

Beyond the Lab Report: Using Non-scientific Genres to Facilitate and Assess First-Year Student Learning

Elizabeth Hogan¹, Gregory McGee², and Neal Abrams³

¹SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, ² Environmental Biology Department,
³Department of Chemistry, Environmental Studies, Writing Program, 1 Forestry Dr., 105-B Moon,
Syracuse NY13210, USA
(eshogan@esf.edu)

Many of our first-year students come to us without having written (or read) a lab report and are understandably daunted by this “new” field-specific genre of writing. As a result those initial forays into the genre often fail to accurately reflect what students have learned through their primary research, and present challenges in assessing an individual student’s mastery of the content or in determining how successfully a given experiment facilitated students’ collective learning. As first-year students develop proficiency in the genre, their formal lab report writing can be supplemented with other more familiar, non-scientific genres (informal responses, essays, letters, oral presentations, and even children’s books or comic strips) geared to public audiences. Allowing students to share or develop their knowledge of biological concepts through other forms or low stakes “writing to learn” exercises might permit them to more confidently communicate what they’ve come to understand through their experiments; prepare them to write more detailed, analytical lab reports; and open possibilities for discussing best practices for communicating science to public audiences. Presenters will share strategies they’ve used with first-year STEM students, and participants will share and discuss other options for using non-scientific genres of writing in laboratory courses.

Mission, Review Process & Disclaimer

The Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE) was founded in 1979 to promote information exchange among university and college educators actively concerned with teaching biology in a laboratory setting. The focus of ABLE is to improve the undergraduate biology laboratory experience by promoting the development and dissemination of interesting, innovative, and reliable laboratory exercises. For more information about ABLE, please visit <http://www.ableweb.org/>.

Papers published in *Tested Studies for Laboratory Teaching: Peer-Reviewed Proceedings of the Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education* are evaluated and selected by a committee prior to presentation at the conference, peer-reviewed by participants at the conference, and edited by members of the ABLE Editorial Board.

Citing This Article

Hogan, E., G. McGee, and N. Abrams. 2016. Beyond the Lab Report: Using Non-scientific Genres to Facilitate and Assess First-Year Student Learning. Article 40 in *Tested Studies for Laboratory Teaching*, Volume 37 (K. McMahon, Editor). Proceedings of the 37th Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE). <http://www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-37/?art=40>

Compilation © 2016 by the Association for Biology Laboratory Education, ISBN 1-890444-17-0. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. ABLE strongly encourages individuals to use the exercises in this proceedings volume in their teaching program. If this exercise is used solely at one's own institution with no intent for profit, it is excluded from the preceding copyright restriction, unless otherwise noted on the copyright notice of the individual chapter in this volume. Proper credit to this publication must be included in your laboratory outline for each use; a sample citation is given above.