Celebrating Today, Preparing for Tomorrow: An Unconventional Focus Group

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

~Malcolm X

People
All IDEI participants will be invited. These participants include nearly 100 skilled adult learning professionals from around the globe including individuals from organizations of all sizes, independent consultants, attendees on the lookout for their next exciting position, and GLP staff and partners.

Invitations will go out via email and the Ning community the Tuesday prior to the event. Additionally, Kate will distribute palm cards at the event and personally invite individuals, and Kris will mention the event and share the invites at the registration table.

The meeting will be facilitated by Kate, with listening and note-taking support by one or two other GLP team members.

Situation and Intentions

- The second evening of the IDEI is sure to be abuzz with energy and excitement and attendees will be looking for additional opportunities to meet and network with others. This will provide the perfect backdrop to connect and synthesize experiences for continued innovation in our collective work.
- The consulting branch has recently been focusing on learning more about the DE successes of our biggest fans (past and current clients and colleagues), developing outreach materials to connect with new audiences, and wondering about and anticipating future learning needs.
- As an organization, GLP will soon be developing a new three year strategic plan and we would like the needs of our future clients and community to be at the core of this model.
- We also want to ensure that the thriving community of DE practitioners have the tools and resources they need to continue to be agents of change in the world, as well as have as many opportunities as possible to connect with one another to learn, laugh, and develop lasting friendships.

Vision
After our time together participants will...
- feel more connected to—and as—a learning community
- have succinctly named and developed an even better handle on their upcoming learning needs
- be poised to approach future needs with excitement and creative new resources
After our time together GLP will...

- think in even more client-centric language for future marketing and outreach opportunities
- be poised to approach future needs with excitement and creative new resources
- have a better grasp on ways to partner with individuals and organizations whose expertise is a great complement to ours

**Time and Place**

5:45pm-7:00pm in Waterview D
(On the lobby level with a big door out to a patio and the harbor beyond that)

Will include snacks to nosh on throughout event including: chips and salsa; pita with 2 kinds hummus; edamame with gray salt, trail mix, energy bars, red velvet cupcakes, fruit juices, fizzy lizzy soda, regular soda, coffee, bottled water.

See about getting light house music piped in. If the evening is nice, have the doors open to the patio area to encourage use of indoor and outdoor space. Plan for open space in the middle, chairs and tables sprinkled throughout, and tables for materials along some of the walls.

**Achievements**

By the end of our time together you will have:

- Visualized and celebrated your future learning and change successes
- Predicted two pressing learning needs you’ll be faced with in the next three years
- Inspired ideas for future resources, support and services to help you and your organization continue to make a positive impact in the world.

(All while noshing on delicious snacks, participating in fun conversations, and meeting new people!)

**Welcome (5 min)**

Thank them for attendance and quickly introduce myself. Share fun and informal nature of event and point out where materials can be found around the room (i.e., pens, markers, index cards, flip charts, post-it notes, and food. Let them know that they can feel free to convene anywhere in the space and snack throughout. Standing if they want to/sitting if they want to. Share objectives on wall, along with a brief description of the situation and vision.

Acknowledge that some work for large organizations, some have solo consulting organizations, and some may be drawing from past experiences; we’ve framed the questions with all these situations in mind.

**Warm-Up (10 min)**

Think of all the great work you do related to learning and change and select a recent high point in your work. Once you’ve selected one, ask yourself:
What personal/organizational strengths helped to make this high point a reality (i.e., what were you and your organization doing really right that helped that event to occur)? Take a moment to capture these strengths on one side of an index card (which we will collect at the end of this session), and then turn to a partner and share.

**Envisioning the Future (10 min)**
10 mins
Guided visualization (script at end of document.).

Take a moment to mentally file away what had heart and meaning for you from this visualization. On the back of your index card, capture what you are proud of and excited about from this preferred image of your future (on flip chart):

- What future accomplishments are you most proud of and excited about in next three years as they relate to learning and change?

**Celebrating and Planning for Success (20 mins)**
10 mins
In groups of four, take a few minutes each for everyone to introduce themselves and share and celebrate your future successes.

10 mins
Keeping in mind your collective future accomplishments, take 10 minutes to discuss the following question (on flip chart):

- What are two of the most pressing learning needs your group has in order to make your preferred futures a reality?

Capture each of these needs on an index card and post/cluster on the sticky wall based on any connections/overlaps you might see.

Facilitators: read off the cluster/category names to large group. As I do so, have co-facilitators create one flip chart for each and spread around the room.

**Ideas for Support (30 mins)**
25 mins
Invite people to gather at the flip chart/butcher paper that is of most interest to them. In these groups, brainstorm and capture your thoughts to the following question:

- What resources, supports and new services would be most useful in terms of helping you and your organization meet these needs in the coming three years?
- What are the roles you can foresee GLP, Dialogue Education, and our community of practitioners having here?

(*If time, a quick popcorn out from each group on one resource they are most excited about.*)

5 mins
Turn to a partner and share (on flip chart):

- What is one step you can take within the next two weeks towards realizing your vision of the future?

