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## Importance of Reflective, Collaborative and Transparent Practices to Close the Assessment Loop

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# Workshop 2 - Importance of Reflective, Collaborative and Transparent Practices to Close the Assessment Loop

WMU Assessment in Action Conference

Vicki L Wise, PhD



*Thank you all for attending!*

*Thank you Karen, Jennifer, Derek, Bryon  
and the planning committee!*

# Me & My Journey

## Oregon

Portland State University  
Student Affairs

Oregon State University  
Public Health Assessment  
and Accreditation

## Nebraska

Gallup Organization

Millard Public Schools

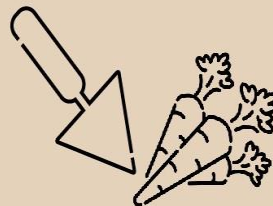
## Virginia

James Madison University  
Center for Assessment and  
Research Studies

Institutional Research

College of Education

What I like to do:



... measuring student learning and experience is by far the easiest step in the assessment process. The real challenge begins once faculty, staff, administrators, and students at institutions try to use the evidence to improve student learning.

- Blaich, C. F., & Wise, K. S. (2011, p 2).

# Our journey together today

In this session we explore the importance of closing the assessment loop and how collaboration, reflection and transparency are necessary conditions for doing so. My hope is that you will learn practical ways and promising practices to make assessment more meaningful and to close the loop.

## **Learning outcomes**

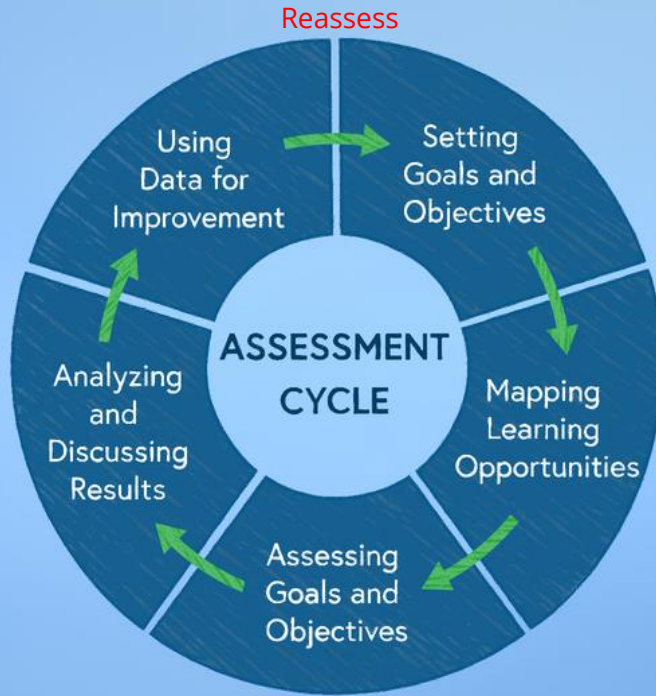
- Examine the values of closing the assessment loop.
- Identify the challenges to closing the assessment loop.
- Explore strategies such as collaboration, reflection and transparency to make assessment more meaningful and to increase the likelihood of closing the loop.

**Self-reflection Activity (5 minutes). Do this on your own.**

What does closing the loop in assessment mean to you? Why is it important?

**Does anyone want to share out in the chat? If so, I will read out a handful of these.**





Source: adapted from the Office of Assessment and Planning at Lehman College (CUNY).

This is an assessment cycle. We close the assessment loop to make evidence-informed decisions about:

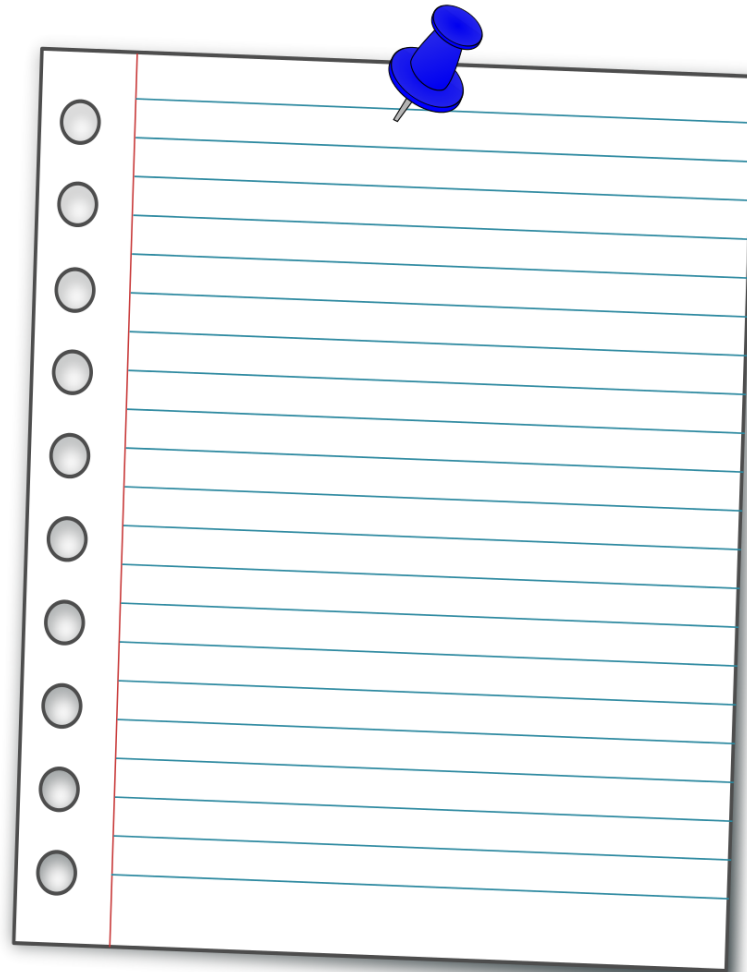
- what our students know and can do,
- how effective we are in the delivery of our programs and services,
- how programs align with the university/division mission and goals, and
- how we are good stewards of resources.



