

A Storyhunter's Guide to Framing

Framing can be thought of as decisions about emphasis (what to highlight, how to explain it, and what to leave unsaid) that have a measurable and meaningful effect on thinking. There are many ways to communicate a larger frame: through data, through appeals to canonical texts, through examples. One of the most powerful ways to illuminate and embody a frame is through storytelling. A story recounts a series of causally linked events, following a change over time.

When a story is being told to spark public discourse on important social issues, framing matters immensely. The characters and setting signal who is responsible, who is affected, and who isn't. The events impart a perspective on what matters and why, and how the issue works. The moral of the story—and how explicitly it is stated—directs the real-world response to the tale. Through the Partnership for the Future of Learning, a network of educational advocates are finding, telling, and sharing stories that illustrate and embody a forward-looking frame on the future of education. The charts below offer guidance on which kinds of stories advance education policy and practice and which are more likely to set them back. These recommendations emerge from research conducted by the FrameWorks Institute. Researchers analyzed media and advocacy content to distill the stories that Americans are likely to hear about education. They then cross-referenced those narratives with research on public thinking to predict the effects of those narratives on attitudes and policy preferences and developed alternative storylines that advance a view that is more aligned with evidence and advocates' vision. The original research is available at www.frameworksinstitute.org on its Core Story of Education page.

Stories to Replace	Stories to Embrace
Inspiring teacher inspires struggling students.	Redesigned learning environments spark knowledge and interests.
Broken, neglected school sets kids up for failure.	High-wattage opportunities power potential; patchy connections fray possibility.
Magic happened in this philosophically aligned classroom.	Purposeful support for effective education accelerates skills of the future.
Technology now allows us to customize curricula to individual interests.	Learning happens best when learners use tools to actively work with content.
When students drive their own learning, they arrive at amazing places.	Navigating an information-based world requires having students' hands on the wheel.
Schools can't be expected to solve social problems alone.	In systems that work, learners are supported socially, emotionally, and academically.
Specific approach yields amazing results.	When teaching approaches are chosen purposefully, with evidence, they work.

Dominant Narratives to Marginalize	Powerful Alternative Narratives to Advance
The benefits of education are primarily individual and financial, equipping students to get jobs.	Education is an essential public good, which supports our civic, social, and economic future.
Learning is a passive, linear, hierarchical, and compartmentalized process.	Learning is active, and skills and knowledge develop in mutually reinforcing ways.
Poverty and the culture of poverty explain poor educational outcomes.	When children have access to powerful learning environments, they thrive, and we all benefit.
Public schools haven't served marginalized children well, so privatization policies are the only way to go.	To meet our nation's needs, we do, can, and must use proven approaches to equip millions of children for the world of tomorrow.