

# KICK-START MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

THESE TWO TOOLS CAN HELP SCHOOLS ASSESS AND BUILD ONE-ON-ONE AND TEAM RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME



## APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEWS

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Appreciative interviews will help you avoid trying to close the trust gap and instead focus on building on the positives. Use this tool to help you and your partners discover what has worked well in the past, affirm those successes, create positive self-images, and imagine future successes.

### 1. Conduct appreciative interviews as detailed here.

- Form pairs.
- One partner interviews the other and vice versa, using the following questions.
  - o Describe a time when you felt you were at your prime as a \_\_\_\_\_ (add role you want to focus on). Share as many details as possible. When did it occur? Who was involved?



## PARTNER INTERVIEWS

Conducting an interview with potential teacher partners, in addition to gathering information and educating teachers on the coaching philosophy, helps coaches build “one-to-one individual relationships with teachers” (Knight, 2007). According to Knight, 15-minute one-on-one interviews are more effective than two-hour group meetings, so always try to schedule individual meetings, preferably during teacher planning time.

### Four starter questions that generate meaningful conversations

1. What are the rewards you experience as a teacher?
2. What are your professional goals and what obstacles interfere with your ability to achieve your professional goals?
3. What are your students’ strengths and weaknesses?

## APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEWS

- What were you doing? What were others doing?
- o What did you value most about that situation, the work involved, the community, and yourself? What were the contributing factors that made it successful for you?
  - o Project yourself into the future. It is five years from now, the start of 20\_\_-20\_\_ school year. Describe what is happening for you related to \_\_\_\_\_ (add area of concern). What do you want to be like as a \_\_\_\_\_ (add role title) then? What do you see yourself doing? What do you

envision you will accomplish? Who will be your colleagues/confidantes?

2. **After the interviews, meet with another team and introduce your partner to that team.**
3. **Discuss patterns that occur across all four interview responses (your partner's and yours and the other pair's responses). Be ready to share the patterns with the larger group.**
4. **Share patterns that exist across the larger group.**

### ADAPTED FROM:

**Lord, J.G. (2005).** *Appreciative inquiry and the quest: A new theory and methodology of human development.* Available at [www.appreciative-inquiry.org](http://www.appreciative-inquiry.org).

**Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J.M. (2008).** *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

## PARTNER INTERVIEWS

4. What kinds of professional learning are most/least effective for you?

### Questions about teachers' current realities

- Describe a typical day on the job.
- What do you really like about your job?
- What kinds of pressures are you facing?
- What challenges are you facing?
- What kinds of changes are you experiencing?

### Questions about students' current realities

- Tell me about your students.
- What are the major needs of your students?
- What would most help your students?
- What outcomes are you striving for with your students?
- How many students are you teaching each day?
- How many students with various disabilities do you teach?
- What could have a significant influence on the happiness and success of your students?

### Questions about the school's current reality

- Describe the relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers in your school.
- Describe the relationship between senior high school

teachers and junior high school teachers in this district.

### Questions about changes being experienced

- How has your job changed over the past five years?
- How has your philosophy changed over the past five years?

### Questions about instructional practices

- Are you teaching (name of intervention) at this point?
- If yes, which (intervention) are you teaching?
- What modifications, if any, have you made in your teaching of (intervention)?

### Questions about a desired future

- What changes in your school would have the greatest influence on your students' success?
- Describe the ideal school.
- What would you like to change about your job?

### Questions about professional development

- Talk about the kinds of professional development you've experienced in the past few years.
- What have you liked about your professional development?
- What have you not liked about your professional development?

**REFERENCE: Knight, J. (2007, March).** Conversations can kick off the coaching. *Teachers Teaching Teachers*, 2(6), 1-4.