STUDENTS at the CENTER

Using Inclusive Assessment Approaches to Challenge the Status Quo

AAC&U Authentic Assessment Institute

June 9, 2026



MACALESTER

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Who’s in the Room? Introductions



Introduce yourself in the chat, and respond to any of these questions:

- What drives your interest in assessment as a tool for student success?
- What’s an example of an assessment that you’re working on and want to improve? What “level” is it, e.g. classroom, program/department, institution?
- What’s one thing you want to take away from this presentation?

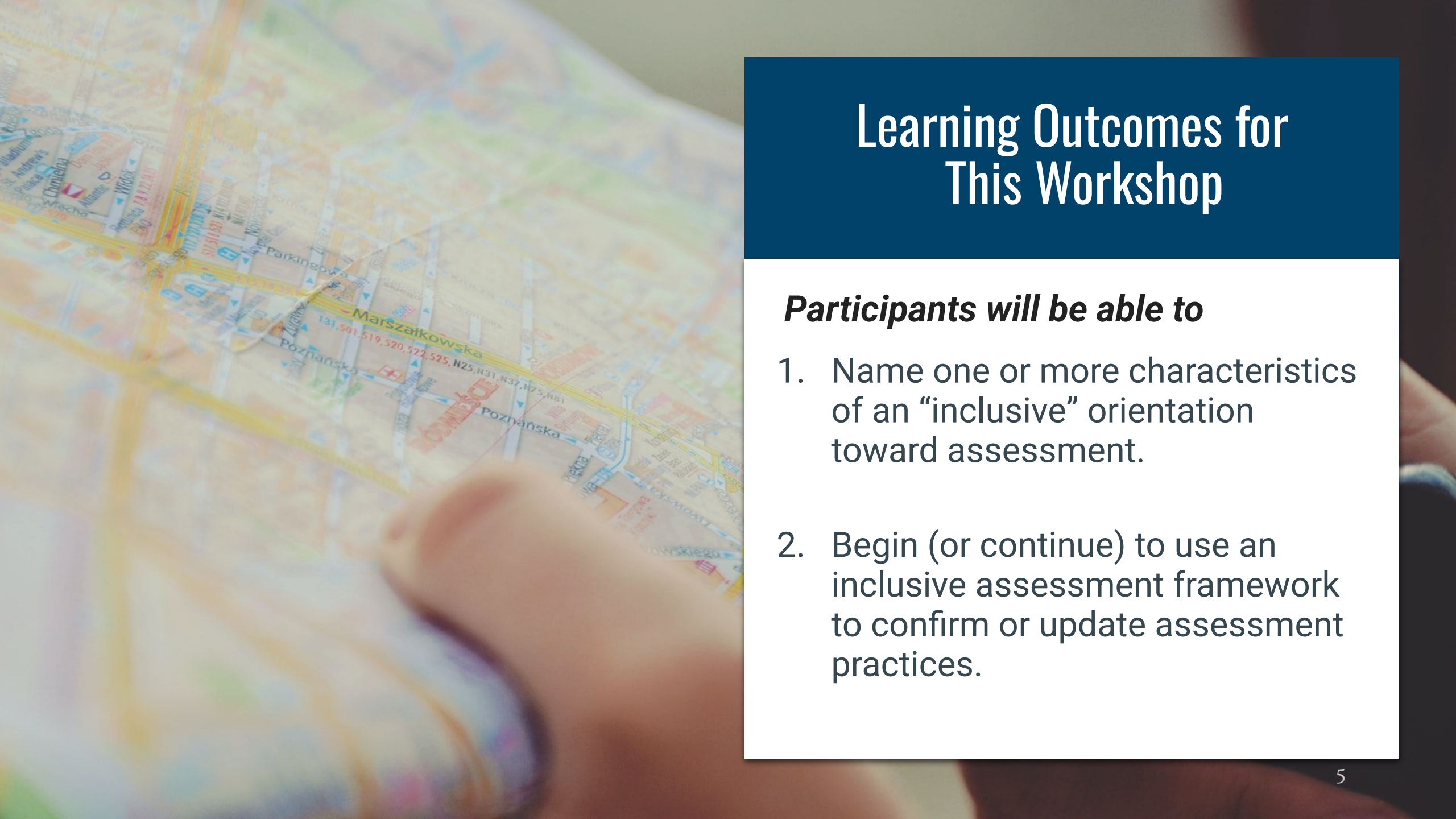
Welcome & Introductions



Nancy Bostrom
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Director of Assessment
Macalester College
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(she/ her)
Associate Provost & Chief Data Officer
Macalester College
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Learning Outcomes for This Workshop

Participants will be able to

1. Name one or more characteristics of an “inclusive” orientation toward assessment.

2. Begin (or continue) to use an inclusive assessment framework to confirm or update assessment practices.

Overview

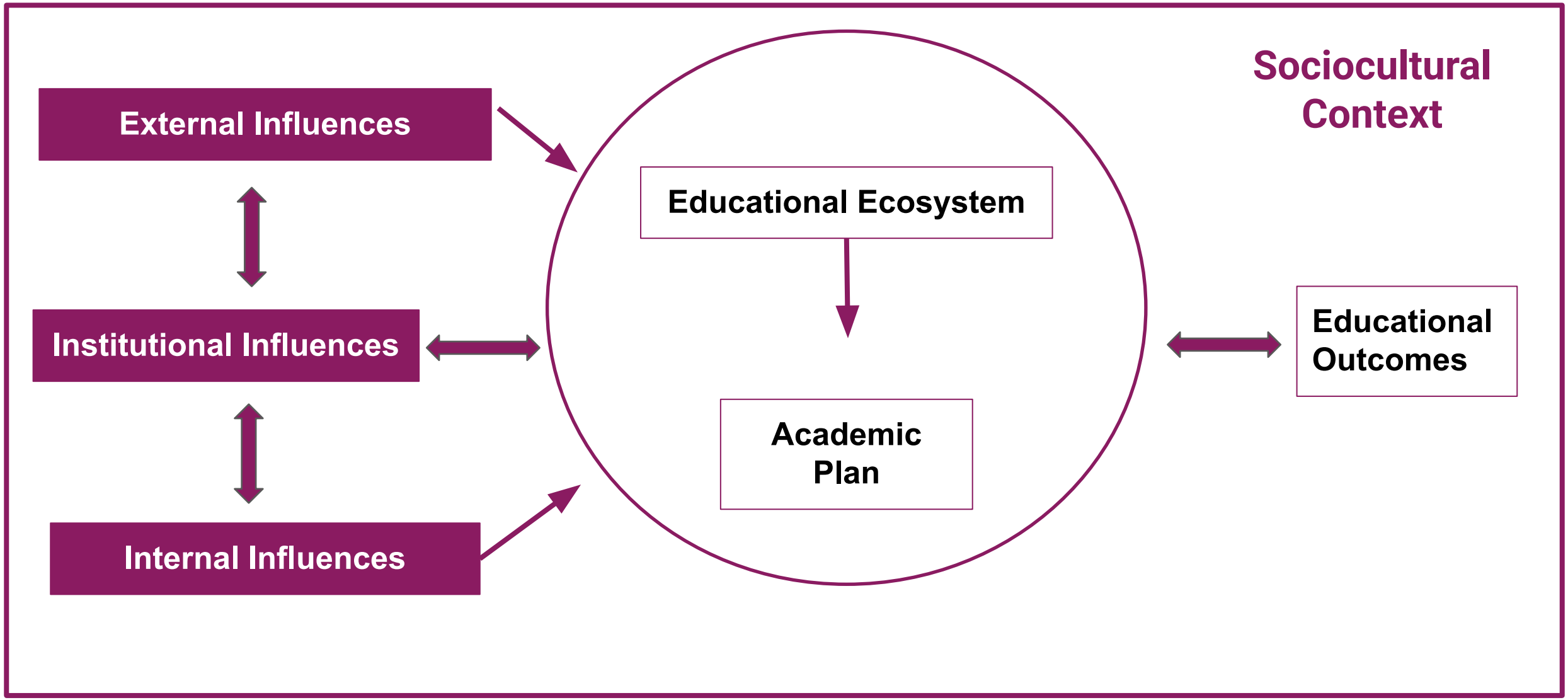


- Grounding
- Assessment Foundations
- Case Study #1 GenEd Assessment: Writing
- Case Study #2 Classroom Learning Environment: CC&C
- Q&A