**Self-reflection Activity (10 minutes).**  
**Do this on your own.**

Closing the assessment loop is well documented to be challenging. Why do you think this is the case?

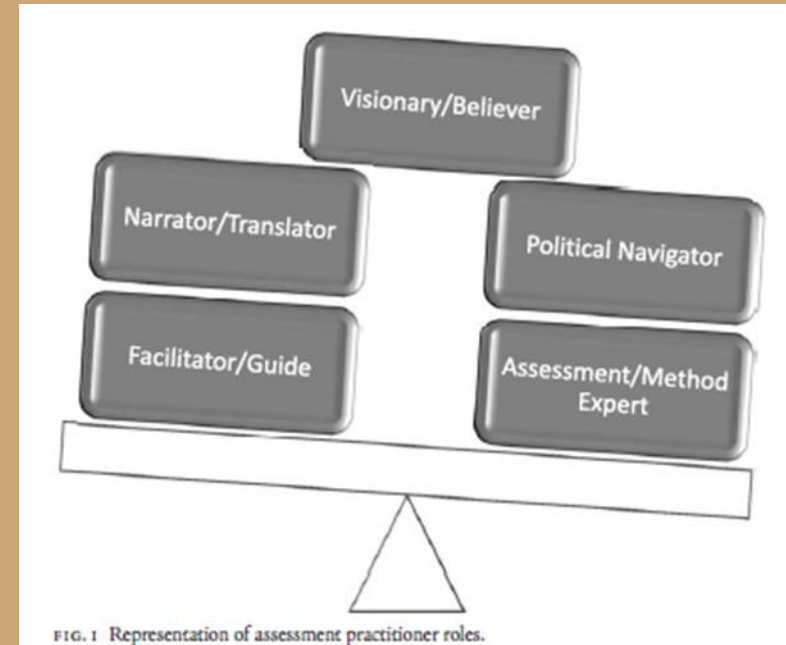
**Does anyone want to share out in the chat? If so, I will read out a handful of these.**



Some reasons supported by research...

- Assessment for accountability and accreditation
- Lack meaning/value
- Skills and abilities
- Recognition and reward
- Going it alone, just too much
- Fear of “poor” findings
- Other reasons you shared

Assessment work is relational. We all have balancing acts in our jobs; and the expectations of doing assessment adds to this because of the skills and dispositions needed.



Jankowski and Slotnik (2015)

# Assessment is relational



Courtesy: Daily-shirt.com

Relationship building asks of us to

- Engage in self reflection
- Gain trust
- Listen actively and reflect back
- Provide supportive words and tone
- Minimize distance (and power differences) between me and subject matter expert (them)
- Meet people where they are in skills/assessment work
- Emphasize progress
- Remain flexible in approach
- Co-create meaning

***Collaboration and relationship-building have been identified as best practices toward meaningful engagement in the assessment process.***

-cited by Clucas & Polychronopoulos in RARE Model: Interpersonal Strategies for Inclusive and Collaborative Assessment Practice webinar

# Practices to close the assessment loop

*Let's look at these  
in detail*

Assess for learning

Empower people

Build in reflection

Be realistic

Treat assessment as scholarship

Use the whole toolbox

Feedback for all

Tell your story

Be transparent

Recognize progress

# Practices to close the assessment loop. We want to...

Assess for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Assess for meaning making, tie to values.</li><li>▪ Measure fewer things more deeply, focus outcomes.</li><li>▪ Assess for continuous improvement, not just accountability.</li></ul>
Empower people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Involve others in making sense of data.</li><li>▪ Provide guided direction to make sense of data.</li></ul> <p><i>Ask: What do you think this means? Does this confirm or disconfirm what we have seen for ourselves or in other data?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Encourage speculation.</li><li>▪ Incorporate student voices in assessment process.</li></ul>
Build in reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Build in time &amp; resources for reflection. Take a pause in collecting.</li></ul>

