Storytelling + Social Change
Engaging Students as School and Community Leaders

Carol Barash, PhD
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HOW STORYTELLING AFFECTS THE BRAIN

NEURAL COUPLING
A story activates parts in the brain that allows the listener to turn the story into their own ideas and experience thanks to a process called neural coupling.

MIRRORING
Listeners will not only experience the similar brain activity to each other, but also to the speaker.

DOPAMINE
The brain releases dopamine into the system when it experiences an emotionally charged event, making it easier to remember and with greater accuracy.

CORTEX ACTIVITY
When processing facts, two areas of the brain are activated (Broca’s and Wernicke’s area). A well-told story can engage many additional areas, including the motor cortex, sensory cortex and frontal cortex.

Infographic highlighting the effectiveness of using ‘Whiteboard Animation’ for storytelling @stayingaliveuk - www.stayingaliveuk.com
STORYTELLING + STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

Carol Barash, PhD: Moderator

Tyler Nakatsu: The work of Marshall Ganz

Cameron Mussar + Mayra Sarteaga: How SFER uses Storytelling to drive Community Change

Keith Frome: Storytelling + Student Empowerment at College Summit
WHY STORYTELLING

Speaker-Listener Neural Coupling

Overlap of Speaker-Listener and Listener-Listener Neural Coupling
POWERING BROAD SCALE CHANGE

TAKE WRITING FROM TRANSACTIONAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL

IMPROVE COLLEGE ACCESS

PROVIDE END-TO-END SOLUTION TO DRIVE MASSIVE WRITING IMPROVEMENT
Marshall Ganz
Kennedy School of Government
story of **self**
call to leadership

story of **now**
strategy & action

story of **us**
shared values &
shared experience

PURPOSE

COMMUNITY

URGENCY
Story of Self

• Pick a specific moment where you faced a challenge. What choice did you make in the face of that challenge, and what value did it teach you? (Hint: Challenge, Choice and Outcome)
Story of Us & Now

• What is the challenge facing this community? What is the choice we need to make based on our values? What outcome will it have?

• (Challenge, Choice, Outcome)
Students For Education Reform
Our Mission

SFER develops college students into grassroots organizers who fight for educational justice in their communities
Since 2009 SFER grew from a single college campus club into a national grassroots organization...

- 8 States
- 5,000 members, supporters, and alumni
- 20 grassroots campaigns since 2012
- Through SFER Action Network, we’ve contacted over 250,000 voters and have helped elect 8 reform candidates out of 9 school board races we’ve participated in across the country
- Over 215 student voices elevated in the media, notably, in the Boston Globe, the L.A. Times, the L.A. Weekly, the Star - Tribune, and on ABC and Univision
THE POWER OF STUDENT AGENCY:
Selfless Advocacy
THE PEER FORWARD MODEL

Building Capacity in Schools

School-Wide Achievements Driven by Eight-Person Peer Leader Team

- Summer Workshops: Train four seniors who return to school and train four juniors.
- Educator Training: Training one per school at our summer workshop.
- Frequent Coaching: From campaign coach, on-site as well as through video-conference, email, and text.
- Signaling Materials: Provided by College Summit to increase visibility of campaigns and Peer Leaders.
- Digital Curricula: Schools can purchase as an add-on.
PERSONAL STATEMENT COMPONENTS

• Narrative
• Striking Image
• Guiding Idea
PERSONAL STATEMENT PROCESS
PHILOSOPHY

- Student writing as Texts
- Writing is a Group Process
- Authenticity is Hard Earned
PERSONAL STATEMENT PROCESS

1. Free Write I
2. Goldmining I
3. Free Write II
4. Goldmining II
5. Assembling the Statement
6. First Draft
7. Polish
8. Second Draft
9. Complete
Many consider the inequity in college attainment to be the civil rights issue of our time.

And many think that the solution is to bring complex and expensive interventions into schools.

College Summit believes in a different solution – one that is already roaming the hallways of America’s high schools.

Students have to be seen as part of the solution to the problem of educational inequity in our country; students must own their school culture and drive the change we seeks so that every child does indeed succeed to college and career.
For the last two decades, College Summit has been a leader in student-driven change. To date, we have helped over 250,000 students from low-income communities reach their college and career goals.

This unique peer-driven model has increased college enrollment rates in partner schools by 20% over their baseline.

Peer Leaders are part of a growing student-led, grassroots movement to close the achievement gap in America by making college the expectation, not the exception. In the next decade, this one-of-a-kind model will serve 1.8 million students from low-income communities nationwide.
I AM...
CONTACT INFO

Carol Barash, PhD
Founder + CEO, Story2
carol.barash@story2.com
@carolbarash

Tyler Nakatsu
Managing Editor, Getting Smart
tylnakatsu@gmail.com

Keith Frome
CEO + Co-Founder, College Summit
kfrome@collegesummit.org
@KeithFrome

Cameron Mussar
Membership Associate, SFER
cmussar@studentsforeldreform.org
@CameronMussar

Mayra Arteaga:
Student, SFER
marteaga@studentsforeldreform.org