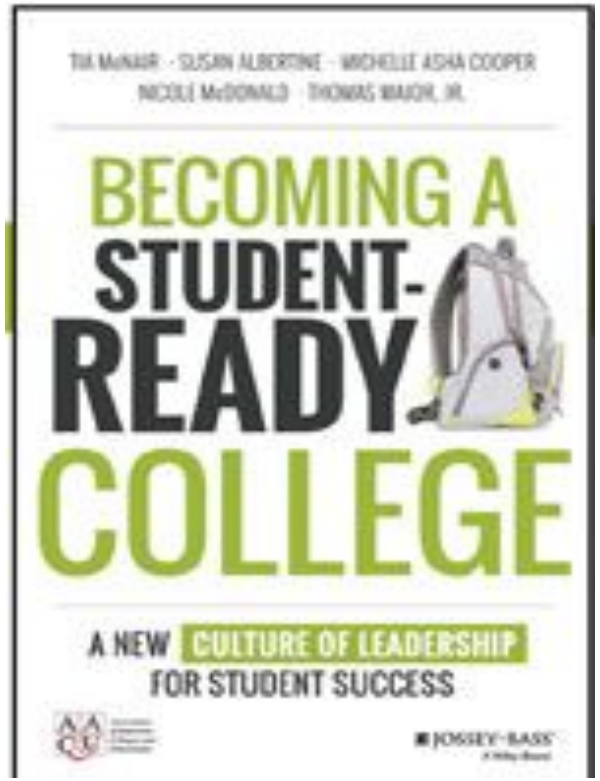
Grounding

Adapted from: Shaping the College Curriculum – Academic Plans in Context

Assessment in Sociocultural Context



Student-ready college v. College-ready students





Our “why?” Social justice.

“Social justice is both a goal and a process. The *goal* of social justice is full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. The *process* for attaining the goal of social justice should also be democratic and participatory, respectful of human diversity and group differences, and inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacity for working collaboratively with others to create change.”

Bell, L. (2016). Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education. In Adams, M., Bell, L., Goodman, D. J., Joshi, K. Y. (Eds.), *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. New York: Routledge.

What is your sociocultural context? Your institution?



Leadership



Assessment Foundations

NILOA Assessment Philosophies

Compliance/Reporting	Measurement
• Meet the reporting requirements & demands of administrators, accrediting bodies	• Focus on the most appropriate & accurate (valid and reliable) measures of learning
Student-Centered	**Teaching & Learning**
• Students actively participate in a process to learn about their own learning	• Enhance faculty teaching & student learning • Address faculty questions about teaching & learning

Source:
What is Your Philosophy of Assessment? May 2020, NILOA

Assessment uses research methods…
BUT it's not the same as scholarly research.

ASSESSMENT…

- Is a form of **action research**, whose purpose is to inform and confirm or improve practice rather than make broad generalizations.
- Is **disciplined and systematic** and uses many of the methodologies of traditional research
- Keeps the **benefits of assessment in proportion** to the time and resources devoted to them

"Useful assessments *…engage faculty and staff, flow from and focus on clear and important student learning goals, have a clear purpose and yield reasonably accurate and truthful information on what students have learned."* (*Suskie)*

Assessment Definitions

"...a process that enables us to determine the **fit between what we expect our students to understand and be able to do and what they actually demonstrate** at points along their educational careers." *(Maki)*

"…the **systematic collection, review and use** of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of **improving student learning and development**." *(Palomba and Banta)*

Inclusive Assessment

"At its core, inclusive assessment calls for those who lead and participate in assessment activities to pay attention and be conscious of how assessment can either feed into cycles that perpetuate inequities or can serve to bring more equity into higher education."

Adapted from Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020



Adapted from Macalester's Department of Multicultural Life

Foundational Principles: Inclusive Assessment

1. **Check biases and ask reflective questions throughout the process;**
2. **Use multiple sources of evidence;**
3. **Include student perspectives and take action;**
4. **Increase transparency;**
5. **Ensure data can be meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated;**
6. **Make evidence-based changes**

(Montenegro & Jankowski, A New Decade for Assessment: Embedding Equity into Assessment Praxis).

What do we assess?

Program Effectiveness (i.e. How well is your department / program functioning in the context of the overall institutional mission?)

+

Student Learning & Development (i.e. How well are students achieving your intended outcomes for learning?)

Assessment **FOR** Learning

Using assessment info to enhance teaching and learning.

Deficit-Minded vs Asset-Minded

Deficit-Minded

- *Blames students for being underprepared rather than blaming the social systems that perpetuate inequities in education.*
- *Belief that certain students cannot learn how to navigate the complexities of higher education, they are unmotivated, or they lack the intellectual capacity to succeed in certain programs.*

