

Evaluating the Extension Volunteer Teacher¹

Elizabeth B. Bolton²

This is one publication in the series The Cooperative Extension Volunteer Teacher. This volunteer teacher series addresses the need for guidelines to assist Extension county faculty in the important task of preparing the volunteer to teach.

Overview

Evaluating the volunteer teacher may seem like an odd thing to do since this person is not being paid for his/her services to the Extension program. Volunteers, like paid employees, appreciate knowing the strong and weak points of their performance. Evaluating the volunteer teacher is an important part of the process and it serves several purposes:

1. It gives the volunteer a perspective of the strength of their performance as a teacher. If they are involved in another volunteer teacher experience, they will be able to improve their performance.
2. Evaluating a volunteer teacher will also provide the Extension faculty conducting the evaluation some ideas about their performance. For example, might the volunteer teacher have performed differently if they had additional information? Was there too much supervision or too little?

3. The evaluation information can be used to improve the recruitment, orientation, and training components of the program. It can be the basis for planned change.
4. The data gathered can be used in reporting Extension program accomplishments. Further, a thorough evaluation can be used to explain the program to the community and to funding agencies.
5. The evaluation can be the basis for a formal recognition and acknowledgement of the Extension Volunteer Teacher.

The volunteer teacher should know from the beginning that he/she will be evaluated, who will be doing the evaluation, and how the results will be used. The volunteer should be aware of the criteria that will be used in the evaluation. The evaluation form should be furnished to him/her during the orientation and it should be the basis for the training program. The fact that the volunteer is not a paid professional does not detract from the importance of appraising his/her work. Rather, it gives recognition to the importance of the volunteer work.

1. This document is FCS9076, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October 1, 1992. Revised October 5, 2005. Reviewed February 1, 2000. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Elizabeth B. Bolton, Professor, Community Development, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.

Evaluations are used to aid in the decision-making process. Evaluation data can be used to make decisions about the utilization of volunteers, their selection, orientation, and the Extension program they serve.

Stenzel and Feeny (1968) suggest that goals and objectives should be used as the criteria for judging the quality and effectiveness of the volunteer program. They note that the criteria for program quality is a high attendance that is consistent over time, participants enjoy the training sessions, participants are active and involved, and there is a positive attitude toward additional training (p. 172).

General Guidelines for Evaluating the Extension Volunteer Teacher

1. The volunteer teacher should be made aware that there will be an evaluation, who will do it and how the results will be used.
2. There should be an opportunity for evaluation by and with the volunteer teacher using the goals and objectives of the program as criteria (Stenzel and Feeny, 1968, p. 203).
3. The volunteer teacher should look at the teaching experience as a learning experience that meets a personal goal. This goal should be identified during the recruitment process and both the volunteer and the Extension Supervisor should be aware of the personal benefits the volunteer hopes to derive from the teaching experience.
4. The volunteer teacher should be considered as an educational resource as well as a client of the program. Both roles demand respect and consideration from the Extension staff.
5. The participants' needs are primary in the program and volunteer teachers that do not perform adequately will be asked to volunteer for other type positions. (See letters in recruitment section.)
6. Wilson (1976) says that the evaluation results should be used in a meaningful way. They should be discussed and something should be done as a consequence of having evaluated work of the volunteer teacher. Results should be analyzed

and recommendations should be made for change or improvement in parts of the program that can make a difference in the effectiveness of the work of the volunteer teacher (p. 90).

Types of Evaluation

There are several types of evaluation that might be done and these can be used singly or in combination.

Self Evaluation. This is done by the volunteer teacher to assess his/her own strengths and weaknesses. This serves to make the volunteer teacher take a personal look at his/her performance and to be as objective as possible. They may discover their own weak points. This will make it easier for the Extension supervisor to point out the same weakness and make corrective suggestions. Examine sample instruments 1 and 3 to see which fits the needs of your program. Sample Instrument 1, derived from the American Red Cross, can be used by the volunteer for self assessment as well as by the supervisor.

Evaluation by the Extension Supervisor. An assessment by the Extension County Supervisor can be the same form that is used by the volunteer teacher for a self assessment or a different form can be used as in Sample Instrument 2.

Participant Evaluation. An assessment by the participants in the classes or courses taught by the volunteer teacher is the tangible evidence of the participants reaction to the class and the instruction provided. (See Sample Instrument 4.)

These evaluation instruments should be available to both the volunteer teacher and the Extension Supervisor. Evaluation of the Extension volunteer teacher is not to be used as a threat but rather as a formal acknowledgement of the importance of the job and the feedback to the provider. Each of these can be used singly or in combination with the others. The important thing to be remembered is that if a job is worth doing, it is worth appraising.

The evaluation should not depart from the job description and the criteria that were used in recruiting and training the volunteer teacher. The information on the job description and the

recruitment criteria ideally have been shared with the volunteer teacher during the orientation phase. In evaluating the volunteer teacher, the following broad areas, reflected in the job description, orientation, and training sections are important in the evaluation process. These include: teaching skills and subject matter mastery, reliability, interpersonal skills, and commitment to the University of Florida and the Extension mission.

