


Communicating Our Work Through Evidence-Based Storytelling

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National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent




NILOA

NILOA's mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

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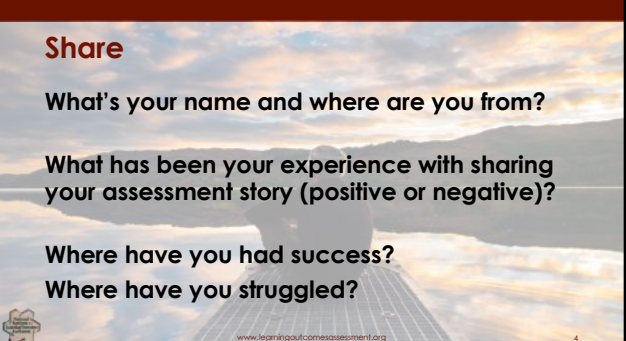
Share

What's your name and where are you from?


What has been your experience with sharing your assessment story (positive or negative)?

Where have you had success?

Where have you struggled?



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Current Narratives around Assessment...

News | Assessment And Accountability

Harsh Take on Assessment ... From Assessment Pros

At accrediting conference, panels acknowledge that effort to measure learning outcomes has been a "hot mess" and that it's time for a better approach.

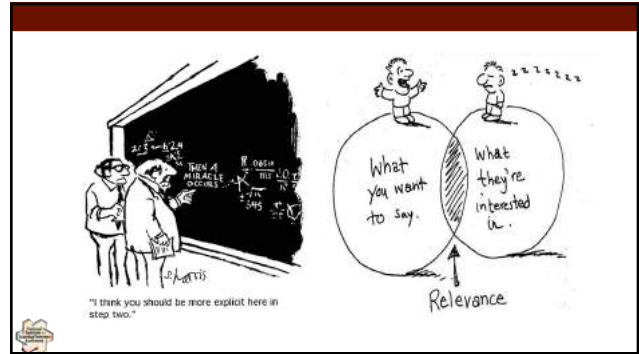
By [Shirley Lockman](#) | April 11, 2015

COLLEGE PAGES

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

The Misguided Drive to Measure 'Learning Outcomes'

Molly Worthen FEB. 23, 2014



Communication Finding

Effectively communicating information about student learning remains a target of opportunity for assessment work.

Institutions provide limited publicly-available information on assessment activities on their websites.

Yet, what was more important to provosts was not what to share, but how to share information.




Audience Interpretation Gap

"We are not great as an industry at explaining what we do, how our institutions run, and the great value we provide to students and communities.


I think the biggest gap is in outsiders understanding student learning. We can provide all the assessment results or data we like, but if others cannot interpret them accurately there is no benefit to transparency." ~Provost

Our approach has been...



Making all information available in the name of "transparency" or closing doors and sharing nothing



Learning Outcome Assessment Communication Continuum



Compliance posting of outcomes & select (favorable) results	More tailored posting of outcomes, by program/major experience & results for different audiences	Nuanced, tailored framework for communicating outcomes, improvements, in comprehensive, student-focused, culturally responsive way
Oversharing of easy to measure outcomes & results, just to do something	More complete picture of all the places learning occurs, posting outcomes in student affairs/services & results for different audiences	

Kinzie, 2019
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Thorngate's Commensurate Complexity Postulate

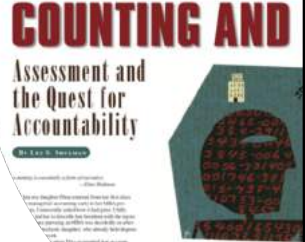



Accounting or Counting

In a piece in *Change*, Lee Shulman (2007) posits that accounting is a form of narrative, and argues that counting without narrative is meaningless.

The role of an institution is to give an account on the contribution to the education of its students.

But, we rarely provide info to make a compelling narrative – we tell data and process stories



Let's start here...

"Educational assessment is at heart an exercise in evidentiary reasoning. From a handful of things that students say, do, or make, we want to draw inferences about what they know, can do, or have accomplished more broadly." (Mislevy & Riconscente, 2005, p. iv).

Put more simply it's a way to justify stated beliefs about students and their learning as well as the role of our institutions and programs in getting them there.



Causal Statements

We want to make causal claims about our impact on students and their learning...but we can't



Evidence-Based Storytelling



Evidence of student learning is used in **support of claims or arguments** about **improvement and accountability** told through stories to **persuade a specific audience**.