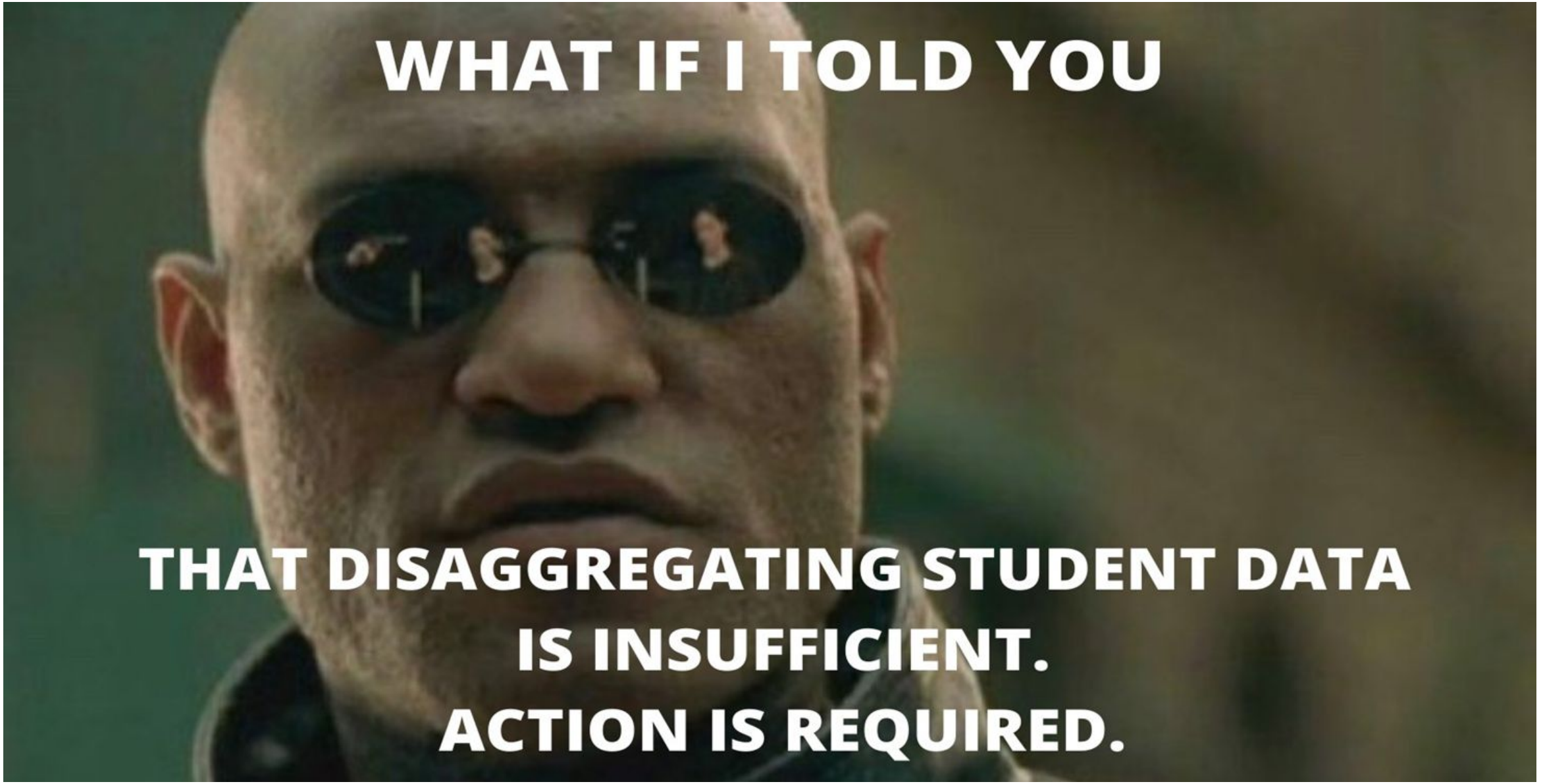
P.91 Becoming a student-ready college

Asset-Minded

- *Focuses on strengths that diverse students bring to the classroom.*
- *Direct response to deficit-minded models of the past. Ensuring equity for an increasingly diverse student population relies on today's educators viewing student differences as assets and not deficits.*

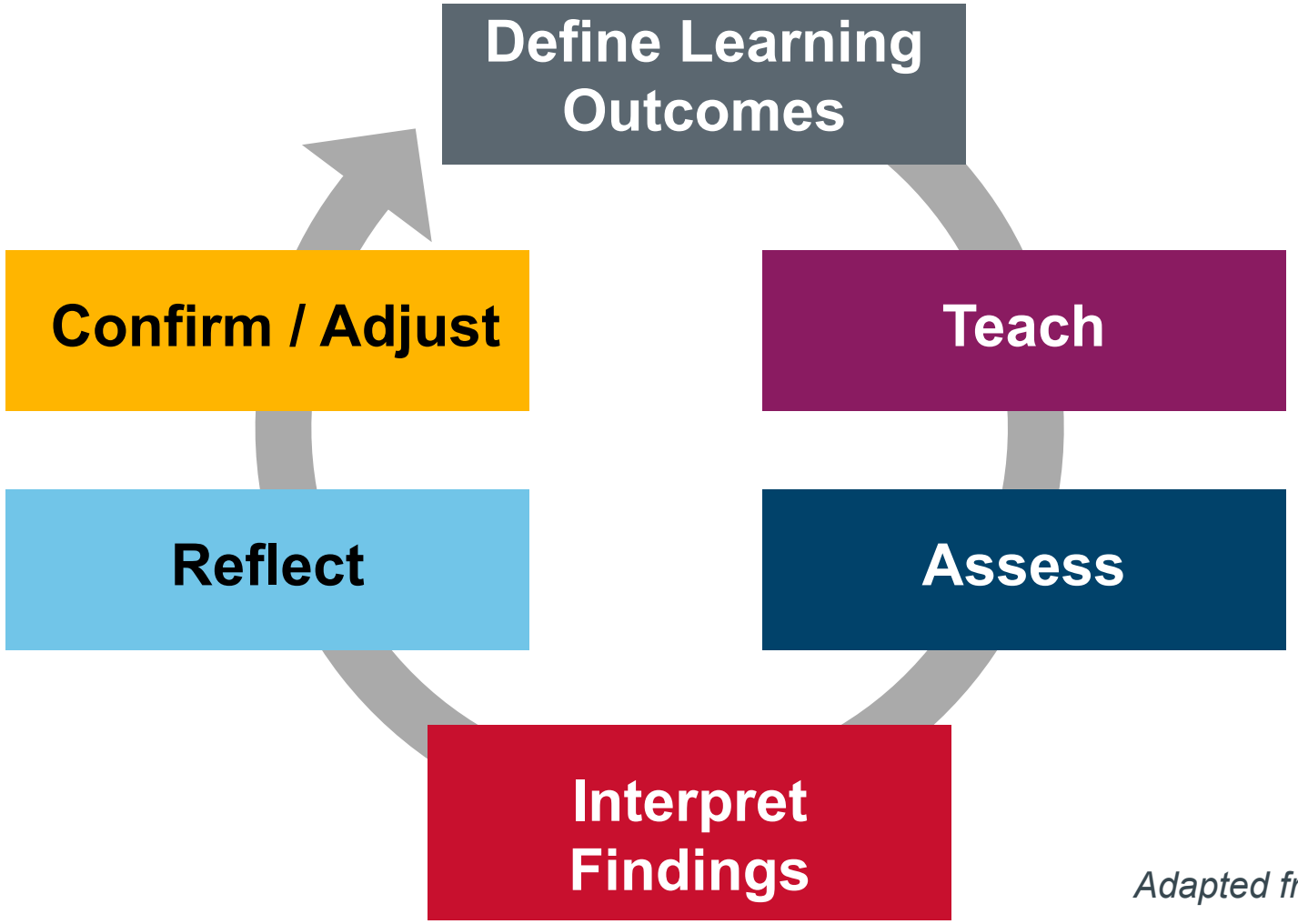
Source: asset-based pedagogies

Nuanced Data Picture



Case Study #1: Gen Ed Assessment

Assessment Cycle



Adapted from Wiggins & McTighe

3 Big Challenges with our GenEd Direct Assessment

1. A **mismatch** between our goals for assessment and our assessment design
2. Assignments from Gen Ed courses **didn't explicitly connect** to the learning outcomes
3. **Closing the loop**

Compliance/ Reporting	**Measurement**
Student-Centered	**Teaching & Learning**

Solution: Faculty Assessment Fellow Pilot

- ✔ Approve Gen Ed courses
- ✔ Assessment-related professional development
- ✔ Co-design and co-lead assessment
- ✔ Co-lead faculty engagement / workshops
- ✔ Partner on meaning making
- ✔ Help to close the loop

Writing Pilot Assessment

1	Kick-off workshop with faculty – **assignment alignment and transparency**
2	Direct Assessment: **collected assignment prompts** along with papers; conducted a **content analysis**
3	**Closing the loop** with a shorter report emphasizing data that confirm teaching practices or suggest improvements.

What do we mean by “Transparency”?

“Transparent teaching and learning methods make explicit to students **HOW** and **WHY** they are learning course content in particular ways.”

TILT



Why is Transparency Important?

In a national study of impact of transparency by TILT:

- ALL students benefited from more transparency
- First gen/underserved populations showed greater benefits.



