course relationship in the online classroom by ensuring, (1) the course content and materials were transparent and organized; (2) each student had access to the course materials and practicum experiences; and (3) the course materials met the diverse learner needs to ensure equity for each student in the course. The following information highlights ways in which the researchers addressed these three topics.

To support students' success in the course, it was imperative they were able to easily locate and navigate within the learning management platform. One tool the researchers developed was a standardized Blackboard template outlining course content, materials, assignments that were easily identifiable and consistent throughout the course design.

Access and equity were addressed in the varying modalities the researchers provided students for engaging with the content and practicum experiences in each course. One example was through the use of video modeling and video analysis to ensure all students had the opportunity to observe model teaching practices and young children in real-life educational settings - of particular importance as classroom-based practicum experiences were now not available in K-12 public school settings. Video modeling provided opportunities for the instructors to demonstrate instruc-tional strategies to their students through self-produced videos shared via YouTube or Padlet, while video analysis (Baecher, 2020) used curated videos that served as exemplars for students to critically observe and relate to course content.

In order to achieve equity within the course it was necessary to provide a variety of teaching modalities, such as synchronous and asynchronous instruction, voiceovers, powerpoints, video lectures, modules, small and large group instruction and learning opportunities, as well as offering choice in how students demonstrated learning. As an example, students were provided choice through the use of a "playlist" of course assignments. When using a playlist students were provided a choice in how to demonstrate their understanding (Education Elements, 2020). This strategy differentiates instruction to meet individual academic and social-emotional needs by providing students with agency to demonstrate their learning along a developmental progression throughout the course.

Another strategy to enhance equitable student success within the virtual classroom was through the use of a goals contract. Because students need to be self-directed to experience success in a virtual course, the goals contract outlined expectations for students in the course coupled with an opportunity for students to design their own personal learning goals. The use of a goals contract shifts ownership of learning from the instructor to the student (Darby & Lang, 2019).

It should be noted, collectively over 100 hours of professional development were completed by the instructors during Summer 2020, covering topics aimed to improve knowledge and skills in online course de-

livery. Heinrich (2020) and her colleagues note the most effective way to successfully increase integration of technology in schools is by providing "intensive professional development that boosts teacher technology knowledge and experience at the start of the digital learning initiative" (p. 109). Two of the team members moved from knowledge building to implementation by creating an online tutoring initiative to expand their working knowledge of online instruction. Outcomes of this work informed methods courses, preparing teacher candidates for a new educational landscape of online teaching and learning.

Destiny/Delivery

The Destiny/Delivery cycle brings the work of Discovery, Dream and Design to a logical conclusion. It also forms the beginning of an appreciative learning culture. A major outcome of the Destiny/Delivery phase is the development of programmatic structures that will sustain the ideas and plans previously developed. To ensure students' success in distance learning and, prior to engaging with the course content, students participated in various online modules and read articles pertaining to what it meant to be a successful learner in a virtual environment in addition to encouraging healthy self-care. Researchers empowered students to take control of their personal learning by exploring the dichotomy of receiving and accepting information because it came from someone of authority or becoming critical interrogators of "truth" by questioning information presented to them that does not align with their own experiences or research. They were encouraged to seek "truth" through questioning and exploring additional sources outside of what was provided to them within the context of the course (Markowitz, 2005). During this exploration students read an article and worked in small groups to reflect and dissect the information. Finally, students came together collectively and shared their thoughts through a facilitated discussion. Students determined that effective learners (1) understand their own biases, (2) investigate the "truth" of information disseminated to them, and (3) understand there can be mul-tiple truths based on the social context, one's own experience, and the perspective of the individual delivering the information.

When taught face-to-face, the delivery of lessons within the researchers' practicum classes afforded pre-service teachers the opportunity to experience the elementary classroom through observations of skilled teachers and through teaching small groups of children themselves. According to Trilling and Fadel (2009), "online education may provide a less authentic context for many learners…Instructors of online classes must seek to make the learning experience authentic in this new context" (p. 34). When instruction moved online, one of the researchers addressed concerns with experiential learning when the course could no longer meet in the elementary school context. How could they deliver instruction in

an authentic manner?

The researchers chose to incorporate video analysis (Baecher, 2020) into the structure of their online classes using specific observation/analysis guidelines. One researcher incorporated videos of herself teaching elementary students. The pre-service teachers were able to see how the content they were learning would look in a real situation. The video analysis component allowed the instructor and students to pause the lesson for discussion or to replay key sections. Video analysis templates found in Baecher's (2020) book, Video in Teacher Learning, were selected depending on the focus of the lesson.

A final structure of the study included systems to sustain the critical reflective dialogue the researchers engaged in for this project, informed by the Appreciative Inquiry framework. One such system included continued inquiry of the instructors' online teaching, regularly scheduled meetings to examine outcomes of the implemented strategies detailed in this paper, and professional development to improve instruction and ensure student achievement.

