THE POWER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: DISCOVERING THE LATENT POTENTIAL OF AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe Discovery Valley High School (DVHS) participants’ involvement in the appreciative inquiry (AI) process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences and how they use these highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future. An embedded qualitative case study was used to tell a story of seven students, one administrator, one school counselor, and four teachers’ involvement in the appreciative inquiry (AI) process. As a theoretical research perspective and methodology, AI was used because it brings an affirmative approach and the generative capacity for participants to interact and collaborate with each other (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2002a). An AI methodology typically involves four stages: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. For the purposes of this study, participants engaged with each other through the first two stages (Discovery and Dream). They shared stories of past highpoint experiences, talked of what they value in themselves and their school, and shared their dreams for the future of DVHS. Their involvement in the study resulted in their personal commitments to advance their compelling vision to create excellence in learning and teaching at DVHS.

Participants shared personal stories throughout the study. Their stories were collected in the form of semi-structured paired interviews, focus groups, field notes
resulting from direct observation, and through my role as a participant-observer (Yin, 2009). Data were analyzed using content analysis, thematic coding, pattern matching, and text analysis software (Glesne, 2006; Somekh & Lewin, 2005). This analysis led to two salient findings: (1) Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the teachers and students at DVHS, (2) Stakeholders discovered that there is a high level of resiliency among students at DVHS.

Teachers and students in this study demonstrated high levels of bridging social capital. Bridging social capital refers to the relationship that is formed when one group “opens the door” to another group and consequently creates meaningful opportunities that did not exist prior to this connection (Putnam, 2000). If schools are to teach students to be engaged, free thinking, and socially responsible it is important that a foundation of trust and respect exist between teachers and students. Trust and respect create an environment for teachers and students to be engaged with each other. Although teachers and students at DVHS were from different backgrounds and perspectives, they demonstrated a common interest in the collective success of their high school. The comfort and respect shared between them provided a collective capacity to dream together for the future of their high school. The willingness of the teachers to bridge a relationship with their students not only provided them an opportunity to learn, it provided them an opportunity to dream.

A finding of resiliency also emerged from the data. Resiliency is the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity in their lives through perseverance (Benard, 2004). The students talked openly of their ability to avoid distractions and stay focused on the positive. Staying focused on the positive provided an opportunity for the
students to view their high school as a desirable place that was enjoyable and exciting. Their involvement created a connection that allowed them to become an integral part of the DVHS community. The students were also living models of what it means to have an appreciative life. They were thankful for their teachers’ dedication, the kindness of their fellow students, and the support of their families.

This study discovered the inherent potential of the participants at DVHS. As urban high schools continue to fall under scrutiny for not performing to expectations set forth by No Child Left Behind, I believe now is the time more than ever to allow the generative power of AI to uncover the ability of school stakeholders to collectively co-construct a better future (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003). With the premise that we move in the direction of our thoughts, I believe capitalizing on individual strengths will not only assist in attaining academic goals, but will take us one step closer to seeing each other as connected individuals capable of achieving great things together. The power of these uplifting interactions has the potential to change the way schools operate and contribute to student learning.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Denny and Melanie Miller. You continue to define what a life of service looks like. I am eternally grateful that I was raised in a household where I was taught the beauty of putting others ahead of myself. I can only hope that my life is a small extension of the vast reach you have had on those around you.
Acknowledgments

The completion of this doctoral program would not have been possible without the love and support of those who have stood with me throughout this journey. I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Ray Calabrese, my doctoral chair and my role model. Dr. Calabrese, you have changed my life. Your positive support, your intellect, your humor, and your unwavering belief in me made the entire process worthwhile. You refused to accept anything but my best and consequently allowed me to appreciate the reward of hard work. You are a true difference maker. Your dedication to me as your student has inspired me to be a better mentor to my own students, both young and old. Although I am sad to see this portion of our journey come to an end, I am excited about future opportunities to collaborate with you.

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exemplify what it means to be dedicated administrators and friends. You make my work enjoyable and worthwhile.

This study would not have been possible without the interest and support of Jaime Stewart and the participants of my research. Your appreciative nature and dedication to those around you is second to none. You serve as continual reminders of the important work of urban education and are paving the way for a better tomorrow.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to my own teachers: Don Huysman, Pam Hanser, and Jayne Sulser. You are exemplary educators, and you taught me to see the potential in every student.

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I want to give a special thank you to Andrew Snedaker. You arrived in the nick of time and helped me find my true north. Every step from this point forward means much more thanks to you.

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I would like to conclude by sending a special thank you to Dr. Georgiann Diniaco. Simply stated, I could not have done this without you. Your love, support, and fierce
protection of me throughout this journey was priceless. You have dedicated hours
listening to me go on and on about my writing and the stress of the moment. I am lucky
to have you in my life, and promise to pay it forward.
Vita

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Education

Minor Field: Educational Policy and Leadership
Table of Contents

Abstract............................................................................................................................................ ii
Dedication........................................................................................................................................ v
Acknowledgments........................................................................................................................... vi
Vita.................................................................................................................................................... x
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... xi
List of Tables ..................................................................................................................................... xiv
List of Figures................................................................................................................................... xv
CHAPTER 1 ......................................................................................................................................... 1
Background to the Study..................................................................................................................... 2
Problem Statement.............................................................................................................................. 7
Purpose of the Study............................................................................................................................ 10
Overview of Methodology ................................................................................................................ 11
Unit of Analysis ................................................................................................................................. 13
Methods........................................................................................................................................... 15
Data Analysis................................................................................................................................... 16
Research Questions .......................................................................................................................... 16
Objectives........................................................................................................................................ 17
Assumptions ..................................................................................................................................... 17
Limitations........................................................................................................................................ 18
Delimitations...................................................................................................................................... 18
Definition of Key Terms.................................................................................................................... 19
Significance of the Study ................................................................................................................... 20
Summary.......................................................................................................................................... 20
CHAPTER 2 ......................................................................................................................................... 24
Literature Review............................................................................................................................... 24
Conceptual Framework ....................................................................................................................... 24
Epistemology .................................................................................................................................... 25
Professional Education Experiences ................................................................................................ 25
Theoretical Perspective ..................................................................................................................... 27
Origins of Appreciative Inquiry ...................................................................................................... 28
Competing Theory ........................................................................................................................... 31
Search Criteria ................................................................................................................................. 32
Synthesis of the Empirical Research ................................................................................................. 34
   Genesis of AI (1986-1990) ........................................................................................................... 34
   AI as a research methodology (1900-1995) .............................................................................. 36
   AI – Organizational Development .......................................................................................... 37
Findings

CHAPTER 4

Findings
Purpose of the Study
Theoretical Perspective
Methodology and Research Design
Research Questions
Data Analysis

Summary

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Research Design
Purpose of the Study
Research Questions
Context of the Study
Unit of Analysis
Role of Researcher
Data Analysis
Research Quality

Summary

AI - Global Social Innovation
AI as a large-scale research methodology (1995-2000)
AI – The Summit
AI expands (2000-present)
AI – Community Involvement
AI - Business
AI - Health

AI - Education

Summary

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Research Design
Purpose of the Study
Research Questions
Context of the Study
Unit of Analysis
Role of Researcher
Data Analysis
Research Quality

Summary

AI as a large-scale research methodology (1995-2000)
List of Tables

Table 3.1 The First Two Stages of the AI 4-D Cycle – Discovery and Dream .............. 51
Table 4.1 DVHS Participant Involvement ................................................................... 62
Table 4.2 Stakeholders Discovered A High Level of Bridging Social Capital Between Professional Staff and Students at DVHS ......................................................... 65
Table 4.3 Relationship Descriptions Between Professional Staff and Students at DVHS ...................................................................................................................... 70
Table 4.4 Stakeholders Discovered A High Level of Resiliency Among the Students at DVHS .................................................................................................................. 75
Table 4.5 Great Things Happening Within DVHS ....................................................... 88
Table 4.6 Participant Characteristics ........................................................................... 100
Table 4.7 Participants’ Dreams for DVHS ................................................................. 103
Table 4.8 Participant Commitments ............................................................................. 106
Table 5.1 Relationship of Social Capital and AI to Organizational Psychology ....... 127
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Description of the AI 4-D Cycle .............................................................. 12
Figure 2.1 Timeline of Appreciative Inquiry ............................................................ 36
Figure 3.1 Embedded Case Study Research Design ................................................... 46
Figure 4.1 Interactive Nature of Bridging Capital at DVHS ...................................... 68
Figure 4.2 Jello Parfait Metaphor ............................................................................. 91
Figure 4.3 Loaf of Bread Metaphor ........................................................................ 93
Figure 4.4 Ice Cream Sundae Metaphor ................................................................ 95
Figure 4.5 Layered Cake Metaphor ....................................................................... 96
I started my career in education to educate young people in ways that prepare them to be engaged, free thinking, and socially responsible citizens. My career began as a high school English teacher and I spent the last eight years as an assistant principal in a suburban comprehensive high school. This leadership role has given me an opportunity to work with teachers as an instructional leader and with students as an advocate for their academic success. I discovered using my role as an instructional leader to promote the strengths of people has a far greater impact than focusing on the deficits. The success I witnessed through affirming people led me to inquire further about the impact of a positive and optimistic approach.

Throughout the past decade, I have had an opportunity as an educator to educate young people to be engaged, free thinking, and socially responsible citizens. I have also had an opportunity to expand my beliefs about the importance of my role as an educator. Although I continue to believe we need to prepare students to be independent and responsible citizens, I now believe I have an opportunity to make this possible by helping students recognize their inherent capacity for academic achievement and higher aspirations.

By nature, I am an optimistic person and question the tendencies of some educators to focus on fixing problems. I believe there is tremendous untapped potential to assist schools in discovering an innate capacity for transformation. This belief led me to
investigate a movement rooted in organizational learning dedicated to shifting the historical deficit-based approach of businesses toward a positive and optimistic initiative (Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998). It is with this perspective, that I embrace the theory of appreciative inquiry (AI) and its core mission to continually look for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). This concept is commonly referred to in AI as the positive core. The positive core is the wisdom, knowledge, positive attitude, best practices, skills, and capabilities of the organization (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2002a).

The purpose of this study was to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences and how they used their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

I now address the background to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, overview of the methodology, unit of analysis, methods, data analysis, and research questions. I conclude with the significance my work has on the broader education community.

**Background to the Study**

In this section, I review the educational reform movement and the potential impact for schools to improve the academic experience for students. Public schools in general continue to fall under the critical watch of the public eye. Because of this, urban high schools historically have received the most scrutiny to improve the academic
experience for students (Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004; Fleischman & Heppen, 2009).

Throughout the last decade of my professional career, I developed a passion to advance the success of students served through public education institutions and now desire to focus on a historically low performing urban high school to describe the positive core of highpoint experiences that exist within this school.

Global forces have compelled the United States Government to play a greater role in determining the quality of public education for nearly five decades. School reform mandates, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, were developed to address the learning needs of students (Da Silva, Huguley, Kakli, & Rao, 2007). Since that time, various high school reform initiatives have surfaced to focus on improving academic achievement, reducing dropout rates, and building stronger relationships between students and adults (Legters, Balfanz, Jordan, & McPartland, 2002; Rodriguez, 2008). Through these initiatives, a prevailing optimism evolved that public education in the United States could be successfully managed.

From 1990 to the present, several studies have assessed successful school reform initiatives focused on improving the academic experience for students. Although the results are inconclusive, we know that school reform initiatives cannot work in isolation of each other (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003; Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; Fullan, 2009; Legters et al., 2002). The inclusive results of these initiatives reinforce the challenge of improving public education due to the complex nature of schools and the internal and external variables impacting academic
achievement, dropout rates, and the strength of relationships between students and adults within the school (Rumberger & Ah Lim, 2008).

The school reform initiatives that appear to be the most effective (a) establish frameworks that support the use of effective data, (b) encourage a culture of questioning what works and what does not work, and (c) ensure adequate teacher professional development (Lachat & Smith, 2005). School reform initiatives are complex and analysis of these initiatives from 1990 to the present indicate hope for improving public education in the United States (Fullan, 2009).

Reform efforts have a long history in the United States and serve as a catalyst for improving education. Since 1965, the United States Government has approved updates to the ESEA every five years to continue the charge of improving public schools (Schneider & Keesler, 2007). Reform oriented educators continue to work toward improving public education with an understanding that reform initiatives cannot work in isolation of each other and must continually adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of the public education system.

With the turn of the 21st Century, the ESEA received a major overhaul and was renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB is comprised of five overarching goals:

1. All students will achieve high academic standards by attaining proficiency or better in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year.

2. Highly qualified teachers will teach all students.

3. All students will be educated in schools and classrooms that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.
4. All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English.

5. All students will graduate from high school and be prepared for the 21st Century (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002).

The focus on academic achievement continues to be a concern for public schools. In particular, urban high schools struggle to find meaningful ways to improve academic achievement for students. Factors such as school size, urbanized location, racial composition, and poverty level are all significant indicators affecting the potential of a student to perform well and ultimately graduate from high school (Swanson, 2010). The composition of these factors directly impact urban high schools and leave the charge of improving academic achievement a challenging task.

No Child Left Behind’s impact on the capability of urban high schools to improve academic achievement has yet to be fully determined (Balfanz & Legters, 2008; Fuller, Wright, Gesicki, & Kang, 2007; J. Lee, 2006). There are, however, encouraging examples of traditional low performing urban high schools increasing academic achievement (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Montecel, Cortez, & Cortez, 2004; Rodriguez, 2008).

Empirical evidence indicates that urban high schools with an increase in academic achievement share common factors: they have strong principal leadership (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Fullan, 2009), high expectations for students (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; V. Lee & Ready, 2009) regular monitoring of student progress (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), and sustain working relationships with parents and the surrounding community (Rodriguez, 2008; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). NCLB has contributed to new school leadership structures and creative instructional responses that benefit students.
Identifying a connection between new school leadership structures and creative instructional responses to improve academic achievement has yet to be fully determined (Fusarelli, 2004).

Although some reform efforts have shown signs of increasing the academic experience for students in urban high schools, other formal school reform efforts addressing improving the academic experience have found little success (Datnow et al., 2002; Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; Fullan, 2009). Moreover, some evidence exists that accountability systems like NCLB detrimentally affect the academic achievement for minority and low-income students (Brown, 2010; Lagana-Riordan & Aguilar, 2009).

Supporting the student’s academic experience cannot be accomplished by focusing on academic factors in isolation. A critique of NCLB through a sociological lens revealed that NCLB ignores looking at the whole student. Yet, it is the whole student, not just academic experiences, that must be considered when attempting to create lasting change and impact specific factors like improving academic achievement, reducing dropout rates, and building stronger relationships between students and adults (Dworkin, 2005; Meier & Wood, 2004). Although researchers continue to seek to discover effective means for improving the academic experience of the whole child there has yet to be a clear solution for improving the education of urban high school students (Carroll et al., 2004; Lynn et al., 2010).

One line of inquiry not fully explored in advancing the important work of traditional low performing urban high schools is to operate from the assumption that something works. The seeds of change are the things people think about, the things people talk about, and the things that inspire images of the future (Cooperrider, Whitney,
Many schools focus on fixing problems. My research brings a positive and optimistic line of inquiry to complement existing critical lines of inquiry that focus on improvement of academic achievement of urban high school students.

**Problem Statement**

Much of the empirical research on low-performing urban high schools is framed in critical inquiry (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; V. Lee & Ready, 2009; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). I suggest a different and complimentary line of inquiry may prove beneficial to developing a compelling vision for learning and teaching in traditionally low performing urban high schools. The focus on the positive core that I believe exists within the school needs to be discovered. Positive core is the wisdom, knowledge, positive attitude, best practices, skills, and capabilities of the organization. Discovering the positive core is a process of inquiry in which an organization enhances its collective wisdom, builds energy and resiliency to change, and extends its capacity to achieve extraordinary results (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Discovering the positive core of an organization is the first step in the change process to construct a compelling vision for learning and teaching. The process of discovering the positive core has shown signs of success in government and health (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Collins, 2003); business and religious organizations (Coghlan, 2000; Markow & Klenke, 2005); and global settings to empower people to transform their lives and that of their villages (Calabrese, San Martin, Glasgow, & Friesen, 2008; Thatchenkery, 2004).
In order to construct a compelling vision for learning and teaching in an urban high school, it is necessary to focus on the positive core existing within the school. In my research, I asked an administrator, school counselor, teachers, and students to describe their highpoint experiences; they were asked to talk about what they valued most in themselves, their work, and their school; they were asked to describe what gives life to their school when it is at its best (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Discovering the positive core within the school was accomplished using an AI theoretical research perspective and methodology.

Appreciative inquiry as an asset-driven and strengths-based perspective that discovers what gives life to an organization when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms and brings to life the positive characteristics already at work within an organization (Cooperrider, 1990; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AI is rooted in the field of organizational learning positing that human systems attempt to maintain and maximize their autonomy through their environment (Schein, 2004). AI researchers discovered once people started working cooperatively with each other, their relationships improved and ultimately shifted the culture toward a greater capacity for positive change.

Through its collective nature, AI shifts the direction of the dialogue to a positive focus that ultimately bridges the relationship between the behavior of people and their actions (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Altering the way people work with each other to strengthen their relationships gives organizations a greater capacity for change. Because of this, AI is considered an important addition to traditional problem solving applications of action research (Bushe, 2001).
Researchers facilitating change in organizational development report significant success in applying AI in a variety of settings. More specifically, AI has been found to have a positive impact in both public and private educational settings (Calabrese, 2006; Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan, & VanBuskirk, 1999). AI processes provide opportunities for teachers and students to focus on the positive experiences in their schools by collaboratively and generatively discovering new possibilities not previously considered (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Calabrese, Hester, Friesen, & Burkhalter, 2010; Calabrese, Hummel, & San Martin, 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008). Because of this, I suggest that if urban high schools are to maximize their potential, the use of AI within educational settings is an important line of inquiry to compliment the traditional critical inquiry focus on urban schools.

My study applied AI as a theoretical research perspective to facilitate public urban high school stakeholders to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences; and, how they used their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future. The study was driven by the following overarching question: How can historically low performing urban high schools discover and apply their positive core of successful highpoint experiences to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable learning community to advance learning and teaching?

One historical low-performing urban high school is Discovery Valley High School (DVHS) located in a large urban city in the State of Ohio. DVHS is a pseudonym used to protect the confidentiality of the school. As one of four comprehensive high schools within the Discovery Valley City School District, DVHS has received a
designation of “continuous improvement” by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) five of the eight years since the inception of this rating system.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, DVHS had an average daily student enrollment of 1,128 students. Of these students, 22.9% were classified as Black, non-Hispanic; 63.6% White, non-Hispanic; 2.3% Asian or Pacific Islander; 8.0% Hispanic; 2.9% Multi-Racial, based on self-reporting data to the ODE. Data also reveal that 67.8% of students were economically disadvantaged, 16.6% students had disabilities, and it is considered a high poverty high school (Ohio State Department of Education, 2010). DVHS had a graduation rate of 78.5%, the lowest graduation rate within Discovery Valley City School District during the 2009-2010 academic year. DVHS continues to struggle to improve its graduation rate and meet adequate yearly progress (Ohio State Department of Education, 2010).

