Application of Data

As you use the data collected with these measures to leverage individual and school growth and capacity, consider the following approaches.

Appreciative Inquiry

Consider integrating appreciative inquiry and a strengths-based perspective into your professional learning communities or your traditional multi-tiered response to intervention (RTI). Appreciative inquiry, created and popularized by Cooperrider, is a strengths-based approach to change (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, date), aligned with the main tenant of positive psychology through its focus on the positive. Rather than focusing on fixing problems and attacking weaknesses with a deficit mindset, appreciative Inquiry seeks to capitalize on existing strengths. Research by Achor (2018) supports the neurological power that results from focusing on the positive:

Too many managers highlight the point of weakness or areas for improvement first, before highlighting the positive. From the perspective of the brain, this tells the employee that the manager cares not about their strengths but their weaknesses; not their growth but their deficits. Thus the brain believes that their positive behaviors do not matter. And what does not matter does not get repeated. (p. 127).

Attention directs brain focus and shapes behavior. For example, focusing on "not being upset," causes the brain to attend to the negative emotions being avoided rather than positive emotions that may replace them. Consequently, we may miss opportunities to foster positive emotions if we are too focused on avoiding the negative. This principle of brain focus is one of the reasons why appreciative inquiry has been found to increase buy-in; enable creativity; improve business efficiency and output; revitalize commitment, enthusiasm, and engagement; and "work across all types of organizational sectors, from for-profit to the social sector" (Champlain College, n.d., n.p.).

 Appreciative Inquiry consists of five D's: definition, discovery, dream, design, and destiny. First, inquirers *define* the strength or positive focus of their investigation. Then they *discover* particular moments that have involved these strengths and share them with others to define the life-giving forces. Life-giving forces are "elements or experiences within the organization's past and/or present that represent the organization's strengths when it is operating at its very best" (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2016, n.p.). Next coworkers envision, or *dream*, the future they want to create by capitalizing on these strengths, *design* that future into reality, and reevaluate how accurately their design leads them to their envisioned *destiny* (The Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2016). A similar appreciative inquiry- based model, SOAR, focuses on strengths by asking particular questions: "What are our greatest *strengths*? What are our best *opportunities*? What is our preferred future [or *aspirations*]? What are the measurable *results* that will tell us we've achieved that vision of the future?" (emphasis added; ASO, 2016). It is important to note that in appreciative inquiry and SOAR models, problems are reframed, not ignored.

Focusing on the positive can help energize you, your educators, and your students to reframe problems, create positive change, and increase wellbeing. For example, a principal using an appreciative inquiry approach would focus on the school's high levels of engagement, rather than on the low levels of positive emotion. Teachers and school leaders would gather to discuss moments when they have noticed engagement in their students. This strengths-focused discussion would help energize and prepare them to discuss needed changes. After teachers and school leaders had

shared these stories with each other, they would begin to design and implement interventions to help their students become even more engaged. The low levels of positive emotion in their students' experiences wouldn't be ignored, but would be reframed as opportunities for growth. Teachers and school leaders would also discuss times when they had observed their students expressing positive emotions, identify the life- giving moments that enabled these positive emotions, and seek ways to foster more of these experiences.

Response to Intervention

Positive psychology and response to intervention (RTI) can be complementary as you endeavor to increase the wellbeing of all your students. The general measures you administer should be "reviewed on a regular basis and in a systematic manner" (Sugia, date, page no), allowing you to notice patterns of wellbeing changes over time, keep track of improvements, and quickly respond to information. For example, you may notice overall decreases in wellbeing towards the end of terms for teachers and students. Recognizing this pattern can help you take proactive and preventive action to improve future end of terms. However, be aware the measuring wellbeing too often can lead to response bias.

In order to do any Tier 2 interventions, you will need to identify struggling students. One way to do this is to identify students on their surveys rather than administering the surveys anonymously. However, removing anonymity may have some unintended ethical and response consequences and thus may require obtaining different kinds of permissions. See the section Ethical Considerations and Wellbeing from a Growth Mindset for more information. Tier 2 interventions involving wellbeing could include administering an additional, more detailed, survey to better understand the situation or applying a more specialized intervention.

Administering measures is not the only way to identify students who could benefit from a Tier 2 intervention. As in most studies involving human subjects, numbers often don't tell the complete or perfectly accurate story. Just as academic assessments can have a margin of error, so can wellbeing measures. So trust your observations. If your teachers seem to be struggling with hope, try a researched-backed hope-based intervention. If the misbehavior of a class of students seems to be due to poor engagement, try a research-backed engagement intervention. As the wellbeing expert in your context, learning to rely on your observations to note patterns and trends can help you intervene in appropriate ways.

Section Summary

- Appreciative inquiry and the Soar model consider strengths, rather than adopting a deficit mindset, to energize change. Instead of ignoring or focusing on weaknesses, you can reframe them to focus on what you want for your school.
- Strengths-based approaches increase buy-in, promote creativity, and lead to other positive results. These methods more readily focuses the brain's attention towards a positive goal.
- Consider integrating a strengths-based approach into your PLCs or into a multi-tiered response to intervention model.

Suggestions for Further Research

Achor, S. (2018). *Big potential: How transforming the pursuit of success raises our achievement, happiness, and wellbeing.* Currency.

ASO Service Quality Division. (2016). Strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis. https://edtechbooks.org/-kYC

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