

Story Curator Response and Reflection

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As story curator, I must confess that I was also Bethany Toy's professor as she developed her action research project "Exploring Implementation of Second Step at a Suburban Elementary School: An Appreciative Participatory Inquiry Process." That being said, I noted from the beginning of her work that Bethany was keenly aware of creating and fostering respectful relationships with students, teachers, support personnel, and administrators. She wanted to concentrate on bringing something positive and helpful into her school.

As is evident in this work, Bethany listens deeply. She arranged meetings with individuals and small groups to hear their stories about what works best to promote social emotional learning (SEL) in their classrooms, with their students, and in their professional worlds. She did not place herself above anyone, nor try to become a surrogate whose job was to impose an administrative Second Step mandate on all. She listened respectfully and took note of the positive core of what each teacher expressed. She also very keenly brought in student voices. What is their experience in the classroom? How does their experience inform current and proposed practices to promote SEL school-wide? Students were not viewed as objects to be filled or ordered around, they were invited to become participants and resources in an effort to bring about what is best in the school and in promoting SEL.

Bethany presents her work with a most humble voice, but surely her process and respectful relationships reveal a very powerful and compassionate perspective focused on

doing right for kids. She did not waiver. She was curious about what was working for each individual, as well as wondering about how each effort and perspective could inform the principal's mission to integrate SEL efforts. Second Step was not the only show in town. Different teachers had different practices that worked in their classrooms with their students. Still the principal wanted Second Step as a way to bring about a common language and to move toward a SEL curriculum with a more comprehensive developmental scope and sequence. These are challenging waters for a second-year school psychologist in training to surf. Bethany got up and rode the wave with grace, respect, and power without either running over a single person, or being run over or over-powered herself.

Bethany's research and chapter has both the structure and the heart to reveal her skills, compassion, and capacity to work respectfully with divergent and varied professionals and students to bring about understanding and positive actions. Her work hints at her wisdom and compassion for students. Her work shows how she cares deeply for her students, their learning, and their well-being. She is a professional I would want working with my own children because I know she would stand up for them as a positive and assertive advocate. My hope is that she will take what she has learned about appreciative inquiry (AI) and the participatory inquiry process (PIP) into the schools where she works and continue to lifescape those schools in ways that promote the learning of all students. I hope others will be there for her to cheer her on or in becoming her ally. None of us can do this work alone. We all need communities of practice where we can lifescape the schools of our dreams together.

