

REFERENCE LETTER FOR MAUREEN “MO” MCKENNA

In the spring of 2012, as a Superintendent for the Upper Canada District School Board, I was assigned the lead for a new project: the creation of a culture of service excellence in the school district. This was a daunting task to undertake with nearly 5000 employees and approximately 30,000 students. I began to dig into the multiple resources that were available about service, organizational change, and employee engagement. I began to develop my own understanding of all of these concepts and began to think about what process I might use for implementation.

No wide spread change in an organization can stick without the engagement of those who will be asked to implement the change. Although this project had the support of the Board of Trustees, I knew that successful implementation would hinge on the engagement of all employee groups. As I began to mull this over with a colleague, my colleague suggested a workshop on Appreciative Inquiry. Could this be the philosophy and process that I might use for implementation? I wasn't entirely convince, but as I wanted to “get rolling”, I signed up with 3 other colleagues: a principal, an H.R. Employee and an employee from Planning and Research.

Thus began my adventure with the fabulous Mo McKenna, who was the facilitator of the Appreciative Inquiry course and who soon became our mentor and coach. Mo trained our team during the four day workshop and we concluded the workshop with confidence and enthusiasm that A.I. would be the perfect process for implementation of our Service Excellence project.

Mo not only trained myself and my team but she acted as a mentor for the project, assisting with the development of employee interviews and helping to design and facilitate our summit. We spoke frequently and although she had expertise in A.I, she didn't direct our efforts but came along side us in order for us to retain our ownership of the project.

Through the A.I. process we were able to engage all employee groups and a significant representation of students and parents. Three years later, all employees have participated in on line service excellence training and the concepts of service excellence are influencing interactions between staff, students and parents. In addition, Mo's workshops on Appreciative Inquiry have been well received and well attended by many Upper Canada employees.

Mo's knowledge, enthusiasm and energy have been generously given throughout this initiative and I attribute a great deal of it's success to her ongoing support.

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