Thank them for their time and let them know that the responses will be shared and accessible by all in Ning. Invite them to do a gallery walk and stay as long as they wish to chat and eat.
Appendix A: Visualization Script

Find a nice comfortable position wherever and however in the room that you are comfortable. Feel free to let your eyes close. Allow yourself to take some gentle, deep breaths in and out. With each inhale, breathe in creativity and vitality. With each exhale, let go of any tension or worry. Again, breathe in deeply. Good. And breathe out completely.

As you connect with your breath, start to notice what sensations you feel in your body. You might become aware of your belly rising and falling with each breath. Just relax your entire body, allowing yourself to be fully supported by the ground or seat beneath you. You might start to feel a tingling sensation in your fingers and toes. Allow that tingling sensation to begin radiating throughout your entire body, through every muscle, as it melts away any tension or worry. Let the tingling sensation radiate up your torso and back, up your neck and up through the crown of your head. Let it run down your shoulders and arms, and out the tips of your fingers, allowing you to relax even more. Then let the tingling sensation radiate down through your legs and feet, to the tips of your toes. As you let these soothing sensations radiate through each and every cell of your body, you become more and more peaceful and calm.

Now that you feel completely relaxed, take a moment to do a mental scan of all your wishes and desires for your learning and change work. What are the current strategic plans, goals and objectives, questions, or dreams for that future? (30 second pause.)

Now remember who you and your organization are. Where are you wanting to see the most powerful change? Allow yourself to name and admire the strengths you and your organization bring to your work, appreciating how these strengths have already helped to make a positive difference in your work and in the world. (30 second pause.)

To start this journey, allow yourself to imagine that it is three years from today. This is your opportunity to experience the success and abundance of your work related to learning and change in the future.

You are awakening from a deep, restful nap and it is the year 2016. You are lying on your back in thick grass on the top of a high hill. As you awaken, you see the blue sky. You feel the beams of sunlight on your skin. You hear the sounds of birds chirping and the wind softly rustling through the tree leaves. As you sit up and notice the valley spread out below you, you realize that all of your 2013 plans for learning and change were wildly successful.

You’ve built on your strengths and achieved your dreams. What achievements and milestones are being celebrated? What is new or different in your work? What do you notice about what your coworkers, partners, colleagues, learners or clients are doing? How have you grown, expanded, or evolved personally and as an organization? What is the energy like?

Really allow yourself to take in the full experience of living and breathing your learning and change work in the future. Know that it is a reflection of who you are, a representation of your values, voice, and vision.
Feel free to take another look around this special place three years into the future. What else do you notice? Just let your senses drink in the sights, sounds, and smells of this place. What special details do you want to make sure you remember?

Before you get ready to come back to the present time, do what you need to in order to say good-bye to this wonderful future, and know that you can come back and visit anytime you wish.

In a few moments, we'll count back from three to one. At the count of one, you will be awake and renewed, knowing you can remember everything you need to of your future vision.

Three. Coming back now. Becoming more awake and alive. Two. Wiggling your fingers and toes, moving your body and feeling the temperature of your skin. And one. Eyes open, feeling totally awake and renewed.
Appendix B: Focus Group Notes

What personal/organizational strengths helped to make this high point a reality?

- Recently conducted online evaluation of third quarter webinars for project managers. Very positive results. Personal strengths: focus, creativity. Organizational strengths: management support.
- Confidence, opportunity, innovation, depth and evolution. Two recent GLP Foundations courses I co-taught (proven approach and solid content, diverse sectors/participants.)
- Freedom and responsibility with boundaries (protocol) and time bound (deadline).
- When people find new energy: listening for it!
- New energy, easily letting go, modeling healthy, sustainable wholeness, balanced, joyful, inclusive. Affirming others who carry the dream.
- Organizational development, project development and management. Creativity.
- Leadership experience/competent experienced staff.
- Personal: ability to combine attention to detail/project management with creativity. Organizational: a dedication to the arts. And the everyday importance of the arts in our lives.
- A workshop I organized with my director and Jeanette for my team. Personal strengths: determination, creativity, belief, curiosity, desire to improve and enhance. Organizational strengths: openness, trust, commitment to learning, trying something new.
- Facilitating 15th year of “Sometimes and Aspiring Supervisor Series”. (8 week class for people who supervise students or lead often.)
- Developed skills/practice with 4As, LNRA and open questions. Facilitated LYS RS for third time this year. Participant feedback indicated DE solid—safety, engagement, immediacy, relevance and transfer.

What future accomplishments are you most proud of and excited about in the next three years as they relate to learning and change?