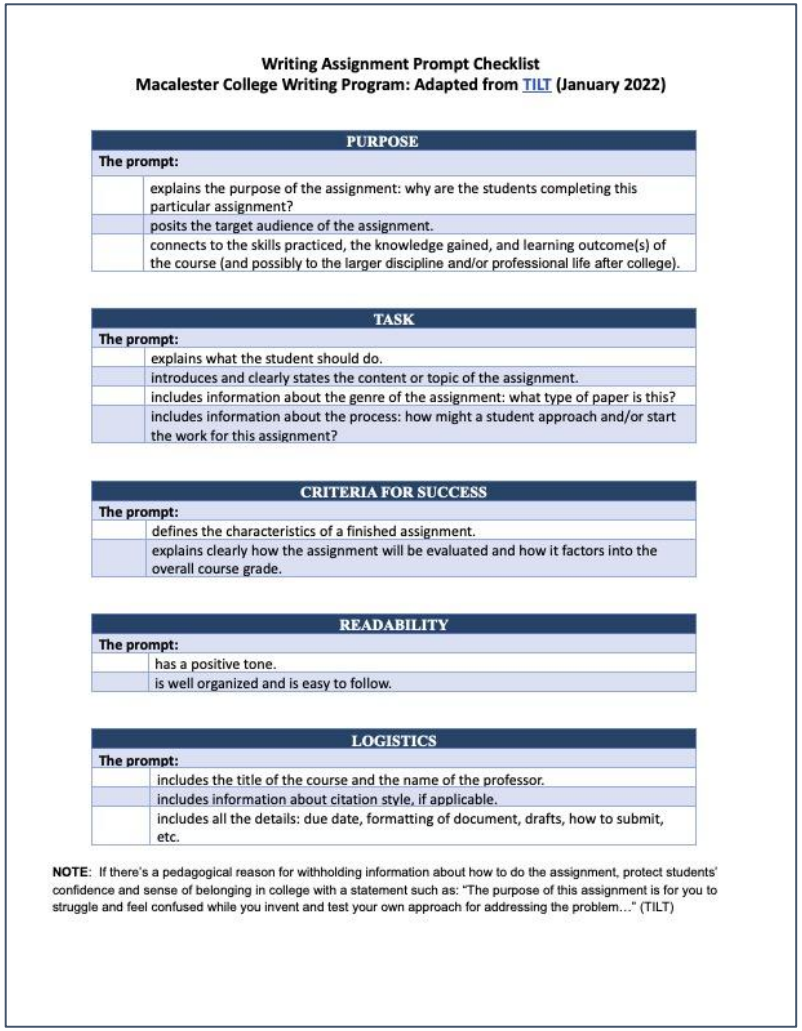
Three Elements of Transparent Design



TILT

Checklist for Assignment Prompts

- Highlights elements that make an assignment prompt transparent and thus more equitable
- Helps ensure that the assignment matches the LOs that we assess
- Resource that faculty found most useful in the workshop



Writing Assignment Prompt Checklist
Macalester College Writing Program: Adapted from TILT (January 2022)

PURPOSE	
The prompt:	
	explains the purpose of the assignment: why are the students completing this particular assignment?
	posits the target audience of the assignment.
	connects to the skills practiced, the knowledge gained, and learning outcome(s) of the course (and possibly to the larger discipline and/or professional life after college).

TASK	
The prompt:	
	explains what the student should do.
	introduces and clearly states the content or topic of the assignment.
	includes information about the genre of the assignment: what type of paper is this?
	includes information about the process: how might a student approach and/or start the work for this assignment?

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS	
The prompt:	
	defines the characteristics of a finished assignment.
	explains clearly how the assignment will be evaluated and how it factors into the overall course grade.

READABILITY	
The prompt:	
	has a positive tone.
	is well organized and is easy to follow.

LOGISTICS	
The prompt:	
	includes the title of the course and the name of the professor.
	includes information about citation style, if applicable.
	includes all the details: due date, formatting of document, drafts, how to submit, etc.

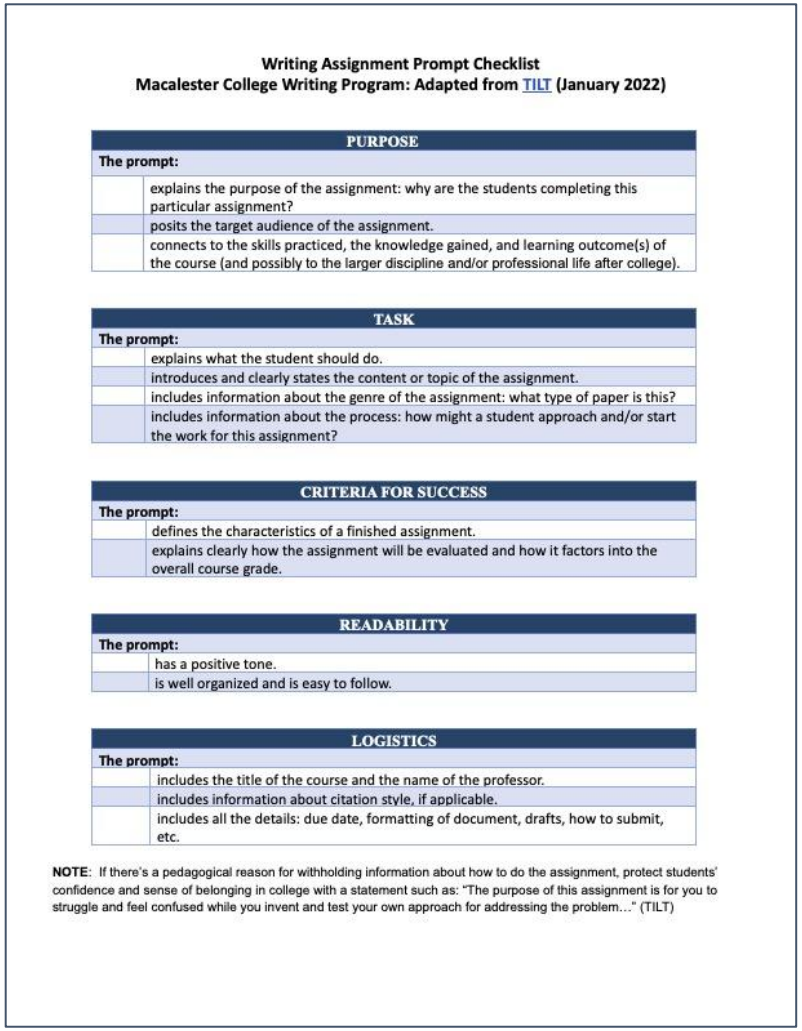
NOTE: If there's a pedagogical reason for withholding information about how to do the assignment, protect students' confidence and sense of belonging in college with a statement such as: "The purpose of this assignment is for you to struggle and feel confused while you invent and test your own approach for addressing the problem…" (TILT)

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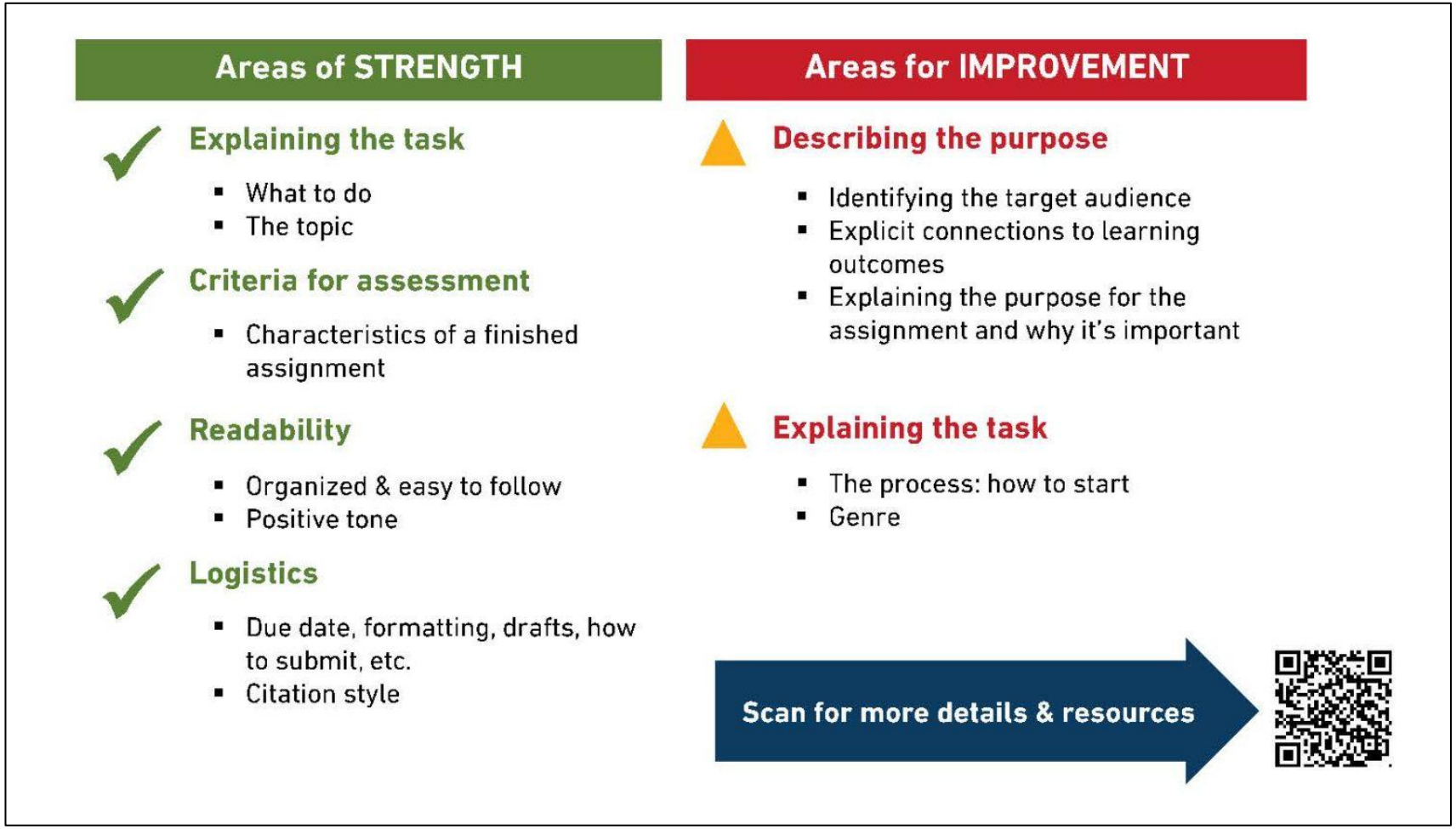
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Content Analysis and Closing the Loop

