

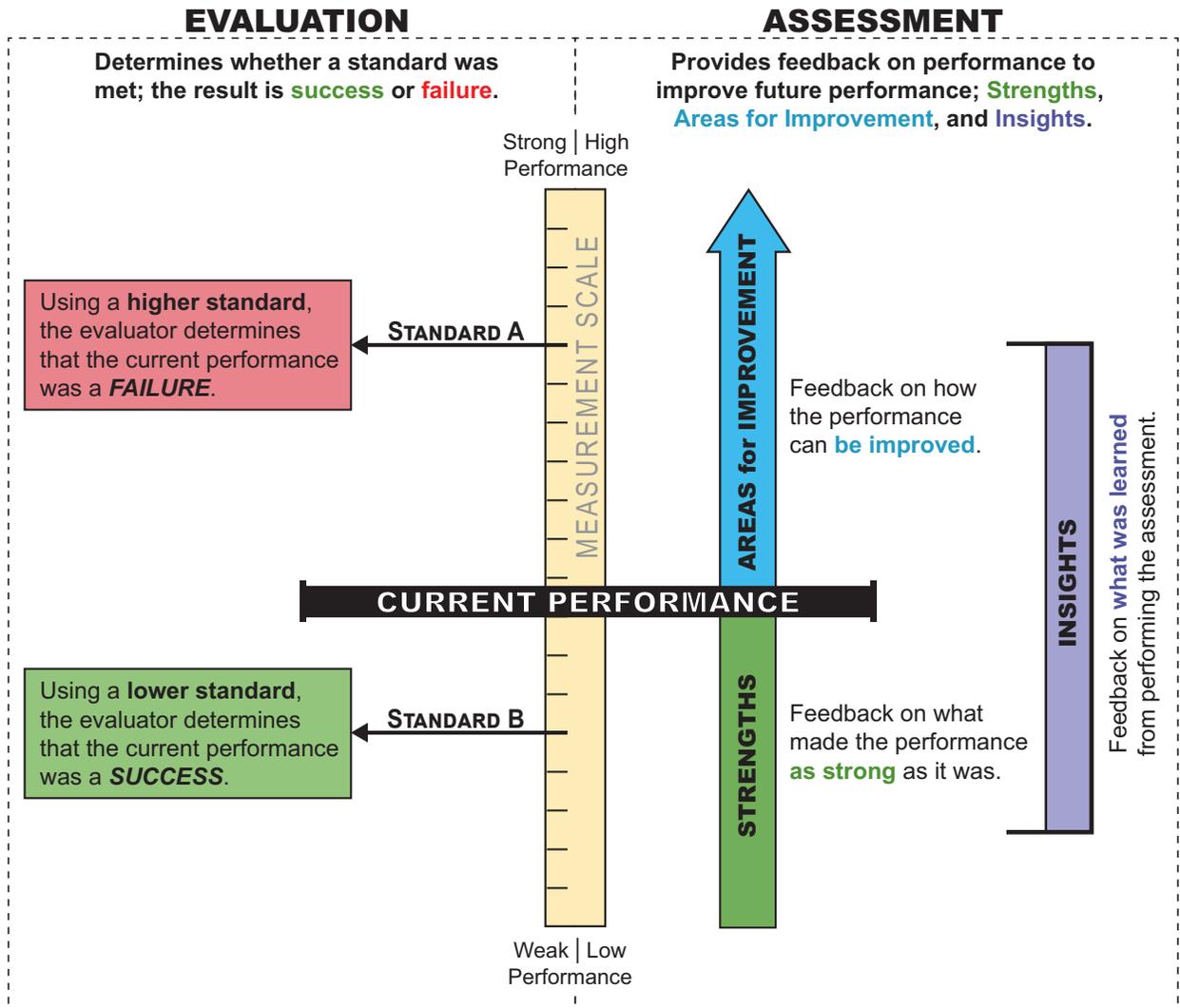
*Assessment is a process used for improving quality; evaluation is a process used for judging quality. An assessment is an analysis of current performance aimed at improving future performances by clarifying the reasons behind current performance strengths, determining potential improvements and implementing action plans for making them, and gaining insights and learning from each performance.*

The term *assessment* has been present in the educational lexicon for decades. Alverno College has been talking about it since 1973 (Alverno College, 1985). Trudy Banta became a central figure in the assessment movement with the publication of her book *Making a Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education* (Banta, 1993), and Angelo and Cross made “the first serious effort to meld assessment techniques with teaching tips” in *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (Angelo & Cross, 1988). Nevertheless, the goal of creating an assessment culture at most institutions of higher education has been elusive.

