

Using Evidence-Based Storytelling to Better Tell Your Institutional Assessment Story

NATASHA JANKOWSKI, PHD

GIANINA BAKER, PHD



National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

NILOA is a research and resource-development organization dedicated to documenting, advocating, and facilitating the systematic use of learning outcomes assessment to improve student learning.

Publications
Surveys and Case Studies
Focus Groups and Interviews
Assignment Design and Library
Equity and Assessment
Transparency Framework
Evidence-Based Storytelling
Mapping Learning
Degree Qualifications Profile
Toolkits

WWW.LEARNINGOUTCOMESASSESSMENT.ORG

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Publications](#) | [Our Work](#) | [Browse by:](#)

Question(s) at Hand

What question about assessment processes and practices brings you to the website today? In this section we have collected the most often queried topics and questions to help meet current needs. While the resources here are not exhaustive, they provide a starting point to begin answering your questions. We will continue to update this section based on need!

Top Questions We Receive:

- Equity and Assessment?
- Using Technology & Data in Assessment?
- How to Tell an Evidence-Based Story?
- General Education and Assessment?
- Engaging Faculty?

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Publications](#) | [Our Work](#) | [Browse by:](#)

Discover, Assess, Distribute.

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment makes learning outcomes visible and useful to the public.

Making the Move to Online Courses: Resources to Inform Teaching and Learning

The NILOA Team has completed and will continue to update a [resource list](#) to assist the field across multiple online courses.

New Resources

New Occasional Paper
Evidence-Based Storytelling in Assessment

In this highly anticipated occasional paper, Natasha Jankowski helps conceptualize what is meant by Evidence-Based Storytelling (EBS)—an approach used at NILOA to refine and encourage evidence-based stories in assessment. According to Jankowski, two purposes are served within this paper: “to examine what is meant by use of assessment results and to

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Publications](#) | [Our Work](#) | [Browse by:](#)

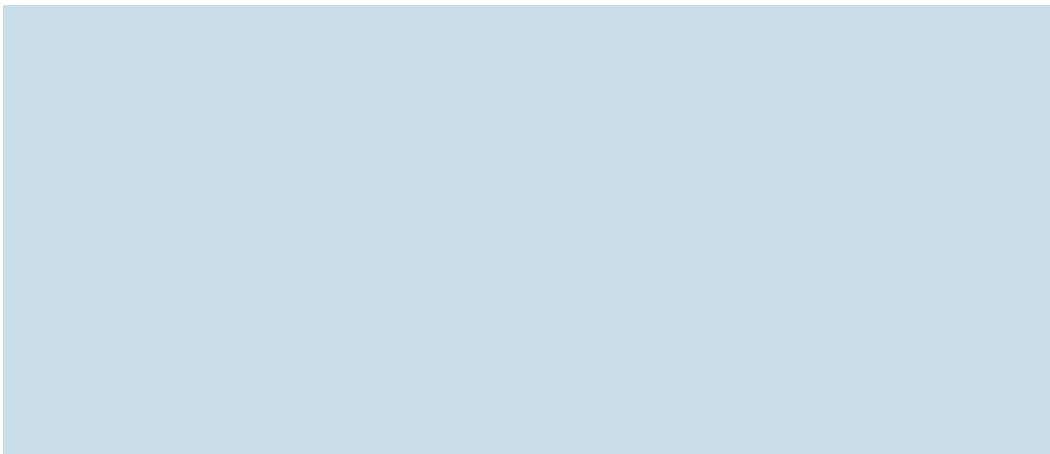
New to Assessment?

First time exploring the field of assessment? Fear not. We put together a collection of open-access resources introducing the basics of assessing student learning. We recommend starting here, and then exploring and supplementing these resources with materials that are relevant to your specific practice questions and audiences.

