THE
GERALDINE R.
DODGE
FOUNDATION

a society more humane -
a world more livable

The Dodge Assessment Initiative

The Initiative is about capacity building within organizations rather than about reporting back to Dodge

From the Dodge Assessment Initiative: Principles/Concepts of Assessment

I.   The primary purpose of assessment is *to improve performance,* not merely audit it.

II.   Good assessment requires being clear about *mission and goals,* the *standards to which you aspire,* and the *criteria* by which you would measure success.

III.   Therefore, it is about MEASURING WHAT MATTERS *(If you assess what you value, others will value what you assess.)*

IV.   And, necessarily, it becomes about PLANNING BACKWARDS.

From the Dodge Assessment Initiative: Principles/Concepts of Assessment

V.   Assessment that improves performance involves FEEDBACK.

VI.   Good assessment requires a *variety* of measures, data, and feedback.

VII. One tool for determining what matters most and getting useful feedback in the RUBRIC.

VIII. Good assessment is *ongoing.* It is about continuous improvement.

IX.   Done collectively, assessment builds community.

When these principles and practices become habits in an organization, people apply them to both their internal and external worlds. They create an *assessment culture.*

Rethinking Assessment

- Most of us are conditioned to think about assessment as praise or blame, success or failure, or who's in or out.

- We are also conditioned to think of it as a "test" that comes at the end of a course, program or process.
  - E.g., a standardized test that sorts students to identify a spectrum of performance rather than improve it.

- *What if assessment is something that is built into the work – to inform and improve the work, and in the process, have a result that people were not expecting … to improve performance, not merely audit it.*

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

Too much and too long, we seem to have surrendered community excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product . . . counts air pollution and cigarette advertising and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them. It counts the destruction of our redwoods and the loss of our natural wonders in chaotic sprawl.

Yet the Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials.

It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.

- Robert F. Kennedy

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

- Good assessment is about MEASURING WHAT MATTERS. *If you assess what you value, others will value what you assess.*

- Measuring What Matters requires the following:
  - Being clear about mission and goals, the standards to which you aspire, and the criteria by which you would measure success.
  - Expecting and demanding – questions like,
    - What are we trying to do here?
    - What would it look like if we succeeded?
    - What standards are we aspiring to?
    - By what criteria would we judge the success of our work?

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

- Leads to a discussion about what really matters & raises the question of how you go about measuring something that resists quantification – **most things that really matter do resist quantification**.

- The most common response from someone resisting an emphasis on assessment is "You can't measure that."   Response: **"If you can describe it, you can measure it."**

- If we haven't stopped long enough to ask what really matters, we end up measuring what is easiest to measure.

    - E.g., In evaluating the success of a workshop, an organization may say "Over a hundred people showed up."   Or an evaluation may show that over 70% of the participants found the workshop either 'helpful' or 'very helpful – but is that what matters most? It is likely that what matters most is whether or not the participants ever used the information of the workshop and how well they used it. **This data is much harder to get; you have to identify it as important early on, then design a way to get it.**

Concept

Planning Backwards

"What would it look like if we succeeded?"

Planning Backwards

- Good assessment is about design. To be good assessors we have to become good designers.

- Q. "What would it look like if our workshops met our highest hopes and goals?" A. "People would use the information– in fact, they would say the workshop significantly changed for the better their professional practice."

- Planning backwards, we would then say, "How are we going to get that information?" Answers might include: 1) an incentive for participants to be part of a follow-up study; or 2) inclusion of those participants in the design of pre- and post-workshop activity.

- Another benefit of planning backwards in a project is that it forces you to be clear about mission and goals, standards and criteria then help keep you on track.

Feedback

Assessment that improves performance involves exemplary FEEDBACK

(old way)
- Honest

- Tactful

- Useful

(better way)
- Contextual

- Descriptive

- Timely

Exemplary Feedback

- **<u>Contextual</u>** - The best feedback systems are set up in relation to goals, standards, and criteria for success. Within that context, we can ask for feedback that describes where our current efforts seem to be in relation to our vision of where we want to be.

- **<u>Descriptive</u>** - We need to defuse the idea that feedback is either praise or blame. But to describe what one sees, it helps to know what the person getting the feedback is trying to do (context).

- **<u>Timely</u>** - You need to get information when there is still time to use it, not when it is too late.

How do we design to get good feedback?

- **Good assessment requires a variety of measures, data, and feedback**
- **There is an axiom in the assessment world that no single assessment instrument can tell you everything you want to know. So it helps to be familiar with a variety of tools:**
  - questionnaires,
  - surveys,
  - interviews,
  - focus groups,
  - follow-up studies,
  - use of outside evaluators, etc.