I suggest a different and complimentary line of inquiry may prove beneficial to developing a compelling vision of learning and teaching for traditionally low performing urban high schools. Considering the potential of focusing on a positive core as the foundation of generating a compelling vision for learning and teaching in educational settings, my study sought to describe the positive core of highpoint experiences that exists in DVHS and imagine a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the high school.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences and how they
use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

**Overview of Methodology**

My study was an embedded qualitative case study to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process. The data collected in my study discovered the participants’ positive core highpoint school-related experiences and the application of their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

I used an AI theoretical research perspective and methodology to guide my study. AI was used as the methodology because of its affirmative approach and the generative capacity for interaction and collaboration with others (Cooperrider, 1990). An AI methodology typically involves a 4-D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny [See Figure 1.1]. For the purposes of this study, participants were engaged in the first two stages of the 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream.
Figure 1.1. The AI 4-D Cycle consists of four stages: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. The Discovery stage asks participants to question “What gives life” to their organization and is the first stage of the cycle. The Dream stage asks participants to question “What might be” of their organization and is the second stage of the cycle. The Design stage asks participants to question, “How can it be” for their organization and is the third stage of the cycle. The Destiny stage is the fourth stage of the cycle and asks the culminating question of “What might be”. All four stages makeup the AI 4-D Cycle.
The Discovery stage is the first stage of the 4-D Cycle in which participants inquire into what gives life to their school. They begin to discover their positive core by discovering and valuing what gives life – the best of “What is?” in their organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The Dream stage is the second stage of the 4-D Cycle in which participants imagine their ideal high school and what that would be by taking the positive core from the Discovery stage and then collectively envisioning how their school can look in the future. A collective vision can be defined as “What might be?” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

My research used the first two stages (Discovery and Dream) of the AI 4-D Cycle to facilitate the discovery of the positive core of highpoint school-related experiences that exists in DVHS and imagine a compelling of learning and teaching in the high school. Due to time and financial constraints of the participating school district, the remaining two stages of the 4-D Cycle (Design and Destiny) were not part of this study. The Design stage is the third stage where participants take the best from the past and use those descriptions to design a model for the future that illustrates how they envision the organization at its best. The fourth stage is the Destiny stage where the shared vision becomes reality for the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The four stages used as a whole comprise the entire AI 4-D Cycle.

**Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis in my study was a group of purposefully selected DVHS stakeholders. Participants included one administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students. I worked in conjunction with the head principal at DVHS to
select an administrator and school counselor to participate in my study. The intent was to have an administrator and a school counselor who had a minimum of five years of experience in the high school building to provide a historical and cultural perspective. Once selected, the administrator and school counselor provided input toward the selection of teacher and student participants.

Teacher and student participants were selected based on a criterion to provide a well-rounded representation of DVHS. Two teacher participants were selected with continuing contracts to provide a veteran perspective; two teacher participants were selected without continuing contracts to contrast experience with new perspectives. All four teacher participants were involved in one or more extra-curricular activity to provide a perspective of student life outside of the academic classroom.

Three junior student participants and three senior student participants were selected to bring an experienced perspective about the life of DVHS students, as well as involvement in one or more extra-curricular activity to lend a perspective of student life outside of the academic classroom. Additionally, one freshman student participant was selected to bring an initial experience of participation at DVHS.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

a. gender balanced
b. one administrator with a minimum of five years of experience in the building
c. one school counselor with a minimum of five years of experience in the building
d. two teachers with continuing contract
e. two teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience, but not eligible for a continuing contract
f. all teachers will be currently involved in one or more extra-curricular activity
g. three students from senior year
h. three students from junior year
i. one student from freshman year
j. all students will be currently involved in one or more extra-curricular activity
k. all students will have a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average

Methods

One DVHS administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students participated in the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream. Data collected with the AI 4-D Cycle mirror methods commonly associated with qualitative research, such as semi-structured, paired interviews, focus groups, identification of pertinent documents, artifacts, direct observation, and participant-observation (Cooperrider, 1990; Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Yin, 2009).

For my embedded qualitative case study, data were collected in the form of semi-structured paired interviews, focus groups, field notes resulting from direct observation, and my role as participant-observer. As a researcher conducting action research, I participated in the study as a participant-observer. Participant-observer is a mode of observation in which the researcher is not merely a passive observer. Instead, the researcher assumes a variety of roles and may actually participate in the events being studied (Yin, 2009).
All AI activities for this study were recorded and transcribed. I maintained rich and detailed field notes throughout all activities of the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle. The participants’ stories and data collected in the Discovery stage were used to map the Dream stage. A fuller explanation of the methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

The Discovery and Dream stages of the 4-D Cycle were conducted over a two day period. During this time, all AI activities of the study were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed using content analysis, thematic coding, and pattern matching (Weber, 1990; Yin, 2009). I applied my analysis as an iterative process over several months drawing deeper and richer meanings from my reflections and conversations with stakeholders, peers, and my advisor. I looked for common threads that revealed stories, practices, and wishes that became apparent from participant interviews, focus groups, field notes, and my role as participant-observer. I then identified themes to discover how to do more of what worked well in given situations, and how the data as a whole related to the initial research questions.

Research Questions

My research was driven by an overarching question and guided by two specific research questions. The following overarching question set the context of my study: How can a historically low performing urban high school discover its positive core of highpoint successful experiences to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable
learning community to advance learning and teaching? The following research questions guided my study:

1. How do DVHS participants describe their positive core (Discovery stage) of highpoint experiences that exist in DVHS?
2. How do DVHS participants describe their compelling vision (Dream stage) of learning and teaching for the future at DVHS?

**Objectives**

The study involved one DVHS administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students participating in the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream. The participants focused on achieving the following two objectives:

1. To describe DVHS administrator, school counselor, teachers’ and students’ positive core of highpoint experiences that exist in DVHS.
2. To describe DVHS administrator, school counselor, teachers’, and students’ compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future at DVHS.

**Assumptions**

The study had the following assumptions:

1. DVHS had a positive core of teaching and learning experiences.
2. The administrator, school counselor, teachers, and students could describe a positive core of highpoint experiences at DVHS.
3. DVHS had an unrecognized and undiscovered positive core.
Limitations

The study had the following limitations:

1. The study was limited by the composition of my unit of analysis. For the practicality of conducting my study, one administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students were purposively selected as a representation of the entire adult and student populations.

2. The study was limited by the use of only the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream.

3. The study was limited by the time constraints of administrator, school counselor, teachers, and students for their participation in two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream.

4. The study was limited by specifically focusing on the positive core in DVHS.

Delimitations

The study had the following delimitations:

1. The study was delimited to DVHS, a low-performing urban high school. DVHS was selected as a historically low-performing urban high school in an urban school district in Ohio.

2. The study was delimited to participants: administrator, school counselor who had a minimum of five years of experience in the building to provide a historical and cultural perspective, two teachers with continuing contract; two teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience, but not eligible for a continuing contract; all teachers were currently involved in one or more extra-curricular
activity; three students from senior year; three students from junior year; one
student from freshman year; all students were currently involved in one or more
extra-curricular activity; all students had a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Academic Achievement**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emphasizes all students will graduate from high
school and be prepared for the 21st Century (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002).
To qualify for high school graduation, a student must accomplish specific academic
requirements by a maintaining a level of academic achievement. Academic achievement
is a student’s grade point average and graduation status (pass/fail) based on five sections
of a standardized state high school graduation exam (Ohio State Department of
Education, 2009).

**Appreciative Inquiry**

Appreciative inquiry is a theoretical research perspective and methodology that searches
for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. AI is a
collaborative process of discovering what gives life to an organization when it is most
effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms (Cooperrider et al.,
2008).

**Highpoint Experiences**

Highpoint experiences are moments when people feel most alive, capable, and effective.
The ability to recall and understand high point experiences empower individuals to use
the confidence and strength gained from these experiences in future actions (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

**Positive Core**

Positive core is the sum of the best of an organization and its people. It is a process of inquiry in which an organization enhances its collective wisdom, builds energy and resiliency to change, and extends its capacity to achieve extraordinary results (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

**Stakeholders**

For the purpose of this study, I define stakeholders as individual(s) who have a vested interest in and/or a strong impact on a school’s growth and future. This individual(s) can supply valuable insights into the selected topic of study. Stakeholders in education include students, parents, teachers, administrators, higher education institutions, government, community, and professional associations (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Although similar, educational specific research will sometimes isolate the definition of stakeholder to those having influence outside of the traditional school related roles; for example, parents, community members, and federal, state, and local government officials (Gordon & Seashore Louis, 2009).

**Significance of the Study**

My study is important to educational practitioners by extending AI into the field of education and creating a focus on the strengths of a system instead of deficit-based thinking. It is important to policy makers by highlighting recognized and unrecognized
attributes of NCLB. It is also significant to educational researchers through opening new lines of inquiry into the power of positive relationships.

My study also provides additional contribution to the field of theoretical knowledge by implementing the first two stages of an AI 4-D Cycle in an urban high school. Through participating in the first two stages of an AI 4-D Cycle, an administrator, school counselor, teachers, and students were empowered by discovering the positive core of learning and teaching experiences that exists in DVHS. Through discovering their positive core, they were able to describe their vision for advancing learning and teaching. The implementation of the first two stages of an AI 4-D Cycle compliments the AI work already done at the middle, alternative, and district levels (Calabrese, 2006; Calabrese et al., 2010; Calabrese, Hummel, et al., 2007; Calabrese, San Martin, et al., 2008).

The study is important to educational practitioners because it extends AI methodology into the field of education by involving urban high school administrators, school counselor, teachers, and students in the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle. The study informs suburban and rural high school administrators, teachers, and students, as well. In addition, the use of AI as a research methodology in schools provides an alternative approach to view the field of education by focusing on the strengths of the system instead of focusing on the weaknesses.

My study is important to educational policy makers because of the potential to impact the initiatives set forth through NCLB. NCLB mandates all students will achieve high academic standards by attaining proficiency or better in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). This study has the potential to demonstrate how AI as a research methodology in urban high schools will
promote the discovery of recognized and unrecognized attributes of NCLB leading to a positive impact on improving academic achievement.

My study is important to educational researchers interested in urban high schools because of the potential to open new lines of inquiry. It is also important to researchers involved in positive organizational scholarship. This study advances the theoretical understandings of human strengths as opposed to the predominant focus on weakness in work organizations (Dutton, 2003; Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). Moreover, the study has the potential to discover the positive core of highpoint experiences within an urban high school; and, how this compels a vision to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable learning community.

My study advances the work of those using AI to promote cultural change in public schools and to advance academic achievement by demonstrating how AI as a research methodology in low performing urban schools can impact organizations outside of education.

**Summary**

Chapter 1 provided the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, overview of the methodology, unit of analysis, methods, data analysis, research questions, objectives, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, definition of key terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 provides an alternative perspective, an explanation of conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and a review and synthesis of related empirical research. Chapter 3 provides a description of the context of the study,
research design, a delineation of the unit of analysis, the specific methods to be used to collect data, and the data analysis procedure. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the salient findings of my study and reviews the participants’ involvement in the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D cycle. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, implications for future research, and a conclusion to the study.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature related to my study. The review is comprised of the (a) conceptual framework that includes a discussion of my epistemology, professional education experiences, and theoretical framework, (b) origins of AI, (c) discussion of a competing perspective, (d) methodology for searching the selection of empirical research, (e) synthesis of the reviewed literature as it relates to AI in urban high schools, and (f) chapter summary.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for my study was built around my epistemology, professional educational experiences, and the AI theoretical research perspective. This section provides the basis of my view and approach of my study of an urban high school. I view urban high schools as social systems made up of individuals with a desire to do great things. The administration, school counselor, teachers, and students described the positive core of highpoint school-related experiences; and, how these experiences help to construct a compelling vision for learning and teaching of their high school.
Epistemology

The study was grounded in the epistemology of social constructionism. Social constructionism claims that all knowledge, even the most basic, is derived from and maintained by social interactions. As an epistemology, social constructionism views the interactions of others as (a) human perspectives in which all viewpoints should be treated equal, (b) meaning being defined through relationships based upon historical and cultural perspectives, (c) relationships continually being redefined and shifting prior interpretations, and (d) the power of human relationships to recognize the past, take the good, and co-construct a better tomorrow (Gergen, 1985, 1999). Through these social interactions, meaning is constructed as people try to make sense of the world in which they are participating (Berger & Luckman, 1967). The beliefs of social constructionism serve as the foundation for AI.

Social constructionism forms the epistemological foundation for AI. Social construction’s foundation consists of people, interactively co-constructing meaning to create the world in which they live. It connects with the premise of AI bringing people together to co-constructively create a better future (Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995). The social constructionist epistemology will be connected to my beliefs and professional experiences in the next section.

Professional Education Experiences

My professional educational experiences are grounded in a social constructionist epistemology influencing the AI methodology I selected for my study. My career began as a high school English teacher and I spent the last eight years as an assistant principal in
a suburban comprehensive high school. This leadership role has given me an opportunity to work with teachers as an instructional leader and with students as an advocate for their academic success.

I discovered using my role as an instructional leader to promote the strengths of people has a far greater impact than focusing on the deficits. The success I witnessed through affirming people led me to inquire further about the impact of a positive and optimistic approach in schools; and, whether it was possible to shift the environment around us to reflect this approach. A deeper understanding of social constructionism led me to understand that it is possible to reconstruct the world in which we live through our interactions with others. Because humans have a capacity to be change agents, I believe applying an AI theoretical research perspective that is grounded in a social constructionist epistemology will contribute toward sustained advancement in educational settings.

My epistemology and professional educational experience were the basis for my core beliefs as an educator to educate young people in ways that prepare them to be (a) engaged in their learning, (b) free thinking toward opposing perspectives, and (c) socially responsible citizens who are concerned about the future of a democratic nation. Although, I believe a greater opportunity exists to make this possible by transforming their learning environment to a place where deficit-based thinking gives way to a tremendous untapped potential for positive growth. These beliefs align with the AI theoretical research perspective and serve as my theoretical perspective and research methodology.
Theoretical Perspective

Appreciative inquiry is the theoretical research perspective that I used in the study of a low performing urban high school. In AI, there are five underlying principles: (a) the constructionist principle – social interactions define the organization; (b) the principal of simultaneity – inquiry and change are not stand alone moments, but are simultaneous; (c) the poetic principle – an organization’s story is continually being coauthored by its members; (d) the anticipatory principle – images of the future guides the decision-making for an organization; and (e) the positivist principle – unconditionally positive questions cultivate the momentum of an organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Using AI as a theoretical research perspective allowed me to describe how focusing on the stakeholders’ collective highpoint school-related experiences served to create a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future. As a theoretical research perspective, AI (a) is generative in nature, (b) has capacity for individual growth and organizational transformation, (c) is a narrative-based research methodology, and (d) is different from the traditional problem solving methods.

Appreciative Inquiry is a theoretical research perspective and research methodology used to initiate organizational change through a positive inquiry approach. AI takes the best from the past and present, providing the basis for constructing an image of what could be and becomes the collectively co-constructed design for the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).
Origins of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry originated as a research methodology in the mid-1980s by David Cooperrider, a doctoral student at Case Western Reserve University. Cooperrider was working with a non-profit medical practice, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, in Cleveland, Ohio, that had been plagued by conflicts in leadership and decision-making between professional responsibilities and administrative affairs. To address these concerns in what is commonly known as organizational development (OD), Cooperrider chose to experiment with a non-traditional method and found that AI propelled the collective wisdom within the Cleveland Clinic and revealed the importance of focusing on the life-giving forces within the organization. The powerful outcome of this experience led to creation of the AI methodology (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Appreciative inquiry’s core has been derived from research on positive psychology (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), learned optimism (Seligman, 1990), and positive organizational studies (Dutton, Glynn, & Spreitzer, 2005). Cooperrider was influenced by work that focused on empowering people that lead to energizing organizations through affirming the positive within those organizations. AI research methodology takes the best from the past and present to create the future. As the people within an organization learn to value each other, a synergy is developed that will propel the organization forward in a positive way (Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997). Through the AI research methodology, the energies of people within an organization are led toward discovering the positive core and the power it holds to positively shape an organization.
The positive core identified through an AI research methodology reflects the greatest achievements and innovations that an organization or person experiences. Every organization and human being has the capacity for moments of inspiration, opportunity, and images of the future (Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Miller, 2003). The positive core is the wisdom, knowledge, positive attitude, best practices, skills, and capabilities of the organization. Discovering the positive core is a process of inquiry in which an organization enhances its collective wisdom, builds energy and resiliency to change, and extends its capacity to achieve extraordinary results (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Appreciative inquiry is a form of action research (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). Action research has been defined as a set of problem solving steps that require identifying, action, and evaluation of problems within organizations (Lewin, 1946). In action research, researchers focus on problem solving models and ways to provide solutions to these problems (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Unfortunately, organizations focusing on symptoms in isolation find themselves mired in the same problems over and over and become locked in a cycle of blame and divisiveness (Senge, 2006). The use of AI as a form of action research serves as an opportunity for organizations to move beyond a focus on problem solving and into the realm of generative (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2002a).

Appreciative inquiry provides opportunities to share past highpoint experiences instead of focusing on traditional problem solving methods. Through the use of positive storytelling, AI alters the traditional modes of action research. Storytelling allows individuals to share the best from the past while looking forward to a positive future (Michael, 2005). It is important to note that AI does not ignore problems. Instead, AI
addresses problems within an organization by focusing on doing more of what works and what will work even better tomorrow (Elliott, 1999).

Appreciative inquiry has been used in several contexts to bring about change in organizations. AI for example is used as a research methodology in government and health (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Collins, 2003); business and religious organizations (Coghlan, 2000; Markow & Klenke, 2005); and global settings (Thatchenkery, 2004). AI facilitates a focus on organizational members appreciating and valuing each other, ultimately leading to positive change in a variety of settings.

The power of appreciating and valuing others in AI brings people together. Because of this, AI has shown success when applied in both public and private educational settings (Calabrese, 2006; Ryan et al., 1999). AI processes provide opportunities for teachers and students to focus on the positive that is happening in their schools by collaboratively and generatively discovering new possibilities not previously considered (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Calabrese et al., 2010; Calabrese, Hummel, et al., 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008).

As a research methodology, AI emphasizes the generation of positive ideas among individuals within an organization. The generation of these ideas provides the structure for creating positive change. As a theoretical research perspective, AI examines what people value about themselves and their organization. In the following section, I describe a competing theory as an alternative way to view my study.
Competing Theory

Critical theory, as a competing theory, was considered for this study. Influenced by philosophers like Kant, Hegel, and Marx, the first critical theorists addressed the oppression they observed in society and economics, particularly for minority populations (Habermas, 1973). Critical theory is grounded in a belief that humans should be liberated from the circumstances that enslave them (Freire, 1972). Many critical theorists also focus on the oppressive and restrictive aspects inherent in society (Crotty, 1998). The concentration on providing a better life for others has positioned critical theory to serve as a tool for reform throughout the field of education (Willower, 2001). The charge to provide a better future for education connects critical theory and AI.

