

Reading Response 7: Rethinking Assessment

Before reading Reynolds and Davis's and friend, I hadn't really questioned how complex grading and evaluation actually are. I used to think assessment was mostly based on how much the teacher liked your work, and that grades were a simple reflection of both clear effort and correctness. Like many students, I saw feedback as something more optional rather than essential. But Reynolds and Davis reveal that assessment involves careful judgment based on shared academic standards, not just personal taste. They explain that "evaluation, like reading or writing or other forms of critical thinking, is a complex act" and that "evaluators do not develop criteria for good writing idiosyncratically, rather those criteria come from experiences, from mentors, or from the media" (25). This helped me understand that instructors' evaluations are guided by both professional experience and expectations. Another myth I found relevant is their point that "letter grades really don't initiate the kind of feedback or input that's essential to the assessment of a work in progress" (26). I've often viewed grades as the end of the learning process, but the authors emphasize that conversation, feedback, and reflection are what can truly support growth. This connects with Friend's argument that grading should come from teachers because they "can evaluate both the product and the process" of a student's work, understanding how each assignment could student's development over time.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I've had teachers who only gave letter grades and others who provided written or spoken feedback. The approach with feedback always helped me improve more because I could understand what I may have messed up and what I need to work on. Reynolds and Davis point out that "oral and written commentary is more instructive than a letter grade" (28), which perfectly captures why that kind of feedback feels more useful.

Both readings helped me rethink assessment. I used to think grading was just a final judgment, but now I understand it's meant to guide improvement. Reynolds and Davis showed that evaluation is based on shared standards, not simply a professors personal opinion, and Friend reminded me that grading should be part of learning, not separate from it.