

# Messaging Workshop: Environmental Literacy for Sustainability

Lauren Watkins, Ph.D.







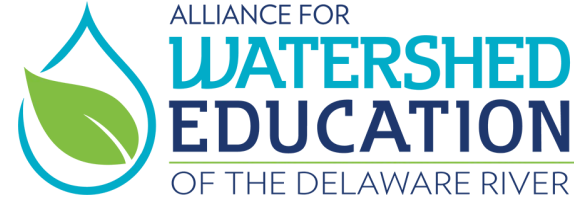
**Impact**  
by **Design**

We help you develop the capabilities to maximize impact for people, wildlife, and the environment.





# Select Clients



# Activity

I'm going to share a few statements and I'd like you to stand up if you agree.





# Stand up if...

You agree that scrambling eggs is by far the superior way to cook eggs.





# Stand up if...

You feel stressed about communicating with decision makers about supporting environmental literacy plans.





# Stand up if...

You have people in mind that you haven't communicated with yet about environmental literacy (such as funders, potential partners, parents...).





# Stand up if...

You've reached out to someone about environmental literacy plans or partnerships before and nothing happened.





# Stand up if...

You really, really, really love office supplies.





# Lauren Watkins, Ph.D.

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Principal,  
Social Science & Research



**Impact  
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SOCIAL SCIENCE & RESEARCH





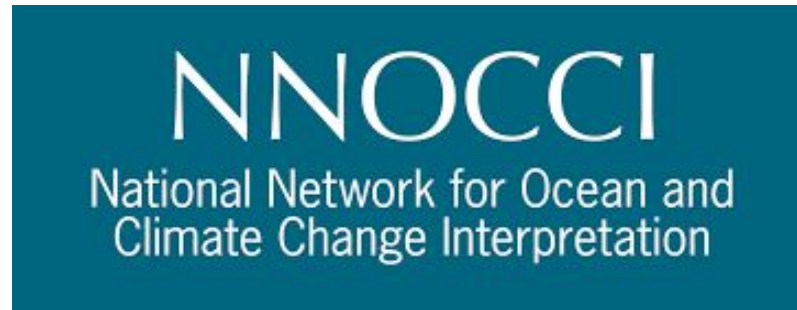


**I just feel like I  
have a lot  
going on...**

# My life in a few logos...



NATIONAL  
ESTUARINE  
RESEARCH  
RESERVE  
SYSTEM



ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS





# My messaging journey...

(How it started 🙄)





Learning  
along the  
way...



# Assessing Environmental Education Outcomes and Motivations in Community-School Partnerships

Lauren Ashley Watkins  
Dissertation Defense  
October 30, 2020

Committee Chair:  
Dr. Martha C. Monroe

Committee Members:  
Dr. Alison Adams | Dr. Sally Blake | Dr. Corinne Huggins-Manley | Dr. James 'JC' Bunch



SAYING 'NO' TO  
FIELD TRIPS MAY BE  
A GOOD THING...

Presented by Lauren Watkins




# My messaging journey...

(How it ended 🥰)

How it all started Why it matters What I investigated What I discovered How others can use it UF

## Recommendations Informal Science Learning Centers

- ✓ Engagement **over time** and offer **variety** to foster a conservation ethic.
- ✓ **Don't overdo it.** Evaluate, listen, and adjust. Co-create!
- ✓ **Support and relationships matter a lot.**
- ✓ Problem-based learning: Start small with passionate teachers. Good option for **skill-building**.



Why this Research Matters Methods & Limitations 'Ah-hah' Moments & Insights UF

When partnerships are at their best, people can have the resources, skills, and motivation necessary to address pressing environmental issues.





**Strong partnerships begin  
with thoughtful approaches to communication  
that 'meet people where they are.'**

# Goal for Today

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Discover ways to enhance the ways we share information.



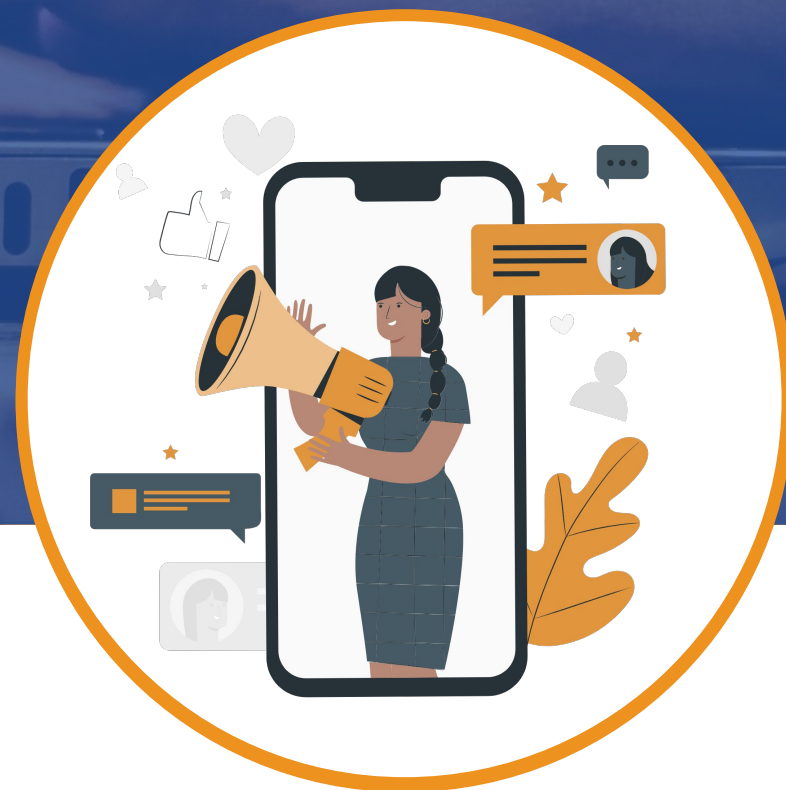
# Session Roadmap



**What** you  
want to say



**Who** you  
want to tell



**How** you will  
deliver the  
message





# Backed by Social Science

## Resources & Tips Messaging for Impact



Created by:



### Resources for Communication

Environmental Education, Literacy, and Community Co-Creation

#### [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#)

A great resource for learning how to co-create with a community from Facilitating Power

#### [Promoting the Benefits of Environmental Education for K-12 Students—Messaging Guide](#)

Brief messaging tips from the North American Association for Environmental Education

#### [Elements of Effective Environmental Education Programs](#)

An article by Monroe and Altham outlining essential elements of EE programs to foster EL

#### [Influences on and obstacles to K-12 administrators' support for environment-based education.](#)

A paper by Julie Ernst that discusses research into what influences or inhibits support from administrators.