DATA

- **What data would be worth noting year-to-year regarding (for example):**
  - ➤ **Quality of Experience**
  - ➤ **Institutional Reputation**
  - ➤ **Management Priorities and Achievements**
  - ➤ **Caliber and Diversity of Staff**
  - ➤ **Standards of Governance**

TOOL: Rubrics

Why Rubrics?

- **For feedback on performance rather than audit of performance**

- **Compares current performance against an exemplary standard**

- **Demystifies exemplary standard; takes it out of one person's head**

- **Gives specific description of higher levels of performance, tells us "what to do next"**

Why Rubrics?

- **They are a vehicle for ongoing discussion of what good work looks like**

- **Facilitates self-assessment in the context of what the whole organization is trying to accomplish**

- **Forces us to ask what is most worth measuring rather than what is easiest to measure**

What rubrics do we need?

- Is there a core performance in the work of our organization, one that would benefit from being described specifically so that people can get better at it?

- Are there key words in our mission, goals, or strategies that inspire us to ask, "What would that look like if we succeeded?"

- Is there something that matters a lot to us that resists quantification and measurement?

- Are there people in our organization who need feedback on something important?

What rubrics do we need?

- Is there something we need to talk about, and should talk about, that we haven't found a way yet to talk about?
- Is there an essential question to our work, one where we need a vehicle for ongoing discussion?
- Is there a job description in our organization that would benefit from being examined from the multiple perspectives of people who are affected by that person's performance?
- Are there things we do that have many parts, where we are not sure what parts of them matter more than others?

Rubrics

- Rubric-writing takes time, so it is a practical necessity to decide which ones are worth the time and effort. From an assessor's point of view, they should be written on those aspects of an organization's (or individual's) performance where fostering improvement would make the most difference in achieving mission, goals, and objectives. A danger with "new" rubric writers is that they want to write them on everything from breakfast cereals to late night television.

- Rubrics are great, but they are only one of the tools available to us. They are probably most useful in the planning stages of a project, or for feedback within an organization, where everyone understands the rubric.

Constructing an Analytic Scoring Rubric

This response, performance, or product provides evidence of
_____

proficiency in _____.

traits				
weights →				
4				
3				
2				
1				

Rubrics: Examples

Center for Whole Communities - Measures of Health

We strongly believe that the following sets of practices
  represent the most basic and essential elements of any
  evaluation or dialogue that aspires to be about the
  relationship between people, land and whole communities:

- Justice and Fairness
- Strengthening Connections between Land

and People

- Civic Engagement and Social Capital
- Healthy Natural Lands and Biodiversity
- Healthy Habitat for People
- Stewardship

MOH: Justice & Fairness

Practice	Negative Impact	Neutral
Sharing power and decision-making	People with privilege deny the importance of or are hostile towards discussing issues of power and privilege. There is no accountability of decision makers to disenfranchised communities.	The power and influence of disenfranchised people remains essentially unchanged. Dominant culture individuals and groups retain decision making power. People with privilege do not consider issues of power sharing.

MOH: Justice & Fairness

Modest	Strong	Highest Impact
Issues of power sharing and privilege are acknowledged by people and groups/organizations with privilege.

Attempts were made to invite disenfranchised people to give feedback on the project. | Issues of power sharing and privilege are acknowledged by people with privilege as being important.

Alliances are formed between people with privilege and disenfranchised people.

People and groups/organizations with privilege are held accountable to decisions made with disenfranchised people. | There is an active dialogue about power and privilege within the project. Sharing decision making and power is a top priority of all participants.

Strong alliances are formed between people with privilege and disenfranchised people based on a mutual commitment to an inclusive process of decision making.

Structures are in place to hold people with privilege accountable to decisions made with disenfranchised communities.

This work led to a meaningful and lasting change in policy by governments, foundations or non-government organizations to promote justice and fairness in access to and ownership of parks and land and the associated benefits. |

MOH: Civic Engagement and Social Capital

Practice	Negative Impact	Neutral
Creating spaces for community dialogue, learning and engagement	The project has removed or significantly degraded the quality of public spaces used by the community as informal gathering places.	There was no consideration given to the role of land and public spaces as important gathering places for people from across the community.

MOH: Civic Engagement and Social Capital

Modest	Strong	Highest Impact
The effort prevented a change in land use that would have reduced public gathering places or in other ways broken important community bonds.	The project created informal gathering places where diverse members of the community come together.	As a result of this work, diverse members of the community can be seen engaging with each other in public gathering places; community members better understand the range of physical, natural and cultural assets within the community; it helped create or restore a sense of "publicness" and a commitment to shared stewardship of the commons.