Critical theory and AI are both grounded in social constructionism through the belief that human beings have the power of language and can use this form of interacting to construct a better future (Gergen, 1999). Critical theory and AI differ, however, on how society views human interactions. Critical theory traditionally focuses on power relationships and how that power is abused, ultimately creating an unjust society (Crotty, 1998). The interpretation of this societal ill serves as the impetus for correcting the problem (Freire, 1972). AI, as a different line of inquiry, does not focus or seek out perceived problems in society. Instead, AI seeks out the strength within human interactions and uses this to construct a better future (Cooperrider et al., 1995). I did not choose critical theory because AI is an empowering methodology that seeks to involve all stakeholders in a transformative process for a compelling future. In the next section, I present the process I used to construct my literature review.
Search Criteria

The purpose of my literature review was to identify empirical research associated with AI and how it advanced practice in organizational settings. The empirical research I will use to anchor this study will meet the following criteria: (a) empirical research with a well-defined qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods methodology from the genesis of AI (1987) to present, (b) empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals available electronically in full text from online databases, and (c) practical applications as reported in AI journals.

I delimited my search of the empirical research using the following online databases: Education Full Text; Education Research Complete; Electronic Journal Center (Ohio Link); ERIC; Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection; PsycINFO; and Business Source Complete. Education Full Text, Education Research Complete, and ERIC were all used due to their intense concentration on empirical research surrounding education. PsycINFO was used to gain access to empirical research done in the areas of positive psychology and learned optimism. Business Source Complete was used to gain access to empirical research published in the area of positive organizational studies.

I formed an overarching question to guide my search of empirical research related to my study: How has AI advanced practice in organizational settings? Within this overarching question, I narrowed my search to two specific search questions:

1. What empirical research exists on urban high schools where AI has been used as the theoretical perspective or methodology?

2. What empirical research exists that demonstrates the evolution of AI into a mainstream action research methodology?
I used the following keywords and keyword combinations from the databases to conduct my search.

Education

High school

Urban high school

Appreciative inquiry

Positive core

Positive psychology

Learned optimism

Positive organizational studies

Student achievement

School culture

The following keyword combinations were used to refine and narrow my search:

Education + urban high school + appreciative inquiry

Urban high school + appreciative inquiry

High school + urban high school + positive psychology

High school + urban high school + learned optimism

High school + urban high school + appreciative inquiry + school culture

Appreciative inquiry + student achievement

Positive psychology + student achievement

Learned optimism + student achievement
Synthesis of the Empirical Research

I organized my discussion of the empirical research in the form of a timeline beginning with the genesis of AI, the research methodology applied in my study. I will present the formative years of AI from 1986 to 1990, AI’s evolution as a research methodology from 1990 to 1995, AI’s use in large-scale organizational change from 1995 to 2000, and its acceptance among mainstream researchers as an action research methodology in the 21st Century. I conclude with a discussion of AI education in general and more specifically in urban education.

Genesis of AI (1986-1990)

In this section, I present the inception of AI and its trajectory during the first few years of its existence. Prior to the mid-1980s, AI as a term had not been officially used to describe a research methodology. AI first appeared as a research methodology by David Cooperrider at Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio. His dissertation, “Appreciative inquiry: Toward a methodology for understanding and enhancing organizational innovation” demonstrated how AI could be used as a positive strengths-based research methodology for organizational change (Cooperrider, 1986).

During the late 1980s, AI started to appear in scholarly work where it was introduced into OD as a positive theoretical change perspective (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Shortly after the release of this seminal work, in October of 1988, a symposium was held at Case Western University to discuss the concept of AI as a theoretical research perspective and strengths-based research methodology. This marked the first time a group of researchers came together to discuss AI as an action research methodology. The theme
of the symposium surrounded the power of positive change in OD; specifically, the positive impact of AI on teamwork (Aram, 1990), diversity (Bunker, 1990), executive leadership (Frost & Egri, 1990), positive thinking (Cooperrider, 1990), and illusions and disillusions of appreciative management (Pages, 1990). Building from the momentum generated at the symposium, AI evolved toward a focus on the strengths of an organization moving away from the traditional deficit orientation (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Srivastva & Barrett, 1988). Figure 2.1 gives a chronological history of how AI has evolved. I will refer to this timeline when noting the defining shifts in AI’s evolution.
**Figure 2.1.** The timeline of AI gives an overview of AI since its inception in 1986. Since it first appeared in a doctoral dissertation, AI has been used as positive theoretical change perspective (late 1980s – to present), a research methodology (early 1990s to present), and a large-scale research methodology (mid 1990s to present) in the form of an AI Summit. Over the last 25 years, AI has been found in business, education, health, community, and other social organizations.

Figure 2.1 Timeline Of Appreciative Inquiry

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**AI as a research methodology (1900-1995)**

In this section, I discuss the shift of AI from a strengths-based research methodology toward a theoretical change perspective. The early 1990s will show AI’s continued growth within OD and throughout other concentrations.
At the onset of the 1990s, AI gradually evolved from a strengths-based research methodology into a change perspective allowing for generative change within organizations. As a strengths-based research methodology, AI provided the structure for constructing change by emphasizing the generation of positive ideas. The application of AI as a theoretical research perspective examines, from a positive lens, what people value about themselves and the social world in which they live. As a form of social engineering, AI joined with the theory of social construction’s premise that humans have the potential to positively impact the world in which they live (Gergen, 1994). The structure for constructing systemic changes by emphasizing the generation of positive ideas and construction of meaning with others in the organization became a reality.

As a valid change process for facilitating positive growth, AI became a powerful alternative to the traditional reform approaches in OD (Gotches & Ludema, 1995). As well, the application of AI in OD advanced AI as a legitimate change model (Bushe & Pitman, 1991). This marked AI as another form of action research stemming from Lewin’s (1946) seminal work in OD and positioning it to have a larger impact beyond OD.

AI - Global Social Innovation

The impact of AI within OD served as a catalyst for the potential of positive change in other disciplines. The early 1990s marked a time when AI researchers turned their focus toward larger global issues such as poverty, disease, hunger, and lack of education. Capitalizing on AI’s premise that humans can accomplish great things when
working together, the emergence of global social innovation produced new forms of human relationships that connected with the relational foundation of AI (Cooperrider & Pasmore, 1991). Through seeking to discover the inherent good in an organization, AI provided an alternative to the deficit-based approaches. This work propelled AI onto a global scale and showed the potential impact of AI as a catalyst for positive change.

The positive impact of AI spread throughout villages in South Africa (Watkins & Cooperrider, 1996), in the mountains of South American (Kaczmarski & Cooperrider, 1997), and throughout Romania’s health care system after the collapse of communism (Fry, Barrett, Seiling, & Whitney, 2001). Although the context varied, the common goal was to use AI’s generative nature to open the lines of communication and create a positive future.

As AI spread throughout the globe, a need to create a systematic application of AI and the methods in which it was delivered became apparent. Consequently, the AI 4-D Cycle was developed to make AI more adaptable to unique circumstances. In the beginning, Discovery, Dream, and Destiny were used to describe the AI process (Appreciative Inquiry Commons, 2010). The 4-D Cycle placed the AI process into a structure that allowed AI to be delivered in a clear format to various groups of people.

**AI as a large-scale research methodology (1995-2000)**

In this section, I discuss AI’s shift toward a large-scale research methodology. Since the inception of AI, the generative nature of AI was used to create a positive future for organizations, communities, and individuals. Overtime, the refinement of the AI 4-D Cycle opened more possibilities to bring AI to large numbers of people (Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998).
AI – The Summit

In the beginning, as a research methodology, AI was primarily delivered to small groups of people and continued to operate in this fashion through the mid 1990’s (Barrett, 1995; Bushe, 1995). As AI continued to positively affect groups of people through the AI 4-D Cycle and other research methodologies, attention turned to facilitating large groups of people in the AI process. This new approach, referred to as an AI Summit, trained groups of people to positively impact large groups ranging from 50 to 2000 (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998). AI summits have been used in cities like Chicago, Illinois and Minneapolis – Saint Paul, Minnesota (Bowling, Ludema, & Wyss, 1997; Browne, 2004), companies like Verizon Wireless – formerly GTE and American Express (Giglio, Michalcova, & Yates, 2007; Whitney, Cooperrider, Garrison, & Moore, 1999), and city governments like Hampton, Virginia (Johnson & Leavitt, 2001). The process for using the AI Summit to positively affect large groups of people propelled the use of AI as a research methodology to a wider audience.

The AI summit provided an alternative for delivering AI to various disciplines. AI as a strengths-based research methodology has been used by spiritual groups and religious affiliations. AI was embraced by the United Religions Initiative and presented as a positive change agent during their global conference in 1997. Divisiveness throughout spiritual affiliations was adversely impacting the ability to accomplish great things. The use of AI, empowered this group to move from historical divisiveness existing among many spiritual organizations (Chaffee, 1997; Gibbs & Ackerly, 1997).

Appreciative inquiry has also been used to influence congregations on a more personal level through the AI 4-D Cycle. Similar to the Imagine Chicago study (Browne,
2004), these churches empower their members to interview the congregation at large (Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces, 2009). On a more institutional level, the Catholic Church used AI to reach individuals searching for a church, plan for future growth, and renew the spirituality of current members (Star-Paddock, 2003).

**AI expands (2000-present)**

In this section, I will discuss the expansion of AI into the 21st Century. The beginning of the 21st Century marked advances in the evolution of AI (see Figure 2.1). In the years since its inception, AI evolved from a strengths-based research methodology into a change perspective, and then to a combination of the two. As the potential for positive change became more popular, AI branched into other disciplines: community involvement (Browne, 2004), health (Haizlip & Plews-Ogan, 2010), and education (Calabrese, Hummel, et al., 2007).

**AI – Community Involvement**

Communities are made up of individuals and the success of a community rests on the participation of individuals within groups (Gergen, 1999). The generative nature of AI has shown success as a vehicle to bring communities together and to increase citizen participation (Schooley, 2008). Chicago and Minneapolis are two cities participating in studies designed to bring aspects of their communities closer together using AI. Chicago engaged hundreds of participants from around the city, whereas Minneapolis was concentrated within a local neighborhood (Akdere, 2005; Browne, 2004).
The positive impact of AI on community involvement has reached out on a global level. A large-scale representation of this impact is evidenced through the convening of the 2004 United Nations Global Compact. This group, consisting of nearly 500 chief executive officers, government officials, and various community leaders, came together to discuss the importance of communities being in union with each other finding ways to further the concept of global citizenship (United Nations Global Compact, 2004). Collectively, this group sought to value the importance of cooperation and providing a better future using AI. Although the ability of AI to bring communities closer together is still in its infancy, the potential exists for continued evolution of this process.

AI - Business

Since 1986, AI has been used widely as a resource in business settings that deviate from OD. AI has been used to increase sales, productivity, and increase morale among colleagues (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008; Maier, 2009). Large corporations, using an AI Summit, capitalized on untapped potential of employees and focused their energy toward a positive future for the corporation. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, 2003), Hunter Douglas (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2001), and Roadway Express (Appreciative Inquiry Commons, 2004) all used versions of the AI Summit to energize the workforce and benefit from increased sales, productivity, and employee morale.
**AI - Health**

Appreciative inquiry has widespread use in the health professions to increase the quality of patient health care and to focus on the retention of health care employees. Large medical systems such as university medical centers have used AI to regenerate physicians, nurses, and administrators (Haizlip & Plews-Ogan, 2010). Medical corporations consisting of several health centers used AI to increase occupancy and increase participation among their employees (Derksen, 2002). In addition, AI has been used to create an awareness of the importance of creativity, compassion, and valuing diversity through the use of AI as a strengths-based methodology (Fitzgerald, 2003).

The impact of AI has also shown to have a positive effect on the nursing profession. AI has been used to retain nurses in the profession (Challis, 2009), improve the connections between colleagues (Moody, Horton-Deutsch, & Pesut, 2005), and assist nurses with the pain management of patients (Kavanagh, Stevens, Seers, Sidani, & Watt-Watson, 2008).

**AI - Education**

In addition to other disciplines, AI has had an impact in the field of education. The majority of the research examined in this section references empirical work. I also included some non-empirical work in this discussion since professional development applications of AI in schools are its primary use (Calzini, Harden, Hunley, & Joiner, 2009). Regardless of the nature in which it is being used, the generative fabric of AI is appearing in the daily life of schools.
Appreciative inquiry has been used in higher education to improve the educational experience of students and the working relationship between schools and higher education institutions. Research using AI to assist graduate students pursuing degrees in business administration to work in collaboration with one another (Conklin & Hart, 2009). AI has also had a presence in education by aiming to strengthen the school experience of students obtaining doctoral degrees in educational administration (Calabrese, Zepeda, et al., 2007).

Appreciative inquiry has started to be used in K-12 education as a change methodology. As an action research methodology, AI uses methods commonly associated with qualitative research such as focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and online surveys. These methods have been used to identify a positive core of teacher and administrator experiences related to at-risk students (Calabrese, Goodwin, & Niles, 2005), strengthen social capital between university and school partnerships (Calabrese, 2006), improve the educational school social environment for students with disabilities (Calabrese, Patterson, et al., 2008), assist school leaders balance their professional and personal workloads (Crozier-Durham, 2007), and give new life to a struggling rural school district (Calabrese et al., 2010). The use of a traditional 4-D Cycle has also been used in non-AYP schools to strengthen academic achievement (Calabrese, San Martin, et al., 2008) and assess the culture of the school (Willoughby & Tosey, 2007).

Although AI has had an impact on education, there is still much work to be done to bring the powerful nature of AI into schools, particularly urban high schools. To date, studies focusing on urban high schools describing the positive core of highpoint experiences and drafting a compelling vision of success for the future are missing from
the research literature. It is the intent of my study to address a gap in the empirical research by using an AI 4-D Cycle designed to unveil the positive core and construct a compelling vision to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable learning community to advance learning and teaching of a low performing urban high school. The generative nature of AI has the potential to serve as an important medium to create a powerful and more optimistic outlook for the future of urban high schools.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided information describing the conceptual framework including my experiences and beliefs. Also included within the chapter are the lens of social constructionism, epistemology, and professional educational experiences that are related to my study. AI was described as the theoretical perspective, and critical theory was described as a competing theory. The chapter also provided the search criteria, guiding questions for the literature review, and a synthesis of the related empirical literature. I will discuss the research design and methodology that I will use for the purposes of this AI study in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Research Design

I organized Chapter 3 by first describing the research design and methodology. I then address the purpose of the study and research questions that guided my research. A detailed description of the context of the study is provided. The unit of analysis is addressed; it includes a description of the study’s participants. I provide an explanation of my role as a participant-observer and researcher. I then explain data collection methods and data analysis. I provide an overview of how I plan to maintain research quality. I conclude Chapter 3 with a summary.

An embedded qualitative case study research design was used to facilitate participants in the first two stages of the 4-D Cycle – Discovery and Dream [See Figure 3.1].
My research used the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint.
school-related experiences; and, how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences; and, how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

**Research Questions**

My research was driven by an overarching question and guided by two more specific research questions. The following overarching question set the context of my study: How can a historically low performing urban high school discover its positive core of successful experience to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable learning community to advance learning and teaching? The following research questions guided my study:

1. How do DVHS participants describe their positive core (Discovery stage) of highpoint experiences that exist in DVHS?
2. How do DVHS participants describe their compelling vision (Dream stage) of learning and teaching for the future at DVHS?

**Context of the Study**

The research site for my study was DVHS located in a large urban city in the State of Ohio. My study focused on how AI can be used to assist schools to describe the
positive core of highpoint experiences and imagine a compelling vision for learning and teaching within DVHS. As one of four comprehensive high schools within the Discovery Valley City School District, DVHS has received a designation of “continuous improvement” by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) five of the eight years since the inception of this rating system. During the 2009-2010 academic year, DVHS had an average daily student enrollment of 1128 students. Of these students, 22.9% were classified as Black, non-Hispanic; 63.6% White, non-Hispanic; 2.3% Asian or Pacific Islander; 8.0% Hispanic; 2.9% Multi-Racial, based on self-reporting data to the ODE. Data also reveal that 67.8% of students were economically disadvantaged, 16.6% students had disabilities, and DVHS is considered a high poverty high school (Ohio State Department of Education, 2010). DVHS had a graduation rate of 78.5%, the lowest graduation rate within Discovery Valley City School District during the 2009-2010 academic year. DVHS continues to struggle to improve its graduation rate and meeting adequate yearly progress (Ohio State Department of Education, 2010).

Due to the history of DVHS’s designation of continuous improvement and its failure to meet adequate yearly progress, I believed this site was conducive for discovering the positive core and using this to generate a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

**Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis in my study was a group of purposefully selected administrators, teachers, and students at DVHS. Participants included one administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students. I worked in conjunction with the
head principal at DVHS to select an administrator and school counselor to participate in my study. The intent was to have an administrator and a school counselor who have a minimum of five years of experience in the building to provide a historical and cultural perspective. Upon selection, the administrator and school counselor provided input toward the selection of the teacher and student participants. For the purposes of clarity when presenting my data, I refer to teachers, counselor, and administrator under the heading of professional staff.

Teacher and student participants were selected based on a criterion to provide a well-rounded representation of DVHS. Two teacher participants were selected with continuing contracts to provide a veteran perspective; two teacher participants were selected without continuing contracts to contrast experience with new perspectives. All four teacher participants were involved in one or more extra-curricular activity to lend a perspective of student life outside of the academic classroom. Three junior student participants and three senior student participants were selected to bring an experienced perspective about the life of DVHS students, as well as involvement in one or more extra-curricular activity to lend a perspective of student life outside of the academic classroom. Additionally, one freshman student participant was selected to bring an initial experience of participation at DVHS.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

a. gender balanced

b. one administrator with a minimum of five years of experience in the building
c. one school counselor with a minimum of five years of experience in the building

d. two teachers with continuing contract

e. two teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience, but not eligible for a continuing contract

f. all teachers were currently involved in one or more extra-curricular activity

g. three students from senior year

h. three students from junior year

i. one student from freshman year

j. all students were currently involved in one or more extra-curricular activity

k. all students had a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average

**Role of Researcher**

As a researcher conducting action research, I participated in the study as a participant-observer. Participant-observer is a mode of observation in which the researcher is not merely a passive observer. Instead, the researcher assumes a variety of roles and may actually participate in the events being studied (Yin, 2009). The role of the participant-observer is twofold: engaging in activities and observing. The participant-observer develops an understanding of the social surroundings through observing and interviewing while blending into the everyday life of the community in which they are present (Glesne, 2006).
As participant-observer, I facilitated participants’ AI activities throughout the first two stages of the 4-D Cycle – Discovery and Dream [See Table 3.1]. Participants were asked to describe the highpoint school-related experiences that exist in DVHS and imagine a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the high school. As participant-observer, I worked to establish rapport, build trust, and communicate with participants so they felt supported and engaged in the research process (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

Table 3.1

*The First Two Stages of the AI 4-D Cycle – Discovery and Dream*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discovery Stage</th>
<th>Dream Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Discovery stage is the first stage of the 4-D Cycle.</td>
<td>The Dream stage is the second stage of the 4-D Cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants inquire into what gives life to their school.</td>
<td>Participants imagine “What could be” by taking the positive core from the Discovery stage and then collectively envision how their school can look in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants begin to understand and build their positive core.</td>
<td>A collective vision can be defined as “What might be?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants discover and value the best of “What is?” in their organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the researcher, through careful reflection and analysis, I needed to be cognizant of how my beliefs could affect this study. Through an AI lens, I sought to capture the participants’ descriptions of the highpoint experiences that exist in DVHS; and, how they draft a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the high school. In my role as participant-observer, careful attention was given to minimize bringing biases
to my study (Yin, 2009). Participants’ privacy was of the utmost importance and confidentiality of information guaranteed.