References

- American Red Cross. (September, 1990). *Performance Review Form I for Paid and Volunteer Staff*. American Red Cross Form 6616-A (9-90): American Red Cross.
- Cummins, R.A. (1998). Leadership for volunteers: The way it is and the way it could be. *Journal of Extension* [on line]. Available: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998october/tt2.html>
- Stenzel, A.K. and Feeney, H.M. (1968). *Volunteer training and development: A manual for community groups*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Stout, P.E. (August, 1982). *Maximizing volunteers in program delivery*. New York: New York State Cooperative Extension Systems.
- Tidwell, J.V. (2005). A social identify model of prosocial behaviors within nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 15 (4), 449-467.
- Wilson, M. (1976). *The effective management of volunteer programs*. Boulder, Colorado: Volunteer Management Associates.

Sample Instrument 1.

Sample Instrument 1	
Please list your key responsibilities and the results and accomplishments of your work as you perceive them.	
I. Key Responsibilities	Results and Accomplishments
II. Work-Related Behaviors	
Rate your work-related behaviors using the criteria listed below.	
	a. Clearly unsatisfactory
	b. Needs improvement
	c. Fully successful
	d. Exceeds expectations
Commitment to Extension Clients and Class Participants	
	Treat internal and external users of Extension service as top priority
	Act effectively to respond to clients in a timely way
	Encourage and listen to client's input
Commitment to Extension Service and Its Mission	
	Communicate and support Extension mission and values and inspire pride in the organization
	Comply with policies, procedures, regulations, and operations
	Identify how plans, policies, procedures, or actions can be modified to improve/strengthen organizational performance
Commitment to People	
	Demonstrate cooperation and teamwork in accomplishing results
	Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences in all interactions
	Actively seek and act on ways to improve effectiveness of working with others
	Show personal integrity in dealing with others
Commitment to Self	
	Demonstrate initiative and recognize need for action, proceeding in a responsible manner
	Accept constructive feedback and use it to strengthen performance
	Take responsibility for own actions, readily admit mistakes
	Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in response to change
Commitment to Task	
	Consistently meet deadlines
	Produce highest quality work in accordance with policies, procedures, regulations, and operations
	Meet demands with respect to quantity
	Effectively plan and organize work and able to deal with unexpected or unusual demands
	Identify, analyze, and innovatively solve problems
	Perform work independently, involving the supervisor when necessary
	Seek new and more efficient means for performing the job
	Exercise good judgment and make timely, effective decisions
III. Other Performance Factors	
Rate your other performance factors using the criteria listed above.	
Job Knowledge/Technical Skills	
	Effectively utilize necessary knowledge and skills to perform the job
	Actively strive to keep current with new technology and concepts in area of responsibility
	Quickly understand and apply new knowledge
Communications	
	Listen effectively and demonstrate understanding of information received

Sample Instrument 1.

	Express information clearly and effectively in writing
	Speak clearly, logically, and convincingly
	Present a positive impact of the Extension Service when communicating with others
Reliability	
	Maintain satisfactory attendance record
	Punctual for work and meetings
Adapted from American Red Cross. (September, 1990). <i>Performance Review Form I for Paid and Volunteer Staff</i> . American Red Cross Form 6616-A (9-90): American Red Cross.	

Sample Instrument 2.

Supervisor's Appraisal Form for Volunteer Teacher				
Rate each of the following using the scale below each item. Comment on any of the items you feel need additional explanation.				
TEACHING SKILLS				
1. Knowledge of subject matter				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
2. Ability to work with adults as a facilitator of learning				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
3. Use of good demonstration and questioning techniques				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
4. Knowledge of the sequence of learning and the ability to plan the events of instruction				

Sample Instrument 2.

High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
5. Ability to work with older adult learners; judgement and maturity				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
RELIABILITY				
6. Dependability				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
7. Punctuality				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
8. Keeps records as requested				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
9. Follows all guidelines				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1

Sample Instrument 2.

Comments:				
10. Motivation/perseverance - follow through on tasks to completion				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS				
11. Ability to work with others				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
12. Ability to accept direction				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
13. Spirit of cooperation				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
14. Communications skills				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1

Sample Instrument 3.

Self-Appraisal for Extension Volunteer Teacher	
1. What skills or abilities have you developed or enhanced through your work as a volunteer teacher?	
2. Are there skills that you think you need to work on in order to do a better job as a volunteer teacher? If so, what are they?	
3. List the results or outcomes from this class that you observed from your students?	
4. Describe your relationship with the Extension office staff and county faculty?	
5. Were the Extension Staff helpful? If so, in what way?	
6. Did you need things that were not provided? If so, what?	
7. What did you enjoy most and find the most fulfilling as a volunteer teacher?	
8. What did you enjoy least and find the least beneficial to your work as a volunteer teacher?	
9. What recommendations would you make to the Extension Supervisor and the Extension Service for things that might be changed to improve the Volunteer Teacher program.	

Sample Instrument 4.

Participant Evaluation				
1. Rate the subject matter knowledge of the teacher.				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
2. Rate the usefulness of the class/session to you.				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
3. Rate the ability of the teacher to get along with participants.				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
4. Rate the communication skills of the teacher.				

Sample Instrument 4.

High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
5. Rate the punctuality and dependability of the teacher.				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
6. Did the teacher meet your expectations in presenting the material to be learned?				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
7. Would you recommend this class to someone else? Why or why not?				
High		Medium		Low
5	4	3	2	1
Comments:				
8. What did you like most about the class?				
9. What did you like least about the class?				
10. Overall comments				