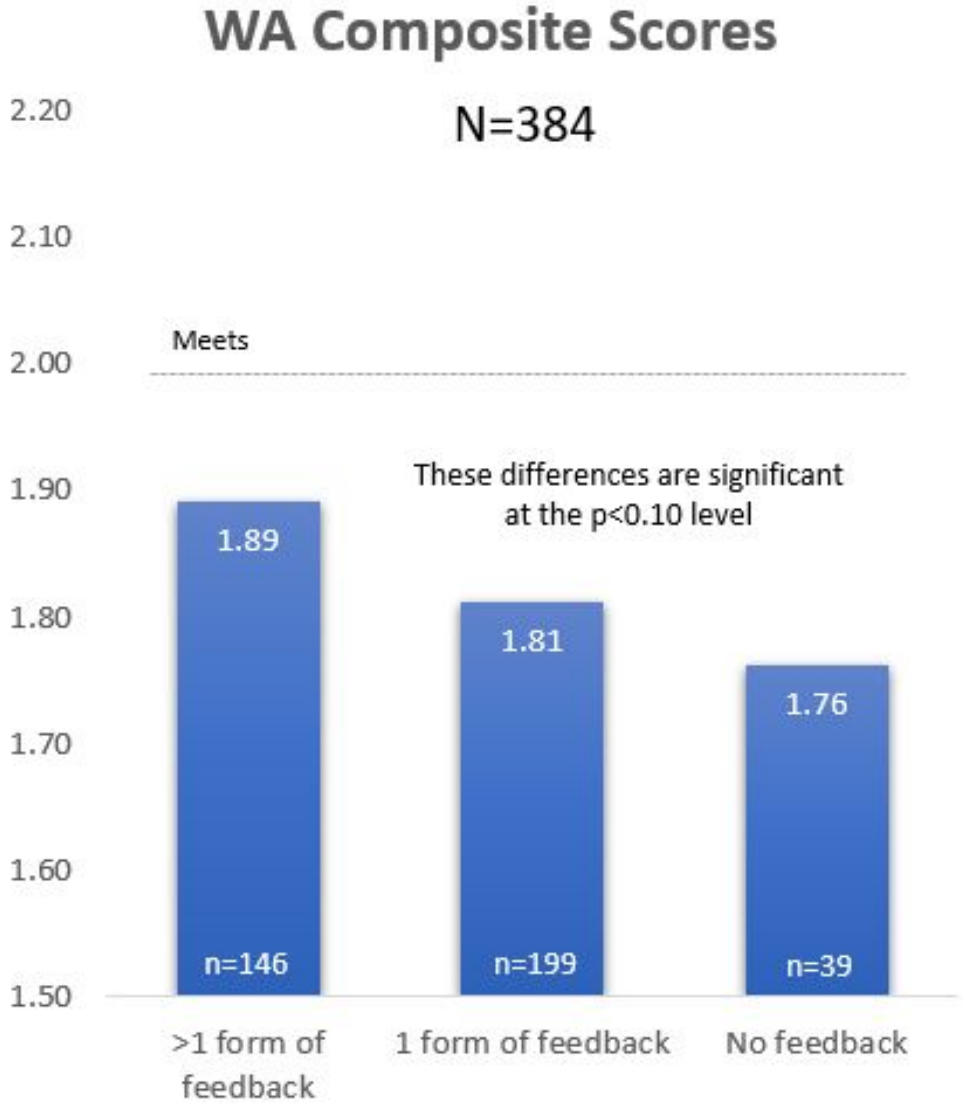


Writing Pilot Assessment

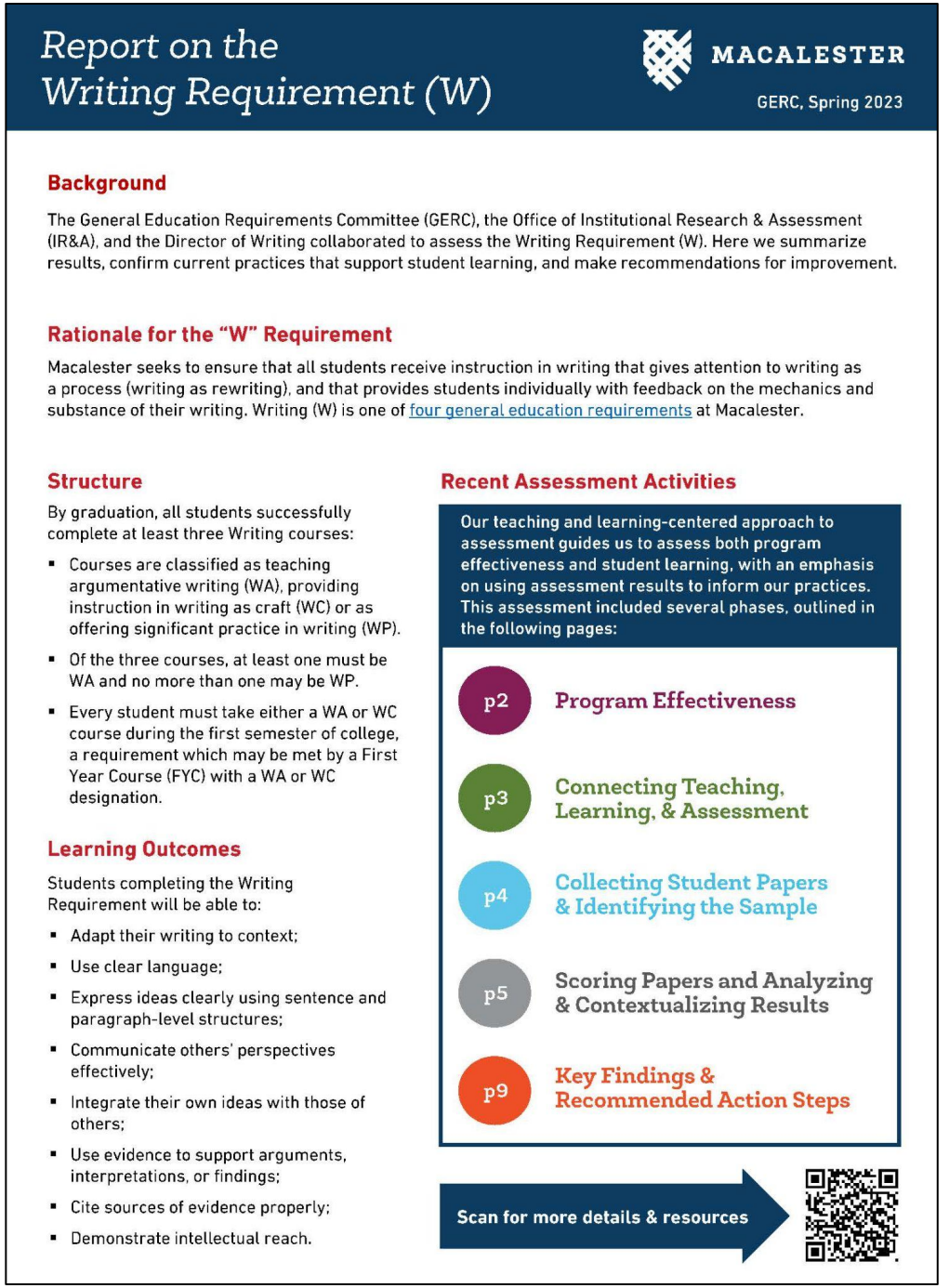
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Assignment-level analysis