Data that I collected from the study’s participants were only available to Dr. Raymond Calabrese (my committee chairperson) and me. Students (and their parent and/or guardian), teachers, the administrator, and school counselor were informed of their rights prior to the study (Appendix A). Per The Ohio State University’s Institutional Review Board guidelines, consent forms were distributed to all participants including students’ parents and/or guardians prior to the beginning of the study (Appendices C, D, and E). In addition, I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of all participants and the school in my study.

Methods

One DVHS administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students participated in the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream. I have included PowerPoint slides from the Discovery and Dream stages in the appendices [See Appendix F and G]. Data were collected with the AI 4-D Cycle mirroring methods commonly associated with qualitative research, such as semi-structured, paired interviews, focus groups, identification of pertinent documents, artifacts, direct observation, and participant-observation (Cooperrider, 1990; Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Yin, 2009).

For my embedded qualitative case study, data were collected in the form of semi-structured paired interviews, focus groups, field notes resulting from direct observation, and my role as participant-observer. All sessions with participants were recorded and
transcribed. I kept detailed field notes throughout the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle. I also used a field observer to take descriptive field notes of the AI process while I facilitated the Discovery and Dream stages. The field observer noted behavior of the participants in addition to recording rich descriptions of their responses.

The participants’ stories and all other data collected in the Discovery stage was used to map the next stage, the Dream stage of the 4-D Cycle.

**Data Analysis**

The Discovery and Dream stages of the 4-D Cycle were conducted over a two day period. During this time, all AI activities of the study were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed using content analysis, thematic coding, and pattern matching (Weber, 1990; Yin, 2009). I also used two qualitative software programs, Tropes Text Analysis and IBM’s Many Eyes Analysis, to facilitate in the identification of themes. I looked for common threads that revealed stories, practices, and wishes that came out of the interviews. I then identified themes to discover how to do more of what worked well in given situations, and how the data as a whole related to the initial research questions.

**Research Quality**

The quality of the research I conducted in this study was determined through my ensuring its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).
Trustworthiness

The researcher is responsible for ensuring a level of trustworthiness, or research validity, in the study being conducted (Glesne, 2006). Trustworthiness can be determined in social science research through the following terminology: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmation of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility involves establishing that the results of the study are credible through the lens of the participants. In order to accomplish this, participants from DVHS were asked to check supportive quotations used for accuracy. This method is referred to as member checking within research studies and is used in qualitative research as a method to ensure the data collected is credible by the actual participants of the study (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another method used to determine credibility is referred to as triangulation of data. The data collected through semi-structured paired interviews, participant group discussions, participant created documents, direct observation, and participant-observation was triangulated through these data sources to determine the credibility of the collection methods (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Transferability is referred to in qualitative research as the degree to which the results of a research study can be transferred to other contexts (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). My goal throughout my study was to ensure the data collection methods used would allow for an accurate interpretation of the information gathered during my study. The reader must then decide if the information delivered is transferable to other contexts or areas of study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability can be defined as the responsibility of the researcher to account for how the context of the study might have changed throughout the research process and
how these changes were acknowledged and addressed at the completion of the study. My study was based on the dependability of the AI protocols used during data collection for the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Confirmation of the data refers to the process of allowing participants to review and confirm all data collected upon completion of the study (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The findings were presented to the administrator participant of my study. Due to time constraints, the administrator participant presented the findings to the other participants for data confirmation.

**Bias**

Bias can occur when personal relationships are formed throughout the course of a research study. My role as a participant-observer placed me in a position to get to know the participants of my study. The ability of the participants to feel at ease and share in a genuine capacity depends on this relationship. Therefore, it is important that rapport be built with participants without allowing the relationship to grow into friendships that could bias the data collected (Glesne, 2006; Somekh & Lewin, 2005). I was cognizant of this when selecting the participants of this study in order to avoid potential bias.

Data were gathered for this study throughout the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle. Careful attention was taken to ensure that quality of the research addresses bias and trustworthiness.

**Summary**

Chapter 3 described my research methodology and the procedures I will use for my study. It then described the purpose of study, research questions, context of the study,
unit of analysis, role of the researcher as a participant-observer, data collection methods, 
the process for the analysis of data, and the quality of my research. I discuss the salient 
findings of my study and provide a supportive narrative of the Discovery and Dream 
stages in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

Section one of Chapter 4 begins by restating the purpose of my study and the theoretical research perspective used to guide my study. I then present the methodology and research design, and restate the research questions. This section concludes with data analysis and a summary of the findings from my study.

Section two includes (a) a description of the two salient findings that emerged from the data and (b) a report of findings that addresses the findings by detailing activities that occurred during the two days of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream. I conclude with a summary of Chapter 4.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences; and, how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

Theoretical Perspective

Appreciative inquiry was the theoretical research perspective I used in my study of a low performing urban high school. In AI, there are five underlying principles: (a) the constructionist principle – social interactions create the organization; (b) the principal of
simultaneity – inquiry generates change; (c) the poetic principle – stakeholders interacting with organizations are the co-authors who determine the story that perpetually transforms the organization; (d) the anticipatory principle – collective images and talk determine the future for an organization; and (e) the positivist principle – positive images cultivate positive results (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Using AI as a theoretical research perspective allowed me to describe how focusing on the collective highpoint experiences of stakeholders serves to create a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future. As a theoretical research perspective, AI is (a) generative in nature; (b) has capacity for individual growth and organizational transformation, (c) a narrative-based research methodology, and (d) different from the traditional problem solving methods. AI is a theoretical research perspective and research methodology used to initiate organizational change through a positive inquiry approach. AI takes the best from the past and present, providing the basis for constructing an image of what could be and becomes the collectively co-constructed design for the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

**Methodology and Research Design**

My study was an embedded qualitative case study to describe the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences; and, how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future. Participants were purposefully selected from a group that included administrators, teachers, and students at DVHS who
volunteered to participate in my study. Participants included one administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students.

I used an AI theoretical research perspective and methodology to guide my study. AI will be used as the methodology because of its affirmative approach and the generative capacity for interaction and collaboration with others (Cooperrider, 1990). An AI methodology typically involves a 4-D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. For the purposes of this study, participants were involved in the first two stages of the 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream.

The Discovery stage was the first stage of the 4-D Cycle in which participants inquired into what gave life to their school and identify their positive core. Participants discovered and valued the best of “What is?” in themselves and in their organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The Dream stage was the second stage of the 4-D Cycle in which participants imagined what could be by taking the positive core from the Discovery stage and then collectively envisioning how their school could look in the future. A collective vision can be defined as “What might be?” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

My research used the first two stages (Discovery and Dream) of the AI 4-D Cycle to facilitate the discovery of the positive core of highpoint experiences that exists in DVHS and collaboratively create a compelling vision of learning and teaching in the high school. Data were collected during the Discovery and Dream stages through semi-structured paired interviews, field notes, participant created documents, and through my role as a participant-observer.
Research Questions

My research was driven by an overarching question and guided by two specific research questions. The following overarching question set the context of my study:

How can a historically low performing urban high school discover its positive core of highpoint successful experiences to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable learning community to advance learning and teaching?

The following research questions guided my study:

1. How do DVHS participants describe their positive core (Discovery stage) of highpoint experiences that exist in DVHS?
2. How do DVHS participants describe their compelling vision (Dream stage) of learning and teaching for the future at DVHS?

Data Analysis

The Discovery and Dream stages of the 4-D Cycle were conducted over a two-day period. Data were collected using semi-structured paired interviews, field notes, participant created documents, and through my role as a participant-observer. During this time, all activities of the study were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Upon completion of the data collection, I began the process of data analysis. It was my intent to discover how the data as a whole supported the initial research questions. I also sought throughout data analysis to seek evidence indicating whether the findings generated in my study were inaccurate (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

Data were analyzed using content analysis, thematic coding, and pattern matching to look for common threads in order to identify patterns (Weber, 1990; Yin, 2009). Data
were specifically analyzed using Tropes Text Analysis and IBM’s Many Eyes Analysis Software to identify patterns. Tropes Text Analysis Software is a web based software program designed to allow users to analyze free response questionnaires, analysis of clinical interviews, and behavioral studies (Tropes Text Analysis, 2011). Many Eyes Analysis Software is a web based software program created by IBM to explore data from a visual perspective. The software allows users to view quantitative data through scatterplots, histograms, and line graphs. Additionally, the software allows users to view qualitative data through word clouds, word tree, and phrase nets (Many Eyes, 2010).

The data analysis from my study revealed two salient findings. The two findings are reported separately with rich descriptive quotes from participants that exemplify the finding.

Finding 1: Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the teachers and students at DVHS.

Finding 2: Stakeholders discovered that there is a high level of resiliency among students at DVHS.

**Report of Findings**

I divide the report of findings into two sections. In the first section, I present the results of the two salient findings of my study. Quotations from the participants are used to strengthen and provide support for these findings in Table 4.2, as well as throughout this section in descriptive form. In the second section, I share the narrative of the participants’ participation in the AI 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream.
The unit of analysis in my study was a group of purposefully selected administrators, teachers, and students at DVHS [See Table 4.1]. Participants included one administrator, one school counselor, four teachers, and seven students. The descriptive data I present to illustrate my findings were gathered by direct observation or were shared freely by participants in all AI activities. I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

Table 4.1

**DVHS Participant Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jared</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I group all comments from the teachers, counselor, and administrator under the heading of ‘professional staff’ and students under the heading of ‘students.’
Two salient findings emerged from the analyzed data gathered during the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle at DVHS. I present each of these findings individually and provide evidence to support the findings.

Finding 1: Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the professional staff and students at DVHS.

The participants provided evidence that an underlying and untapped strength at DVHS was the existence of high levels of bridging social capital. Although coming from two different worldview perspectives, professional staff and students connect in meaningful ways that contribute to the creation of bridging social capital. Bridging social capital is one form of social capital. Researchers identify three types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking (Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Putnam, 1995). Bonding social capital refers to people who share common experiences and backgrounds and are committed to each other (Putnam, 1995; Wuthnow, 2002). Bridging social capital is the relationships formed among individuals who come from different backgrounds and social experiences, yet work together in each other’s best interest (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998). Linking social capital refers to the ability of power relationships to join forces in order to achieve a common goal (Foster, Meinhard, & Berger, 2003; Onyx & Bullen, 2000). Professional staff and students coming together at DVHS to connect in meaningful ways contributed to the emerging theory of bridging social capital in to my study.

Bridging social capital refers to the relationship that is formed when one group “opens the door” to another group and consequently creates meaningful opportunities that did not exist prior to this connection (Putnam, 2000). Merging these differences serve as a powerful bond connecting individuals in significant ways and allowing them to work
together for the best interest of the organization (Stone & Hughes, 2001). The concept of bridging social capital can also be applied to professional staff and students working together toward a common goal (Calabrese, Hummel, et al., 2007).

Professional staff and students bring diverse perspectives to the school and create opportunities for bridging and connecting toward a common goal. The commentary from the participants during my study began to support an emerging theory of bridging social capital. Table 4.2 captures examples of the supportive comments offered by the professional staff and students as they relate to this finding. The comments supporting Finding 1 are distributed across the theoretical perspectives of bridging social capital and AI as related to this finding and are categorized accordingly.
Table 4.2

**Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the professional staff and students at DVHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Bridging Capital Indicators: Professional Staff</th>
<th>Bridging Capital Indicators: Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridging Social Capital</strong></td>
<td>There’s a close relationship at DVHS between the teachers and students.</td>
<td>There is openness, trust, and understanding between the teachers and students at DVHS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It all starts with the teachers’ willingness to do what it takes for the students.</td>
<td>My classmates were there for me when I needed them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m going to do what’s best for kids and provide support in the classroom to make everyone feel safe and welcome.</td>
<td>The teachers are there for us at DVHS. It’s just what they do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I want happiness and success for my students just like my own.</td>
<td>We really do have a tight bond among the students and teachers at DVHS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is respect between students and teachers at DVHS.</td>
<td>The teachers at DVHS are helpful and dedicated to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six similar comments</td>
<td>Five similar comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AI &amp; Bridging Capital</strong></td>
<td>Watching my high school students work with elementary students has been the best experience.</td>
<td>My family was there to watch me, which made the competition even more meaningful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I value that I’m a caring and concerned teacher.</td>
<td>I enjoy being with people who don’t judge me and allow me to just be me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I pitch-in wherever I’m needed to make DVHS better.</td>
<td>I have respect towards others and take pride in being there for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
In addition to Table 4.2, I applied predictors known to support the growth of bridging social capital to organize the participants’ supporting comments. Briggs (2003) suggests three predictors of bridging social capital: an opportunity for contact, individual preference as means of creating supportive networks, and agency by groups. Two of these predictors were evidenced in the analyzed data. I categorized these two predictors in the following way:

1. An opportunity for contact applies to the professional staff and students at DVHS and the positive opportunity they have to connect with each other on a regular basis.

2. Individual preference as a means of creating supportive networks applies to professional staff and students demonstrating a personal interest in other individuals because of a shared DVHS connection.
Bridging Social Capital – An Opportunity for Contact

Professional staff members are the gatekeepers at DVHS. Gatekeepers hold the power to determine who gains access or remain closed out (Lewin, 1947). As gatekeepers, they opened the gate to students providing them with an opportunity for direct contact through the nature of their daily interactions. The typical comprehensive high school contacts provided the context for the creation of bridging capital. Figure 4.1 illustrates the interactive nature of bridging social capital at DVHS.
The typical structure of a school building provides multiple opportunities for contact among professional staff and students. As participants shared personal stories, it became clear professional staff and students enjoyed being with each other. Donna commented that one of the highlights of her job is being able to spend time with her students as she shadows them on job experiences. She said:

*Figure 4.1. The students, teachers, school counselor, and administrator collectively made up the unit of analysis in this study. All four groups had the ability to interact freely among each other. Figure 4.1 Interactive Nature of Bridging Capital at DVHS*
The aspect I enjoy the most about my job is simply being able to spend time with my students. We work together in the classroom, but I really enjoy seeing them on their job sites. I wish I had more time to spend with them in this setting because it brightens my day to hang out with them.

Instead of perceiving school as an obligation, their stories painted a picture of bridging capital through their interactions with each other. Nicole added that the connection between professional staff and students at DVHS was unique in comparison to other schools. This connection was powerful enough for her to voluntarily ask to transfer from another school back to DVHS. She said:

There is a family atmosphere at DVHS. I’ve been in three different high schools in this district and the other high schools aren’t like DVHS. There’s a close relationships between the teachers and students that provides a strong foundation to connect with the kids and do what it takes for them.

Lori added she chose to stay at DVHS for over 20 years because of the connection between the professional staff and the students. She commented, “I chose to stay at DVHS because of the relationship between teachers and students. We [teachers] enjoy being together and take pride in doing what’s best for the kids.”

To expand on the positive connection between the professional staff and students, I asked the participants to identify what the relationship between professional staff and students looked like when it was at its best. Table 4.3 depicts these shared responses when paired groups were asked to reflect on what DVHS looks like when it is as its best. Participants’ responses were scripted on chart paper and displayed at the front of the room.
Table 4.3

Relationship Description Between Professional Staff and Students at DVHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Groups</th>
<th>Relationship Description Between Professional Staff and Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Group 1       | Students and professional staff at DVHS demonstrate respect for each other.  
                | Professional staff at DVHS work hard for their students.            |
| Group 2       | Professional staff are helpful, dedicated, and willing to help students one-on-one at DVHS.  
                | Professional staff at DVHS work hard to connect their classes to real life experiences. |
| Group 3       | Students and professional staff at DVHS protect each other and stand up for each other.  
                | Professional staff at DVHS view their jobs as more than simply receiving a paycheck. They come to work for the students. |

The shared responses listed in Table 4.3 demonstrate evidence of a strong connection between the professional staff and students at DVHS and supported an emerging theory of bridging social capital. The bridged connection provides powerful opportunities for students attributable to the connection they have with their teachers. In addition to having opportunities to bridge relationships together, the professional staff and students had opportunities to bridge relationships individually based on their preferences as a means of creating supportive networks.
Bridging Social Capital – Individual Preference as a Means of Creating Supportive Networks

School structure provides opportunities for professional staff and students to be in direct contact with each other. Being in direct contact develops bridging social capital by seeking out individuals based on personal interests and preferences. Although historically individuals prefer to connect with those who share similarities, strong connections can be bridged between those who are seemingly different (Briggs, 2003). This has been identified in school settings where teachers and students join forces in positive ways (Schofeld, 1995). This was evident when Penny shared a story about growing up in a supportive family with a father who lived to make the lives of his children better. As a counselor, she realized that not all of her students were benefitting from a similar experience. Because of this, she set a goal of making connections with her students on an individual basis to provide support. In her words:

I realized my students’ experience was different from mine while I was growing up. I made a commitment to meet with all of my students on a regular basis to get to know them individually. My first class graduated in 2008 and together, we did it.

This form of bridging social capital was revealed through professional staff and students reaching out to each other and providing support. Stories were shared of students cheering up their classmates when their classmates were having a rough day. The students embraced each other in times of grief.
Allison spoke of understanding how difficult life can be at times for her fellow students. She commented, “When life gets tough, I reach out to my fellow classmates and try to cheer them up. Even if I don’t know them very well, it makes me sad to see them upset so I try to pick them up.”

Stephanie talked of benefitting from her classmate’s kindness. She shared her experience of attending the funeral of a teacher who suddenly passed away. Although she did not know anyone else while she was at the funeral home, the students who were there noticed she was upset and reached out to comfort her. She said:

I attended the funeral for a teacher who passed away suddenly. I didn’t know her, but thought I should go. There were four kids in line ahead of me who I didn’t know well. When I got to the front of the line, I started crying. They noticed I was upset and came right over and hugged me. They were there for me even though we weren’t close. It’s just what we do at DVHS.

As participants continued to share personal stories, it became evident professional staff were willing to “open the gate” and extend opportunities to their students beyond the traditional classroom experience. Lori exemplified the willingness of professional staff to provide opportunities when she described how she encouraged a student to compete for a national competition in San Antonio, Texas. Although the experience was grounded in academics, the ability to travel together and sightsee while on the trip helped to build an even stronger connection between them. She said:

One of my students made it to a national competition of the Business Professionals of America in San Antonio, Texas. She earned the right to compete against all of the other top state qualifiers. The trip itself also provided an
opportunity for me to show her around the city and expose her to cultures that she had not experienced in our city.