**Differentiating the Processes**

The terms *assessment* and *evaluation* are often used interchangeably and sometimes with variable meanings. To further confuse things, terms such as *formative* and *summative* are often added to both terms. By clearly distinguishing and differentiating the concepts of assessment and evaluation from one another, Pacific Crest eradicated a lot of ambiguity. It declared that assessment is a process for *improving* quality and is offered by a mentor whose desire it is to inspire growth while evaluation is a process for *judging* quality with consequences such as promotion and failure (Apple, 1991; see Figure 1). This

Figure 1



restored the utility of both terms, increasing the potential for meaningful dialogue or discovery. This strategic delineation helped to uncover some of the affective barriers that keep learners from embracing feedback (in short, because they are used to receiving evaluation and, as a result of that expectation, react defensively) and helped instructors develop more effective ways to frame their improvement- and growth-directed interventions.

### **Categorizing Assessment Feedback**

The spirit and practice of assessment, as defined in Figure 1, can be found in the pilot for Pacific Crest's first Process Education Teaching Institute (Apple, 1991). The materials describe the processes of assessment and self-assessment as pivotal with respect to quality learning and teaching. At the end of this event, organizers sought feedback about the institute from participants and that feedback led to major improvements in subsequent teaching institutes. As helpful as that was, the ultimate value of the assessment feedback was realized when the community analyzed the feedback it had given. The analysis identified three critical components of assessment as informed by Process Education:

1. **STRENGTHS:** what makes certain aspects of an experience or performance powerful, and why (and later how)
2. **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** aspect of the experience or performance that might be improved, with recommendations on how to do so
3. **INSIGHTS:** what was learned from the experience to increase our knowledge about activities and performances, including design, planning, delivery, and execution (lessons learned).

*SII-assessment* (Strengths, Improvements, and Insights) is the term coined and used in the *Faculty Guidebook* (Wasserman, 2007).

### **Methodical Assessment**

A methodology for performing SII-assessment was first documented in the *Teaching Institute Handbook* (Apple, 1995) as a way to help faculty improve their skills in performing assessment. The methodology was further refined in the *Assessment Institute Handbook* (Apple & Krumsieg, 2002) and given a final polish in the *Faculty Guidebook* module *Assessment Methodology* (Apple & Baehr, 2007). See Figure 2.

### **Scholarship on Assessment**

Beyond using professional development institutes as a crucible for implementing a shift towards a culture of assessment, the scholarship of assessment led to two major

manuscripts: *Differentiating Assessment from Evaluation as Continuous Improvement Tools* (Parker, Fleming, Beylerlein, Apple & Krumsieg, 2001) and *Keys to Improving Academic Assessment* (Utschig & Apple, 2009). The most recent edition of the *Faculty Guidebook* includes a series of modules, each of which gives educators the information and tools they need to begin benefitting from the improved educational practices and outcomes that assessment offers: *Overview of Assessment* (Baehr, 2007b), *Distinctions Between Assessment and Evaluation* (Baehr, 2007a), *Mindset for Assessment* (Jensen 2007a), *Moving Towards an Assessment Culture* (Utschig, 2007), *Performance Levels for Assessors* (Jensen, 2007b), *Assessing Assessments* (Anderson & Watson, 2007), and *Turning Evaluation into Assessment* (Watson, 2007).