#### [Agencies, educators, communities & wildfire: Partnerships to enhance environmental education for youth.](#)

A paper by Martha Monroe et al. that explores several powerful aspects partnership programs have in common.

**What** you want to say

K-A-B Model  
(Bettinghouse, 1986)

**Who** you want to tell

Diffusion of Innovation  
(Rogers, 1995)

**How** you will deliver the message

Framing (Nisbet, 2007)



A few notes on logistics and things on  
tables and side of the room...

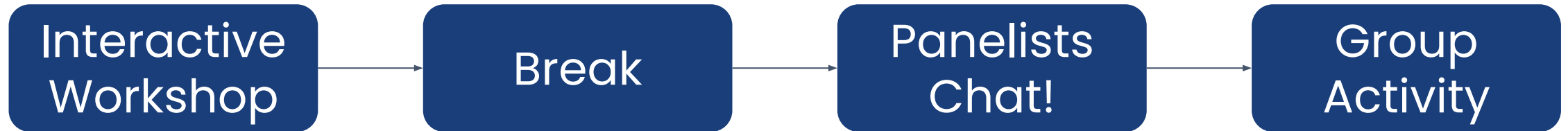
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# Flow for the Afternoon

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(🏆 = prizes!!)

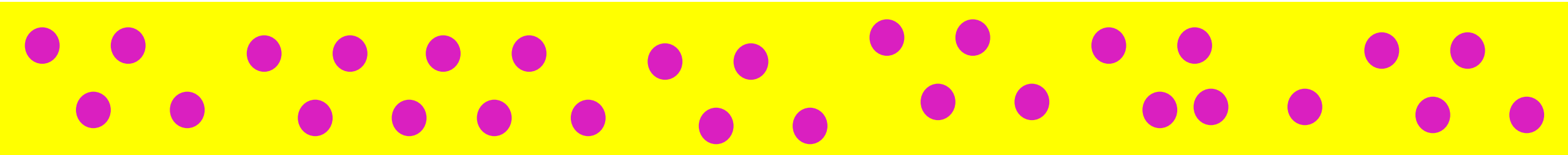






The Funder

# Time!





# **What** do you want to say?

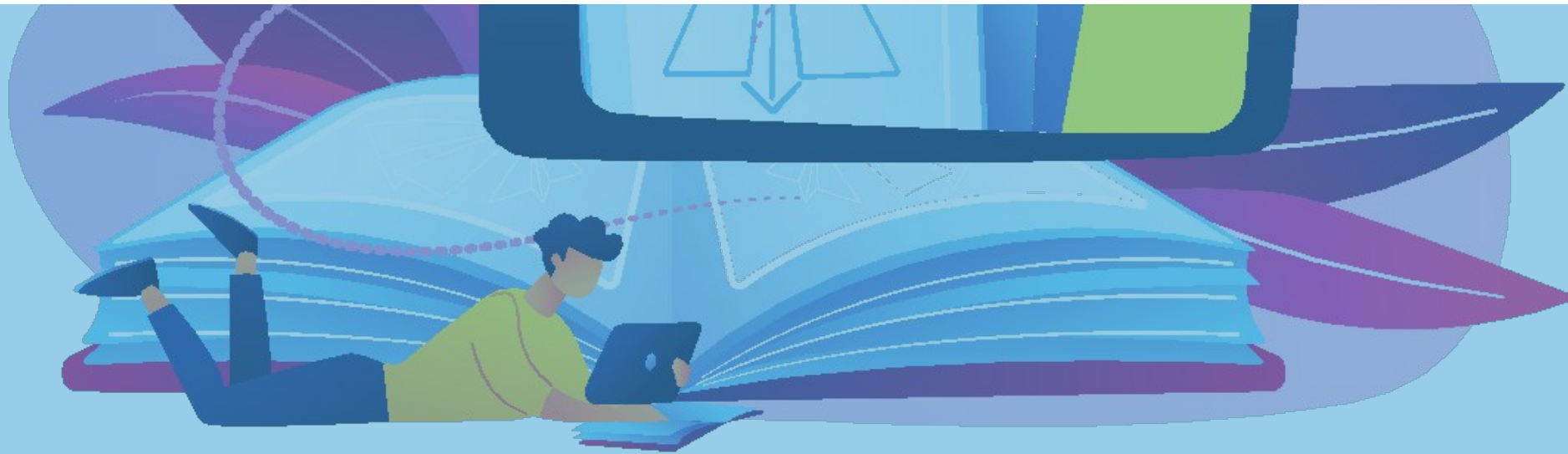
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And, more importantly,  
**why** do you want to say it?





There are many reasons why we need to share the important work we do.







## Activity

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Grab paper and a pen.



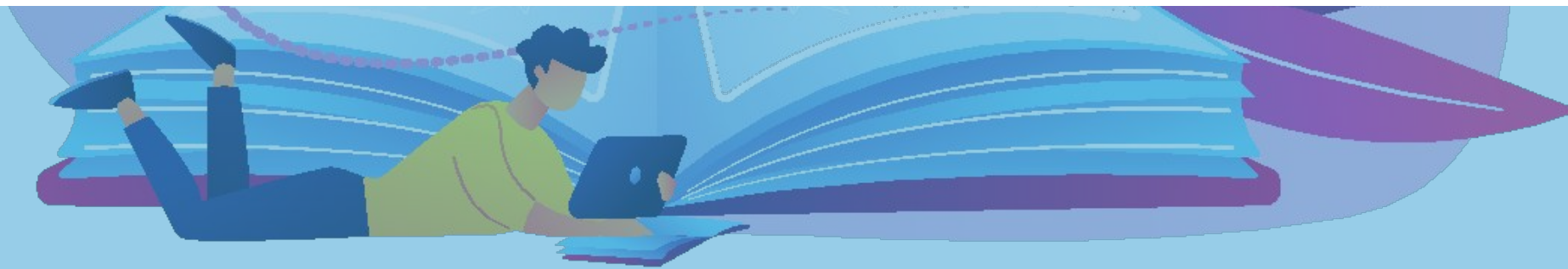


## What's **your** reason?

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Take a moment to think to yourself about the message you want to get out there.

What is your, or your organization's, motivation for sharing your message about environmental literacy?



## Our Goals

If they knew how important this is, they would **do something**.

Raising awareness empowers the public **to shift the needle**.

**This is the truth**, and people need to know it for their own good.

## Our Biases

Cause us to feel for, or against, something or someone.

A normal human experience... but...





## Our Goals

If they knew how important this is, they would **do something**.

Raising awareness empowers the public **to shift the needle**.

**This is the truth**, and people need to know it for their own good.

## Our Biases

### **Influence:**

- ✓ Why we want to share information
- ✓ What we say
- ✓ How we say it
- ✓ Who we tell



# Our Goals

If they knew how important this is, they would **do something**.