# Practices to close the assessment loop. We want to...

Be realistic and recognize progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Change takes times. Assessment done well takes time, interpreting and using findings takes time, re-assessing changes made takes time.</li><li>▪ Measure incremental change, progress.</li><li>▪ Celebrate successes along the ways! Recognizing practice improves assessment practice, and it raises its visibility and importance.</li></ul>
Treat assessment as scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Improves the quality of assessment, fosters transparency and sharing.</li></ul>
Use the whole toolbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Do a data audit.</li><li>▪ Partner with IR Office.</li><li>▪ Use a variety of assessment tools, some created locally and some standardized, and (in) &amp; direct measures of student learning.</li><li>▪ Combine data collection efforts to have more usable large-scale data, and to minimize silos.</li></ul>

# Practices to close the assessment loop. We want to...

Provide feedback for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Use feedback throughout the assessment cycle to improve the process.</li><li>▪ Include students in assessment processes and use their formative feedback.</li><li>▪ Share assessment findings with participants; let them know their voices matter, solicit feedback on findings.</li></ul>
Tell our story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Stories make data more relatable and give voice to the data. Humanizes data.</li><li>▪ Summarize &amp; disseminate information to fit the needs of various stakeholders.</li></ul>
Be transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Make meaningful, understandable information about student learning and institutional performance (assessment) readily available to stakeholders.</li><li>▪ Transparency motivates us to be ethical, and to draw conclusions that are well-supported and clearly-reasoned.</li></ul>

# Promising practices

- Closing the loop
  - Portland State University, Neuberger Hall Lobby Survey

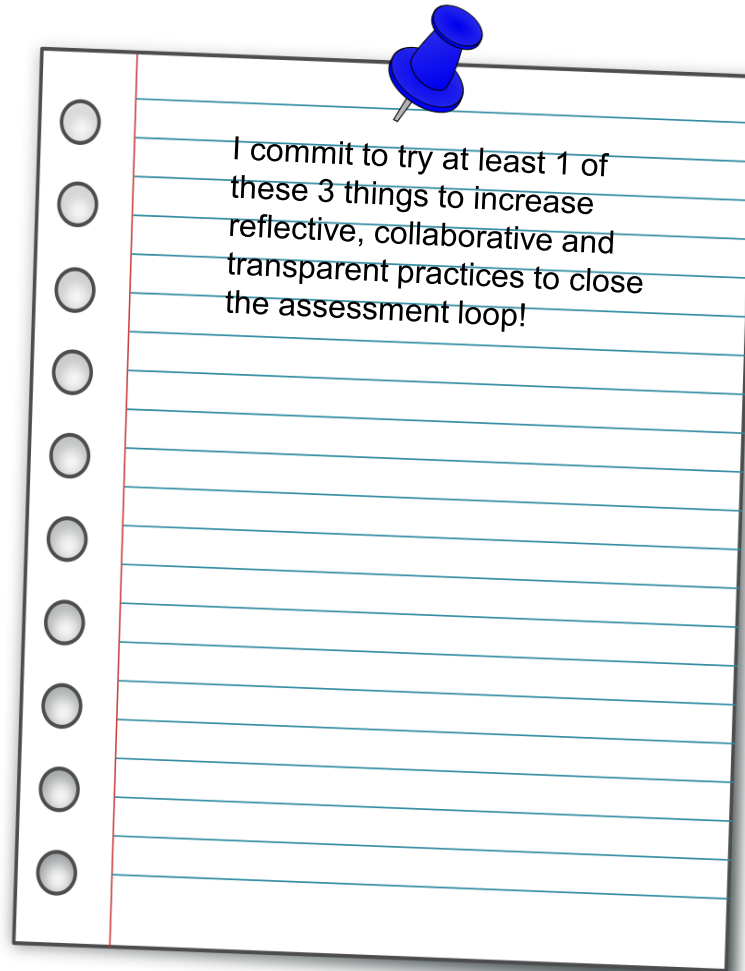
Collaborative effort between Registration & Records, Degree Requirements, Student Financial Aid and the Bursar's office to understand better students' understanding of policies, procedures, and deadlines. Survey included survey and test items. Results were used to improve their financial literacy program, to change their website making information easier to navigate and understand. A follow-up survey was conducted two years later to measure impact of change.
- Assessment day
- Assessment awards
  - Emerging Practice and Excellence & Innovation in Assessment Award



## Self-reflection Activity (5-10 minutes) and share out

What three things might you try in your programs and services to increase reflective, collaborative and transparent practices to close the assessment loop?

Does anyone want to share out in the chat? If so, I will read out a handful of these.



**In the chat...**



**What questions remain unanswered?**

**Any muddy points?**

**You can reach out to me at [vickilwise@gmail.com](mailto:vickilwise@gmail.com) if you have further questions.**

# References

- Blaich, C., & Wise, K. (2011). From gathering to using assessment results: Lessons from the Wabash national study. National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Retrieved at [http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/Wabash\\_001.pdf](http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/Wabash_001.pdf)
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