

*Jenna Grogan*  
*The Appreciative*  
*Tutor*

**M**aximizing 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.

**Overview of Foundational Theories**

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.

**The 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
3. Breaking the Task into Parts
4. Identifying Thought Processes which Underlie Task
5. Setting the Agenda for the Session
6. Addressing the Task
7. Tutee Summarizing Content
8. Tutee Summarizing Underlying Process
9. Confirming
10. What's Next?
11. Arranging and Planning the Next Session
12. Closing and Good-bye

Detailed descriptions of each step will be discussed in context with Appreciative Advising (MacDonald, 2000).

### **Appreciative Advising**

Appreciative Advising reflects the influence of multiple theoretical approaches, including positive psychology, choice theory, reality therapy, and Appreciative Inquiry (Bloom et al., 2008). In general, these models focus on individual strengths (rather than weaknesses). Essentially, Appreciative Advising encourages advisors to adopt an "appreciative mindset" (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 32). In order to maintain an appreciative mindset, advisors must recognize the potential of every student and emphasize a person's unique strengths. Advisors that adopt an appreciative mindset realize they are fortunate to have the opportunity to positively influence students and society and recognize the need for continuous professional development to improve their techniques. Also, advisors with an appreciative mindset accept a certain power of influence and utilize that power appropriately. It follows from this professional outlook that advisors would display continued interest in students' lives and demonstrate cultural competency (Bloom et al., 2008).

Similar to the Tutoring Cycle, Appreciative Advising does not prescribe a "lock-step process for working with students" (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 27). Since appreciative advisors recognize unique differences among their students, a rigid process cannot accommodate the needs of advisees. Bloom et al. (2008) also utilizes a cyclical approach for Appreciative Advising, consisting of six phases:

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.

### **The Appreciative Tutoring Cycle**

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 influences Appreciative Advising, has had the greatest impact on the Appreciative Tutoring Cycle. As we know from Vygotsky, social interaction, culture, mutual respect and collaboration represent necessary components in the process of creating knowledge (Vygotsky, as cited in Bloom et al., 2008). The effectiveness of peer tutoring, for example, stems from very collaborative principles. Consider the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding—two significant concepts of social constructivism which are embodied in the peer tutoring model. The ZPD illustrates “the gap between a person's actual development level and his/her potential level of development” (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 17). By engaging in collaborative learning and social interaction, students develop a relationship with their tutors, improve their academic skills, and achieve greater success in the subject area than they would have studying independently. During this process, the ZPD narrows, and the student moves closer to developing his or her full potential. Similarly, scaffolding plays a critical role in the relationship between tutor and student. During the first session, a tutor must provide the student with high levels of support and structure. However, as students improve their abilities and develop self-confidence, the tutor skillfully begins to remove the scaffolding. For tutors, the ultimate goal is to foster a sense of independence in students, thereby eventually eliminating the need for scaffolding (Bloom et al., 2008).

Rather than address issues related to advising, the Tutoring Cycle provides a framework for students to learn academic content and develop independent learning strategies. Nevertheless, components of Appreciative Advising are inherent in the Tutoring Cycle. In order to enhance

the appreciative aspects of tutoring, a new framework is necessary. The proposed Appreciative Tutoring Cycle blends the critical components of Appreciative Advising with the academic-specific techniques of the Tutoring Cycle. Designed cyclically, this new framework consists of six phases:

1. Welcome
2. Identify
3. Prioritize
4. Apply
5. Confirm
6. Foster Independence

Each phase will be discussed in greater detail, acknowledging the influence of Appreciative Advising and the Tutoring Cycle (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000). Essentially, when tutors implement this new framework, they will become “appreciative tutors.”

### **Welcome Phase**

The *Welcome* phase strongly parallels Step 1 of the Tutoring Cycle (Greeting and Climate Setting), as well as the first phase of Appreciative Advising (Disarm). Specifically, the *Welcome* phase merges the principles of Step 1 and the first phase of Appreciative Advising. According to MacDonald (2000), the “overall purpose of Step 1 of the Tutoring Cycle is to set up the session for success” (p. 25). Ultimately, a positive and comfortable learning environment will encourage student success. Step 1 of the Tutoring Cycle describes multiple approaches to developing the appropriate atmosphere, and the Disarm phase of Appreciative Advising further elaborates upon these techniques.

First, tutors must warmly greet the students as they enter the session (MacDonald, 2000). Specifically, Appreciative Advising encourages a “full frontal stance with [a] smile” (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 36). Tutors should address the students by first name and shake their hands (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000). Second, tutors must carefully consider the tutoring environment. Although the arrangement of furniture, as well as the décor of the assigned room, may be outside of the tutor’s control, tutors can eliminate unfriendly distractions from the room, such as personal homework assignments and cell phones, to create a more comfortable atmosphere. Additionally, tutors must be cognizant of their body language and position in the room during group tutoring. For example, the tutor should face the students as much as possible, allowing them to see and hear the tutor’s verbal and nonverbal cues. During individualized tutoring, tutors should sit next to the student with the work in front of the student or between the pair (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000).