Raising awareness empowers the public **to shift the needle**.

**This is the truth**, and people need to know it for their own good.

Knowledge + Attitudes = Behaviors  
*(Not usually the case.)*

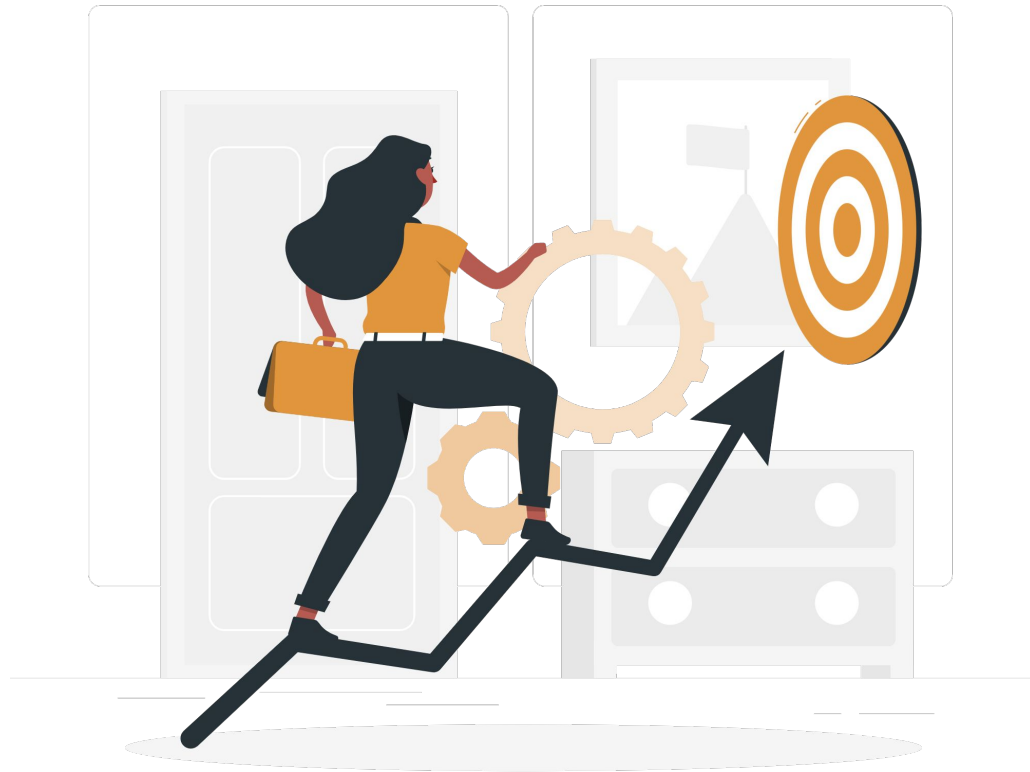
Self-efficacy & Hope

My information is as good (or better) than yours.

# Our Assumptions



# How might your goals be influencing things? **What about your audiences' goals?**



Your Goals



Audiences' Goals







So now what?





# Who do you want to tell?

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Hint: It's **not** the 'general public.'



## The Myth of the General Public

September 2020

Think about a change you see in a project you are working on, one you want to share with others. Is it a positive shift, and you hope to get support for your efforts? Maybe it's negative, and you want to spark action. Who do you want to share the message with – everyone?

*Available online at our website*



# Different Goals Require Different Approaches to Messaging

## Message

We want to develop a sustainable environmental literacy plan that is equitable to students and integrated systemically in our district.

## Your Goals

Enhance science education curriculum

Get students outside more

## Audiences

Superintendent

Board of Education

Funder

Parents

Community Partners







## Grab your paper again...

---

Think about the goal you wrote earlier. Now, **take a peek at your avatar**. What do you think are their goals – why would environmental literacy matter to them? Are their goals different from yours?



# The Three Pillars

## Of Knowing Your Audience



They are never a  
'blank slate.'



Their needs will  
almost always  
outweigh our  
goals.



They must  
connect with you  
to connect to  
your message.





# Questions for Yourself Before you Get Started

1

What do they  
care about?

2

What are  
their goals?

3

Is there anything  
that I need to  
overcome with  
them?







## Grab your paper one more time...

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Think about your **avatar**.  
What barriers might they experience to hearing your message or doing what you want them to do? What could get in the way?

Make a couple notes about this.