Penny shared a story of her willingness to meet individually with her students to construct a plan for the future. She said:

I feel my experience with local colleges and area job sites gives me an opportunity to meet with my students one-on-one and develop a plan for their future beyond DVHS. A little encouragement and support is all they need to get a head start.

Both the professional staff and students took the time to connect with others in an effort to provide opportunities for both academic and personal growth. Stories shared among the participants described the professional staff and students at DVHS as being willing participants to make individual connections.

*Summary of Finding One*

The professional staff and students of DVHS demonstrated a high level of bridging social capital through (a) an opportunity for contact among each other and (b) individual preferences as a means of creating supportive networks. Students spoke of the level of respect for the professional staff because of their willingness to “open the gate” and extended opportunities to them. The professional staff and students shared stories revealing how their lives were enriched because of the support they received from each other. These connections fostered opportunities for growth in addition to cultivating a family atmosphere at DVHS.
Finding 2: Stakeholders discovered a high level of resiliency among the students at DVHS.

Researchers define the concept of resiliency as the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity in their lives through perseverance (Benard, 2004; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Resiliency is strengthened over time as the result of an individuals’ ability to strengthen one or more of the following traits: (a) social competence, (b) problem-solving ability, (c) autonomy, and (d) sense of purpose (Benard, 2004). In order to exhibit high levels of resiliency, an individual does not have to exemplify all of these traits. The ability to continue to strengthen one or more of these traits over time does lead to increased levels of resiliency (Wang & Reynolds, 1995). In my study, three of the four traits were supported by data collected [See Table 4.4].

As the participants’ participated in the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle, stories were shared of students’ ability to tolerate high levels of adversity without becoming consumed by negativity. As a low performing urban high school, students of DVHS experienced negative comments about themselves and their school from others. In spite of the negativity, students maintained a positive attitude about themselves and their school. They coped with adverse external perceptions of DVHS by focusing on the positive. Their actions supported an emerging theory of resiliency.

The ability to focus on the positive in spite of negative comments was illustrated by Jared who spoke openly about people thinking DVHS students were from poor neighborhoods and not equal to students from other schools. He said:

People think we’re not good enough and act as if we’re from the ghetto.
I guess it makes people feel good to say stuff like that. To me, I feel like we’re misunderstood at DVHS. People don’t see what we’re really capable of doing.

Throughout my study at DVHS, it became increasingly evident that students demonstrated high levels of resiliency. I include Table 4.4 depicting participants’ comments as they relate to the emerging theory of resiliency. As well, I organized shared responses around three resiliency predictors in descriptive format.

Table 4.4

*Stakeholders discovered a high level of resiliency among the students at DVHS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective:</th>
<th>Supportive Quotations: Professional Staff</th>
<th>Supportive Quotations: Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency – Social Competence</td>
<td>We get through the hard times together.</td>
<td>It was very meaningful to me to have my family present during the competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers and students have each other’s backs at DVHS.</td>
<td>My best friend was there with me to share in the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We stand up for our students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a sense of community at DVHS.</td>
<td>It meant a lot that everyone was there to be part of the celebration with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are there for the kids.</td>
<td>I’m there to help my friends when things get tough. They do the same for me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective:</th>
<th>Supportive Quotations: Professional Staff</th>
<th>Supportive Quotations: Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency – Social Competence continued</td>
<td>I enjoy that I can help students believe in themselves.</td>
<td>We clicked with each other and great things happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency – Autonomy</td>
<td>(No data from Professional Staff to support this characteristic of resiliency.)</td>
<td>I feel like we’re mistaken. They don’t see it, but we’re a diamond in the rough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency – Sense of Purpose</td>
<td>Taking a student to a conference in San Antonio, Texas was a great experience for both of us.</td>
<td>I think my determination is something unique about me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
Table 4.4 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective: Resiliency – Sense of Purpose continued</th>
<th>Supportive Quotations: Professional Staff</th>
<th>Supportive Quotations: Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVHS students continually persevere in the face of adversity.</td>
<td>We don’t succumb to what people think or say about us.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re in this for the kids.</td>
<td>Watch us and you’ll see what we can do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We collaborate to do what is best for kids.</td>
<td>We just keep moving.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe my students can do it.</td>
<td>DVHS will be a flagship school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We can be a role model school to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resiliency – Social Competence

Social competence in terms of adolescent resiliency is defined as having the ability to be responsive to others, hold an understanding of diversity and cultural differences among individuals, and the ability to be empathic and caring toward others (Benard, 2004). Being socially competent was demonstrated by student participants in my study through their ability to embrace and care for each other as individuals.

The ability to embrace others was demonstrated by Allison when she talked openly about the impact of Challenge Day on DVHS. She said:

Challenge Day was one of the most important days of my life. We all came together as classmates and talked honestly with each other. No one judged each other and we felt comfortable telling our stories. Although I thought I knew my classmates pretty well, I had no idea some of them were dealing with so much in
their lives. I felt closer to them after hearing their story. I was there with them and told them that I cared about them. I wanted them to know we were all in this together.

Allison’s ability to embrace her fellow students without judgment and show empathy for the various personal circumstances demonstrates the resiliency component of social competence. Donna, from a professional staff member’s perspective agreed with Allison by saying, “Challenge Day was an opportunity for the students and staff to come together and be honest with each other. It proved once again how accepting this place [DVHS] is of one another.” In addition to being responsive to others, having a strong sense of personal autonomy is also an aspect of resiliency.

**Resiliency – Autonomy**

An autonomous person holds a sense of personal identity, self-awareness, and an ability to maintain high levels of self-confidence (Cheng & Furnham, 2002). Although continually being refined through life, an autonomous person understands who they are as a person and possess the ability to reframe negative commentary and conditions (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

When faced with unfortunate circumstances, an individual who has the ability to take a negative situation and reframe it through positive self-talk is known to have high levels of self-awareness and self-confidence (Benard, 2004; Cheng & Furnham, 2002). As referenced earlier, Jared gave the impression that he and his school were inferior in the opinion of others. He stated, “I know people look down on us, but if you ask me I think we’re a diamond in the rough.” He refused to allow the negative commentary to
alter his awareness of himself and of his classmates at DVHS. By demonstrating an ability to reframe, he emulated a characteristic of being an autonomous person.

The ‘judging’ from others was also mentioned by Jeremy when he referred to people misinterpreting the capabilities of DVHS students. As with Jared, Jeremy reframed his situation through a positive awareness of himself and his fellow classmates. He focused on the affirming qualities he witnessed at DVHS instead of allowing the negative opinions of others to impact his self-confidence and sense of personal identity. He said, “I’ve been around people who characterize us in a negative way, but, they don’t know us. They don’t know the great things we accomplish at DVHS.”

Autonomous individuals demonstrate an inward ability to focus on the good within themselves and maintain a positive outlook on life (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Kristin added, “It’s easy to get caught up in what others think about DVHS, but those people are simply judging a book by its cover. They don’t see the great things that our kids are doing every day.” In addition to being autonomous, the participants of my study also demonstrated a sense of purpose.

Resiliency – A Sense of Purpose

Autonomous individuals promote high levels of resiliency. Additionally, the ability to approach life with a sense of purpose is equally important to cultivating resiliency. A sense of purpose is referred to in terms of adolescent resiliency as a person’s ability to set goals, hold educational aspirations, and have optimism for the future (Benard, 2004; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Resilient adolescents hold an
understanding that life has great things to offer and they have the ability to refrain from
distraction that might interfere with their goals (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005).

The ability to refrain from allowing distractions to interfere with personal goals
was evident from the discussions about allowing negative commentary to generate a
stronger sense of purpose. Matt commented:

I think my determination is something unique about me. It doesn’t matter what
you say I don’t give up and those around me don’t give up. The more someone
tries to bring me down, the more I’m going to fight to prove them wrong. I’m
going to achieve my goals, and I see others do that here at DVHS.

Stephanie complimented Matt’s thoughts by telling a story of meeting students
from a wealthier, suburban district during an athletic competition. She described how
students boasted on how much better their facilities were compared to those at DVHS.
She said:

I was talking to these kids from a richer school who we were competing against,
all they did was go on and on about how great their school is compared to ours. It
made me so mad that we were being judged and they didn’t even know us. It
really made me remember what we’re about at DVHS and that we are determined
to be even better. I wasn’t going to let them make me forget what I wanted to be.

Nicole praised students who refuse to give up after failed attempts in passing the state
graduation test. She said:

I work with students who have every reason to throw their hands in the air and
give up, but they do not. They fight through and end up passing the test. Their
dedication is touching and proof we can improve our state report card.
Summary of Finding Two

Discovery Valley High School students demonstrated high levels of resiliency through their ability to (a) be socially competent, (b) maintain autonomy, and (c) possess a strong sense of purpose. They demonstrated an ability to care for each other and appreciate their unique differences. When faced with unfortunate circumstances or the negative perceptions others held for DVHS, they maintained high levels of self-confidence in themselves and those around them. As well, they possessed a dedication to their family, friends, teachers, and school that did not waiver throughout my study.

Day One – The Discovery Stage

Discovery is the first stage of the AI 4-D Cycle. The Discovery stage is designed to uncover and appreciate the “best of what is.” The Discovery stage tells the story of professional staff and students at DVHS discovering their positive core by reflecting on highpoint experiences in their personal and school lives. As I share the narrative of this story, I highlight the following salient themes that emerged during the Discovery stage:

a. DVHS professional staff and students value positive connections;
b. DVHS professional staff and students believe they succeed through teamwork and positive relationships in school and at home;
c. DVHS professional staff and students care for each other;
d. DVHS professional staff and students appreciate the strength of their school;
e. DVHS professional staff and students respect each other.
These salient themes emerged from the activities of the Discovery stage in which the participants were actively engaged. The Discovery stage began by participants being asked to reflect on a favorite person or place.

**DVHS professional staff and students value positive connections**

Reflecting on someone of importance or a place of significance helped keep the focus of the participants on positive and affirming thoughts. I asked the participants to take a moment and think about a favorite person or place in their lives. Allison volunteered to share. She said, “There isn’t one specific person that makes me feel happy. Instead, I enjoy being with anyone who doesn’t judge me and allows me to simply be me.” Jeremy shared that his favorite place is at home. He said, “I chose my favorite place as my house. No matter what happens in my day, I know I can always go home and feel secure. I enjoy being at home with my family.” Penny added that her father was her favorite person. She said:

Choosing a favorite person was easy for me. I chose my dad because of his undying work ethic. He is loyal, consistent, and loving to his family and friends.

He is a great husband, father, and grandfather. He’s my role model.

Sharing stories of a favorite person or place allowed participants to focus on the value of having these positive connections in their lives. Remembering these connections positioned the participants to continue reflecting on affirming thoughts by discussing past highpoint experiences.
**DVHS professional staff and students believe they succeed through teamwork and positive relationships in school and at home**

Acknowledging past highpoint experiences begins to uncover and appreciate the “best of what is” throughout an organization. In order to accomplish this, the participants were asked to focus their thoughts on past highpoint experiences and successes. They were asked to think about a moment or moments in their lives that truly made them feel happy and alive at DVHS. As the participants shared their highpoint experiences, the importance of positive connections emerged again along with the belief of success through teamwork.

I asked participants to share these highpoint experiences with the group. Jack discussed a highpoint teaching moment in which his students were asked to spend time tutoring students in a local elementary school. He said:

I teach a program called Career Based Intervention for students in need of credit recovery. We were invited by Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Central Ohio to be part of a mentoring program. At the time, I wondered why they chose my group because I didn’t think my students had the tools to carry out the job effectively. Yet, it’s been the best experience. I think we are in the 12th year of participating in this activity. Every two weeks we go to West Franklin Elementary and mentor kindergarten or third grade students. It’s been an excellent experience for our high school students and the little ones.

Jeremy talked about his highpoint experience in the marching band; it added to the strong sense of family he had from his home experience. He said:
A highpoint moment for me was my first marching band competition as a freshman. When we finished competing, we walked off the field to a standing ovation and I knew instantly it was an amazing show. The experience made it a great show, but knowing that we worked as a family to get there made it even better. It was meaningful to me to have my family present during the competition.

Matt, a member of the basketball team, added to Jeremy’s value of family as part of his highpoint experiences. He said:

During my sophomore year, I played in my first varsity basketball game and scored. It was an awesome feeling because of all of the hard work and I was excited that everyone was there to be part of the experience with me.

A common highpoint experience for several of the participants was an event called Challenge Day. Challenge Day is an initiative promoting positive relationships and teambuilding throughout schools. Students are exposed to activities designed to foster support and appreciation among their peers. DVHS has participated in this event for the past three years. The participant stories focused on the closeness they felt toward each other and how the bond of the DVHS family grew even closer by participating in this activity. Stephanie commented:

We were not afraid to be ourselves during Challenge Day. It was clear that we accept each other at DVHS and we have respect for each other. It was powerful to be reminded of how great we are at DVHS.

Allison agreed with Stephanie and referred to Challenge Day as an affirmation of the tight bond shared among the students and professional staff at the high school. She said:
During Challenge Day everyone opened up and accepted each other as unique individuals. It was clear that we really do have a tight bond among the students and teachers at DVHS. It was great to be with each other.

As the highpoint experience stories were shared among the participants, it became apparent to me as a participant-observer that the memorable experiences for the participants’ involved positive moments shared while working together. This was confirmed by the data analysis of field notes generated during the discussions. The momentum generated from discussing highpoint experiences led to the transition of reflecting on what the participants’ value within themselves and their contributions to DVHS.

**DVHS professional staff and students care for each other**

After sharing highpoint experiences, the participants were asked to consider what they value in themselves and what they value in their contributions to DVHS. As participants’ comments were shared, the importance of caring for each other became evident. Students’ commented on the importance of being friendly to each other, showing respect for differences, and caring enough to encourage each other to be better. Stephanie stated that she values her ability to care for those around her. She shared:

*I value my ability to be a respectful and forgiving person. I also feel I do a good job of seeing the good in those around me instead of the bad. I know we all have a lot of hard stuff in our lives, so I try to be friendly and not judge anyone. Being nice helps make their days a little brighter.*
In addition, Jeremy said he values caring for those around him. He is proud of his ability to make his friends at DVHS feel better when life gets tough. He said:

I have respect towards others and take pride in caring for them. I take time to talk to my friends about difficult situations and push them to be better if they are having a bad day in school or in band. I just enjoy making people smile.

The student participants stressed the importance of caring for each other. Professional staff also shared stories stressing the importance of caring for their students through personal and academic challenges. Jack commented that he values being a caring teacher. He shared, “I value that I’m a caring teacher. I understand the struggles of our students and work hard to help them recover academic credits and turn their lives around.” Donna offered, “It is so important with my kids to show them that I care and that I am there to support them. Whether in the classroom or on a jobsite, I’m in their corner.”

The ability to care for each other was valued by the participants. Respecting the differences of others, supporting friends throughout difficult times, and caring enough to make people smile provides a foundation for the participants to appreciate the unique strength of their school as a whole.

*DVHS professional staff and students appreciate the strength of their school*

Valuing the importance of caring for each other led the participants to reflect on their collective ability to appreciate the strength of DVHS in its entirety. From the onset of my study, participants focused on their positive core – the individual highpoint experiences of their lives, and the value they bring to those around them. At this point, I
asked participants to reflect on the following: 1) the great things happening throughout DVHS; and, 2) what makes DVHS a wonderful place for its stakeholders.

As the participants shared, the importance of positive connections between professional staff and students emerged again. Participants told stories of the professional staff’s willingness to help students on a one-on-one basis and their ability to provide an environment where students felt safe and welcome. These positive connections define DVHS at its best. Table 4.5 depicts the supportive comments from the participant generated chart paper reflecting great things happening when DVHS is at its best.
Table 4.5

**Great Things Happening Within DVHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Groups</th>
<th>Great Things Happening Within DVHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
<td>Teachers at DVHS are helpful, dedicated, and willing to help students one-on-one through challenging times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff and Students</td>
<td>DVHS does a good job of meeting the needs of diverse populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 2</strong></td>
<td>The students and teachers defy the odds at DVHS and don’t succumb to what others may think and say. They stick together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff and Students</td>
<td>DVHS is dedicated to providing support in the classroom to students who are struggling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 3</strong></td>
<td>DVHS teachers continually help students persevere in the face of adversity in the classroom and out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff and Students</td>
<td>DVHS has an accepting atmosphere for all. You can be yourself and feel good about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants shared that DVHS is a place where professional staff and students enjoy positive connections with each other. DVHS’s environment creates an atmosphere in which students can be themselves and feel good about who they are as individuals. As noted in Table 4.5, comments were made throughout each group about the professional staff’s willingness to go out of their way to help students be successful. Participants were
then asked to take this powerful acknowledgment and create a unique metaphor to
capture what they had just shared.

**DVHS professional staff and students respect each other**

The culminating event of the Discovery stage involved the participants’ co-
creating a metaphor called the “Secret Recipe” for DVHS. The creation of a metaphor allows an organization’s story to unfold and gives people within that organization an ability to determine the next chapter (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2002b). The professional staff and students divided into four groups. They were asked to create a metaphor to visualize the great things happening currently at DVHS and allow the power of this momentum to propel the positive next steps of the school.

To determine an appropriate metaphor, the participants’ were asked to reflect on the personal stories of highpoint experiences, values, and the great things happening within DVHS shared throughout the day. They were asked to combine all of their stories into a “Secret Recipe” metaphor. As the participants explained their metaphors, the importance of respecting every member of the DVHS family became evident.

The first group created a jello parfait metaphor [See Figure 4.2]. The individual layers of the parfait consisted of students, success, diversity, acceptance, support, and teachers. Each layer was a different color and represented a different ingredient. One layer of the parfait consists of students as pieces of cut up banana and drawn with a vibrant yellow marker. The professional staff members were big cubes of red jello and colored in with two different shades of red marker. The symbols for the participants were
placed in a glass bowl with a long stem. The stem was labeled as the building of DVHS to represent the strength of the school in holding all of the ingredients together.

The group reported that each individual layer was important to the DVHS’s success; and, how DVHS would not be whole if one layer were missing. Nicole described the various layers constituting their choice of a jello parfait as a metaphor. She said:

We chose a jello parfait. There are many layers that make up the heart of DVHS. All of these layers provide the entire picture of success for our students and it would not be the same if one layer were missing. We also chose to place the parfait in a bowl representing our school in its entirety because it keeps everyone together.
The second group created a loaf of bread as their metaphor [See Figure 4.3]. The group labeled ingredients for the bread as students, academic courses, pathways for success, an optimal environment for learning, positive atmosphere, professional staff, the ability to rise to any occasion, and graduation. They visualized all ingredients rising together to make DVHS the perfect place to attend school.
In the middle of the loaf of bread, they wrote the word “wonder” in bold letters. The group also drew curving lines coming out of the top of the bread to represent it being fresh out of the oven.

