

6 BUILDING BLOCKS OF STORYTELLING

Consider the following building blocks when developing your story in order to convey a clear and concise message in a powerful, compelling way.

1. IMPACT

There should always be a desired impact of your stories. What measurable outcome would make your storytelling initiative successful? What end result is most important? What specific action do you want your audience to take? Determine the purpose to help frame your storytelling.

2. EFFECTIVE CHARACTER

Most stories contain a single, compelling character that is relatable to the audience and who is comfortable relaying specific details, memories and experiences. This character doesn't always have to be a child or family – it could be a teacher, principal, district leader or even a member of the larger community. Who is going to be the focal character in your story?

3. TRAJECTORY

Effective stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Stories should chronicle something that happens – an experience, a journey, a success, a transformation, a discovery, a lesson learned or an impact that your district has had. What do you want to highlight in your story? Make sure to present a clear, concise story about a single issue.

4. AUTHENTICITY

Stories should also show - rather than just tell - the audience about the character's journey, using rich details and featuring the character's own voice. Authenticity comes down to choosing the right character and knowing the right details to emphasize.

5. ACTION-ORIENTED EMOTIONS

Stories should convey emotions that move people to act, and marry these with clear, easy-to-find pathways to get them to those desired actions - remember your desired impact for the story!

6. A HOOK

Stories should capture the audience's attention as quickly as possible. A hook provides a reason to care and answers the following questions immediately... Whose story is it? What's happening? What's at stake?

OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER...

Identify your audience. Stories should be crafted and delivered differently based on your audience. Consider how your audience will perceive the message.

Keep messages simple and concise. Work to highlight your main ideas - less is more!

Use plain language. Avoid jargon and acronyms whenever possible.

Add data. Using high-quality data that is reliable and trustworthy can strengthen your message.

Include images. Pictures visually reinforce your message and grab the attention of your audience.

Adapted from Stories Worth Telling: A Guide to Strategic and Sustainable Nonprofit Storytelling