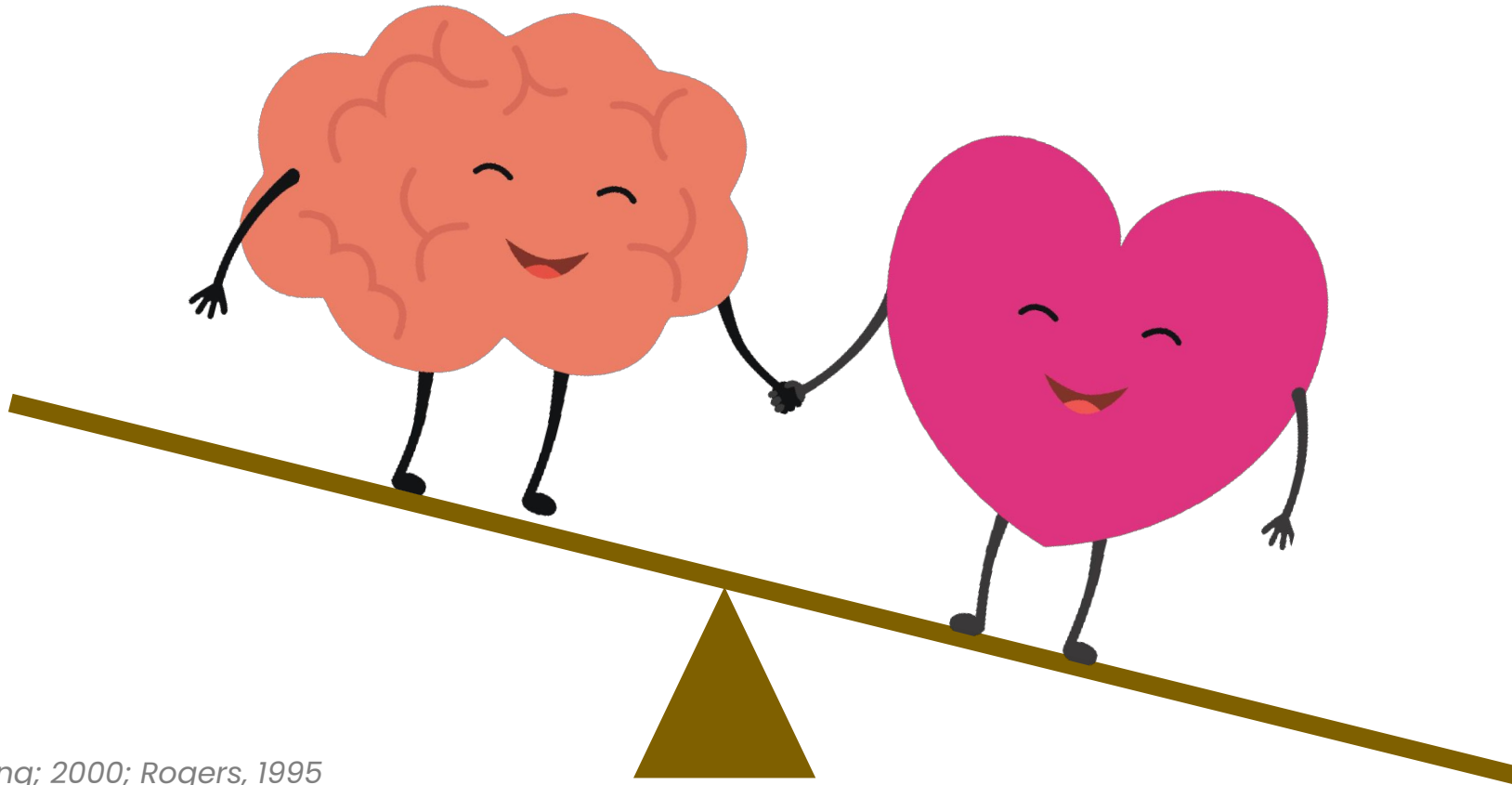
To Get to the **Ultimate Question**

Why should my message  
matter to them?



# Why your message needs to matter to them:

People rarely make decisions based on rationality.  
*(Yes, even you!)*



People use shortcuts and pay attention to information that is:

- ✓ the most vivid
- ✓ easily available
- ✓ from those we trust the most





So, what does that mean for you?





## Tying it Together

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In the absence of rationality, you **have to appeal to the heart** to make your message matter most.



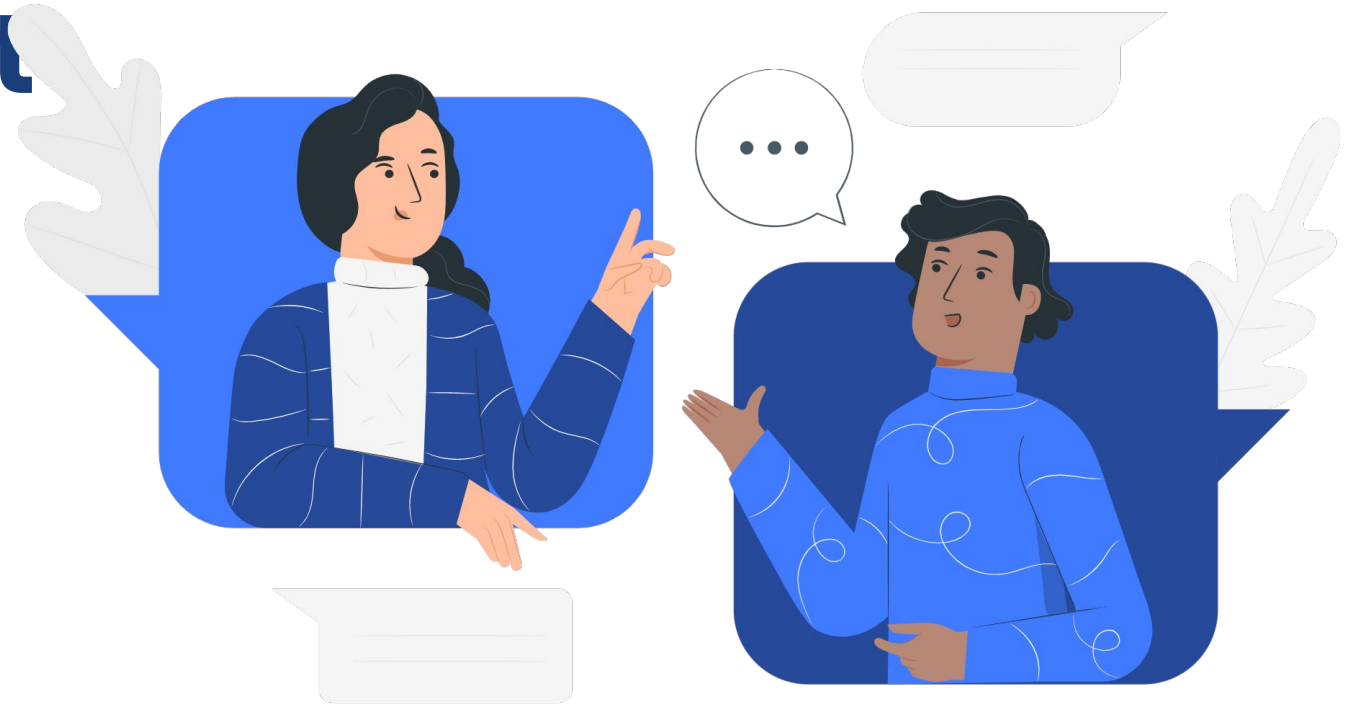
# Activity!

Pick a partner...



One of you will be a **listener** (you cannot talk).

The other will be the **talker** – giving a 'pitch.'

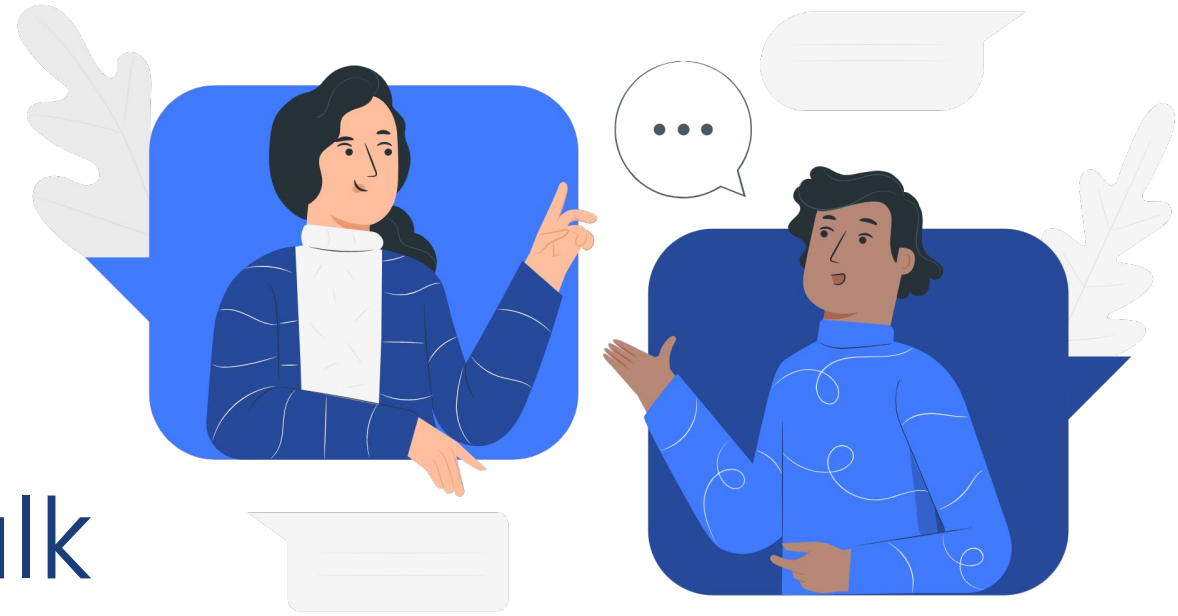




**Listener:** Choose to be either a funder or a community partner and tell your partner which one you are.



**Talker:** You have two minutes to convince the funder/partner to support your environmental literacy plan. They cannot answer questions or talk to you.