The Dream/Delivery phase focused on continuous learning, adjustments, and collaboration. It helped build momentum and a shared positive image of the future allowing the researchers to continuously reflect on which practices were and were not effective in the virtual learning environment.

Recommendations

Upon the completion of their work, the researchers of this study developed several recommendations for educators wishing to implement the AI model into their program development or redesign. Three primary recommendations should be considered by those wishing to implement the process in their work. These include: dedicated time to the process, teamwork, and use of the iterative 5-D cycle for continued course improvement.

First, it is essential to make time to invest in this inquiry process. The AI model was an effective tool, but it required commitment and time to navigate the 5-D cycle to yield results. For this project, weekly one-to-two-hour sessions were scheduled to devote ample time to the process. Each cycle necessitated exploration of the Guiding Questions (Appendix A) to identify, respond, listen, and re-envision the focus of the identified inquiry.

Second, working within a team to incorporate the AI model was effective as the researchers had the opportunity to share ideas and receive feedback; it also demonstrated shared professional values among colleagues seeking to improve instructional practices. Teachers and faculty members interested in implementing this framework into their own work in the classroom could utilize the model to not only improve their on-line

teaching practice, but any other facet of their work as educators. Clearly defining the change or area to be developed provides a strong foundation for the work and will make a significant impact on the overall process. Ultimately, the selected questions and area of inquiry to focus on will drive the transformation.

Third, in the implementation process of the AI 5-D cycle, one must be prepared to be vulnerable. As practices are analyzed, it is necessary to understand the importance of the strengths-based approach required in this methodology. Share stories of successful professional practice. Embrace possibility and lead with what one does well or what works in your organization and from there breathe life into new programmatic structures.

Conclusions: Embracing our Ruby Slippers… We Had What We Needed All Along

Prior to the Design cycle of Appreciative Inquiry, the participants identified key instructional strategies that in brick-and-mortar classrooms had proven to be effective teaching practices. At this stage in the AI process, "participants identify the high-leverage changes in the organization's systems, processes, roles, measures, and structures necessary for achieving the dream" (Mohr, 2001, p. 4). But, the Design phase was more than parsing out action steps; it was also "...about 'translating' the dream into the 'language' of the organization's social architecture" (Mohr, 2001, p. 4). This phase required the researchers to radically shift the delivery model of their teaching while retaining the quality and content of their courses.

As in the Discovery and Dreaming cycles, the faculty focused on "what could be" in their virtual instructional practices so as to breathe life through architectural alterations required of the course, the instructor, and students to ensure their success. For example, to build community in online courses, the instructors focused on making personal connections during the initial sessions to develop a sense of community. Cyber-cafes were embedded in the course schedules as an informal support that established relationships among the members of the course. Student contracts focused on learning goals and were designed to ensure students developed agency, an important component of online learning.

To facilitate student development and empowerment in a virtual environment, faculty spent a significant amount of time considering the purpose of all course elements. For example, a plan for instructional delivery blending synchronous and asynchronous sessions was developed. A template for each type of session, along with a variety of formative assessments, provided feedback to students on their learning. Time was spent discussing what it meant to be an online learner and how to be successful. Taking this further, a faculty member challenged students to be critical consumers of information (Markowitz, 2005).

The researchers agreed to continue their work with the AI itera-

tive process, including a new research project and plan to continue revisions to their courses. The AI cycle aided in determining what was truly at the heart of the researcher's instruction and how this pedagogy would be translated to the virtual classroom. Ultimately, effective pedagogy was recognized as the instructors' metaphorical ruby slippers - educators already have the means to be successful in this new educational landscape. Apply an Appreciative Inquiry lens as you reflect, focus on what works in your teaching, collaborate with peers, and establish new instructional strategies that meet the needs of your students. Good teaching practices remain at the core of effective instruction, and technology and virtual learning environments are vehicles to achieve student success.

Appendix A: Appreciative Inquiry 5-D Guiding Questions in Education

DEFINE	
Questions	**Responses**
What do you wish to explore/change/innovate?	
What terms do you need a common understanding/definition of to aid in commnication between each other?	
DISCOVER	
Questions	**Responses**
What is the best lesson you have ever taught?	
How did this lesson have an impact on your students?	
How would you describe the dynamics between you and your students?	
How would you describe the group energy?	
How was this experience the same and different from other teaching experiences you've had?	
What is the most important learning to take forward from this experience?	
DREAM	
Questions	**Responses**
What does your ideal look like?	
If you had no constraints, what would you do?	
Daydream forward to picture the ideal future for your online classes... What is so wonderful about this instruction?	
Imagine your online instruction in three years time. What are the three biggest things you've accomplished between now and then?	

DESIGN	
Questions	**Responses**
What do you need to make your dream a reality?	
Who do you need to include in this plan?	
What logistical steps need to be put in place for your dream to be realized?	
What steps can you take to move you closer to your dream?	
DESTINY/DELIVERY	
Questions	**Responses**
What process(es) will you put in place?	
What changes will happen in your class?	
How will these process(es) be communicated?	
How will you know if you are effective?	
What are the next steps you will take?	

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