- Data from a survey of all 40 participating WA course instructors provides additional context on the factors driving writing scores.
- For ex: instructors were asked whether feedback was provided on earlier drafts and if this came from the instructor, from peers or another method (or some combination).
- This “assignment level” data was matched back to the dataset of student paper scores to allow for further analysis.



Sharing the Summary Report & Closing the Loop



Report on the Writing Requirement (W)

MACALESTER

GERC, Spring 2023

Background

The General Education Requirements Committee (GERC), the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (IR&A), and the Director of Writing collaborated to assess the Writing Requirement (W). Here we summarize results, confirm current practices that support student learning, and make recommendations for improvement.

Rationale for the "W" Requirement

Macalester seeks to ensure that all students receive instruction in writing that gives attention to writing as a process (writing as rewriting), and that provides students individually with feedback on the mechanics and substance of their writing. Writing (W) is one of four general education requirements at Macalester.

Structure

By graduation, all students successfully complete at least three Writing courses:

- Courses are classified as teaching argumentative writing (WA), providing instruction in writing as craft (WC) or as offering significant practice in writing (WP).
- Of the three courses, at least one must be WA and no more than one may be WP.
- Every student must take either a WA or WC course during the first semester of college, a requirement which may be met by a First Year Course (FYC) with a WA or WC designation.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing the Writing Requirement will be able to:

- Adapt their writing to context;
- Use clear language;
- Express ideas clearly using sentence and paragraph-level structures;
- Communicate others' perspectives effectively;
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others;
- Use evidence to support arguments, interpretations, or findings;
- Cite sources of evidence properly;
- Demonstrate intellectual reach.

Recent Assessment Activities

Our teaching and learning-centered approach to assessment guides us to assess both program effectiveness and student learning, with an emphasis on using assessment results to inform our practices. This assessment included several phases, outlined in the following pages:

p2 Program Effectiveness

p3 Connecting Teaching, Learning, & Assessment

p4 Collecting Student Papers & Identifying the Sample

p5 Scoring Papers and Analyzing & Contextualizing Results

p9 Key Findings & Recommended Action Steps

Scan for more details & resources

Case Study #2: Classroom Community

Case Study #3: Classroom Community

Status Quo

- Macalester has 62% more domestic BIPOC students in 2021 v. 2012
- Non-dominant groups had significantly lower overall GPAs in first two years and reported lack of belonging in classrooms and lower experiences of support.

Case Study #3: Classroom Community

Status Quo

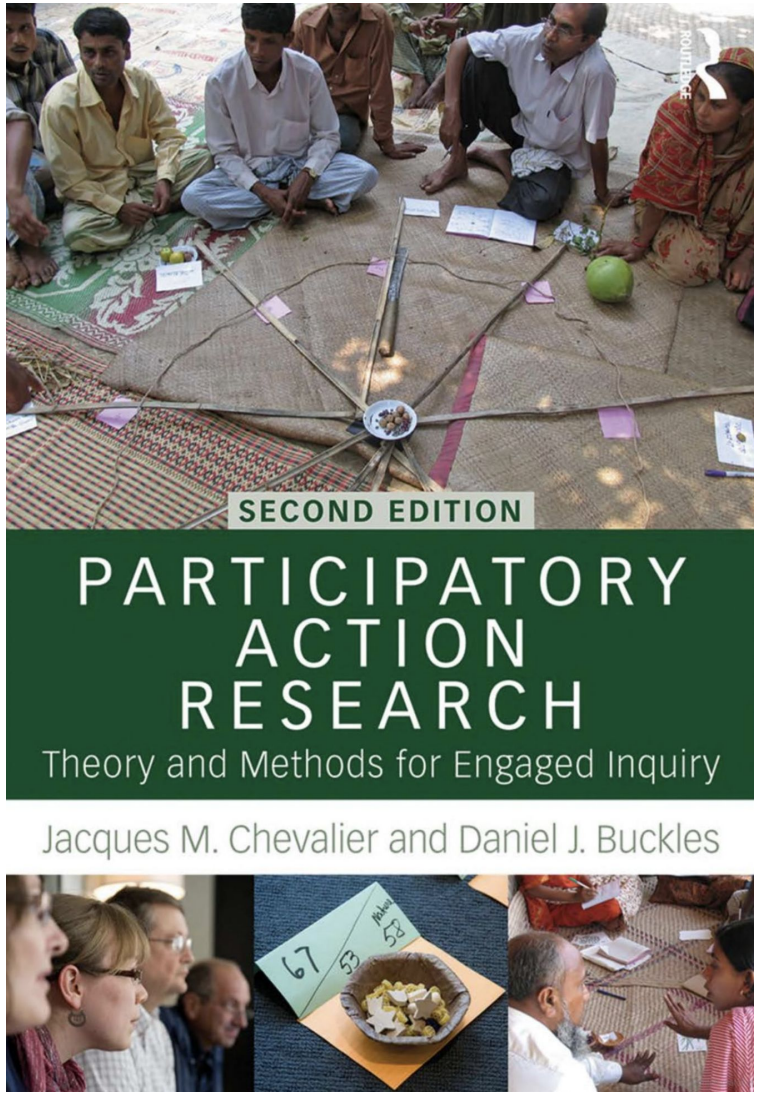
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Inclusive Assessment

Interactive Classroom Activity inspired by Participatory Action Inquiry

Participatory Action Inquiry

Any methodical investigation where the parties engage in concrete action and investigation towards collaborative problem solving and goal attainment. An action inquiry, however, may not involve the advancement of general knowledge in a particular field, as action research.