As their group was called on to describe their metaphor, Lori discussed the basic ingredient as being the student and said that all other ingredients complimented the student ingredient. Additionally, ingredients are placed in the right baking dish (which represents the building of DVHS) and then placed in the optimal environment for baking (which represents the classroom). She said, “We chose bread because the students rise to the occasion every time. We chose to use the word ‘wonder’ because the teachers like to instill a sense of wonder in all students at DVHS.”
The third group created an ice cream sundae as their metaphor [See Figure 4.4]. They labeled the layers of the sundae in multiple colors. The ice cream represented the different cultures within DVHS. The ice cream toppings represented students’ attributes: personalities, strengths, and interests at DVHS. The bananas represented the professional staff at DVHS. The whipped cream represented the community. The students were
represented as the cherry on top. The sundae itself was placed in a large bowl labeled as “the school.”

Stephanie explained the significance of each layer and how they melt together to create the perfect DVHS ice cream sundae. She described her group’s thoughts in selecting a sundae, “We chose a sundae because the various ingredients represent the teachers and the support they provide for us. The different flavors of ice cream metaphor represent the different cultures within DVHS and the cherry on top represents the students.”
The fourth group created a layered cake as their metaphor [See Figure 4.5]. The cake consisted of four layers. Each layer was drawn with a different color; and, decorated differently representing successes at DVHS. The bottom layer of the cake consisted of stick figures lining the bottom of the cake smiling and holding hands. A large sun was drawn above them with rays coming out of it. The second layer of the cake had the word “Falcons” drawn in bold letters with stars all around it. The third and fourth layers of the
cake were drawn to look like cake decorations consisting of colorful lines and shapes. There was a big candle placed on top of the cake.

Nicole explained their metaphor. She said there are many layers of success to DVHS. She said, “The importance of our success begins with the students. We start with each kid and provide as many layers as needed for that student to be successful.” The word “Falcons” was used to represent their school mascot and the lit candle on top of the cake represents the eternal hope for the success of the school. Jared commented, “Our drawing may not look great, but when put together it tastes great.”

Figure 4.5. Layered Cake Metaphor
Summary Day One – Discovery

I reviewed the AI activities of the Discovery stage by focusing the participants’ attention on their created chart paper documents displayed on the room wall. The written information coupled with the visual metaphors created a picture of professional staff and students who (a) value positive connections, (b) believe they succeed through teamwork and positive relationships, (c) care for each other, (d) appreciate the strength of their school, and (e) respect each other.

The fourth principle of AI, the anticipatory principle, states organizations grow in the direction of their positive images of the future. The participants were asked to look for positive things happening around them and come prepared to share one of those positive experiences with the group next week. The ability to recognize and share positive experiences created awareness among participants that positive events and actions are always present in their environment.

Day Two – The Dream Stage

The second stage of the AI 4-D Cycle involves collaborative imagining as a strategically significant activity that leads to higher levels of creativity, commitment, and enthusiasm for the organization and its future (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The Dream stage tells the story of DVHS professional staff and students collectively imagining a positive future for DVHS and their personal dedication to its continued success. As I share the narrative of this story, I highlight the following salient themes that emerged from the Dream stage:
a. DVHS professional staff and students embrace hard work and its reward;
b. DVHS professional staff and students are difference makers;
c. DVHS professional staff and students honor equity and excellence;
d. DVHS professional staff and students are dedicated to the continued success of their school.

The images embedded in the collaborative imaging of the Dream stage helped to facilitate the creation of inspiring actions and propositions for the future of DVHS. The day started by thinking of a positive experience within the past week. An important aspect of AI is continually bringing forth what is best from the past into the present and using it as a springboard to the future.

**DVHS professional staff and students embrace hard work**

Participants began by sharing a positive experience that happened within the past week. As they shared their experiences, the importance of embracing hard work and enjoying the benefit of this work became apparent. Kristin talked of attending a student track meet:

> Something that made my week great was attending a DVHS track meet last Saturday. It was the first time that I attended such a sporting event and I was really impressed by the number of students I had running in the meet. It was cool to see them in their element and watch them push themselves to perform well.

Amy stated her positive experience involved being with fellow seniors over the weekend. She said, “This past weekend, my friends and I played senior tag. We all had a great time together, but no one wanted to lose. The competition was stiff.”
Lori’s positive experience involved her freshman students finishing a large class project. She said:

I had a great week because our freshman worked a culminating project in class. They were given a scenario based on grade point average and attendance. With this information, they worked on a budget in which the amount was determined by the level of their grade point average and the number of days in which they were present at school. It was fun to see how excited they were to work through the activity and how they made connections to real life.

Jared shifted the conversation from school to work by sharing his excitement about his promotion at work. He said:

Last week I received a promotion at work. I was a host and now I will be working as a car side attendant. In this new job, I will have an opportunity to make more money. Although I’m happy about the money, I am happier about my hard work paying off.

The willingness of the participants to recall and share their positive experiences enabled them to recognize the positive interactions happening in their presence. The generative nature of focusing on these positive interactions allowed the participants’ to begin to see their ability to make a difference in the lives of those around them.

**DVHS professional staff and students are difference makers**

I reminded participants they are difference makers. Difference makers have the ability to see the good in those around them and capitalize on these moments to generate positive change. To support this point, I used a visual projector to provide a PowerPoint
with each participant’s picture. To the participant’s picture, I added bullet points for each of things they valued in themselves taken from Day One [See Table 4.6].

Table 4.6

Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Value Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jared</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nice Guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Very Loyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involved at DVHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athletic Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>Always Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
Table 4.6 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Value Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Competitive \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>Positive Attitude \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Caring Person \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Accepting \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margie</td>
<td>Very Dedicated \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>Very Caring \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Dedicated \n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Difference makers have the capacity to see the good around them and use this gift to affirm the positive traits in others. Realizing this affirming power helped propel the participants into imagining a positive future for DVHS.

*DVHS professional staff and students honor equity and excellence*

After reviewing the power the participants hold as difference makers, they began embracing the power of imagining. Participants were asked to think about the powerful and uplifting conversations that occurred among the group since the beginning of the study. They were asked to keep these thoughts in mind as they started to dream about the future for DVHS.

Participants were asked to think of three wishes for DVHS [See Table 4.7]. While sharing their wishes with the whole group, the importance of equity and excellence became evident. The professional staff and students dreamed of having the same opportunities as other successful schools.
Table 4.7

*Participants’ Dreams for DVHS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Dream 1</th>
<th>Dream 2</th>
<th>Dream 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jared</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement for all students</td>
<td>New school building</td>
<td>Football team making it to the state playoffs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>New school building – a fresh start</td>
<td>Same extracurricular options as other schools</td>
<td>More involvements from students and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>More pride and respect from other schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>New school building</td>
<td>More involvement from all groups at DVHS</td>
<td>Student clicks coming together as one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>More involvement from the community</td>
<td>More interactive learning for students</td>
<td>New school building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>New school building</td>
<td>DVHS will be a role model for other schools</td>
<td>More academic programs for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>Everyone would be happy all of the time</td>
<td>Everyone would achieve higher grades</td>
<td>A higher rating on the state report card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>Everyone meshing together as one</td>
<td>All stakeholders contribute to the success of students</td>
<td>Equal opportunities for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Other schools will talk about DVHS in a positive manner</td>
<td>Students will respect and take care of DVHS</td>
<td>Various programs to meet the needs of all students at DVHS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
Table 4.7 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Dream 1</th>
<th>Dream 2</th>
<th>Dream 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Offer a greater variety of classes for all students</td>
<td>New school building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margie</td>
<td>Excellent rating on the state report card</td>
<td>New school building</td>
<td>Excel in sports like other schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>More participation in academically rigorous coursework</td>
<td>Increased graduation rate</td>
<td>More communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Excellent rating on the state report card</td>
<td>School programs that are equal to other schools</td>
<td>Positive people all of the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dreaming of a compelling image for the future of DVHS allowed participants to capitalize on their enthusiasm and energy through imagining a DVHS in which their dreams were the norm. The participants were asked about the hopes and dreams they would share if they were asked to speak on a popular television show in the year 2020.

Each paired group was asked to reflect on the possibilities for DVHS’s future. The importance of equity and excellence surfaced among the participants as they shared their reality for DVHS in 2020. Lori hoped for a new facility to maximize the opportunities provided for students. She said:

In 2020, I think DVHS will have a state of the art high school. It will include plenty of open spaces for students to work and the building will be extremely tech savvy. We will also have many classes that are optional depending on student
interest, limited classes that are not old school lecture format, and multiple options for online learning. I think we’ll have a state of the art athletic complex, and our school grounds will be aesthetically pleasing.

Additionally, Lori spoke about the continuation of DVHS having an open and affirming atmosphere for all students. She said, “People will be understanding and respectful of each other and compassionate towards each other at DVHS.” Donna added that she would like to see more student opportunities. She said:

It is my hope in 2020 that we have a great variety of course offerings for students of all levels; we will provide more opportunities for them. Especially for my students it is beneficial to have more work related opportunities. I also think everyone will have an iPad or its equivalent to use in place of textbooks.

Jared’s wish paralleled those of Lori and Donna. He said, “In 2020 I think DVHS will have the best technology around. This will make things much easier at school and will help those students who do not have computers at home.”

The participants’ wishes enabled them to embrace the power of the future in hopes of equity and excellence for DVHS. Their stories reflected a belief that DVHS held the capacity for an even brighter future. The final activity of the journey involved asking the participants to make commitments to ensure these dreams become a reality.

*DVHS professional staff and students are dedicated to the continued success of their school*

Appreciative inquiry enables participants to create a shared vision for the future grounded in examples from the organization's past (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The
personal commitment gives the participants ownership over making something positive happen within the school. Participants were asked to create this shared vision by defining how they would commit to help DVHS achieve greatness. They were given time to reflect on this question and define their commitments.

After they completed their reflections, I asked for volunteers to share their commitments as I scribed on chart paper visibly hanging in front of the room. As I recorded their responses, the dedication of the professional staff and students to the continued success of DVHS became evident [See Table 4.8].

Table 4.8

*Participant Commitments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Commitment 1</th>
<th>Commitment 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jared</td>
<td>Be a role model for my fellow students</td>
<td>Talk to people outside of DVHS about the successes happening in our school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Talk to others about the great things happening at DVHS</td>
<td>Encourage other students to participate in our band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Invite students to attend clubs in which I am a member</td>
<td>Invite people in my neighborhood to attend school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>Working harder in English to bump up one letter grade</td>
<td>Sharing my work ethic with my friends and challenge them to increase their grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>Promote the positive things happening in our marching band</td>
<td>Promote the positive things happening in our tennis program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
Table 4.8 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Commitment 1</th>
<th>Commitment 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Be a role model as an athlete to make DVHS teams the best they can be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>Be a role model for positive behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>Send out monthly e-mail to the faculty about student successes</td>
<td>Work with the Broadcast students to air student successes on the school news and with local news stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>(Was absent during this activity.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Propose new course offerings to the faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margie</td>
<td>Propose more course offerings to provide more academic rigor for our students</td>
<td>Share a contact spreadsheet with my colleagues to log all positive contact with parents throughout the Math Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>Meeting with every senior parent before graduation</td>
<td>Use mass media to promote the positive things happening at DVHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Create a vision to define what DVHS stands for in education</td>
<td>Hold one-on-one conferences with all faculty twice a year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jeremy was the first to comment by saying, “I am going to promote the good things at DVHS by talking it up more often. There are great things happening here and people need to hear about them.” He also committed to drawing more students into the
band at DVHS. He added, “I also want to promote how good our band is as a tool for recruiting others to be part of something so good. The better we are, the more respect we’ll get.” Kristin committed to reach out in proactive ways to parents and use these connections to generate positive discussions among her colleagues. She said:

I’m committing to having positive contact with parents. I will start a spreadsheet in the math department to record all positive contact with parents in hopes of starting conversations with my colleagues that encourage them to do the same.

We need to showcase the good things that our students are doing.

Additionally, she stated, “I would like to find a way to have more course selections for our students. Other schools in our district have more class offerings than we do and it negatively impacts our students.” Penny agreed with Kristin’s commitment of improving communication about the great things that her students are doing. She said:

I am going to commit to sending out monthly emails to teachers about student successes of the month. I will compile this information and then share the successes with staff and students by publishing it in the school newsletter as well as sending it to the local paper.

Lori also committed to promoting student success by working with broadcast students to air this information on a regular basis. She said, “I promise to work with our broadcast students to air regular segments about our students and their successes. I will also work to have a newsletter sent out to the community promoting the great things our students accomplish at DVHS.” Jared committed that he too wanted to do a better job of promoting the good of DVHS throughout the community. He said:
I commit to being a role model for other students by doing a better job of involving the community so they know the good things going on around DVHS. They don’t realize the good things going on around here and it makes it easy for them to think we’re not good enough.

Nicole waited until the end to add her commitments to the conversation. I asked her afterward if she intentionally waited to respond. She said, “I’m so proud of the dedication of my fellow teachers and students that I wanted to hear what they had to say before I added my own commitments.” She shared:

I’m committing to define what we stand for in education in hopes of setting a clearer mission for our teachers and students. This is important to the continued success of DVHS. I want to start this by committing to work closer with our staff to gain a better understanding of their needs by holding one-on-one conferences twice a year with them. I need to make sure they are equipped to best support our students’ daily.

*Day Two Summary – Dream*

Day two involved participants’ dreaming for the future of DVHS. Throughout the day, participants shared stories of positive experiences that happened within the past week. They were reminded they were difference makers and had the ability to collectively dream for the future of DVHS. The dreamed for their school by stating three wishes and completed their journey by making personal commitments for the future of DVHS.
The Dream stage empowered professional staff and students to recognize their ability to: (a) embrace hard work and its reward; (b) be difference makers; (c) honor equity and excellence; and (d) dedicate themselves to the success of DVHS. Together, they collectively imagined a great future for DVHS and personally committed to propel its greatness into the future.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 4 began by restating the purpose of my study and the theoretical research perspective used to guide my study. I then presented an overview of the methodology and research design and restated the research questions. I concluded the chapter with data analysis and a summary of the two salient findings from my study with DVHS students. The two salient findings based on analysis of data were: (1) stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the professional staff and students at DVHS, and (2) stakeholders discovered a high level of resiliency among the students at DVHS. Evidence to support these findings was presented through narrative of the Discovery and Dream stages, in addition to supportive quotations, tables, and figures.

In Chapter 5, I present the two salient findings of my study along with a detailed discussion of these findings. Additionally, I will provide implications for future research, a relationship of my findings to relevant theory, recommendations for praxis for school administrators, and a conclusion to my study.
CHAPTER 5

My study was designed to describe participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences; and, how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future. I organize this chapter by reviewing the purpose of the study, summary of the literature review, methodology and research design, and research questions. I then restate the summary of the findings and present a discussion of the salient findings of my study. I conclude the chapter by presenting implications for future study, relationship of findings to relevant theory, significance of the study, and summary and conclusions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences; and, how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review began with an overview of the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework is built around the epistemology of social constructionism, my professional experience, and an AI theoretical research perspective.
Social constructionism claims that all knowledge, even the most basic, is derived from and maintained by social interactions (Gergen, 1994). A deeper understanding of social constructionism led me to understand that it is possible to reconstruct the world in which we live through our interactions with others. These beliefs have developed my perspective as a professional educator. I discovered using my role as an instructional leader to promote the strengths of people had a far greater impact than focusing on the deficits. I believe professional staff and students have an opportunity every day to interact in uplifting ways. The potential of these positive and affirming interactions connect social constructionism with the principles of AI serving as the foundation for using AI as the theoretical research perspective in my study.

Appreciative Inquiry is a theoretical research perspective and research methodology used to initiate organizational change through a positive inquiry approach. AI takes the best from the past and present, providing the basis for constructing an image of what could be and becomes the collectively co-constructed design for the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Using AI as a theoretical research perspective allowed me to describe how focusing on the collective highpoint experiences of stakeholders served to create a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

To understand the impact AI had as a theoretical research perspective, I conducted a review of empirical research in the form of a timeline beginning with its genesis. I presented the formative years of AI from 1986 to 1990, AI’s evolution as a research methodology from 1990 to 1995, AI’s use in large-scale organizational change from 1995 to 2000, and its acceptance among mainstream researchers as an action
research methodology in the 21st Century. I concluded with a discussion of AI in education and more specifically in urban education.

The review of empirical research found that AI had been used in several contexts to bring about change in organizations. AI was used as a research methodology in government and health (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Collins, 2003); business and religious organizations (Coghlan, 2000; Markow & Klenke, 2005); and global settings (Thatchenkery, 2004). AI has shown success when applied in public and private educational settings (Calabrese, 2006; Ryan et al., 1999). AI processes provide opportunities for teachers and students to focus on the positive that is happening in their schools by collaboratively and generatively discovering new possibilities not previously considered (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Calabrese et al., 2010; Calabrese, Hummel, et al., 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008). Although AI has been used in urban middle schools and urban alternative schools, there is still learning to be done on the impact of AI in traditional comprehensive urban high schools.

AI facilitates a focus on participants’ appreciating and valuing each other, ultimately leading to positive change in a variety of settings.

**Methodology and Research Design**

My study was an embedded qualitative case study that described the participants’ involvement in the AI process to discover their positive core highpoint school-related experiences and how they use their highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.
I used an AI theoretical research perspective and methodology to guide the study. AI was used as the methodology because of its affirmative approach and the generative capacity for interaction and collaboration with others (Cooperrider, 1990). An AI methodology typically involves a 4-D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. For the purposes of this study, participants were involved in the first two stages of the 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream.

The Discovery stage was the first stage of the 4-D Cycle in which participants inquired into what gave life to their school and contributed to their positive core. Participants discovered and valued the best of “What is?” in themselves and in their organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The Dream stage was the second stage of the 4-D Cycle in which participants imagined what could be by taking the positive core from the Discovery stage and then collectively envisioning how their school could look in the future. A collective vision can be defined as “What might be?” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

My research used the first two stages (Discovery and Dream) of the AI 4-D Cycle to facilitate the discovery of the positive core of highpoint school-related experiences that exists in DVHS and to imagine a compelling vision of learning and teaching in the high school. Although not part of this study, the remaining two stages of the 4-D Cycle are Design and Destiny. The Design stage is the third stage where participants take the best from the past and the descriptions of the possibilities for the future to design a model that illustrates how they envision the organization at its best. The fourth stage is the Destiny stage where the shared vision allows for the implementation of working plans and the
energy to move those plans forward within the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The four stages used as a whole comprise the entire AI 4-D Cycle.

**Research Questions**

My research was driven by an overarching question and guided by two specific research questions. The following overarching question set the context of my study: How can a historically low performing urban high school discover its positive core of successful experience to create an ecologically healthy and sustainable learning community to advance learning and teaching? The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do DVHS participants describe their positive core (Discovery stage) of highpoint experiences that exist in DVHS?
2. How do DVHS participants describe their compelling vision (Dream stage) of learning and teaching for the future at DVHS?

**Summary of Findings**

There were two salient findings revealed through my study.

Finding 1: Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the teachers and students at DVHS.

Finding 2: Stakeholders discovered that there is a high level of resiliency among the students at DVHS.
Discussion of Findings

In this section, I present a discussion of the two salient findings of my study as evidenced through data collected during the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle.

Finding 1: Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the teachers and students at DVHS.