- A vibrant virtual project manager community supported by multiple electronic tools, facilitating robust sharing and support.
- Installed an even more reliable, and high performance responsive engine in the GLP vehicle.
- Adequate demand for consulting services (my own/GLP’s) via word of mouth, GLP’s reputation and promotions.
- Organizationally: We embraced engaging, respectful marketing that gets used by staff and CCT members successfully to get the right amount of work to sustain GLP company staffing, CCT, and CDETs to do in high quality, successful work around the world. Personally: I have a sustainable amount of work to engage in fabulous change with variety of clients.
- That I have written a grant proposal accepted by Lilly Endowments that is a collaborative project to engage mainline churches around the question, “next church” that is moving these denominations more carefully into the future.
- One hour with no prep, 100 students in the gym. Using the basics of DE because they’re a part of our living—daily. Team affirms one another—takes on the task.
Conversations on transformation. A radio program designed to surface and celebrate initiatives in community transformation. Advocate and mobilize people towards significant community engagements. Inspire and instruct people about community transformation.

Contributed to hospice workers/volunteers performing at highest level, feeling fulfilled by their efforts. Contributed to growth in DE by equipping knowledge/skill in dialogue educators.

Feeling/behavior that demonstrates ownership of the work throughout questions, laughter, trust, innovation, rich in resources, pervasive cooperation and excellence.

A fully actualized open studio arts facility that is student-centered and student run, celebrated as one of the great additions to the memorial union by the campus. Recognition of the “every day work of art in our lives” by the organization.

That I am doing a job I feel confident in, that really uses my gifts and in which I am autonomous but connected.

Dialogue in learning is happening everywhere.

Proactive, not reactive. Don’t only do what’s asking for or go where invited. Do what we’re driven to do!

Seeing the learning and transfer and impact of DE in my graduate students that I teach. My department’s encouragement and support to use DE in the classroom.

Creating creative and comfortable office space at home. Doing work I have passion around and have gifts for and get energy from. Still learning! DE learning community.

Name evaluation indicators. Freedom from fear of failure. Learn about web design. Market myself as a consultant. Market model that is congruent.

Develop sense of belonging to each other in training group to larger organization. Connecting ideas to practice and back. Energy of aha! Moments—positive, fun, helpful.

What are two of the most pressing learning needs your group has in order to make your preferred futures a reality?

- How to break down the steps to the final goal
- More generative nodes in the network—self-organizing learning communities and innovative partnerships within GLP (geographical, topical, etc.)
- DE community support
- Marketing: communicating DE relevance—convincing them it matters.
- Create a virtual DE/online community.
- Content development for DE in competencies.
- Determining competencies to train for
- Virtual DE
- A programmer to design an online DE platform
- How to be a consultant
- Learn/teach how to write evaluation indicators so that they know what to look for
- Diffusion of innovation
Communicating the relevance and value of DE beyond our network

- Does GLP have self-imposed/limiting identity (i.e., educational design)... “Education” as a term?
- Promotion of GLP values: one term does not fit all.
- Adaptable packages of relevance based on the “who”.
- Marketable “why”: how do we communicate vision?
- Quality assurance.
- Beyond the narrow scope.

DE applied to technological channels (smart phones, webinars)

- Need: to utilize tech strategies for effective and sustainable learning (not just covering content)
- Tech experts who can help us integrate discussion platforms into webinars.
- Take a look at the differences among the different technologies.
- Gather the best thinking on how to integrate best practices of DE with the advantages of technology.
- Define how/what component of different technologies can enhance learning.

Evaluation Indicators

Resources…..Supports........New Services

- Book
- Course (evaluation)
- LNRA more in depth and iterative. Connect with: ABOs, organization direction and big picture, competencies, evaluation plan.
- Examples of data collection and reports.
- Ways to learn more about what is already happening in this area.
• Goald -> realities -> options -> realistic timeframe -> do it and build on it (Have plan a, b and c to account for the unexpected).
• Adding accountability (How do people know they know?)

Marketing

• Ready to go materials
• Clear/concise messaging (adaptable)
• What to ask about now -> to how about. This is why it is an opportunity.
• Assets review. Example of what DE would look like (be specific)
• GLP to convene think tank group face to face and/or virtually
• Adaptable brand beyond “education” sectors
• Articulate a DE-based meaningful strategy of marketing that models it.
• How to communicate relevance
• Marketing Dialogue Education: messaging, benefits, what’s in it for me (our organization, the client), tools: difference this will make.
• DE more visible: communication, marketing, accessible, resources: audio/visual etc.

More nodes in the network

• From public courses to learning communities via/with/for GLP community Branch (Mary H and Joan D)
• Peter to brainstorm what innovative learning partnerships might look like. Think CORE, microfinance, restorative justice, client-based partnership.
Appendix C: Invitation

You’re invited!

CELEBRATING TODAY, PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

Friday, October 25th
5:45pm-7:00pm in Waterview D

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."
-Malcolm X

#LearningAndChange is not your ordinary institute, and this is not your typical focus group!

Please join GLP’s Consulting Branch before dinner to:

- Visualize and celebrate your future learning and change successes
- Predict two pressing learning needs you’ll be faced with in the next three years
- Inspire ideas for future resources and support to benefit your work

All while noshing on delicious snacks, participating in fun conversations, and meeting new people!

RSVP appreciated but not required. Sign up at the registration table or at kris@globallearningpartners.com

Facilitated by Kate Larose, GLP Consulting Branch Director