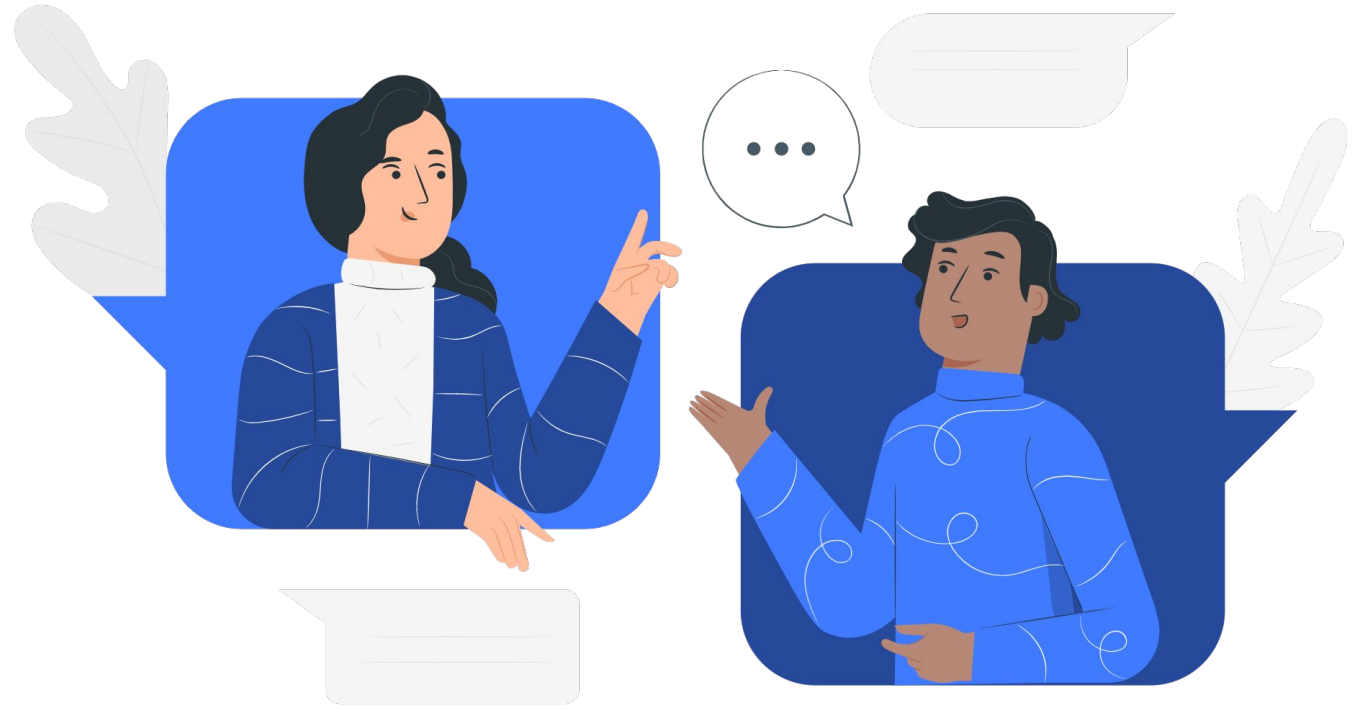


**Ready...**  
**Set...**  
**GO!**

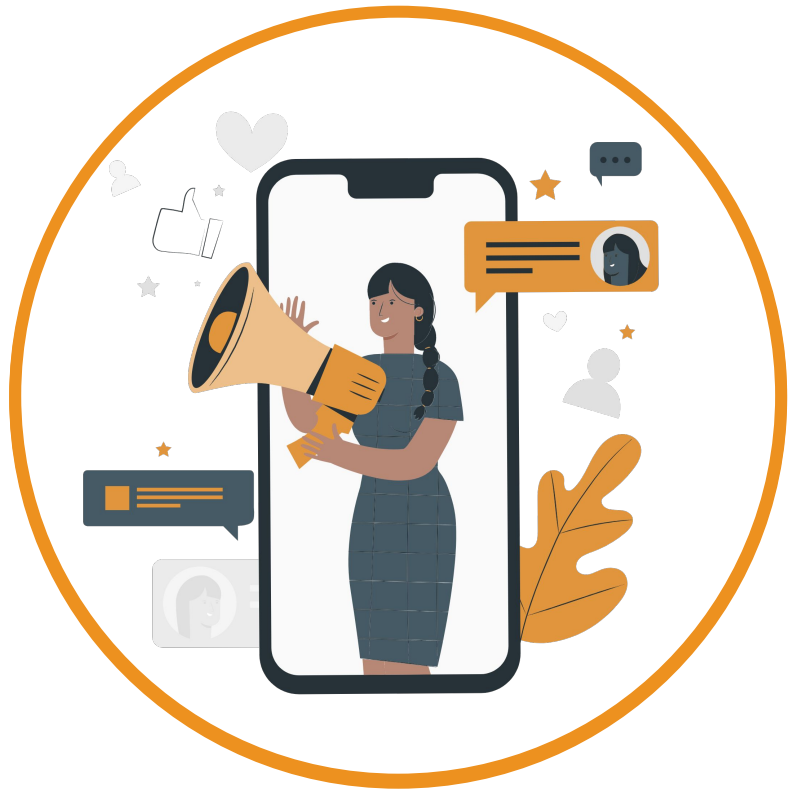


# How did it go?

Funders and partners, raise your hand if...







## **How** should you deliver the message?

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“It’s not what you say, it’s **how** you say it.”



# What People Want

And how to give it to them...