### **Professional Development: Advancing the Practice of Assessment**

As part of the ongoing effort to effectively differentiate assessment from evaluation in order to realize the full benefits of each process, many Process Education institutes included as an integral component learning activities focused on the distinction between the two (Apple & Krumsieg, 1998), up to and including the *Student Success Institute Handbook* (Apple & Krumsieg, 2007) and the *Mentoring Handbook* (Apple, 2009). In 2001, with the help of Stony Brook and Penn State, Pacific Crest designed and implemented a stand-alone Assessment Institute designed to help faculty, staff, and administrators experience the differences in effects, procedures, and outcomes between an assessment culture (where the mindset is focused on continuous quality improvement) and an evaluation culture (where the mindset is focused on rendering judgment based upon the level of quality) (Apple & Krumsieg, 2002).

### **Program Review vs. Program Assessment**

The picture at the program level was not terribly different with respect to differentiating assessment from evaluation; while many colleges practiced program review (an evaluative practice to determine program feasibility), few practiced systematic program assessment. Even as Pacific Crest was increasingly focused on the critical role assessment plays in the ongoing process of improvement, a parallel conversation was taking place nationally, as accrediting bodies sought to help institutions effectively collect and use evidence of their students' learning as the primary indicator of current program quality and to help improve future program quality (Dan Apple, personal recollection). The time was right for a Program Assessment Institute (Apple & Krumsieg, 2001), and one of the first was held at the Ranger School of SUNY – ESF in 2001, leading directly to a model implementation of a program assessment system (Savage, 2002).

**Figure 2** Assessment Methodology

Step	Explanation
<b>1. Develop guidelines for the assessor to follow when assessing a performance.</b>	
<i>Both assessee &amp; assessor:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Define the purpose of the performance.</li> <li>b. Define the purpose of the assessment.</li> <li>c. Determine what is appropriate to be assessed.</li> <li>d. Agree on what should be reported and how it should be reported (for the assessment/feedback report).</li> </ul>
<b>2. Design the methods used for the assessment.</b>	
<i>Both assessee &amp; assessor:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Inventory a list of possible criteria to be used as part of the assessment.</li> <li>b. Choose the criteria from this list which best meet the previously established guidelines (Step 1).</li> <li>c. Determine an appropriate attribute (or set of attributes) for each of the chosen criteria (Step 2b) which will be used to assess the assessee's performance.</li> <li>d. Determine the appropriate scale for each attribute (Step 2c) which will be used to determine or measure the quality of the assessee's performance.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Collect information during the performance.</b>	
<i>The assessor:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Set up a system to complete and collect information pertaining to the attributes.</li> <li>b. Measure the collected information against the established attributes using the determined scales.</li> <li>c. Document the assessee's strengths, areas for improvement, and insights which will be shared with the assessee.</li> <li>d. Offer feedback during the performance, if appropriate and agreed upon beforehand, with the assessee.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Report the findings to the assessee.</b>	
<i>The assessor:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Share the assessment report with the assessee. This includes information gathered during the performance and how it relates to the criteria, along with feedback for improving future performances.</li> <li>b. Analyze a performance that is believed to be poor or of low quality. Determine what part is due to the information collected, the criteria chosen, and/or the performance itself.</li> </ul>

Assessment most effectively leads to improvement when it is part of ongoing practice. This means that it must be part of the very design of the operational context it is meant to improve. This design insight led directly to the Program Design Institute, based on the Methodology for Program Design (Davis, 2007b). It is no surprise that Step 19 of this methodology is “Design a program assessment system.” Numerous programs have implemented the methodology’s design steps, among them an honor's program (University of Indianapolis), an Emerging Scholars Programs (University of Alaska – Fairbanks, College of Rural Alaska, Kuskokwim Campus), and a Learning Communities Program (St. Augustine College) (Pacific Crest, 2015).

