Evaluation is a single moment in time and does not account for the before or after in a way that is apparent to the student.

It is final.

It is measurement (you have to think about what you are measuring the student against and if that is valid. Standardized tests are a form of evaluation and you see there how students are held to, this is the term, a national standard).

Evaluation should be based on a recognizable set of measurements that everyone agrees on. Theoretically, when we say a student deserves an A, we should all know what that A means.

Evaluation is typically restricted to one area of focus.

Evaluation, by and large, goes in one direction. Teachers evaluate students (even if students get to, at the end of a course, evaluate a teacher).

Evaluation moves in one direction: Teacher to student this way:

Teacher

Student

Assessment is recursive and continuous. It is a feedback loop. So it is ongoing.

The goal is not so much to measure against a universal standard, but rather to identify where a student is at in relationship to where they might go next.

The goal of assessment is to improve. To make forward movement.

Assessment goes both ways. Teachers use all available means (performance, behavior, quality of work, effort) to give students feedback. Teachers pursue information from students to tinker with a class—even in the middle of a class.

Teacher Student

To be clear, both are necessary. But the function very differently. And knowing which is which is important and when to use them is important.

My most confounding grading experience

It was fifth grade. That was the first year that we “changed classes,” which literally meant picking up and walking across the hall three times a day. We were in homeroom for most of our time. We had to write about a Saint, and I picked Saint Helen because I had an Aunt Lee who would later become my confirmation sponsor and her actual given name was Helena. St. Helen was a queen who saved I think it was Constantinople from Barbarian hoards. Enough to get you sainthood in those days, I guess. Anyway, as was my way, I wrote a half way decent paper. Probably big on facts. I loved information and stories even then. And probably pretty shabby writing. Not bad writing, but lazy writing. It was a B/B- paper. I say that now in my best estimation of what happened many years ago, but I bet I’m write. But the class where I turned it in was to Mrs. Veverka. She read it quickly and on the spot and gave me an A. I was shocked. I did not think I would get an A. Miss Hardesty, my homeroom teacher and an ex-nun—I am not making that up—an ex-nun, read it after Mrs. Veverka. I think I showed it to her because I’m pretty sure Miss Hardesty had never given me an A in my life and was always calling me on my lazy writing. I wrote loy for boy once and she put it up on the board. I had missed the elusive cursive blip that made an L a B. It was a jerk move. Anyway, I don’t know what I thought she’d do, but what she said was, with a look of abject horror on her face, that she would have never given me an A on that paper. And even though she was probably right, I was pretty much destroyed and the A meant nothing to me after that. Miss Hardesty had a way of teaching via shame a lot and I should remember that now, but what I remember thinking was this: “Wait. An “A” in one class isn’t an “A” in another class? How does that happen?”