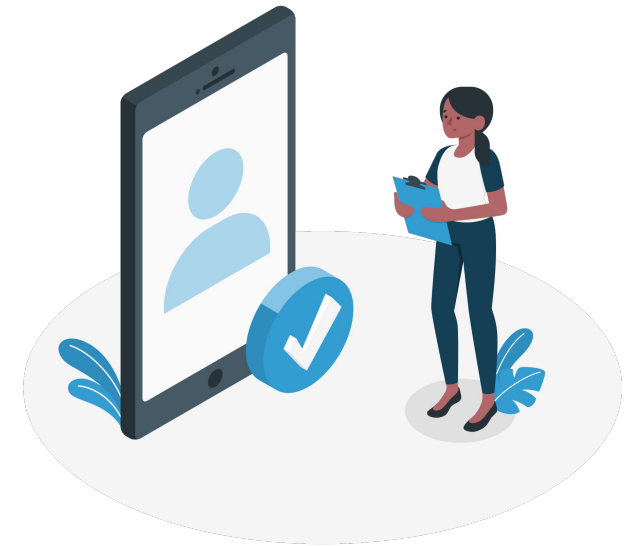
## Connection



## Clarity



## Confidence





There are many techniques for messaging for impact. **Today, I will share a few favorites.**



**Connection** is critical.

Activity!

Grab some paper...







(It's about the size of a lime)















(It's about the size of a lime)





# Universal Values

As a human on this planet,  
we can relate to things like:

Love

Safety

Survival

Family

Loss

Home



# Audience-specific Values

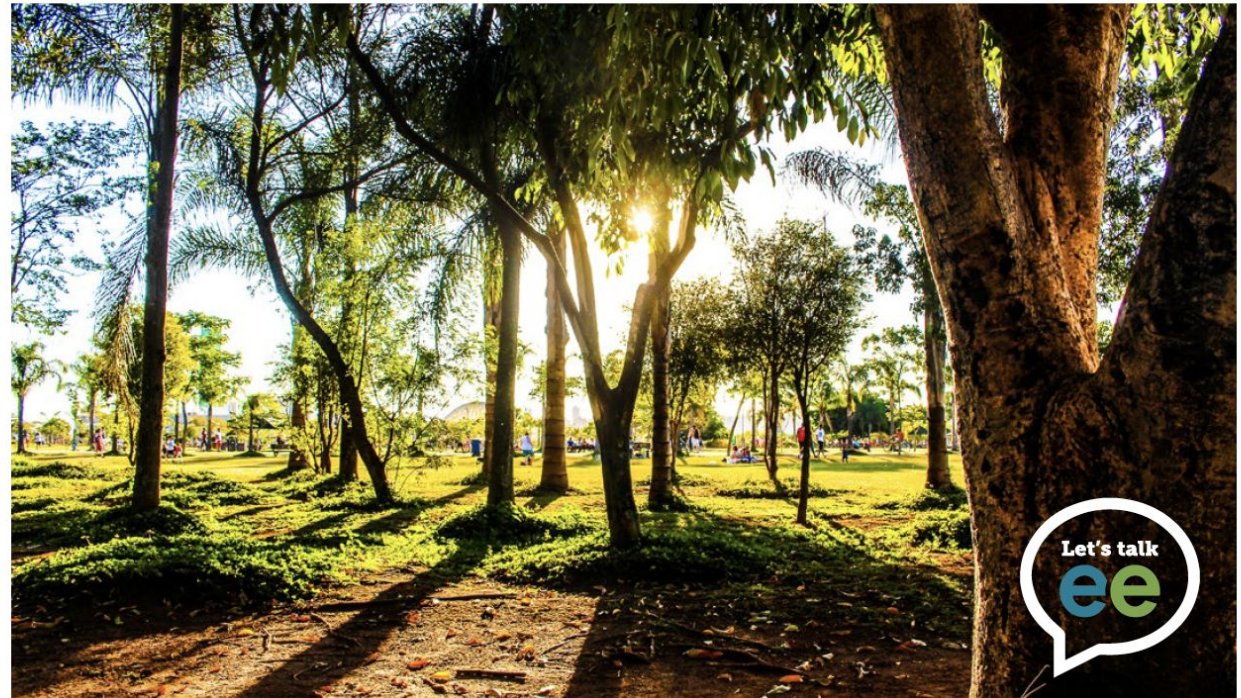
Opportunities  
for At-Risk Youth

Specific  
Academic  
Outcomes

Confidence-  
building

eeWORKS 

From Anecdotes to Evidence: Demonstrating the power of environmental education



**Promoting the Benefits of Environmental Education for K-12 Students—Messaging Guide**

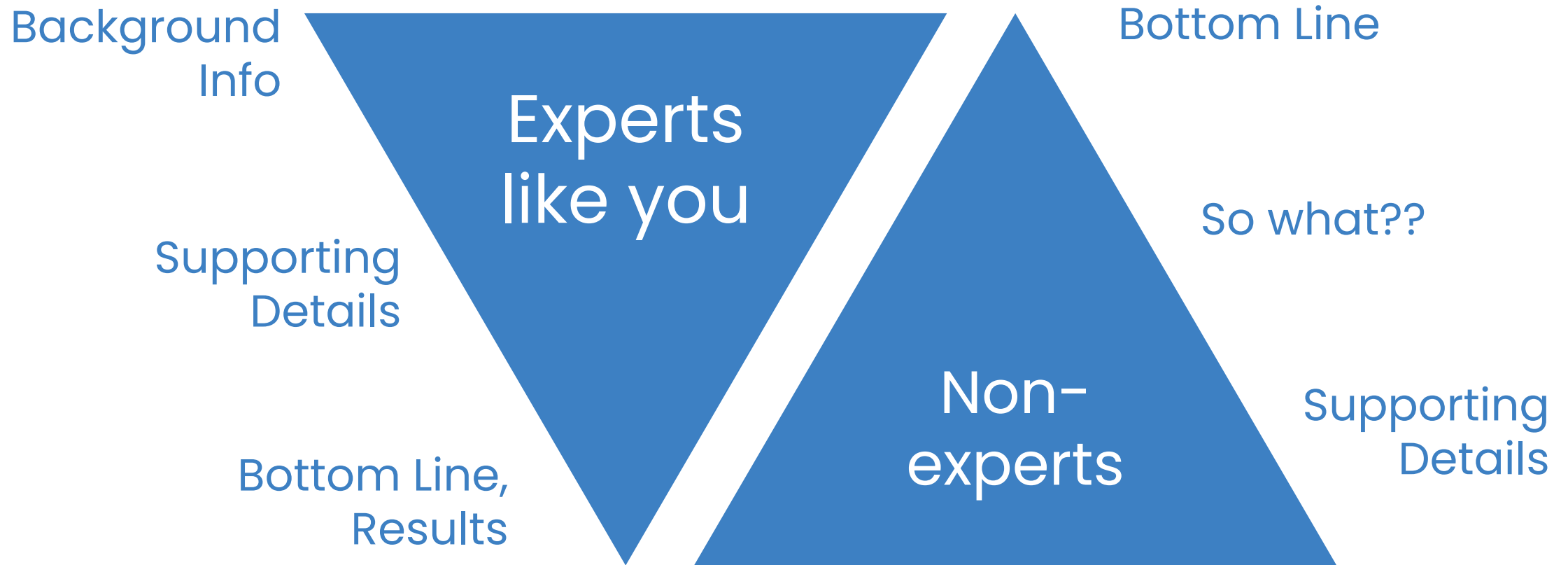


# Connection is critical

- ✓ Frame your message with values
- ✓ Make it emotional and personal
- ✓ Make it genuine, passionate
- ✗ Rely solely on rationality
- ✗ Jargon/too much data = irrelevant/elitist
- ✗ Being robotic, on auto-pilot



# Clarity is essential to 'meet them where they are.'





# The Goldilocks Method

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They don't need to know everything you know – they need to know what is most **relevant** to them and the goals.