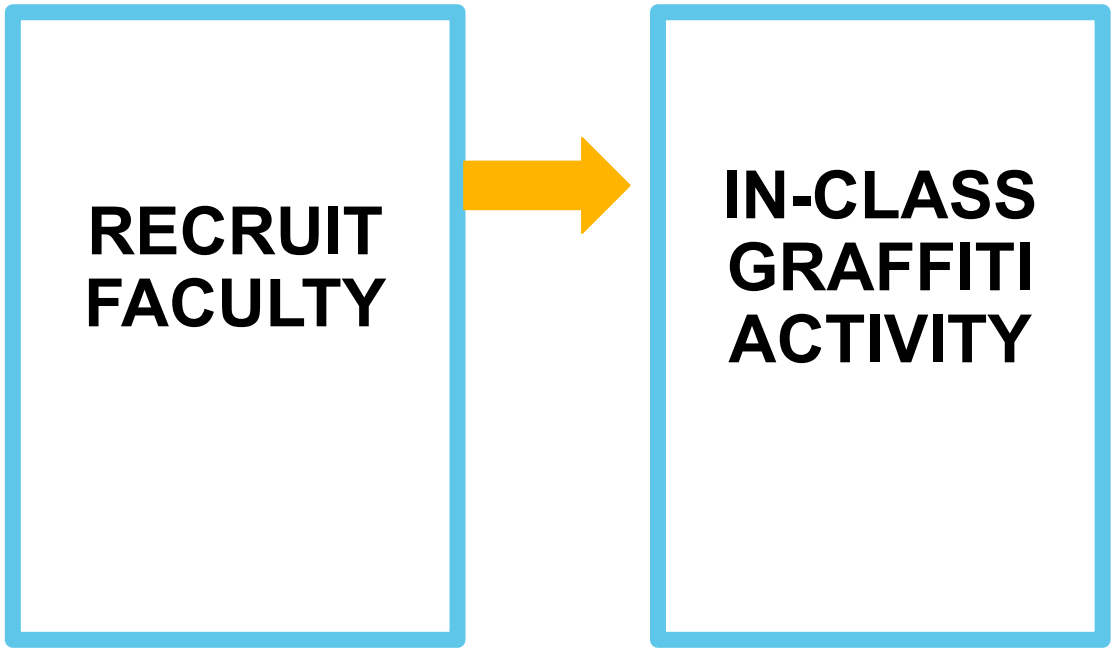
The Three Pillars of PAR

"…participatory action research is both the medium for change and the method of analysis of the change."
Embury (2015)

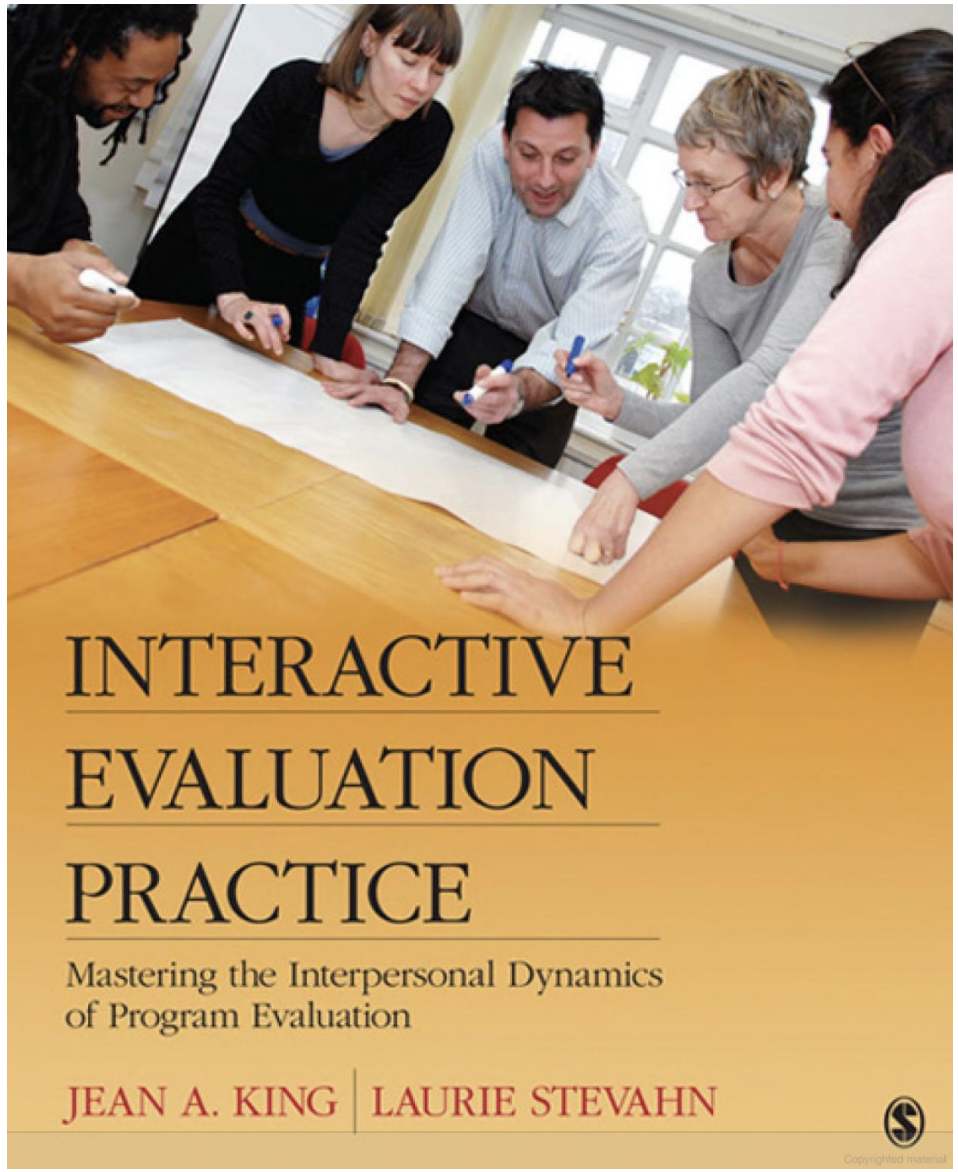


Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry (2019)