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 *Welcome* phase, tutors work to eliminate potential emotional barriers to a successful session by utilizing the approaches described above. Otherwise, the tutoring session may become an uphill journey, with the tutor trying to combat feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Tutors cannot focus on the primary goal of tutoring—providing students with the necessary skills and strategies to independently learn the material—if they are struggling with negative attitudes.

### **Identify Phase**

By incorporating key components, the *Identify* phase corresponds to Steps 2, 3, and 4 of the Tutoring Cycle (Identifying the Task, Breaking the Task into Parts, and Identifying Thought Processes which Underlie Task), as well as the second phase of Appreciative Advising (Discover). During the Tutoring Cycle, tutors must determine the objective of each session. Some students immediately identify a topic for discussion while others may appear confused and seek explicit guidance for the session (MacDonald, 2000). The Discover phase provides important tools for facilitating this process. Tutors should ask positive, open-ended questions to gather information about the students (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000). Information gathered regarding a student's strengths, frustrations, and questions can be used to guide the tutoring session. Additionally, tutors must demonstrate appropriate “attending behavior and active listening” skills (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 46). For example, tutors can ask follow-up questions regarding student concerns, which clarify the session's purpose. Active listening encourages tutors to restate (or paraphrase) a student's confusion. The student will then affirm or negate the tutor's summary. As a result, the tutor can adjust the session's goals based on student needs (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000).

Similar to the Discover phase of Appreciative Advising, the *Identify* phase also emphasizes the importance of recognizing a student's passions and strengths (Bloom et al., 2008). Tutors do something similar when they provide positive feedback to a student who demonstrates knowledge of a particular topic (MacDonald, 2000). Furthermore, tutors strive to develop their students' strengths. They cannot promote student growth by focusing only on right and/or wrong answers; tutors must guide students to an understanding of the thought processes associated with problems. Having once discovered a student's strengths and weaknesses, a tutor can model strategies, which will encourage student independence in the future and foster independent learning (MacDonald, 2000).

### **Prioritize Phase**

In the *Prioritize* 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).

### **Apply Phase**

The *Apply* 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 *Apply* 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 *Apply* 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 (*insert content-specific subject*)?” 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 *Identify* 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).

### **Confirm Phase**

By merging significant components of each model, the *Confirm* 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 session on a positive note (MacDonald, 2000). In the Deliver phase, advisors "energize students to be their best" and "engender academic hope" (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 87-88).

Based on Appreciative Advising principles, a tutor must motivate students to demonstrate hard work and dedication (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000). By reinforcing their accomplishments during the session, tutors will instill confidence in their students. Additionally, tutors should alert students to potential barriers in the academic material, such as difficult concepts or problems. For instance, the tutor may demonstrate a similar problem that is slightly more difficult. However, the tutor can assist the students in utilizing strategic approaches, including the strategies reviewed in the session. Once the problem is solved, the students recognize that they are well-equipped to overcome any obstacle. Tutors can also praise students for utilizing tutoring services, which represents a strategic attempt to overcome academic barriers. Lastly, tutors should conclude the session warmly, thanking students for attending tutoring and welcoming them to future sessions (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000).

### **Foster Independence Phase**

The last phase, *Foster Independence*, encompasses critical components of Step 11 in the Tutoring Cycle (Arranging and Planning the Next Session) and the sixth phase of Appreciative Advising (Don't Settle). During Step 11 of the Tutoring Cycle, tutors encourage students to attend future tutoring sessions (MacDonald, 2000). Fortunately, the

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, the student feels confident in his or her academic abilities and attempts to complete the material alone. The tutor has succeeded in fostering a sense of independence.

### **Conclusion**

Although MacDonald's Tutoring Cycle (2000) and Appreciate Advising (2008) were developed for different purposes, each is effective in its own way. The Tutoring Cycle provides a structure for tutors by emphasizing the mastery of academic content and scaffolding student development by balancing challenging and probing questions with support. Appreciate Advising encourages advisors to maintain an appreciative mindset that recognizes a person's strengths and empowers the students (Bloom et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2000). Despite these differences, specific principles of Appreciative Advising are inherent to the process of facilitating academic success. By blending the two approaches, a more powerful framework emerges—the proposed Appreciative Tutoring Cycle.

By emphasizing the appreciative mindset, tutors will truly recognize (and appreciate) the strengths of their students. Individuals learn differently because of their unique strengths. Consequently, a tutor must accentuate a student's strengths as "tools" for successful learning. As mentioned previously, struggling students experience feelings of frustration and defeat. Nevertheless, when tutors maintain an appreciative mindset, students can feel empowered by their strengths and capable of mastering course content. Essentially, the specialized framework produces "Appreciative Tutors"—individuals who provide strategies for academic success and subsequently, maximize the potential of struggling students.

## References

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**Jenna Grogan** attended the University of Florida and received a B.A. degree in Elementary Education. She attended the University of South Carolina and received a M.Ed. in Higher Education and Student Affairs. Jenna served as the Graduate Assistant for the Student Success Center Tutoring Program. She recruited, trained, and supervised the tutors. Currently, Jenna works as an Academic Advisor for Marymount Manhattan College in New York City, facilitating a program designed for undeclared freshmen. Jenna has presented on the topic of Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Tutoring.