Way Too Much



Not Enough



(Just Right)



# Metaphors can provide **clarity**.

---

You can **tie your message together** and fill mental 'holes' without too much information.



Topic of your Info

Your goal is to tell them...

Reframing for the audiences' goal

Meta-phor

# Environmental Literacy

...EL is important, essential for skill development and to be a contributing member of an informed society

...EE can provide kids with skills and relationships that lead to a stable, sustainable future

**Just like a root system supports and nourishes plants to help them flourish, environmental education provides kids with enriching experiences and supportive relationships that foster lifelong stability and continual growth.**

(Source: Frameworks Toolkit)



# How to Tell a More Effective Story about Environmental Education

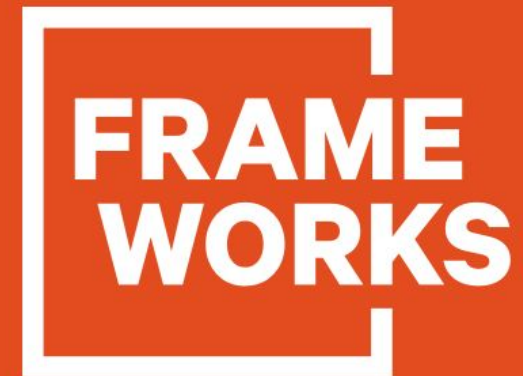
**A Framing Guide for Advocates, Educators, Program Leaders, & Other Communicators**

November 2020

Jessica Moyer, PhD, Principal Strategist  
Anna Marie Trester, PhD, Fellow  
Jennifer Nichols, PhD, Director of Research Interpretation & Application



Created through a partnership with the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) and with support from Environmental Education of New Mexico (EENM)





# Confidence is the key to action.

Careful with sad and alarming imagery, stories, or facts – research shows it can have the opposite impact you seek if your goal is **sustained** change.

Focus on **assets**, not deficits, of people and groups by highlighting aspirations and successes first.

*Theory of Learned Helplessness (Hiroto & Seligman, 1975)*



Photo: Stephanie Bihl



Photo: SOFS Shark Center





# Confidence is the key to action.

- ✓ Can provoke **short-term action** (donation, one-off field trips, 'pilots')
- ✓ Can impede **sustainable** change



Build **confidence** by helping your audience envision their role in the solution.

---

But be sensitive to how you frame their role.



# People are hard-wired for storytelling.

---





# Storytelling avoids flatlining your message.

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## Introduction

Here's what we need you to understand:

- ✓ how great our org is...
- ✓ how bad things are...

## Facts & Info

## Facts & Info

## Facts & Info

## Conclusion

Now you need to:

- ✓ Donate
- ✓ Care
- ✓ Save the world somehow



STORY

BRAND

And meets a guide

And calls them  
to action

That ends  
in success

A character



Has a problem



Who gives them a plan



That helps  
avoid failure



STORY

BRAND

White Oak Conservation Center

Try it out for one year,  
co-create future years with  
other teachers

Systemic, sustainable,  
and equitable EE

St. Johns Day School



Needs a place for field-based learning and problem-based learning support

Partnership with repeated experiences for grade 4 and 8 and curriculum support

Overburdened teachers and one-off experiences that don't align with curriculum



# Questions?

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rawpixel

*Next up... break time!*





**Break  
time!**



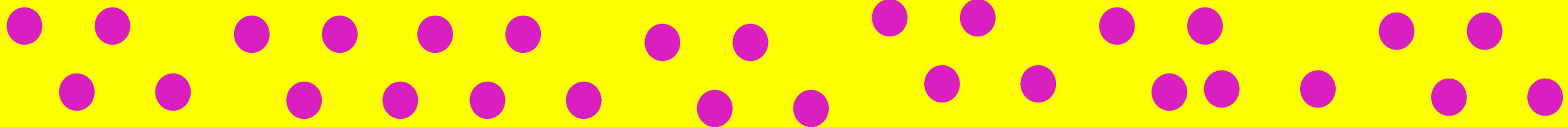
# Welcome Back & Quick Recap!





The Superintendent

# Time!



# Panelist Discussion



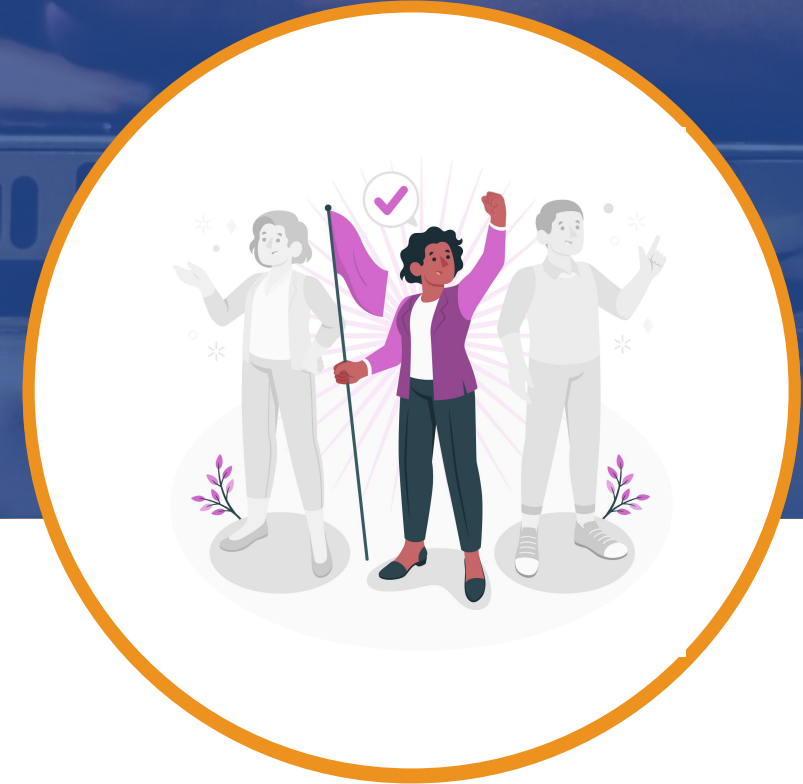
**The Community  
Partner**

Ariel Trahan



**The  
Funder**

MJ Veverka



**The  
Superintendent**

Tim Baird



# Let's hear it from them:

- 1. Can you each share 1 or 2 things you deeply value when reviewing proposals, programs, or requests to partner on plans or programs? What do you look for that is essential?**
2. Can you share an example of a memorable pitch, message, or request you got that was a great example of how to ask for resources or partnership? What made it so great?
3. On the flip side, can you share an example or two of what *not to do*? What pitfalls have you seen in requests?



