The Appreciative Tutor

Maximizing student potential requires explicit (yet flexible) guidelines for tutors and advisors. Many tutors enhance student potential by utilizing an effective process known as the "The Tutoring Cycle," which promotes content knowledge and facilitates independent success (MacDonald, 2000). Similarly, when students attend advising sessions in various emotional states, seeking degree changes and help in making life-altering decisions, some advisors respond by using the techniques of Appreciative Advising—an approach that celebrates the unique differences of students, embraces their wildest dreams, and designs a plan of action (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008).

This article proposes merging MacDonald's Tutoring Cycle with the six phases of Appreciative Advising to create a new Appreciative Tutoring Cycle. In order to better understand the rationale behind this new framework, a general overview of both the Tutoring Cycle and Appreciative Advising will be discussed. Individually, the Tutoring Cycle and Appreciative Advising are powerful frameworks. Put together, a more powerful framework emerges for tutoring professionals.

•

The proposed Appreciative Tutoring Cycle blends MacDonald's (2000) Tutoring Cycle with Bloom, Hutson, and He's (2008) Appreciative Advising methodology. An overview of these foundational approaches will demonstrate their contribution to the development of the Appreciative Tutoring Cycle.

• • • •

MacDonald (2000) defines the Tutoring Cycle as "a set of 12 steps which you can learn and then use to guide [tutors] through a tutoring session" (p. 24). The Tutoring Cycle provides tutors with descriptive suggestions for assisting their students and explains the rationale behind each step. The Tutoring Cycle follows a circular pattern based on the assumption that learning is cyclical. For instance, "one first identifies

what is to be learned, consciously or unconsciously sets some strategy for learning, learns, then moves on to the next learning task;and the cycle continues"(MacDonald, 2000, p. 24). The twelve steps of the Tutoring Cycle are the following:

1. Greeting and Climate Setting
2. Identifying the Task

1. Disarm: The advisor attempts to make a student feel welcome and comfortable in the advising session.
2. Discover: The advisor determines a student's strengths, passions, and interests.
3. Dream: The advisor encourages the student to consider his or her wildest ambitions and future goals.
4. Design: The advisor and the student create a plan of action.
5. Deliver: The student attempts to complete his or her goals with the advisor's support.
6. Don't Settle: The advisor challenges the student to strive beyond minimum expectations.

•

Proceeding from identified strengths, individuals are encouraged to make choices that satisfy their needs and contribute to mental wellness (Bloom et al., 2008). The social constructivist theory, which also

For many students, the word "tutoring" has a negative connotation. As a result, some students may attend tutoring with feelings of frustration, desperation, and uncertainty (MacDonald, 2000). During the [illegible] phase, tutors work to eliminate potential emotional barriers to a success-

- ‹ -

In the phase, tutors will utilize Steps 5 and 6 of the Tutoring Cycle (Setting the Agenda for the Session and Addressing the Task), as well as the fourth phase of Appreciative Advising (Design). Specifically, in the Tutoring Cycle, Steps 5 and 6 encourage tutors to address the academic concerns of the student, and the Design phase of Appreciative Advising provides strategies to resolve these concerns (Bloom et al., 2008;MacDonald, 2000).

While some students may attempt to solve problems independently, others will voice confusion, claiming "I don't know how to solve the problem."According to the Appreciative Advising model, tutors next discuss possible approaches to solving the problem, as well as the pros and cons of specific techniques. In this way, students can learn to make effective decisions regarding problem-solving approaches. At the same time, tutors must avoid the "curse of knowledge"(Bloom et al., 2008, p. 67) which comes from expertise in a field. Although tutors may be very knowledgeable about the course content, they must use appropriate language and craft their explanations to match the ability levels of their students (MacDonald, 2000). While working within a student's zone of proximal development (Vygostky, as cited in Bloom et al., 2008), tutors must continue to offer positive feedback for student success throughout the entire process (Bloom et al., 2008;MacDonald, 2000).

• -

The phase parallels Steps 7 and 8 of the Tutoring Cycle (Tutee Summarizing Content and Tutee Summarizing Underlying Process) as well as the third phase of Appreciative Advising (Dream). Specifically, the phase combines important facets of Steps 7 and 8, and the Dream phase. During Steps 7 and 8, students may experience the "Light Bulb Effect"as they begin to understand the academic material (MacDonald, 2000, p.33). Additionally, Step 8 reiterates the importance of students' understanding of the underlying processes. Based on the goals of Steps 7 and 8, the Dream phase provides important tools for tutors (Bloom et al., 2008).

The Dream phase encourages students to imagine fulfilling their wildest dreams without regard to finances, education, or logic (Bloom et al., 2008). Ultimately, with the help of this exercise, advisors hope students will connect their passions to their future goals. During the phase of the Appreciative Tutoring Cycle, tutors could ask their students a similarly speculative question, "How does your newfound knowledge apply to the bigger picture of ( )?" As students effectively apply the information to additional problems

and real-world scenarios, they envision future success in the content area (MacDonald, 2000). As students begin to apply the material, the tutors will continue to recognize the specific strengths of their students (e.g. "You cross-multiply very well"). Most likely, these strengths were initially observed during the phase, but tutors can reinforce those abilities now by developing strategies in conjunction with the student that builds on those strengths (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000).

By merging significant components of each model, the phase relates to Steps 9, 10 and 12 of the Tutoring Cycle (Confirming, What's Next? and Closing and Good-bye), as well as the fifth phase of Appreciative Advising (Deliver). These steps of the Tutoring Cycle emphasize the significance of reinforcing accomplishments in the session, developing future approaches for success, and concluding the G., Ty 2000) 30

Don't Settle phase clarifies the appropriate boundary between dependence and independence regarding tutoring (Bloom et al., 2008). Nevitt Sanford's theory encourages appreciative advisors (and tutors) to balance the levels of challenge and support (as cited in Bloom et al., 2008). Individual students require different levels of challenge and support; tutors, therefore, must use their discretion to determine the appropriate balance (Bloom et al., 2008;MacDonald, 2000). For example, consider the following scenario: A student attends tutoring sessions every week even though he/she fully understands the material. Through positive reinforcement and support, tutors can challenge such students with the following suggestion, "You have done such a great job over the past few weeks! I recognize your progress. Perhaps you should skip next week's session? I think you can master the material without me. If you have a problem though, you are always welcome to come back!" Consequently,

Bloom, JL., Hutson, B. L., & He, Y. (2008). Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing.

MacDonald, R. B. (2000). (2nd ed.). Williamsville, NY: Cambridge Stratford, Limited.