
Critical Reflection: Beliefs About Assessment in Education

When I began my teacher education program, I held a clear-cut view of what assessment should look like. Evaluate the final product and let that speak for the learner. After all, that was how I had always been evaluated in my previous education and career. Now, after a year of coursework, classroom experience, and critical reflection, my perspective has shifted significantly. One of the most important changes in my thinking has been how I view the role of assessment in the learning process and, more broadly, how I view my role as a teacher.

Early in the program, I saw myself primarily as a deliverer of content and skills. I expected that I would teach, assign a project, and then grade the result. But through my courses, especially those focused on pedagogy and assessment, I began to understand that teaching is not just about the end goal, it's about supporting learning along the way. I now see the teacher's role as that of a facilitator, coach, and guide, not simply a judge of outcomes.

One course in particular emphasized formative assessment, student self-reflection, and differentiated instruction. This opened my eyes to the importance of making student thinking visible throughout the learning process. I started to see that good teaching involves responding to student needs as they arise, not just evaluating their performance at the end. As a result, I've moved away from the belief that assessment is a final step, and toward the understanding that it is an ongoing conversation between the teacher and student.

This shift has required me to reimagine how I interact with students. I've learned to ask better questions, provide timely feedback, and create opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning. It's made me more intentional about scaffolding projects and checking in on progress, rather than waiting to see how things turn out. I now recognize that part of my responsibility is to help students see the value in their own growth, not just in the grade they receive.

Changing this belief has also made my classroom more inclusive. Not all students arrive with the same skills, confidence, or background knowledge. When I assess the process, I'm better able to see their effort, problem-solving, and progress. This makes room for more students to feel successful and valued, which is essential in building a positive learning environment.

In short, I've grown from someone who saw teaching as performance-based evaluation to someone who sees it as a responsive, student-centered practice. Understanding the importance of assessing how students learn, not just what they produce, has made me more reflective, more empathetic, and more effective in my new role as a teacher.

My Philosophy of Education

After over 30 years in the trades, I've come to understand that real learning happens when theory meets practice, when your hands are busy and your mind is engaged. Now, at 55, stepping into the classroom for the first time as a teacher, I bring with me a lifetime of experience, not only in millwrighting but in mentoring apprentices, solving real-world problems, and working with people from all walks of life.

I believe the purpose of education is to prepare people to live capable, meaningful lives, not just to pass tests or memorize information. Especially in the trades, education must be practical, relevant, and based on real life situations. It should build confidence, character, and competence. I've seen firsthand how skills can change a person's life, giving them purpose, direction, and dignity. That's the kind of learning I want to support.

My approach to teaching is built on respect, patience, and honesty. I believe students learn best when they feel safe to make mistakes and are encouraged to find their own solutions. I see myself not just as an instructor, but as a mentor. My job is to pass on more than skills, it's to pass on work ethic, pride in craftsmanship, and the value of doing a job right. I will bring the same standards to my classroom that I brought to the shop floor, be prepared, be accountable, and support one another.

The student's role is to show up with an open mind and a willingness to learn. I won't expect perfection, but I will expect effort. I believe in learning by doing. In my classroom, there will be room for trial and error, hands-on projects, and real-life problem-solving. I will connect the curriculum to what matters, whether it's how to use a tool safely or how to think through a job from start to finish. Assessment, for me, is about growth, seeing where a student started, and how far they've come.

I carry with me values that have guided me throughout my life. Integrity, reliability, fairness, and a belief in the value of hard work. I also know that every student has a story, and that respect and understanding go a long way. As an educator, I will listen, learn, and grow alongside my students. I know what it's like to start from scratch, and I want my students to know that their future is in their hands.

In the end, my philosophy is simple: education should prepare people to contribute, to think, and to take pride in what they do. I may be new to teaching, but I've been teaching all along, on job sites, in workshops, and around apprentices. Now, I'm ready to bring that same spirit into the classroom.