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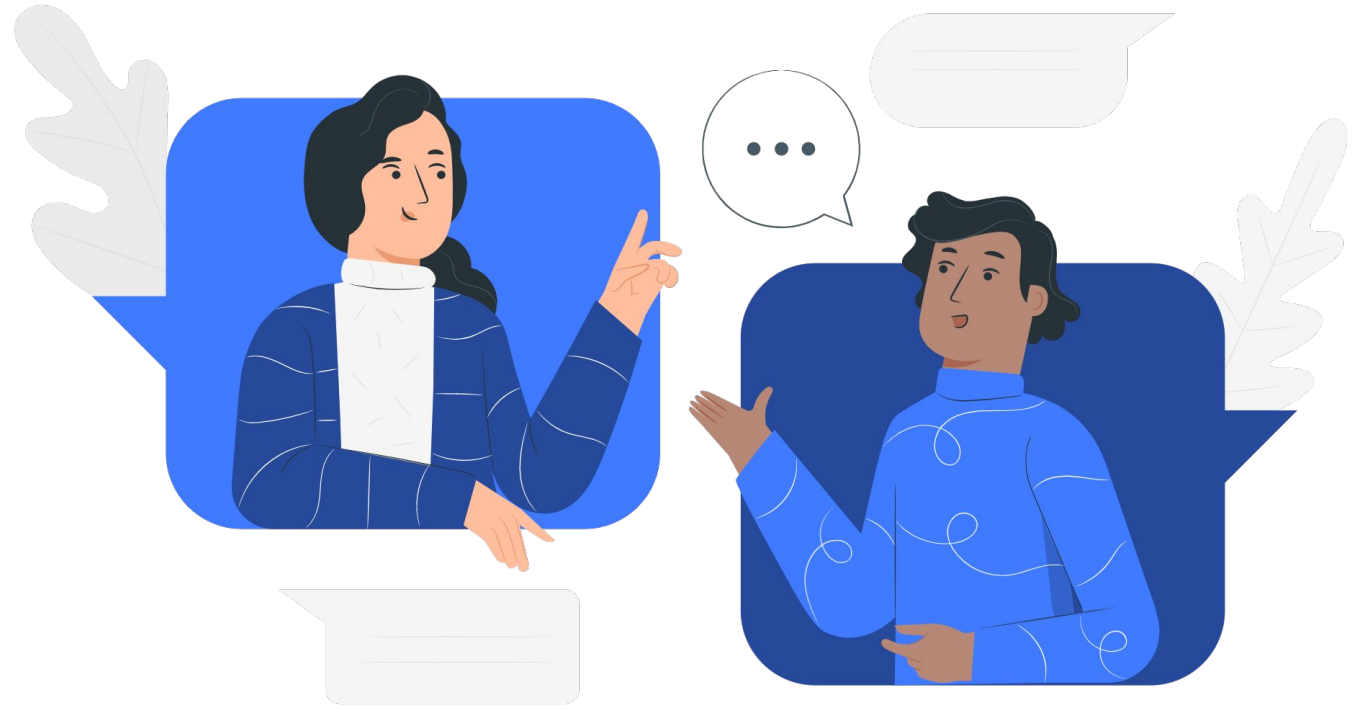
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# Remember your pitch?

Quick discussion:  
How might you do things differently now that you've heard from panelists?





# Activity: Drafting a “Messaging Matrix”



	Funders	Community Partners	Education Leadership	Teachers
How can you share <u>why it matters to this stakeholder group</u> in a way that taps into what they value?				<i>Since teachers have to implement plans - let's not forget about messaging for them!</i>
What stories can you tell to enhance your message?				
Who are the trusted messengers / champions with this stakeholder group?				
What calls to action would you share with this stakeholder?		<i>*Think about how to make the relationship reciprocal/mutually beneficial, rather than one-way or extractive.</i>		



# Instructions for Messaging Matrix

## Brainstorm:

- Breakout groups please stay in this room if possible - or very close by
- Groups of ~5-7 from your district or state
- ~30 minutes to work together with support from floating facilitators
- One team member please come grab a large paper from the stage



# Welcome Back!





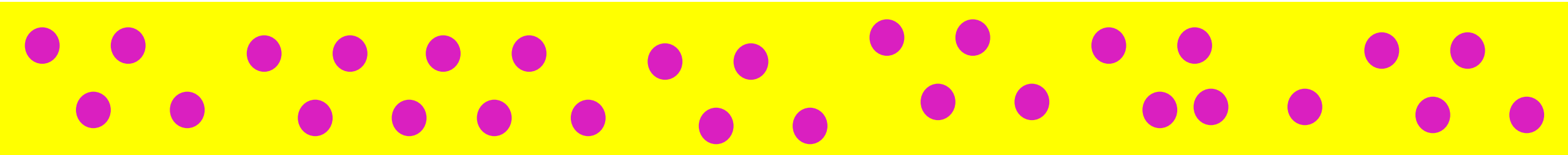


The Board of  
Education Member

# Time!



The Community Partner



# Next up!

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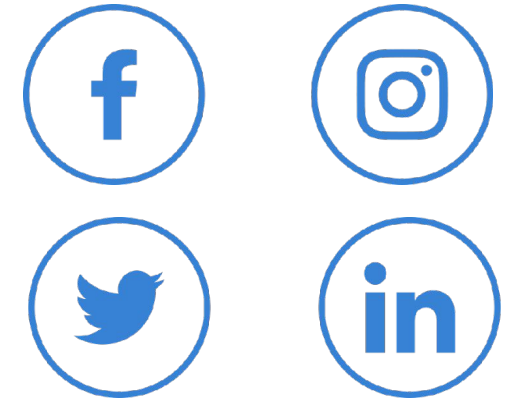
**Lauren@impactbydesigninc.org**



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Any Time!



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Other  
Resources



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# What is one word phrase that comes to mind when you reflect on this session?

