

# Storytelling iSchool

## CURRICULUM

### **Week One – What is the Structure of a Well-Told Tale?**

We will devote this hour to looking more closely at the structural elements upon which memorable and moving stories are built:

- The Open: does your story quickly answer the two questions that audiences are instinctively asking?
- The Rising Action: have you built in elements that stand between your story's protagonist and his (or her) goal and that make the story more interesting for your audience?
- The Moment of Truth: does your story have one, or is it hiding inside the infamous Black Box?
- The Meaning: does your story convey one, is it clear, and does it have emotional resonance for your audience?

At the conclusion of this class, students will be given a structure template to help them build an outline for the story they will write as part of their week #2 homework.

### **Week Two – What are the Qualities of a Well-Told Tale?**

Good structure is to storytelling what a solid frame is to a house. Both are essential, but by themselves they do *not* create a place that people want to enter. During this hour, we will use examples from this class and prior workshops to illustrate the narrative elements that combine with structure to create a full-fledged story. Specifically, we will study:

- How dialogue can add immediacy to storytelling and make the characters within your story more vivid;
- Emotional moments that engage your audience without being manipulative or melodramatic;
- Why good storytellers “show” instead of “tell” (and how you can do this);
- How just a few poorly chosen words can throw off the tone (and lessen the impact) of an entire story.

Students will again have the opportunity to continue refining their original story or starting another story in the time between classes.

### **Week Three – What Kinds of Stories Can I Tell?**

Most organizations will instinctively collect success stories, but those are only 1 kind of story that you can collect and use. In this class we will explain why you must also know:

- The Nature of Our Challenge Story
- The How-We-Began Story
- Performance Stories
- Striving to Improve Stories
- Where-We-Are-Going Stories

## **Week Four – How Do I Put Storytelling to Work?**

Once you know *why* storytelling is so powerful and *what* makes a good story, you are ready to consider *how* this skill can start working for you and your organization. In this final hour together, we will:

- Show how stories and data can work together to help you more effectively educate and persuade the audiences you need to reach;
- Provide examples of how other nonprofits and public interest organizations are already using storytelling for advocacy, development, recruitment, internal communications, and public relations.
- Point you to additional resources if you want to dig deeper into the very rich field of storytelling.