High levels of bridging social capital between the teachers and students at DVHS emerged as a salient finding in my study. Social capital has been defined as networks connecting in ways that benefit the individual and collective interests of the entire group (Coleman, 1988). Social organizations such as parent teacher organizations, neighborhood associations, and individuals gathering to read and discuss a common book are all examples of networks that generate forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is also found within formal organizations such as public and private businesses, non-profit agencies, and educational organizations. My study involving a comprehensive urban high school demonstrated social interactions between professional staff and students. These interactions involved high levels of trust and respect between them.

Trust and respect create an environment for professional staff and students to be engaged with each other. Schools have been charged with the responsibility of teaching students the fundamentals of learning, in addition to the tenets of being informed, socially responsible democratic citizens (Tyack, 1974). If schools are to teach students to be engaged, free thinking, and socially responsible it is important that a foundation of trust and respect exist between the professional staff and students.
The ability to gain knowledge, whether academic or social, relies on the ability to respect and trust in the person trying to teach you. The process of gaining knowledge is a balancing act of risk taking, assessing the likelihood of success, and determining the worth of continued engagement in the process (Argyris & Schon, 1978). The willingness of students to engage in this process hinges on the teachers’ willingness to extend a hand to them in their learning. Students must feel their teachers respect them, value them, and believe in their capacity to learn. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.” When students feel they are respected and valued in the classroom, the foundation for gaining knowledge has been set. The teachers’ willingness to build these strong relationships with their students became apparent through the Discovery and Dream stages.

Throughout all AI activities of the Discovery and Dream stages, professional staff and students were talkative, laughing, and affirming to each other as they shared their stories. They used descriptive words such as compassion, acceptance, respect, friend, trust, and kindness to describe the connection between them. I believe this connection was possible because the professional staff demonstrated a willingness to extend respect and provide students support in their learning.

Professional staffs’ invitational openness to their students revealed a specific aspect of social capital referred to as bridging social capital. Bridging social capital is the relationship formed among individuals who come from different backgrounds and social experiences, yet work together in each other’s best interest (Putnam, 2000).

Professional staff and students at DVHS were from different backgrounds and perspectives; yet they demonstrated a common interest in the collective success of their
high school. The generative power of bridging social capital has the ability to connect teachers and students coming from different backgrounds and social perspectives (Calabrese, Hummel, et al., 2007). Professional staff at DVHS believed in their students and valued their ability to succeed academically. They understood the importance of creating safe and friendly learning environments that ultimately opened the door for student learning.

The social capital professional staff and students shared provided opportunities above the charge of learning. To share one’s hopes and dreams with others requires high levels of respect and trust. I believe an emerging theory of bridging social capital was apparent throughout my study and supported the participants’ willingness to share their hopes and dreams for the future success of DVHS.

The comfort and respect shared between professional staff and students provided a collective capacity to dream together for the future of their high school. As with learning, it is sometimes a challenge to be open and honest with people (Scheff & Retzinger, 2001). The willingness of the professional staff to bridge a relationship with their students not only provided them an opportunity to learn, it provided them an opportunity to dream.

Finding 2: Stakeholders discovered that there is a high level of resiliency among the students at DVHS.

High levels of resiliency emerged as another salient finding of this study. Resiliency is the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity in their lives through perseverance.
The traditional high school is a collection of multiple student personalities learning to become free thinking, engaged, and socially responsible citizens. As adolescents’ ebb and flow throughout their journey to become democratic citizens, they are susceptible to distractions deterring them from their goals. These negative distractions can lead to unhealthy choices such as substance abuse, violence, and school dropout (Rumberger & Ah Lim, 2008). Interestingly though, the students in my study demonstrated high levels of resiliency that empowered them to allow their inherent ability to stay focused on the positive aspects of their lives. The ability to focus on the positive also created an opportunity for them to be highly involved at DVHS.

Student participants in my study were committed to being involved in all aspects of DVHS life. They viewed their high school as a desirable place that made it exciting to be involved. Whether students were in the classroom, on the basketball court, or on a band competition field, they refused to be deterred and took pride in the success they achieved. Student involvement promotes high levels of connection between students and students and teachers. This connection creates opportunities for students to feel valued and part of something larger. Because of the relationships developed through their involvement in DVHS, students knew they would be missed if they were absent from school. They knew they were an integral part of the DVHS community. This sense of belonging perpetuated itself among the students.

Their willingness to be involved created a network of support that subsequently made it easier to navigate challenging times. The capacity to build these supportive networks of individuals was evidenced through the finding of bridging social capital and supports an aspect of resiliency known as social competence. Social competence is an
ability to create networks of support to rely on when negative distractions occur (A. Lee, Hankin, & Mermelstein, 2010). In addition to building supportive networks, the ability to problem solve is also considered a way to overcome negative distractions.

Another aspect of resiliency is the ability to problem solve. The student participants did not outwardly demonstrate this aspect of resiliency. Due to the use of AI as a research methodology, the participants were not directly asked to focus on problems or their ability to navigate around these problems. AI does not ignore the belief that problems may exist. Instead, AI takes the best from the past and present, providing the basis for constructing an image of what could be and becomes the collectively co-constructed design for the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The ability to see the inherent good in situations demonstrates a strength generating capacity.

Although not directly asked to problem solve, student participants demonstrated the ability to reframe the negative and then capitalize on the positive. They were living models of what it means to have an appreciative life. They talked openly about being thankful for their teachers’ dedication, the kindness of their fellow students, and the support of their families. They possessed a strength allowing them to keep their heads held high and appreciate the good in their lives.

The students’ ability to be successful in the classroom, in extracurricular activities, and in social relationships between their peers and adults was simply part of their lives. I believe there is something powerful in this seemingly typical way of life. The combination of bridging social capital and resiliency work create generative potential at DVHS starting with the teachers’ willingness to open the gate to the students. Teachers provided powerful school-related experiences that allowed their students to take risks and
enjoy the benefit of accomplishment. These opportunities empowered the students to develop a sense of pride in their individual ability, metaphorically giving them wings to fly.

Researchers suggest that resiliency is not something that is locked in time. Instead, it is something that is continually being refined and strengthened (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). I believe the students of my study were able to continue strengthening their ability to be resilient because of the foundation set by the professional staff. They were given an opportunity to believe in themselves, take risks, feel a sense of accomplishment, and begin to see the power of tomorrow. When students were asked to talk about their dreams for the future, they had no difficulty in sharing those hopes and dreams. They possessed the aspects of resiliency that allowed them to hold an understanding that life has great things to offer and has the ability to refrain from distractions that might interfere with their goals (Park et al., 2005).

**Implications for Future Research**

My study opens several lines of future inquiry. One line of future inquiry could focus on the power of positive student relationships. The current focus on bullying, hate, and school violence generates an opportunity to capitalize on the power of relationships as a positive solution to these concerns in schools. The power of relationships could be uncovered through future studies using an AI 4-D Cycle to examine the power of the human spirit and its cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in students, teachers, and other stakeholders within schools.
Data from my study at DVHS revealed high levels of bridging social capital between teachers and students. It would be beneficial for schools to utilize the generative power from involvement in the AI process that focuses on the strength of positive relationships. As evidenced by my finding of bridging social capital, AI has positive implications for generating a culture of respect, appreciation, and mutuality within a school. I suggest extending this to a larger scale study commonly referred to as an AI Summit to incorporate all teachers and students. Groups of individuals are trained to positively impact large groups ranging from 50 to 2000 participants (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998). The AI related research done involving whole groups in school settings indicates emerging evidence that AI has a positive influence on strengthening relationships (Bushe, 2010; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007).

My study focused on an AI 4-D Cycle, Discovery and Dream stages, with professional staff and students; future research could focus on the importance of the teaching profession. As the teaching profession continues to come under fire from policy makers, I believe a study focusing on why teachers chose their profession could be beneficial. Using the AI 4-D cycle, provides teachers with an opportunity to discover their positive core by focusing on past highpoint school related experiences and dream of the positive impact they have on the lives of their students. Future focus could also be extended to understand how AI can contribute to teacher retention and rejuvenate a passion for teaching within urban schools. One place to begin might start with asking teachers the question, “What is life calling you to be?” This is an affirming question used in AI studies to get at the heart of why people are driven to excel at their work.
My professional experience has been situated in a suburban, high wealth district. Many of the teachers in this district are former urban teachers. Although I speak from only my experience as a school administrator, the teachers we hired spoke openly in their interviews about valuing their time in urban schools, yet expressed a desire for an opportunity to focus on teaching instead of social work. I believe conducting an AI study of why urban teachers choose to leave and accept jobs in other school districts could provide valuable information to urban schools and their charge to retain quality teachers.

Another area for future research is to extend the findings of my AI study to a mixed methods study of urban high schools students. The salient findings of bridging social capital and resiliency were discovered through methods commonly associated with qualitative research. It would be interesting if the findings of this study could be replicated using a survey instrument to assess if bridging social capital and resiliency are widespread characteristics among urban high school students. The opportunity to discover if these characteristics exist in large numbers has positive implications for empowering students to navigate through the complex world of high school.

Limitations

Throughout my study, some limitations occurred I did not anticipate from the onset. During the second half of the Dream stage one of the professional staff participants needed to be excused because of a medical appointment. I informed the participant of the remaining activities of day two and thanked him for his participation.

Member checking was used with participants throughout all activities of the Discovery and Dream stages. Upon completion of transcribing the data from the study, I
met with the field observer to member check the field notes generated. I also met with the administrator participant to member check the information for accuracy. The administrator participant confirmed the accuracy of the findings. Due to time constraints, she met with the other participants to verify the accuracy of my findings. We met after she talked with all participants and I was informed that all of the participants agreed and verified the findings presented by the administrator. I would prefer in future research projects to have an opportunity to meet individually with each participant to confirm the accuracy of data collected.

**Relationship of Findings to Relevant Theory**

Appreciative inquiry is an asset-driven and strengths-based perspective that discovers what gives life to an organization when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Valuing the potential in organizations and the humans that interact within those organizations has historical connections to organizational psychology and action research. Organizational psychology can be defined as the scientific study of employees, workplaces, and organizations.

Organizations are complex networks of individuals brought together to work toward a common goal. Due to the nature of free thinking individuals, disagreements among employees ranging from minor to significant created productivity barriers within organizations (Argyris & Schon, 1978). The ability to understand the complexity of individuals working together in organizations led to the development of action research. Action research is a method commonly used to examine the network of relationships in
organizations. Action research has been defined as a set of problem solving steps that require identifying, action, and evaluation of problems within organizations (Lewin, 1946). In action research, researchers focus on problem solving models and ways to provide solutions to these problems (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

Using action research to uncover problems and provide solutions to those problems has been a widely accepted process within organizations. Unfortunately, organizations focusing on the symptoms of the problems in isolation of the larger perspective have repeatedly found themselves locked in a cycle of blame and divisiveness (Senge, 2006). Focusing solely on problems within organizations caused researchers to consider the outcome if their focus shifted toward the strengths of the organization. Initiatives such as organizational learning and positive organizational scholarship have dedicated lines of inquiry to the strengths among individuals within organizations (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Dutton et al., 2005). These initiatives acknowledge the complexity of human interactions and focus on the collective benefit when these interactions focus on strengths. Although these initiatives have moved organizations forward in focusing on strengths of individuals, a problem solving focus continues to be a commonly accepted viewpoint within organizations. AI, as a theoretical perspective, offers a complimentary view to this prevailing focus. AI looks at organizations and the generative capacity for collectively co-constructing a design for the organization. AI is (a) generative in nature; (b) has capacity for individual growth and organizational transformation; (c) a narrative-based research methodology; and (d) different from the traditional problem solving methods.
Appreciative inquiry focuses on the generative capacity for the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. These individuals have the power to connect and collaborate with those around them. The belief that organizations have the potential to be cohesive and highly creative ties AI to the theory of social capital.

Social capital theory suggests that networks connect in ways that benefit the individual and collective interests of the entire group. The individuals have the collective ability to determine the future of the organization. This concept directly links social capital to AI. Table 5.1 portrays the relationship between social capital and AI demonstrating how they stem from an organizational psychology theoretical perspective.
Table 5.1

*Relationship of Social Capital and AI to Organizational Psychology*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Psychology</th>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Appreciative Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A scientific study of employees, workplaces, and organizations.</td>
<td>Focus on the power of individuals.</td>
<td>Focus on the power of individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the interaction of individuals with others toward a collective benefit.</td>
<td>Focus on the power of discovery the positive core with individuals.</td>
<td>Focus on the power of discovery the positive core with individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with similar backgrounds and interest collectively bonding together for a collective good. (Bonding Social Capital)</td>
<td>Focus on the collective energy generated through sharing personal stories.</td>
<td>Social interactions define an organization – the constructionist principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with different backgrounds and interests collectively bridging together for a collective good. (Bridging Social Capital)</td>
<td>Inquiry and change are not stand-alone moments – the principle of simultaneity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with power linking resources together for a collective benefit. (Linking Social Capital)</td>
<td>An organization’s story is continually being coauthored by its members – the poetic principle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks of individuals have the cohesive capacity to achieve great things for an organization.</td>
<td>Images for the future guide the decision-making for an organization – the anticipatory principle.</td>
<td>Unconditionally positive questions cultivate the momentum of an organization – the positivist principle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizations consist of individuals who have the collective capacity to define the future of the organization. The study of how individuals within an organization interact with each other form the foundation of organizational psychology (Schein, 2004). Social capital and AI extend from the belief that individuals can create the future of an organization. Instead of focusing on fixing problems, social capital and AI turn the focus
to the inherent ability of the individuals with an organization to be highly cohesive with the creative capacity to determine a powerful future for the organization.

**Recommendations for Praxis for School Administrators**

I propose three recommendations for praxis:

1. I recommend school administrators create an environment that encourages the building of bridging capital among students, and between students and teachers.
2. I recommend the notion of resiliency be built into professional staff development days and integrated into appropriate aspects of the school’s curriculum.
3. I recommend school administrator training and mentorship initiatives focus on the strength of building positive relationships.

*Recommendation 1*

Schools create a natural association between teachers and students I believe is underutilized. The AI research methodology allowed me to discover high levels of bridging social capital between the teachers and students in my study. The teachers extended their hand to the students and opened the door to a safe and creative educational environment. This environment empowered the students to believe in their potential and benefit academically and socially from the positive connection with their teachers.

I recommend school administrators work to create high levels of social capital between the teachers and students in their schools using AI. Administrators can provide opportunities for teachers and students to collectively discover their positive core by focusing on past highpoint experiences. Discovering their positive core will provide an
opportunity to dream of a future for the school in which meaningful relationships between the teachers and students become the norm.

Recommendation 2

Educators overlook the implications for building and fostering high levels of resiliency among their students. Current trends of bullying, hate, and school violence have created a sense of urgency among school administrators to address student well-being in schools. I recommend a focus on building and fostering resiliency among students to address these concerns. Researchers suggest resiliency is something that can be learned and strengthened over time (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Empowering students to navigate through challenges in their lives could assist educators in focusing on the power of positive relationships among students instead of becoming mired in drama that is too often distracting from the school day.

There are several opportunities to build higher levels of resiliency among students. I recommend using professional staff development to deliver resiliency training to teachers and students. Through the use of guest speakers, student success stories, and informational sessions, the topic of resiliency can become a building wide initiative and generate a commitment from teachers and students. As well, it would be important to involve parents and community leaders in this initiative. Powerful connections between the school and its surrounding community can provide resources and support to school initiatives (Sanders, 2006).

Recommendation 3

I believe there is untapped potential in the strength of positive relationships among individuals. My study revealed that focusing on the strength of positive
relationships between teachers and students had positive implications for generating a culture of respect, appreciation, and mutuality within a school. I believe consideration should be given to the current administrative licensure programs, district administrative mentorship programs, and administrative training initiatives from state departments of education. Many of these programs do not realize the potential in creating opportunities for administrators to learn the generative strength of fostering environments that create positive relationships between school stakeholders. Although efforts have been made to view the school administrator as an instructional leader, the reality of school administration still involves immediate problem solving instead of capitalizing on the strength of relationships.

My professional experience as a school administrator over the past decade has left me wondering if the reality of the work can shift from a problem solving culture to a strengths-based culture. A focus on the strengths within an organization can empower individuals to construct positive relationships with each other. There is an untapped resource in empowering the teachers and students in schools to focus on the strength of positive relationships. A breakdown in relationships leads to classroom management issues, conflicts among teachers, and tension between teachers and parents. These issues become the concern of the school administrator and perpetuate the problem solving cycle.

The majority of these challenges have the potential to be refocused into affirmative topics by refocusing administrator attention to the importance of cultivating social capital through strengthening positive relationships. If positive relationships exist among school stakeholders, the potential for problems to occur diminishes and consequently gives the school administrator more time to focus on instructional learning.
The ability to shift this line of thinking requires an interaction with affirmative topics like AI. I believe licensure programs, district mentorships programs, and initiatives from state departments of education should offer opportunities to learn aspects of AI, positive psychology, mindfulness, flow, and other affirming topics. If this occurred, the entire educational administration profession has the potential to shift forward in a positive direction through training in this area.

The field of educational administration is continually attempting to change in order to meet the needs of public schools. It is my recommendation that school administrators acknowledge the power of bridging social capital between teachers and students and how this relationship can lead to a culture of respect, appreciation, and mutuality within a school. School administrators should recognize the importance of creating an environment that promotes resiliency in students. Incorporating professional staff development in resiliency training can sustain a focus on the power of overcoming challenges and moving toward a hope-filled future. The strength of positive relationships should also become part of preparation and development for school administrators. I believe building strong relationships among stakeholders in a school will minimize the time spent solving problems and allow more time for school administrators to focus on instructional leadership.

**Significance of the Study**

My study is significant by providing additional contribution to the field of theoretical knowledge by implementing the first two stages of an AI 4-D Cycle (Discovery and Dream) in a low performing urban high school. The Discovery stage
allowed professional staff and students to discover the positive core by focusing on past highpoint experiences. The Dream stage allowed professional staff and students the opportunity to dream of a future advancing learning and teaching at DVHS. The use of AI as a research methodology in schools is also significant in providing an alternative approach to view the field of education by focusing on the strengths of the system instead of focusing on weaknesses.

My study will help readers understand how the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI 4-D Cycle process can improve urban high schools by opening lines to the power of positive relationships and how they can influence educational environments. My research facilitated opportunities for professional staff and students to share their stories during the AI Discovery and Dream stage activities. During the AI process, they created an environment in which respect and appreciation was evident. Applying an AI model that focuses on the power of positive relationship building may be of significant benefit to schools concerned with bullying, hate, and school violence.

My study also demonstrated high levels of resiliency among urban high school students. Demonstrating traits of resiliency such as social competence, autonomy, and sense of purpose could have a major impact on schools. My research allowed urban high school students opportunities during the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI process to demonstrate an ability to remain resilient and focused on their hopes and dreams. The AI 4-D Cycle can be a catalyst for students to realize their ability to be resilient. Viewing students as having the potential to be resilient could have a significant impact on how schools navigate through potentially distracting issues.
Summary and Conclusions

Two salient findings emerged from my study: (1) Stakeholders discovered a high level of bridging social capital between the teachers and students at DVHS; and (2) Stakeholders discovered that there is a high level of resiliency among the students at DVHS.

