

## Brief Encounter with the Taos Institute

September 2018

This month we welcome [Lindsey Godwin](#), PhD, a Taos Institute Associate and Academic Director of the David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College, as she shares with us a look at the event that could change the way we educate our youth around the world.



### The World Positive Education Accelerator

By Lindsey Godwin

On June 25-28, 2018, the second Festival of Positive Education plus Appreciative Inquiry Summit, otherwise known as the [World Positive Education Accelerator \(WPEA\)](#), took place in Fort Worth, Texas. We welcomed over 850 participants from more than 30 countries who spanned the entire stakeholder spectrum for education, from teachers, to students, to administrators, to parents, to policy-makers, to researchers, to business leaders, to passionate life-long learners. Many Taos Associates participated, from participants to co-facilitators, and will continue to be a part of this initiative.

The WPEA was co-convened by the [David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College](#) and the [International Positive Education Network \(IPEN\)](#), and aimed at highlighting inspiring work happening around the world and envisioning new opportunities to further accelerate Positive Education around the globe. With the ultimate aim at rethinking and constructing new ways for how we approach education at a global level, the WPEA was a living example of social construction in action.

Ken Gergen once wrote in *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*, that “generative ideas emerge from joint thinking, from significant conversations, and from sustained, shared struggles to achieve new insights by partners in thought.” The WPEA truly embodied the social constructionist spirit echoed in Ken’s words, as it was the generative realization of over two years of joint thinking, conversations, and sustained shared work by many around the world. From our steering committee meeting held at Champlain College in September 2017 that involved over 100 people from 15 countries, to working to ensure that we had delegations from around the world able to participate, to inviting different perspectives to present, to designing the AI summit process (which invites collective co-construction of the future by its very design), the WPEA was a true expression of global social construction.

Day one of the WPEA was a day of “discovery” and a festival of learning. It was filled with world-class speakers, interactive workshops, and insights from around the globe with leading scholars and practitioners including Martin Seligman, Sir Anthony Seldon, Angela Duckworth, Lea Waters, Geelong Grammar School, Universidad Tecmilenio, University of Buckingham, and many others.

Filled with rich insights from Positive Education practices around the world, the next three days were designed as a true Appreciative Inquiry Summit, where we invited participants to move through the 4-D phases of Discovery, Dream, Design and Delivery to help them turn their inspiration into actions, co-constructing the future of education together.

For those of you who have not participated in an AI Summit before, I can tell you that the energy was contagious! From our spontaneous “dance party” to Pharrel Williams’ song “Happy” lead by Sir Anthony Seldon, to the creative skits and prototyping that working groups did, the positive energy was palpable throughout the event. You can get a flavor of the energy from our highlight video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Az10lgwCJc&feature=youtu.be>

As we moved from Dream to Design, twenty-six design teams were cultivated (these emerged from the collective dream process and were thus a co-creation of the whole), including:

1. Creating new teacher education and enrichment programs	2. Envisioning a National Summit for accelerating Positive Education in the U.S.
3. Envisioning the learning environment of the future for early education	4. Envisioning a National Summit for accelerating Positive Education in Latin America
5. Envisioning the learning environment of the future for K-12/Primary education	6. Envisioning a National Summit for accelerating Positive Education in Singapore
7. Envisioning the learning environment of the future for Higher Education	8. Envisioning a National Summit for accelerating Positive Education in China
9. Cultivating learning partnerships across institutions	10. Creating a movement of Positive Education in Belgium/Netherlands
11. Creating the new science of positive education, research and evaluation studies	12. Enabling more IPEN-like regional networks
13. Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies to accelerate Positive Education	14. Creating core values to unite a Positive Revolution in education
15. Positive Education for parents and families	16. Ensuring equitable access for all to Positive Education
17. National and International Policy for Positive Education	18. Youth-led initiatives for Positive Education
19. A Funding and resource campaign to support the creation of schools as positive institutions	20. Making Positive Education go viral
21. Cultivating links to strategic intuitions and opinion leaders to accelerate Positive Education	22. Planning post-summit momentum and structure
23. Powering up Positive Education for school leaders, administrators, principles, and executives	24. Business as a force for Positive Education
25. Creating standards and best practices for Positive Education	26. Creating a roadmap for a Positive Education journey at Champlain College

Each of these teams identified a group champion and created an aspiration statement along with a plan for immediate next steps. All of these interest groups will be able to continue their work through WeTipp, our online collaborative platform maintained through the Cooperrider Center.

We are still working to compile the formal summit proceedings document and will gladly share it with the Taos community when it is ready. Meanwhile, we are pleased to report that many dreams from these working groups are already starting to come to fruition as we construct the future of education together. For example:

- Inspired by their attendance at the WPEA, participants from Singapore launched the Singapore Positive Education Network (SPEN) in July.
- The delegation from Nepal is exploring inviting 100 school principals to a Positive Education and AI summit in Kathmandu next year.
- Through their participation in the WPEA steering committee and summit, leaders in Brazil have launched the Instituto Educação Positiva, with the aim of creating Positive Education models to scale across the country.
- An upcoming special issue of the Appreciative Inquiry Practitioner Journal on the theme of Positive Education will feature schools who participated in the WPEA as examples of positive institutions to help further showcase how we can make this work scalable and sustainable.

The WPEA is not over! Rather, the work of the summit has actually just begun. In the true social constructionist spirit, this work will continue to be co-created as we continue cultivating “joint thinking, from significant conversations, and from sustained, shared [work].” The Cooperrider Center is excited to continue supporting these groups and the growing global conversation around Positive Education in the months ahead.

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We invite you all to become involved in this work as well! If you are interested in learning more, contact us at: [positiveeducationsummit@champlain.edu](mailto:positiveeducationsummit@champlain.edu)