Overview, Assessment & Journals

Conversations around assessment, akin to higher education in general, can quickly become jargon-filled. Thus a good starting point involves an overview of key terms and acronyms.

www.LearningOutcomesAssessment.org



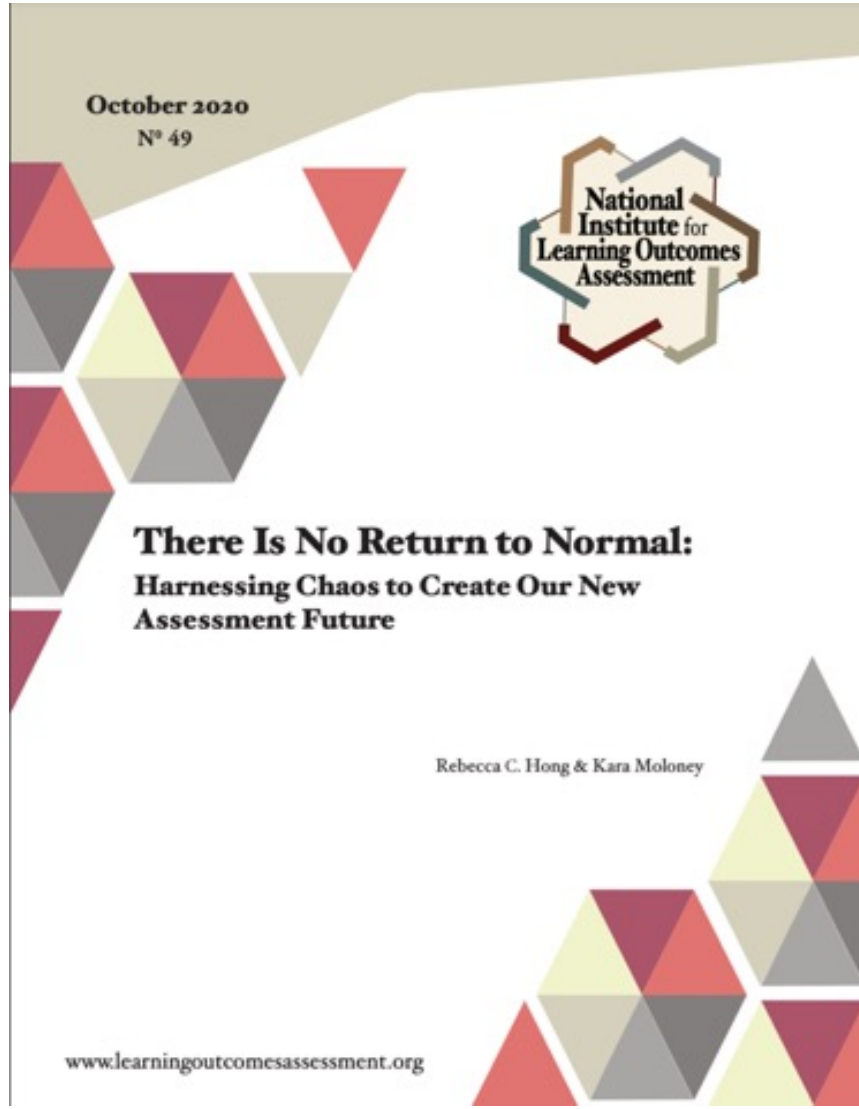
October 2020
Nº 49



**There Is No Return to Normal:
Harnessing Chaos to Create Our New
Assessment Future**

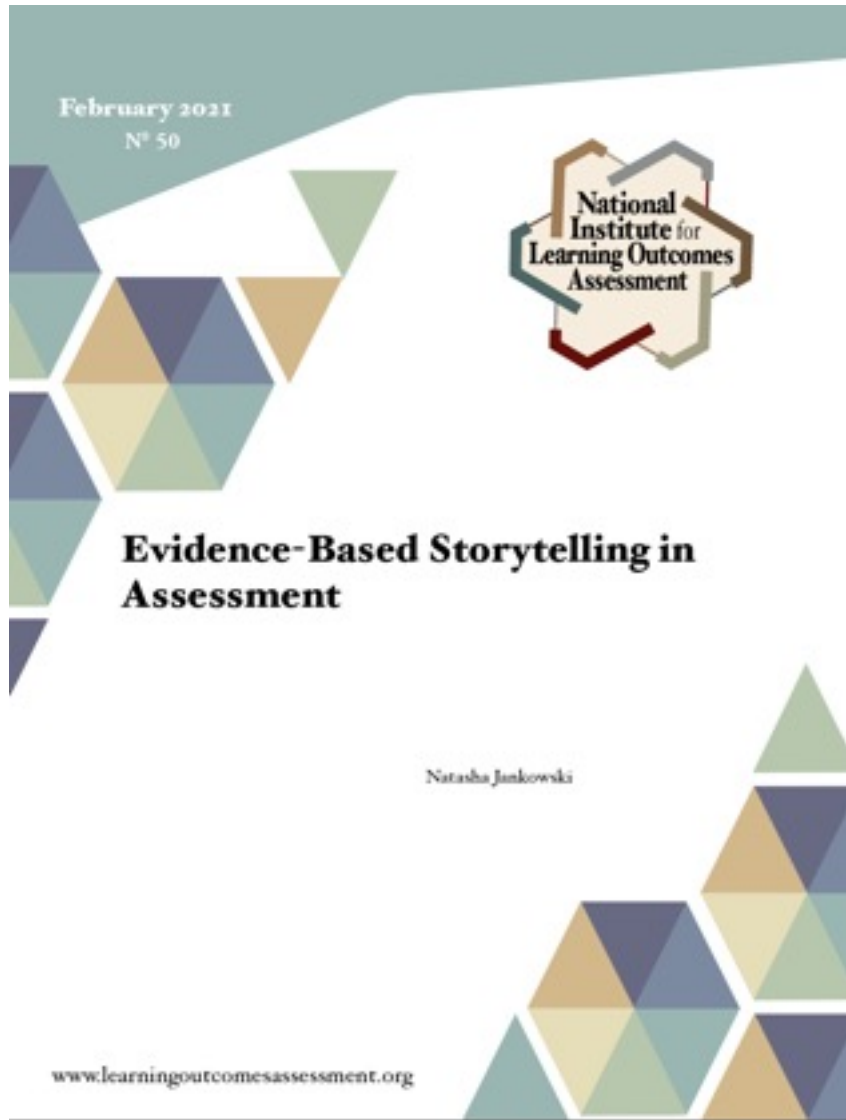
Rebecca C. Hong & Kara Moloney

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org



Telling Our Stories

- What did we do and *why* throughout the course of remote instruction and operation? Based on what evidence?
- What changes were made to learning processes, practices, and approaches? Why?
- What evidence of learning do we have? How trustworthy is it?
- Where do we feel strongly about student learning and where are we maybe a bit more concerned? Why?
- How are we considering which evidence is included or represented and which voices in the telling of our stories?