The foundation of a healthy democracy rests in a free and public education (Tyack, 1974). I have devoted my professional career to education because I believe strongly in this noble charge. As the political climate around us continues to attack the work of public education, I believe it is even more critical to provide evidence that focusing on deficits is not the only answer. Instead, I chose to conduct a study using AI because it takes the best from the past and present and provides the basis for constructing an image that becomes the collectively co-constructed design for the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

My study focused on the latent potential of urban high school stakeholders. As urban high schools continue to fall under scrutiny for not performing to expectations set forth by NCLB, I believe now is the time more than ever to use the power of AI to uncover the ability of school personnel to collectively co-construct a better future. Urban schools continue to be viewed as problems to be fixed instead of schools full of potential and strength. It is my belief that viewing students as having unlimited capacity allows educators to capitalize on the untapped strengths of their students and unleash the creative potential. With the premise that we move in the direction of our thoughts, I believe capitalizing on strengths will not only assist in attaining academic goals, but will
take us one step closer to seeing each other as connected individuals capable of achieving
great things together.

Conducting a study in AI provided hope to the power of embracing the good and
served as the perfect tool to focus individuals on their positive core and embrace the
promise of tomorrow. I believe the power of these uplifting interactions has the potential
to change the way schools operate, especially in urban high schools. I started my career
in education to educate young people in ways that prepare them to be engaged, free
thinking, and socially responsible citizens. After nearly 15 years in the profession, I
believe we are standing at a vital crossroads in this country and now is the time to
embrace the power of focusing on our collective capacity for the good. I believe AI is just
the vehicle to take us there.
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Appendices
Appendix A: Letter of Participant Invitation
Letter of Participant Invitation

Dear Participant:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today. We are here to share the purpose of this study and to extend an opportunity for you to volunteer to participate in the study.

The purpose of this study is to describe your involvement in the appreciative inquiry (AI) process to discover your positive core highpoint school-related experiences and how you use these highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

We are conducting this research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from The Ohio State University in the Educational Administration program. The information generated from your participation will assist Discovery Valley High School to build an empowering and positive culture and generate a commitment to learning and teaching.

Your contributions to this study are important. Your participation is completely voluntary and will involve your participation in an AI Learning Team. AI as a research methodology was chosen because it appreciates and values what you bring to the process. We will present an orientation session to you about your involvement in the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: discovery and dream stages. The time commitment for the AI learning Team will involve approximately 10 hours over a two day period taking place at Discovery Valley High School during normal school hours. The contributions made by your involvement will be protected and confidentiality of information guaranteed. Any data collected from you in this study will not be identifiable and the confidentiality of all participants will be protected. Once the study is complete, the findings will be made available to you. In addition, the final report of my study will be on file with The Ohio State University.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Raymond L. Calabrese
Principal Investigator

Dustin W. Miller
Co-Investigator
Appendix B: IRB Consent Letter of Approval
April 22, 2011

Protocol Number: 2011B0101
Protocol Title: THE POWER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: DISCOVERING THE LATENT POTENTIAL OF AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL, Raymond Calabrese, Dustin Miller,
Educational Policy and Leadership

Type of Review: Initial Review—Expedited
IRB Staff Contact: Jacob R. Stoddard
Phone: 614-292-0526
Email: stoddard.13@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Calabrese,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW the above referenced research. The Board was able to provide expedited approval under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for expedited review, as indicated below.

| Date of IRB Approval: | April 22, 2011 |
| Date of IRB Approval Expiration: | April 18, 2012 |
| Expedited Review Category: | 7 |

In addition, the protocol has been approved for the inclusion of children (permission of one parent sufficient).

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #000006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website - www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Shari R. Speer, PhD, Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board
Appendix C: Student Assent Form
The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title: THE POWER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: DISCOVERING THE LATENT POTENTIAL OF AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Researcher: Dr. Raymond L. Calabrese (Principal Investigator)

Sponsor:

1. You are being asked to be in a research study. Studies are done to find better ways to treat people or to understand things better.

2. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.

3. You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide.

4. It is okay to say “No” if you don’t want to be in the study. If you say “Yes” you can change your mind and quit being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

5. If you decide you want to be in the study, an adult (usually a parent) will also need to give permission for you to be in the study.

1. What is this study about?

The purpose of this study is to describe your involvement in the appreciative inquiry process to discover your positive core highpoint school-related experiences and how you use these highpoint experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future of Discovery Valley High School.

2. What will I need to do if I am in this study?

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to be an active member of focus groups, paired interviews, and whole group discussions. You will be asked to talk about your highpoint learning experiences along with your fellow group members. There will be seven students [one of which will be you], four teachers, a school administrator, and a guidance
3. How long will I be in the study?

The group will meet from 11:00am until approximately 3:15pm for two school days. It will be an excused absence from school.

4. Can I stop being in the study?

You may stop being in the study at any time.

5. What bad things might happen to me if I am in the study?

There are no foreseen bad things happening in this study. Although protecting your confidentiality will be very important throughout this study, it is important to note that due to the nature of focus groups confidentiality can only be guaranteed to the extent that all members of the focus group maintain participant confidentiality. If anything is the least bit uncomfortable to you, you have the right to not participate and/or ask to be excused from the study.

6. What good things might happen to me if I am in the study?

As a participant, you will have an opportunity to reflect on and share the positive school experiences that you have had. These experiences will be used to create a compelling vision for Discovery Valley High School. Your positive experiences will hopefully be used to benefit all of the students and teachers throughout the school. As well, you will have an opportunity to build positive relationships with the other participants in the study.

7. Will I be given anything for being in this study?

Lunch and afternoon snacks will be provided to you during this study.

8. Who can I talk to about the study?

For questions about the study you may contact Dr. Raymond Calabrese by phone (614-247-1633) or email at calabrese.31@osu.edu. You may also contact Dustin Miller, co-investigator, by phone (614) 774-2740 or email at miller.1534@osu.edu.

To discuss other study-related questions with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.
Signing the assent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have had a chance to ask questions before making up my mind. I want to be in this research study.

Signature or printed name of subject ___________________________ AM/PM

Date and time ___________________________

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining assent ___________________________

Signature of person obtaining assent ___________________________ AM/PM

Date and time ___________________________

This form must be accompanied by an IRB approved parental permission form signed by a parent/guardian.
Appendix D: Parental Permission Form
The Ohio State University Parental Permission
For Child’s Participation in Research

Study Title: THE POWER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: DISCOVERING THE LATENT
POTENTIAL OF AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Researcher: Dr. Raymond L. Calabrese (Principal Investigator)
Dustin W. Miller (Co-Investigator)

Sponsor:

This is a parental permission form for research participation. It contains
important information about this study and what to expect if you permit your child to
participate.

Your child’s participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and
family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to permit your child
to participate. If you permit your child to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and
will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to describe the participants’ discovery of positive school-related
experiences and how they use these experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning
and teaching for the future.

Research use of the data collected from this study will be reported in a doctoral dissertation at
The Ohio State University, and may be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and/or
presented at academic scholarly conferences. Data may also be used to illustrate the
effectiveness of the appreciative inquiry process in facilitating small or large group work. In
any case, participant and organizational confidentiality will be maintained.

Procedures/Tasks:

The entire study will take place at Discovery Valley High School in a Midwestern state. A
purposively selected sample of students, teachers, a school counselor, and a school
administrator will be identified by Mr. John Smith, principal of Discovery Valley High
School, and asked to voluntarily participate in qualitative case study in the form of an action
research. The participants will participate in a modified Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit-
4D Cycle. The participants will form a team referred to as an AI Learning Team. The AI
Learning Team will be involved in a qualitative methodology that involves the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discover and Dream.

The Discovery Stage will involve a meeting with the AI Learning Team members who will share peak experiences of highpoint organizational experiences, and identify the organization’s actual narrative as well as desired narrative.

The Dream Stage will involve a meeting with the AI Learning Team members who will envision an imagined and desired future based on the shared peak experiences of highpoint organizational experiences generated during the Discovery Stage.

The AI Learning Team process will be conducted over two school days in the Spring of 2011. Participants will be involved in all AI Learning Team activities [paired interviews and focus groups]. Meeting times with the AI Learning Team will occur during the scheduled school day for participants [April 19, 2011 and April 28, 2011]. The typical length for a meeting will be approximately from 11:00 a.m. until 3:15 p.m. Student participants will have an excused absence from school during this time and will not be penalized in any way from Discovery Valley High School by participating in the study. Data will be collected via field notes from direct observation. In addition, both meetings will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

Duration:

Your child may leave the study at any time. If you or your child decides to stop participation in the study, there will be no penalty and neither you nor your child will lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks associated with this study.

Benefits of this study will assist Discovery Valley High School to build an empowering and positive culture to generate a commitment to learning and teaching.

- Participants will describe their positive core (discovery phase) of highpoint experiences that exist in Discovery Valley High School.
- Participants will describe their compelling vision (dream phase) of learning and teaching for the future.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your child’s study-related information confidential. Although, due to the nature of focus groups confidentiality can only be guaranteed to the extent that all members of the focus group maintain participant confidentiality. As well, there may be...
circumstances where information must be released. For example, personal information
regarding your child’s participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law.
Also, your child’s records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the
research):
• Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international
regulatory agencies;
• The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible
Research Practices;
• The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-
regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

There are no incentives provided to participants to participate in this study.

Participant Rights:

You or your child may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to
which you are otherwise entitled. If you or your child is a student or employee at Ohio State,
your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.
If you and your child choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at
any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any
personal legal rights your child may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State
University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to
applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights
and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Dr. Raymond
Calabrese by phone (614-247-1633) or email at calabrese.31@osu.edu. You may also contact
Dustin Miller, co-investigator, by phone (614-774-2740) or email at miller.1534@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related
concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact
Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are harmed as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-
related harm, you may contact Dr. Raymond Calabrese by phone (614-247-1633) or email at
calabrese.31@osu.edu.
**Signing the parental permission form**

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to provide permission for my child to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to permit my child to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of subject</th>
<th>Signature of person authorized to provide permission for subject</th>
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**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Printed name of person obtaining consent</th>
<th>Signature of person obtaining consent</th>
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Appendix E: Participant Consent Form
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: THE POWER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: DISCOVERING THE LATENT POTENTIAL OF AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Researcher:
- Dr. Raymond L. Calabrese (Principal Investigator)
- Dustin W. Miller (Co-Investigator)

Sponsor:

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to describe the participants’ discovery of positive school-related experiences and how they use these experiences to develop a compelling vision of learning and teaching for the future.

Research use of the data collected from this study will be reported in a doctoral dissertation at The Ohio State University, and may be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and/or presented at academic scholarly conferences. Data may also be used to illustrate the effectiveness of the appreciative inquiry process in facilitating small or large group work. In any case, participant and organizational confidentiality will be maintained.

Procedures/Tasks:
The entire study will take place at Discovery Valley High School in a Midwestern state. A purposively selected sample of students, teachers, a school counselor, and a school administrator will be asked to voluntarily participate in qualitative case study in the form of an action research. The participants will participate in a modified Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit-4D Cycle. The participants will form a team referred to as an AI Learning Team. The AI Learning Team will be involved in a qualitative methodology that involves the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: Discover and Dream.
The Discovery Stage will involve a meeting with the AI Learning Team members who will share peak experiences of highpoint organizational experiences, and identify the organization’s actual narrative as well as desired narrative.

The Dream Stage will involve a meeting with the AI Learning Team members who will envision an imagined and desired future based on the shared peak experiences of highpoint organizational experiences generated during the Discovery Stage.

The AI Learning Team process will be conducted over two school days in the Spring of 2011. Participants will be involved in all AI Learning Team activities [paired interviews and focus groups]. Meeting times with the AI Learning Team will occur during the scheduled school day for participants [April 19, 2011 and April 28, 2011]. The typical length for a meeting will be approximately from 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Data will be collected via field notes from direct observation. In addition, both meetings will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

**Duration:**

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

**Risks and Benefits:**

There are no known risks associated with this study.

Benefits of this study will assist Discovery Valley High School to build an empowering and positive culture to generate a commitment to learning and teaching.

- Participants will describe their positive core (discovery phase) of highpoint experiences that exist in Discovery Valley High School.
- Participants will describe their compelling vision (dream phase) of learning and teaching for the future.

**Confidentiality:**

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. Although, due to the nature of focus groups confidentiality can only be guaranteed to the extent that all members of the focus group maintain participant confidentiality. As well, there may be circumstances where information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
• The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
• The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

There are no incentives provided to participants to participate in this study.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

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For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are harmed as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related harm, you may contact Dr. Raymond Calabrese by phone (614-247-1633) or email at calabrese.31@osu.edu.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date and time

Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)

Signature of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)

Date and time

Relationship to the subject

Date and time

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date and time
Appendix F: Day One – Discovery Stage PowerPoint
Discovery Valley High School

Picture of the high school removed to protect confidentiality.

IMAGINE...

- Imagine your favorite place.
- Imagine your favorite person.
- What do you love about this place?
- What do you love about this person?
- Imagine how this place or person makes you feel.
- Can you imagine that feeling right here – right now?
  IMAGINE Discovery Valley High School!
YOU ARE IMAGINE DVHS!

- Kristin
- Matt
- Allison
- Jeremy
- Jared
- Amy
- Stephanie

YOU ARE IMAGINE DVHS!

- Penny
- Jack
- Lori
- Donna
- Margie
- Nicole
The DVHS Difference Making Team

The most important stakeholders of DVHS!

The future is in your hands!

Ground Rules

- We appreciate, affirm, value, and respect each other at all times.
- All input/comments ARE valuable. You must believe this.
- We encourage everyone to share their dreams!
- All dreams are possible.
- We have the capability to create our reality.
- Focus on the best in Discovery Valley High School, each other, and yourself.
- Each person has the right to pass when asked to contribute.
- Deficit language or problem focusing is set aside or transformed into an affirmative challenge.
Let the journey begin…

A HIGHPOINT EXPERIENCE

Think of a highpoint experience with DVHS when you felt excited, engaged, and alive.

- What made it a great experience?
- When and where did it occur?
- Who was there?
- What was happening?
- What was the outcome of the experience?
YOU ARE IMPORTANT!

CHECK THE HUMBLE AT THE DOOR!

Without being humble, what do you most value about…

- Yourself and the way you approach your work as a student, teacher, counselor, and administrator?
- Your unique skills and gifts?
- What do you think your closest friend/collaborate at school values about you?
- Your contribution to DVHS?
Describing Your Greatness

What words describe you when you are at your best?

Generate at least ten words.

Identifying The Best That We Do!

What history or experiences can you share that describe DVHS at its best?

- In fulfilling its mission to provide a quality education to its students.
- In creating a place where you want to go in the morning.
- In promoting positive relationships between students, teachers, counselors, and administrators.
The Secret Recipe

Identify the essential factors that “give life” to DVHS. What are the secret ingredients?

As a group, draw a baked good to reflect what DVHS looks like.
Share a time when you recognized this recipe in action at DVHS.

When We Are At Our Best!

Based on the profound stories we heard today about you and your school, what are three dreams you have for DVHS and:
- You as a person
- Your students; your teachers
- Your community
What did we learn today?
Appendix G: Day Two – Dream Stage PowerPoint
Discovery Valley High School

Picture of the high school removed to protect confidentiality.

I Had A Great Week!

In each of our lives, wherever we find ourselves, something happened to us this past week that allows us to make a resounding YES to life and each other!

We Just Have To Look For It!
Review of Day One

Remembering The Wisdom
Our 1st Week Together

Our Accomplishments

- We accept each other!
- We respect each other!
- We encourage people to be themselves!
- We set goals and work hard to achieve them!
- We support each other on a daily basis!
- We strive for success!
- We are a family!
- We are difference makers!
YOU ARE DIFFERENCE MAKERS!

A DVHS Difference Maker

Jeremy

- Work ethic
- Great friend
- Respectful
- Musical
- Trustworthy

Participant picture removed to protect confidentiality.
A DVHS Difference Maker

Matt
- Competitive
- Hard worker
- His skills build people up
- Never gives up
- Nice person

A DVHS Difference Maker

Allison
- Shows respect to ALL
- Friendly
- Accepting
- Thinks outside of the box

Participant picture removed to protect confidentiality.
A DVHS Difference Maker

Nicole
- Wants to be here
- Listens to others
- Cares about others
- Puts students first

A DVHS Difference Maker

Donna
- Accepting of others
- Always says “Yes”
- Funny
- Expert professional
- Advocate for kids

Participant picture removed to protect confidentiality.
A DVHS Difference Maker

Jared
- Respectful to all
- Role model to others
- Very involved
- Works very hard
- A nice guy

A DVHS Difference Maker

Kristin
- Always happy
- Very active
- A great friend to all

Participant picture removed to protect confidentiality.
A DVHS Difference Maker

Jack
- A caring person
- Very involved in the school
- Builds rapport with kids
- Makes Heights better
- Loyal
- Helpful

Lori
- Positive
- Good rapport with others
- Respectful
- Change agent
- Flexible
- Good friend
A DVHS Difference Maker

Stephanie
- Determined
- Sticks it out
- Leader within the classroom
- Leader outside of the classroom

A DVHS Difference Maker

Penny
- Very caring
- Loves her students
- Mother figure
- Listens
- Problem solver
A DVHS Difference Maker

Amy
- Smiles a lot
- Very loyal
- Dedicated friend
- Caring
- Contributor to Heights

Participant picture removed to protect confidentiality.

A DVHS Difference Maker

Margie
- Very dedicated
- Flexible
- Friendly to all
- Fun
- Always willing to help

Participant picture removed to protect confidentiality.
The DVHS Difference Makers

Participant group picture removed to protect confidentiality.

We Are Ready To Roll!

Centerfield Video Clip
A Dream

Without a dream there is no hope!

“A dream without a dream there is no hope!

“If we cannot envision the world we would like to live in, we cannot work towards its creation.

“If we cannot place ourselves in it in our imagination, we will not believe it is possible.”

- Chellis Glendinning
A Dream – definition

1. A wild fancy or hope.
2. A condition or achievement longed for; an aspiration.
3. One that is exceptionally gratifying, excellent, or beautiful.
4. To regard something as feasible or practical.

Beginning the Dream

- If you could do anything to make your work better, what would it be?
- When you are at your happiest, what are you doing?
- As a person?
- In your role as you now live it?
When We Are At Our Best!

Based on the profound stories we heard last week about you and your school, what are three dreams you have for DVHS and:

- You as a person
- Your students: your teachers
- Your community

Imagine

- If you could make your dream/wishes come true – what it look like?
- What would be happening?
- What outcomes would you be seeing?
Imagine it’s the year 2020. You’ve been asked to be a guest on Jay Leno to talk about the current state of DVHS.
- What will DVHS look like?
- How will people be treating each other?
- What will life feel like within the school?
- What will you realize you have missed the most?

What stood out in the dreams that were shared to you individually?

As a group?
The DVHS Dream

After hearing all of the dreams today, what dream(s) do we have for DVHSs?

What is one thing that you would like to see happen after I leave?

We are leaving, however, you are just beginning!