The focus on assessment at the program level led directly to numerous additional modules in the *Faculty Guidebook*:

- *Writing a Self-Study Report* (Racine, 2007b)
- *Methodology for Designing a Program Assessment System* (Collins & Apple, 2007)
- *Writing Performance Criteria for a Program* (Nibert, 2007)
- *Identifying Performance Measures for a Program* (Parmley & Apple, 2007b)
- *Constructing a Table of Measures* (Racine, 2007a)
- *Writing an Annual Assessment Report* (Parmley & Apple, 2007c)
- *Assessing Program Assessment Systems* (Parmley & Apple, 2007a)

## Course Evaluation vs. Course Assessment

Educators are used to grading — an evaluative process. And most courses have a course evaluation system that weights assignments or activities by percent or points, all of which contribute to the final grade, score, or percentage. But the principle of designing a system to ensure effective and ongoing improvement through assessment applies just as well to a course as to a program; in fact, there is much to be gained in aligning assessment practices at the program, course, activity, and individual level (see Figure 3). Few courses have a course assessment system — Step 19 of the Methodology for Course Design (Davis, 2007a) — the goal of which is to improve student learning, faculty facilitation, design and responsiveness of the course, and the course's materials and resources. Designing courses that featured integrated assessment became part of the professional development focus in the first Curriculum Design Institute and then the Course Design Institute (Apple & Krumsieg, 2003).

## Self-Evaluation vs. Self-Assessment

Being a self-evaluator is one of the top 20 factors that put academic success at risk for learners, generally by fostering low self-esteem or depression (Horton, 2015). Students who self-evaluate rather than self-assess are “constantly self-critical, see only their mistakes and failures, and do not appreciate growth or improvement.” (For more information about the relationship between the practice of self-assessment and growth see the sections, **Self-Assessment** and **Growth Mindset**.)

**Figure 3** Assessment Drives Improvement at All Levels



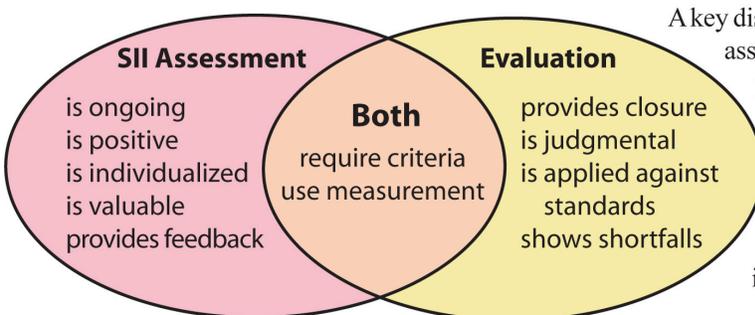
According to Dan Apple,

In 20 years of facilitating Learning to Learn Camps, little has changed with respect to incoming students in that they tend to evaluate themselves rather than self-assessing. Self-evaluation makes self-growth virtually impossible. One of the main goals of the camp is to shift their practice to self-assessment so they can begin, not only to improve, but to truly grow.

## Assessment in Student Curricula

Assessment is the key to improvement and Process Education means that learners must have ownership of their own learning, so we have shared with students the practice of assessment as differentiable from evaluation in Chapter 13 of *Foundations of Learning* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (Krumsieg & Baehr, 2000); upgraded again in *Foundation of Learning* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Redfield & Hurley Lawrence, 2009); and in Experience 4 of *Learning to Learn: Becoming a Self-Grower* (Apple, Morgan & Hintze, 2013). These introduce students to the processes of assessment and evaluation, providing

**Figure 4**



A key distinction to remember is that the point of assessment is to *improve quality*, while the point of evaluation is to *judge quality*. If you keep that in mind, you'll probably be able to distinguish assessment from evaluation. But let's give it a try...look at the list of sentences and phrases below and try to decide if each is assessment-oriented or evaluative.

Sentence/phrase	Which Is it?	Assessment	Evaluation
<i>You did better than I expected.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Your essay is strong and demonstrates comprehensive research.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Steve's draft was terrible.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Your draft could use additional sources.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>...a grade of "A"</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>You missed question 7.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Try doing X instead of Y.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

examples of each, and challenging students to identify feedback as assessment- or evaluation-based (see Figure 4). Additionally, Experience 9 of *Learning to Learn: Becoming a Self-Grower* gives students the opportunity to identify evaluative statements and recast them as assessment-based in order to improve future performance. The learning kits used in Learning to Learn Camps feature either *Foundations of Learning* or *Learning to Learn: Becoming a Self-Grower*.

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