Making Sense of it All

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

Paper Highlights

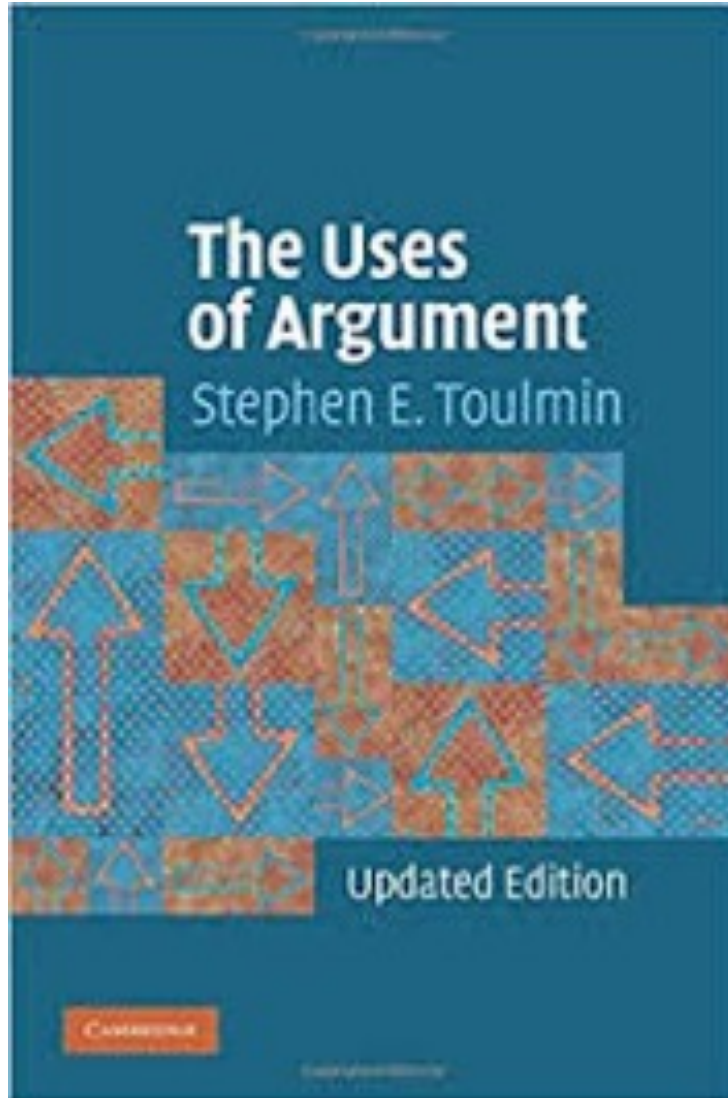
Use is a cognitive process of unpacking theories of change that are shared through evidence-based stories targeted to various audiences.

The act of making meaning of assessment results is a collaborative and social cognitive process that occurs through the telling of stories.

Storytelling complements abstract analysis, not as a replacement, but as a supplement. It is the combination of evidence and stories.

Evidence gives stories substance, but stories give evidence meaning.

Through telling stories assessment professionals provide a way to make sense of the educational experience and communicate that experience to others.



Ask:

What do you want to know about x ? What is the claim?

What type of **evidence** would be necessary to make that **argument**? What are the grounds for the claim?

What is the warrant that connects the grounds to the claim? (Warrant: The argument made about how the evidence supports the claim.)

February 2021
N° 50



Evidence-Based Storytelling in Assessment

Natasha Jankowski

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org

Making Sense of Data

- Unpacking assumptions and making choices on what to change
- Why are we doing what we are for these students - at this time? Why this and not something else?
- What does it say about how we think learning happens? Or what the role is of the institution and the students in advancing learning?

It is also about the Story

Clear argument linking evidence to claims, yes – but there still needs to be a story