Remember: There is a user or consumer of the information with whom we are trying to communicate.



What Goes into an Account?

A good story is easy to read, introduces a problem, and shares how the problem was solved, highlighting the role of the institution in addressing the problem.

We need context and a story, because evidence gives stories substance, but stories give evidence meaning.

Our stories can be our context, our histories, our missions, our organizational saga, it is how we see the world and **why we do what we do**.



Why Storytelling?

Shadiw (2013) presents a process to see stories “as something other than sentimental anecdotes with thin veiled lessons” but instead as a mechanism by which we may reflect on our practices and teaching (p. viii).


Stories allow us to go “*assumption hunting*” (Brookfield, 1995)

Our stories tell others about our assumptions about the roles of students, faculty and content, and they “*help inform - even alter - the thinking of others*” (Shadiw, 2013, p. 16) we seek to “*make believers out of our readers*” (p. 17).

So as you write your story – ask yourself:

- What does the **audience** want to know about x?
- What argument do **you** want to make about x?
- What type of **evidence** would be necessary to make the **argument**?

Evidence-Based Storytelling Toolkit



Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

Audience: For whom is this narrative written (internal/external audience)? What counts as evidence for the different audiences of the story? In what type(s) of story are the audiences interested? What are your goal(s) for this story, targeted to this audience?

1. Primary audience
2. Secondary audience(s)

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Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

2. What kind of story are you telling? (i.e., compliance, improvement, loss, struggle, quest, tragedy, fantasy, etc.) What context is needed for readers to understand the story? What is the setting?

The language you choose is important with the type of story you are telling. What is the tone? How familiar is your audience with the back story? Is the language appropriate for the target audience(s)?



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21

Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

3. Who are the character(s) in your story? (Is there a protagonist in your story—someone who is driving the action and/or someone with whom your audience is likely to identify? What are the motivations of the characters?)

Note: Characterization is the information that the author gives the reader about the characters themselves. What context do readers need to understand your characters? Are there any preconceived notions about the characters that need to be addressed early in the narrative?



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22

Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

4. What is the plot? (The plot is the causal sequence of events and includes setting and conflict.)

- **Exposition** is the information needed to understand a story.
- **Complication** is the catalyst that begins the major conflict.
- **Climax** is the turning point in the story that occurs when characters try to resolve the complication.
- **Resolution** is the set of events that bring the story to a close. However, not all stories have a resolution – it could be a cliff hanger.



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Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

5. What evidence do you have to assert your claims? (i.e., data sources, indirect/direct measures of student learning, etc.).

*Remember audience(s)—some audiences are not interested in the methodology but need information in order to trust the data source in part of a larger argument being made—depending on focus, different amounts and types of information/evidence are needed.



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24

Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

6. Based on the story you crafted, what is the **best medium** through which to share it? Video, written narrative, shorter visual image pieces, a combination, others? How will you engage in usability testing to determine communication fit with your target audiences?



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25

Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

7. If you are using visuals in your narrative – are they appropriate? Do they **support** the story you are trying to share or **detract** from them? Did you make meaning of them for the reader, or are you presenting the visuals and expecting your reader or listener to make sense of them (and is there enough presented visually to enable this approach)?



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26


Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

8. How will you make your target audience(s) aware of the story? Is it discoverable...and by whom?



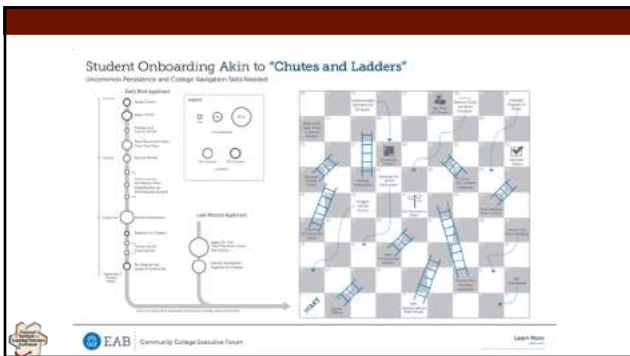
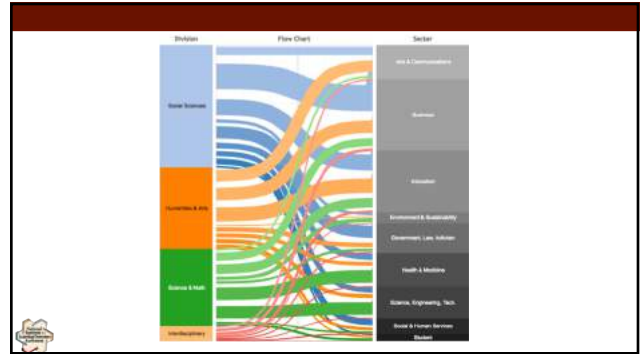
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27




COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

- What information is currently shared about your program's organizational narrative?
- Is your story public? Discoverable? By whom?
- Who updates it?
- What is the digital narrative your students made about you?



If the visual does not contribute to or add to the narrative – then take it out!

Just because we have the data or a cool visual doesn't mean it has to end up in the report.



More Resources than you want or need...



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NILOA Transparency Framework



North Carolina State University



North Carolina Central University

University of Kentucky



Winston-Salem State University

Broward College

University of North Carolina Greensboro

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University of North Carolina Wilmington

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Featured Website

Lewis University:

- History of Assessment Infographic
- Assessment Plan
- Institutional Assessment Continuous Improvement Rubric
- Individual Consultations

Categories: Creativity and Communication

Anchored in the catholic tradition that affirms faith and builds character...

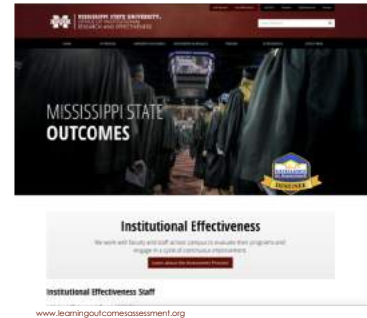
In all our programs, MCU ensures that students advance their **communication, analysis and decision-making skills**, while broadening their **appreciation of perspectives** and their **experience**. These Institutional Learning Outcomes flow from our commitment to Academic Excellence, Real World Learning and Character Formation.

www.marymountcalifornia.edu/student-achievement/achievement-center/intro.htm

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Mississippi
State
University



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University



Austin
Community
College



Excellence in Assessment



EXCELLENCE in Assessment EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT
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NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY UNC CHARLOTTE

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2017 Designees

Southern Connecticut State University Rio Salado College JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

MIDDLESEX Community College **BGSU**
Bowling Green State University


EXCELLENCE in Assessment EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT
2016 Designees

GANNON UNIVERSITY CAPELLA UNIVERSITY CCBC MOUNT ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY UMM AL-QADIRIYA UNIVERSITY

MILLS COLLEGE ROSE-HULMAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY IUPUI

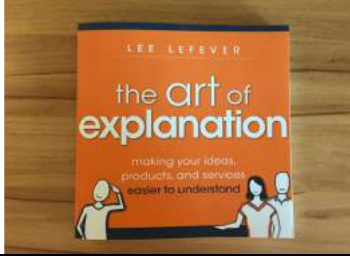
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-DANE COUNTY

Data Visualizations



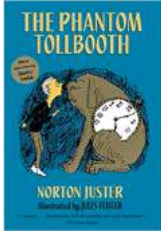
The slide features three book covers. The first is 'Presenting Data Effectively' by Stephanie D. H. Evergreen, showing a central chart with arrows pointing outwards. The second is the 'SECOND EDITION' of 'PRESENTING DATA EFFECTIVELY' by Stephanie D. H. Evergreen, with a green and white cover. The third is 'Effective Data Visualization: The Handbook for Everyone' by Stephanie D. H. Evergreen, featuring a blue cover with various data visualization icons.

Explanation



The slide shows the cover of 'the art of explanation' by Lee Lefever. The cover is orange and features the subtitle 'making your ideas, products and services easier to understand' along with illustrations of people.

Methods Conversations



The slide displays the cover of 'THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH' by Norton Juster. The cover is blue and features a whimsical illustration of a man and a woman in a landscape.

Argumentation and Story






The slide features three book covers. The first is 'The Uses of Argument' by Stephen E. Toulmin, an updated edition with a blue cover. The second is 'EVIDENCE, ARGUMENT, & PERSUASION IN THE POLICY PROCESS' by Giandomenico Majone, with a blue cover. The third is 'WIRED FOR STORY' by Lisa Cron, with a black and white cover featuring a lightbulb.

Questions


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57