
Foreword

Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next? An ideal learning environment or experience occurs when both teachers and students seek answers to each of these questions. Too often, teachers limit students' opportunities to receive information about their performances in relation to any of these questions by assuming that responsibility for the students.... Students, too often, view feedback as the responsibility of someone else, usually teachers, whose job it is to provide feedback information by deciding for the students how well they are going, what the goals are, and what to do next. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, pp. 88, 101)

A formative conception of assessment honours the crucial role of feedback in learning. Research has clearly shown that feedback can promote learning and achievement (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Brinko, 1993; Butler & Winne, 1995; Crooks, 1988; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008), yet most students get little informative feedback on their work (Black & Wiliam, 1998). The scarcity of feedback in most classrooms is due, in large part, to the fact that few teachers have

the luxury of regularly responding to each student's work. Fortunately, research also shows that students themselves can be useful sources of feedback via self-assessment (Andrade & Boulay, 2003; Andrade, Du, & Wang, 2008; Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogaboam-Gray, 1999). Self-assessment is a key element in formative assessment because it involves students in thinking about the quality of their own work rather than relying on their teacher as the sole source of evaluative judgments.

Self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise accordingly. The emphasis here is on the word *formative*: self-assessment is done on drafts of works in progress in order to inform revision and improvement; it is not a matter of having students determining their own grades. Self-evaluation, in contrast, refers to approaches that involve students in grading their work, perhaps as part of their final grade for an assignment or a class. Given what we know about human nature, as well as findings from research regarding students' tendency to inflate self-evaluations when they will count toward formal grades (Boud & Falchikov, 1989), I subscribe to a purely formative type of student self-assessment.

The primary purposes of engaging students in the kinds of thoughtful self-assessment that can be scaffolded using the techniques introduced in this book are to boost learning and achievement,

and to promote academic self-regulation, which is the tendency to monitor and manage one's own learning (Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2004). Research suggests that self-regulation and achievement are closely related: students who set goals, make flexible plans to meet them, and monitor their progress tend to learn more and do better in school than students who do not. Self-assessment is a core element of self-regulation because it involves awareness of the goals of a task and checking one's progress toward them – precisely what students do when engaged in the self-assessment and goal setting strategies featured in Chapters 1 and 2, respectively. As a result, both self-regulation and achievement can increase (Schunk, 2003).

Although even young students typically are able to think about the quality of their own work, they do not always do so, perhaps because one or more necessary conditions are not present. In order for effective self-assessment to occur, students need to be taught to self-assess and set goals. Goodrich (1996) identified the following elements for success:

- Awareness of the value of self-assessment
- Access to clear criteria on which to base the assessment
- A specific task or performance to assess
- Models of self-assessment
- Direct instruction in and assistance with self-assessment

- Practice
- Cues regarding when it is appropriate to self-assess, and
- Opportunities to revise and improve the task or performance.

This list of conditions might seem prohibitive but, as this second edition suggests, student self-assessment is both possible and practical. Several of the key conditions listed above, including modeling, cueing, direct instruction, and practice, are commonly employed classroom practices. The second condition – access to clear criteria on which to base self-assessment – can be met by introducing a rubric or checklist (Andrade, 2000; Arter & Chappuis, 2007; Gregory, Cameron, & Davies, 1997; Sadler, 1989).

As this book reveals, there are a number of ways to engage students in effective self-assessment. In general, the process involves the following three steps:

1. *Articulate Expectations.* The expectations for the task or performance are clearly articulated, either by the teacher, by the students, or, preferably, by both together.
2. *Self-Assessment.* Students create first drafts of their assignment and monitor their learning and their progress on the assignment by comparing them to the criteria or rubric.

3. *Revision.* Students use the feedback from their self-assessments to guide revision. This last step is crucial. Students are savvy, and will not self-assess thoughtfully unless they know that their efforts can lead to opportunities to actually make improvements and possibly increase their grades.

This three-step process can be enhanced with peer assessment and teacher feedback, of course. Just these three steps, however, have been associated with significant improvements in students' work (Andrade, 2010).

Students tend to embrace criterion- and rubric-referenced self-assessment for a variety of reasons related to achievement and motivation. In a study of undergraduates, Andrade and Du (2007) report six main findings:

1. Students' attitudes toward self-assessment tended to become more positive as they gained experience with it.
2. Students felt they could self-assess effectively and were more likely to self-assess when they knew what their teacher expected.
3. Self-assessment involved checking progress, followed by revising and reflecting.
4. Students believed there were multiple benefits of self-assessment.
5. Students reported that transfer of the self-

assessment process to other courses, where it was not supported by the instructor, was spotty.

6. There was sometimes a tension between teachers' expectations and students' own standards of quality.

Andrade and Du's (2007) findings generally mirror the results of a study of the impact of teacher professional development on middle and high school students' attitudes toward self-evaluation by Ross, Rolheiser, and Hogaboam-Gray (1998), with one glaring exception: students in the latter study tended to develop more negative attitudes toward self-evaluation over the course of the eight-week intervention. Interestingly, the self-evaluation done by those students counted toward 5% of their final grades. It may not be surprising, then, that students voiced concerns about fairness and the possibility of cheating by inflating self-evaluations. This finding reinforces my commitment to strictly formative uses of student self-assessment.

In summary, blurring the distinction between instruction and assessment through the use of criteria-referenced self-assessment can have powerful effects on learning. The effect can be both short-term, as when self-assessment influences student performance on a particular assignment, as well as long-term, as students become more self-regulated in their learning. I encourage educators to use the strategies in this book to reap the benefits

of student goal setting and self-assessment, and thereby ensure that students get the kind of feedback they need, when they need it, in order to learn and achieve.

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