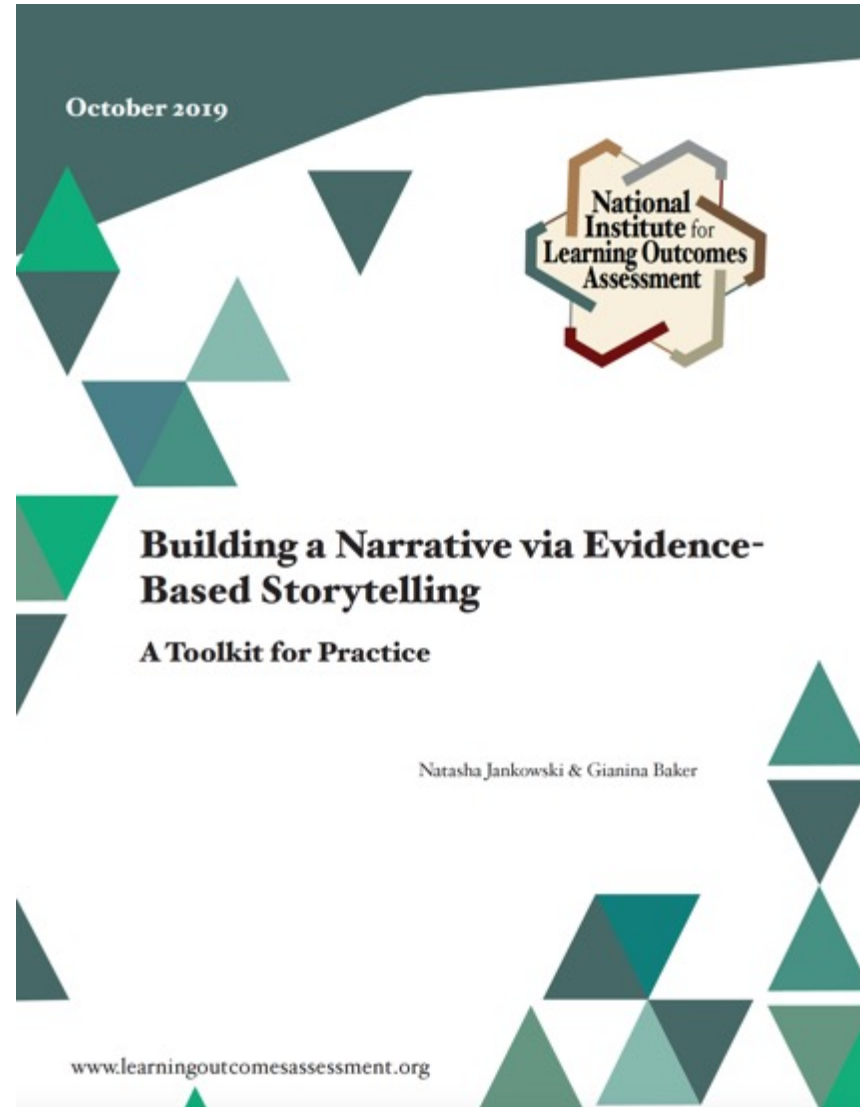
The story is not a data story, but a person, people, or institutional story

Storytelling provides a means to help others makes sense of, connect with, understand, and recenter from pandemic working and learning

Storytelling is about community building and sharing our collective values and lessons learned



- Evidence-Based Storytelling Development
- Tips for Report Writers
- EBST Handout
- Peer Review Process
- Feedback Sheet



