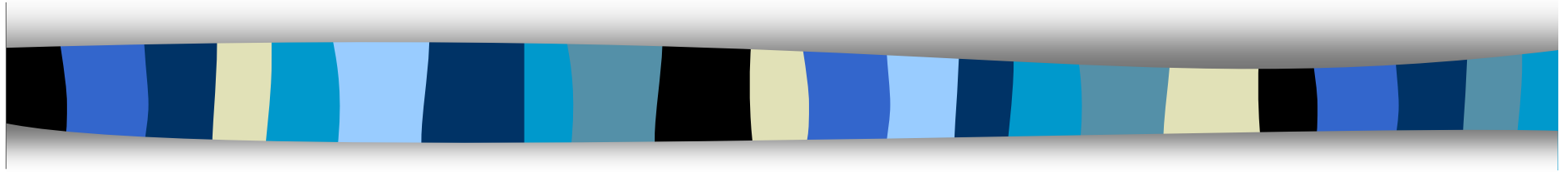


# The Leading Edge: Innovative Practices



Kathleen E. Allen

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# Gifted Practitioners

- Defined as individuals who are innovators and change agents in their institutions
- Identified to discover more about innovative practices?
- Assumes that in rapidly changing world, practice evolves faster than traditional forms of theory

# Why Gifted Practitioner Dialogues?



- To facilitate action research in the practice of leadership
- To influence at the same time we learn
- Assumes that our practice is ahead of our literature / theory?
- Uses the power of human conversation / dialogue as a change process



# The Power of Human Conversation

- We discover each others presence, concerns and dilemmas.
- Conversations move rapidly through human networks to others who find them meaningful.
- As conversations travel among networks of concerned people, they develop power exponentially.



## The Power of Conversation-cont.

- This exponential power can quickly develop into a capacity for huge impact.
- The values and issues we talk about are crucial. We can choose values of self interest or for the common good.
- Seeding the conversation with the values we want is a critical place to intervene for influence.



# The Evolution of an Idea

- First focus group Nov. 1999 [gifted]
- Follow up in March 2000 [gifted]
- Further conversations Oct. and Nov. 2000 – open enrollment
- Midwest focus group March 1, 2001 [gifted]
- Follow up for all March 17 [gifted]
- Open conversation March 18 & 19
- Gifted practitioners selected by reputation for innovation and snowball technique

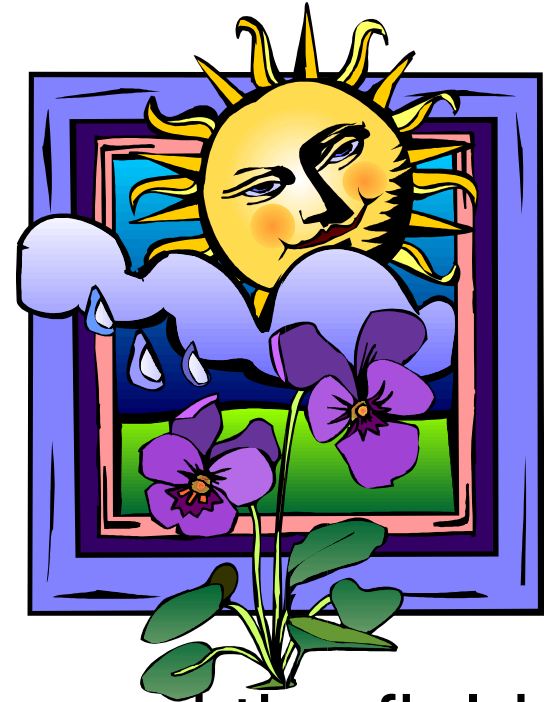


# Asked Four Questions

- What are you curious about?
- What is the root of your passion?
- How do you engage others in change?
- How has your personal growth and development shaped the way you practice?

# Themes - Curious

- Curious about change
- They are curious
- They read outside the box and the field
- Reflection is integrated into new learning





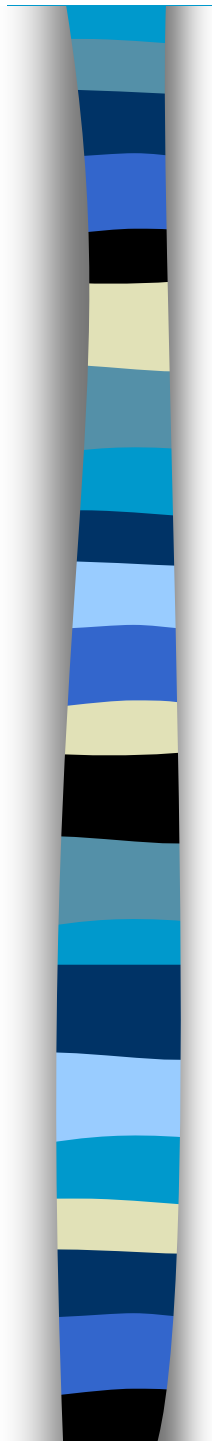


# Themes – Source of Passion

- Connecting what they do to something larger
- Want to leave a legacy
- “Learning first – discipline second
- Growth and development – seeing the magic!
- Belief in the power of transformation

# Themes: Change

- Relationships are primary
- Agents of change not stability
- Assume they are invited to the table
- Follow the energy resources are time, energy and attention not \$
- Attract not push
- Focus on the commons



# An Example:



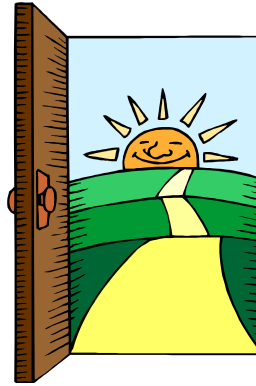
- Intuit tensions / conflicts
- Capture imagination and possibilities
- Attract people to the possibilities
- Lots of iterations
- Top level support 1/3-1/2 way through
- Bringing people together
- Timing and community

# Themes: Personal Growth



- Always seeking
- Personal growth changes the way they work – “simplify, simplify, simplify”
- Perturbations normal
- Reflective
- Letting go
- Spirit involved

# Meta-themes



- Separate questions – integrated answers
- Work in the commons not for self-interest
- Act as if they are critical to a better future – no passion for marginality



## Meta-themes Continued

- See change on two different levels – one that is traditional and one driven by organic ideas like energy, attraction, time, relationships
- Look around corners instead of walls – a pattern of innovation
- Focus on process and meaning not just content



# Questions Worth Asking

- What collective force can we generate in higher education that would make a better learning environment?
- If practice is ahead of theory, what are the implications for our preparation programs?
- How can we spread these ideas / process



# Questions Worth Asking

- How could these ideas or this process effect the content of our conferences?
- What is the role of our professional organizations in enhancing the practice and vision of student affairs as change agents in our institutions?



# One Last Thought

- “You can fly, but the cocoon has to go!” - Norma Gibbs