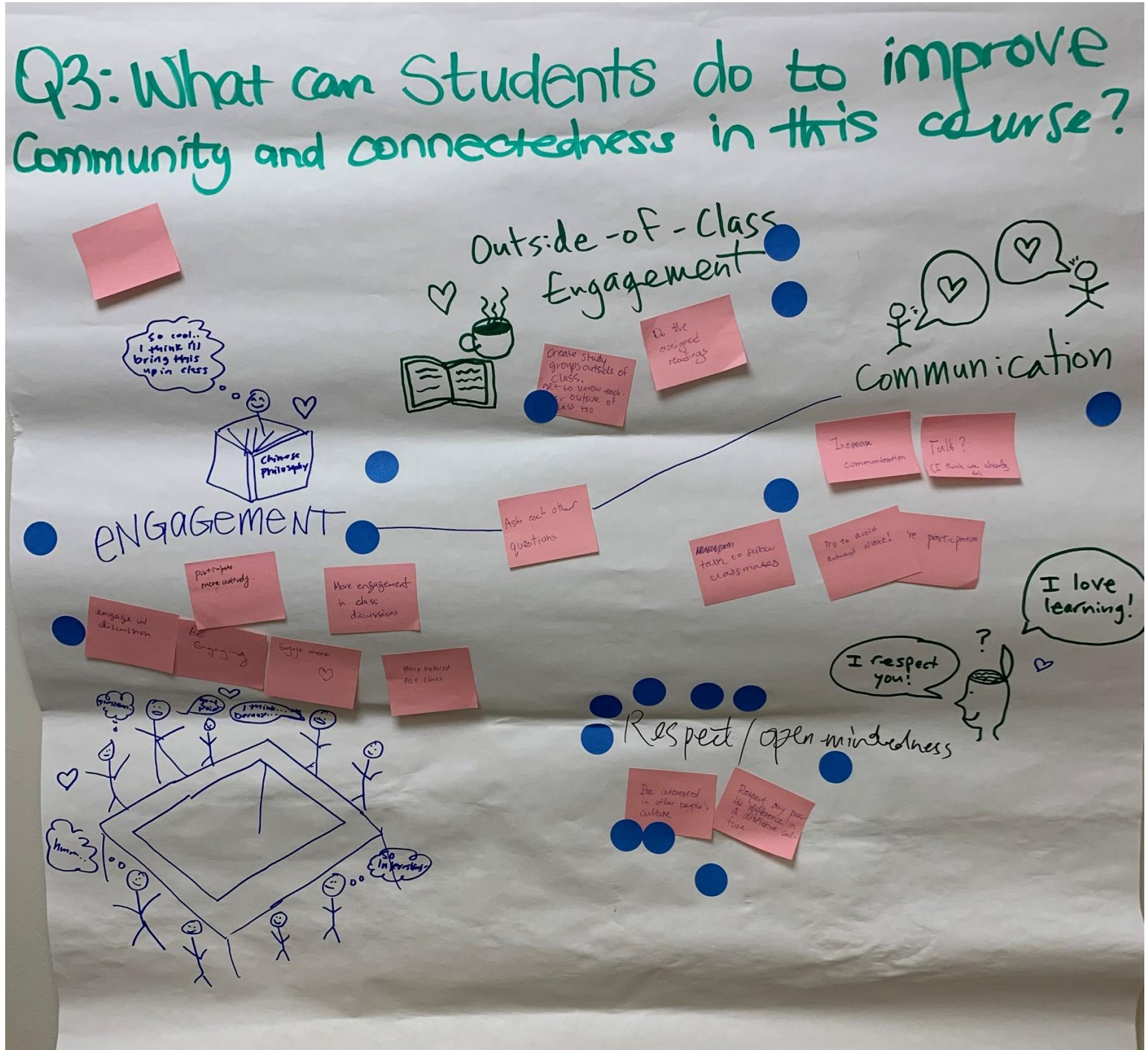
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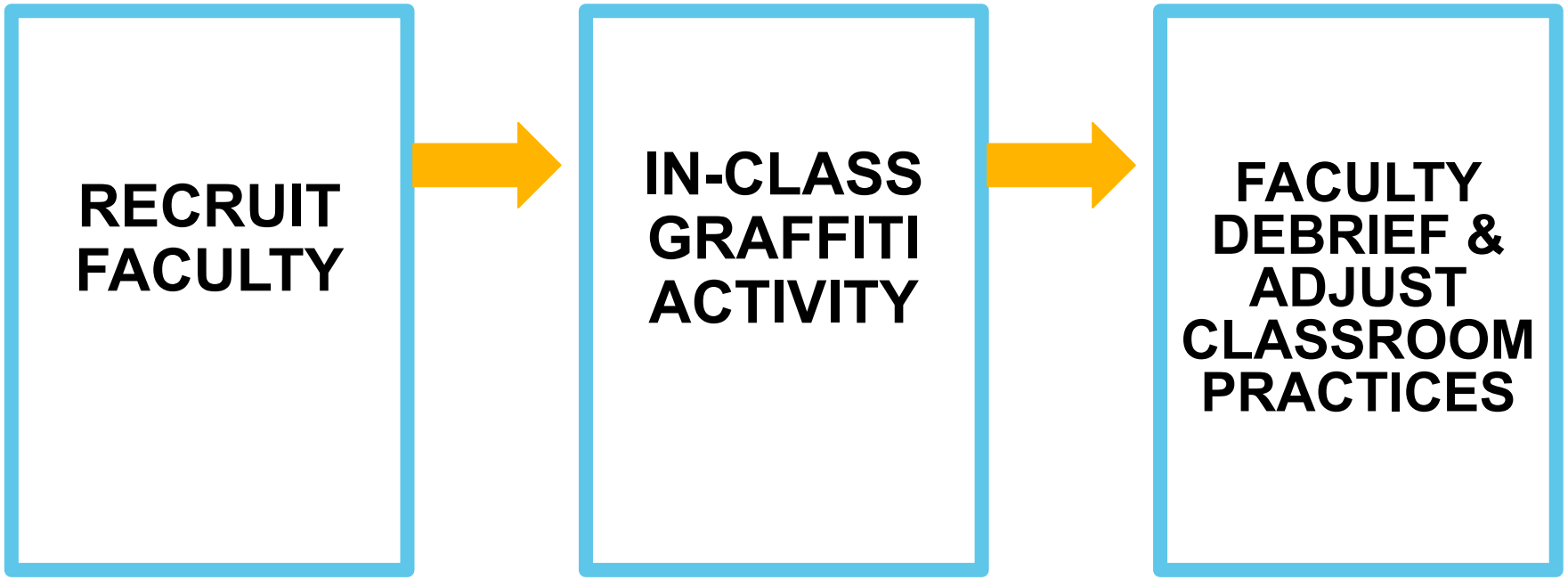
Graffiti Activity



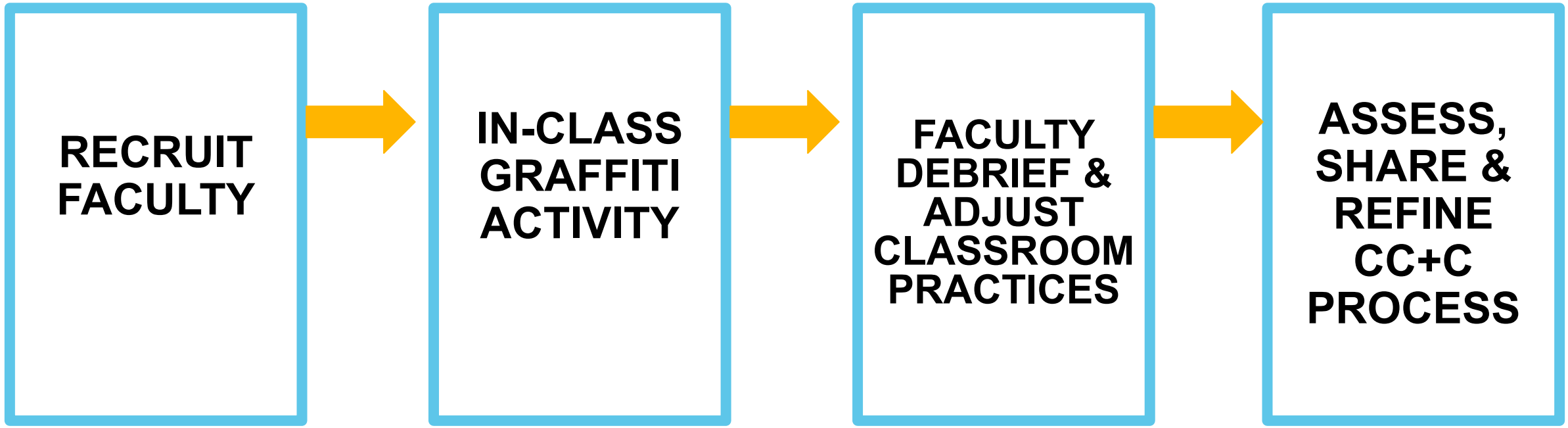
- 1 - 2 Facilitators
- 45 – 60 minutes during class, including intro
- Students provide **individual input** about the classroom community:
  - What's **working well**?
  - What are **barriers**?
  - What can the **students** do?
  - What can the **instructor** do?
- Students **work together in groups** to identify themes
- Students **individually prioritize** themes that are most important


Q3: What can Students do to improve Community and connectedness in this course?
Outside-of-Class Engagement
Create study groups outside of class. opt to know each other outside of class too
Do the assigned readings
So cool.. I think I'll bring this up in class
Chinese Philosophy
Communication
Increase communication
Talk?
(I think we already do)
ENGAGEMENT
Ask each other questions
Participate more actively.
More engagement in class discussions
engage in discussion
Engaging
Engage more
Being prepared for class
Try to avoid awkward silence!
're participation
I love learning!
I respect you!
Respect/open-mindedness
Be interested in other people's culture
Respect and pay the differences in a diverse cul- ture.
Hmm...
So interesting

Case Study #3: Classroom Community



Case Study #3: Classroom Community



Cultivating invitation and belonging



Q&A or Takeaway


MUCH TO LEARN,
WE ALL STILL HAVE.
imgflip.com