Measures of Health

I think the rubric system that "Measures of Health" uses is a real leap forward in practice, certainly for the movement of land conservation, but more generally for movement-building purposes. Because, although it is ranked, the qualitative nature of it is really about promoting discussion about what are we aiming for and what is effectiveness. And those are both really central issues right now.

Michel Gelobter, Redefining Progress

Rubrics: Examples

Focus Area	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Exemplary
	Green Flag GreenFaith Schools Rubric **DRAFT**			
Non-Toxic Products	Continued use of chemical-laden products.	Limiting exposure of students and staff to chemicals.	Tries samples of products and incorporates some 'green' products.	Tries samples of products, and makes the decision to eliminate all chemicals and switch entirely to 'green' products
	Not mindful of complaints by students, students' parents or facilities maintenance staff about ill effects of products. Continually ignoring complaints or input from school community.	Logging complaints by students, students' parents and facilities maintenance staff about ill effects of products.	Logging complaints by students and others, with a concern and willingness to address the issues.	Logging complaints, concern and willingness for the issues, and being proactive about bringing these people together to discuss the issues. Involving these stakeholders in purchasing decisions.
	Ignorance about what products are used and contents of products.	Aware that chemicals are used and they may not be good for the school, but they are complacent.	Aware of the harm with the chemicals used, familiar with contents of those products, MSDS sheets/product information up to date and available on campus.	Aware that the chemicals are harmful, and passionate about reducing this harmful exposure at the school. Familiar with contents of products, MSDS sheets/product information up to date and available on campus.
	Negative attitude towards purchasing changes by facilities maintenance staff.	Allow facilities maintenance staff to make purchasing decisions, but negative or indifferent attitude towards changes in purchasing.	Allow facilities maintenance staff to make purchasing decisions, but create dialogue between facilities staff and other school staff about purchasing. Positive attitude about changes in purchasing, including 'green' purchasing, but general ignorance about 'green' products.	Allow facilities maintenance staff to make purchasing decisions, and support dialogue between facilities staff and other school staff to create a collaborative purchasing atmosphere. Positive attitude about changes in purchasing, including 'green' purchasing, and enthusiasm and knowledge about 'green' purchasing.
	NO POLICY	NO POLICY	Mission statement or resolution about non-toxic products loosely in place, without many details.	Influential policy in place about non-toxic products, describing short and long term goals, a concrete mission statement, and reinforcing the commitment of the school towards a healthier school environment.

Rubrics: Examples

Reducing the Ecological Footprint of Dodge's Office

Greenwashing (i.e., we are not walking the talk)	The Green Collar Workplace		Green Office Frontiers
	Current Office	**New opportunities for the 2008 Maple Ave Office** *(team leader: Susan Pilshaw)*	
Attempt gas reduction, but no carpooling/no hybrids, etc.	Encourage fuel efficient car purchases; carpool when feasible; take public transit when feasible and encourage telecommuting	Implement bike and walk to work policies and/or incentives connected to the transit village in Morristown	Virtual office, or, alternatively, extensive telecommuting combined advanced mobility and clean transportation options
Indicators/examples:	*Indicators/examples:* Dodge hybrid incentive; Dodge telecommuting practices; flex-hours for individual commutes	*Indicators/examples:* if Dodge were to implement transit check or rideshare programs	*Indicators/examples:* Receptacles for plug-in hybrids, car-sharing program, clean fuel incentives, etc.
Happy to see that some conferences/events offers travel carbon offset option	Green travel policy (stay at green hotels where feasible, etc.)		Green travel commitment (virtual events, or alternatively, every trip offset, stay at green hotels only, etc.)
Indicators/examples: EGA annual conference offers a way for attendees to purchase travel offsets	*Indicators/examples:*	*Indicators/examples:*	*Indicators/examples:*

Focus on Human Resources: Contributions and Commitment

	Minimal	OK	Maximum
Board of Trustees			
Other Volunteers			
Artistic staff			
Administrative staff			
Part-time staff			
Consultants			
Donors			

Effective Boards

	Less effective	Effective	Most effective
Who Board Members ARE			
What TRAITS they have			
What Board members DO			

What do Trustees *DO* ?

	Low	Middle	High
At meetings			
Between meetings			
In community			
In relation to ED			

Done collectively, assessment builds community

- Assessment is about institutional and personal development

- When assessment is applied to our external work, the work gets better. When assessment is applied to our internal work, we shift the emphasis away from personalities and onto a collective vision and ever-increasingly effectiveness in reaching it. It puts at the center of our relationships with each other our mutual striving towards worthy and ambitious goals.

- What is more unifying, more edifying, and more fun than asking what our mission really is, what matters most to us, and how we can help each other achieve a vision of good work?

- When these principles and practices become habits in an organization, people apply them to both their internal and external worlds. They create an assessment culture.