STORY DEVELOPMENT

1. Audience

2. Argument

3. Evidence

4. Story and Language

5. Characters

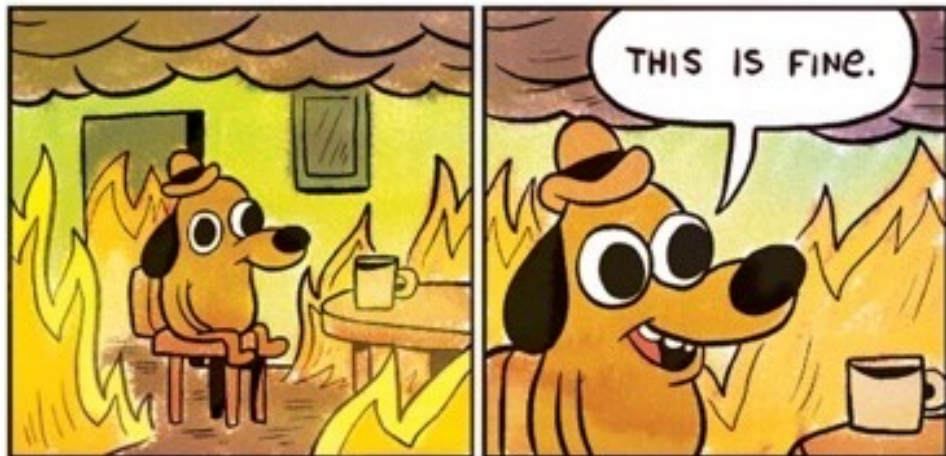
6. Plot

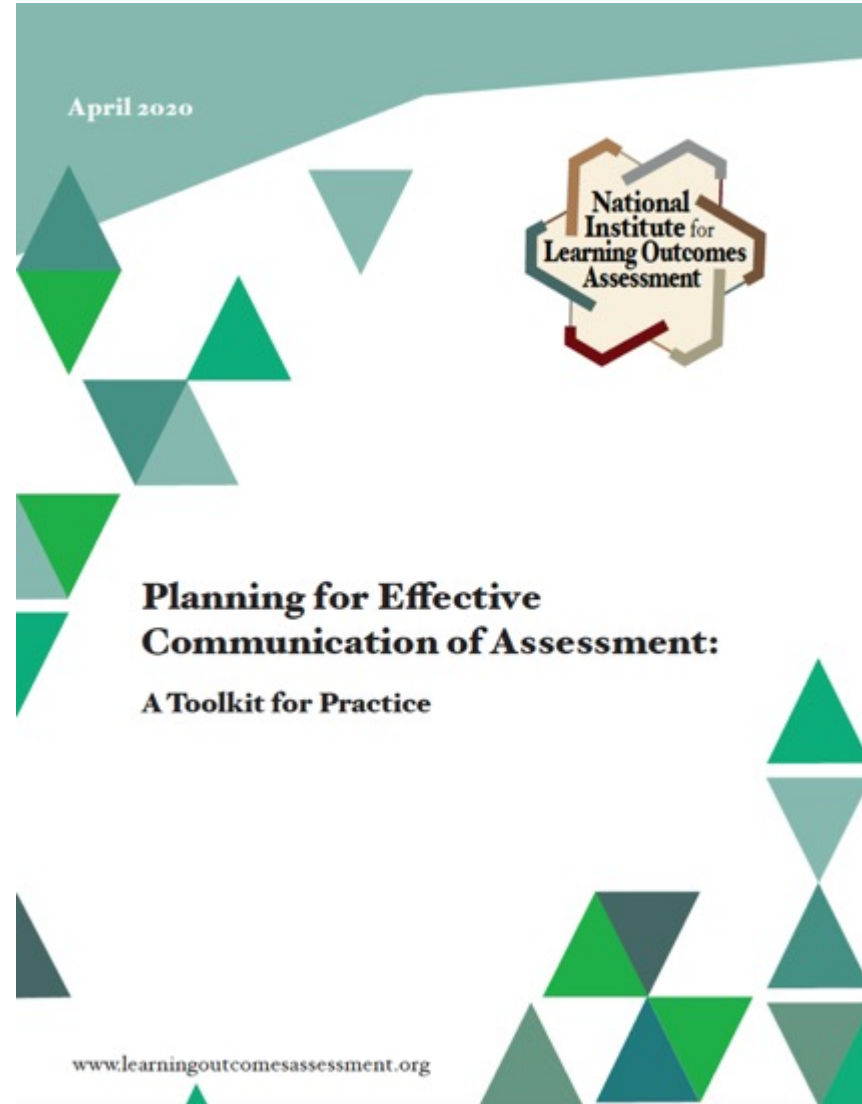
7. Data Visualizations

8. Awareness and Discoverability



A Story of Pandemic Teaching and Learning





Communication Tools

Planning for Effective Communication of Assessment

Communication Guiding Questions

Making the Case for Assessment

Communicating the Value of Assessment

Sample Communication Plan Template

Sample Outreach Plan

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



Communication Questions Address:



COMMUNICATION
CHANNELS



MESSAGING



COMMUNICATION
PLANNING



TIMELINESS

Making the Case

For Assessment
Work

For the Value of
Assessment

Long-Term
Engagement
with Assessment

Evidence-Based Storytelling

NILOA assists institutions in the practice of sharing assessment data through evidence-based narratives utilizing a collaborative, field-tested peer review process. Evidence-based storytelling, informed by the NILOA Transparency Framework, offers an innovative strategy to help institutions meet current accountability and transparency demands.

To better tell institutional assessment stories using evidence of student learning specific to institutional context and audience, NILOA's Evidence-Based Storytelling Toolkit provides questions, tools, and resources for consideration in narrative development. Click on each banner to expand the selection and access each resource.

Please cite as: Jankowski, N. A., & Baker, G. (2019, August). *Building a narrative via evidence-based storytelling: A toolkit for practice*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

∨ Evidence-Based Storytelling Toolkit

∨ Planning for Effective Communication of Assessment

∨ Examples from Institutions & Organizations

∨ Learning Improvement Resources

∨ Additional Resources

General Discussion

