

Program Evaluation

10:15

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Key questions

- What should the focus of student evaluations be? Curriculum, Quality of program, Staff effectiveness
- How do we measure the quality of evaluation?
- How do you deal with data and then create change?
- Is there a way to get a set of standardized evaluation methods for comparison between organizations?
- Imbedded Evaluations (journaling, etc...)? How could they be useful
- We know we are doing a good job with content, but are we creating good citizens, and is there a way to measure that bigger picture?
- Many of us have notebooks full of evals, but we do not know what to do with them or how to go about interpreting them for the betterment of the program?
- Are self-evaluations useful for teacher training?
- How can we share the information with other programs?
- Is EE causing a long-term attitude change in those that come through the program and is there a way to get that information put into a report that can be shared with schools and other programs?
- Where do we find the time to go through our evaluations and not become bogged down in the process?
- What are the concerns / advantages with bringing in external evaluators?
- How to approach getting constructive evaluations?
- How does bringing a group of students to a residential EE program influence what the teacher does in the classroom?
- What is the balance between qualitative and quantitative data?
- Can evaluations from other programs at your site (not just environmental ed.) help to justify your effectiveness?
- Will our time spent on interpreting evaluations really make a difference in our marketing ability with our program?
- Would an evaluation of one program be advantageous in saying to your prospective schools “look, environmental ed. Works” or would it only be useful to have an evaluation of your specific program in convincing groups that they should participate?
- Are we asking the questions we really need to know the answers to or are we asking questions that we want certain answers to?
- Are structured outdoor experiences as beneficial as unstructured time for exploration?
- How to deal with diverse cultures and language barriers?

What are evaluation points that you would like to see from other programs? (For both marketing and program improvement)

- Demographics from your program (SES, age, schools, gender, etc...)
- What is your motivation for attending?
- Affective influences (attitude, environmental attachment, place attachment, stewardship)
- Personal Growth (confidence, comfort level with other people and nature, relationship changes between students, student/teacher and teacher/teacher)
- Barriers to participation (i.g. matching curriculum)
- How to better meet teacher needs (build better feedback/eval mechanisms)
- Desire to Learn (cultural history, local environment)
- Content Knowledge
- Science Process Skills
- Behavior Changes (time outside, stewardship, conservation activities)
- Transference Skills (ability to take what's learned and apply it)

Take home messages

- Pre-surveys, Post-Surveys, 3-Month surveys
- Assessments of learning, standardized test questions correlated to curriculum, etc., benefits of mixed methods for evaluations
- Evaluation of teachers and students: environmental attitudes, student assessment, teacher questions/feedback/comments/quotes, teacher evals of the group, does the program create an increased desire to learn,
- The need for quantitative facts is key to fundraising
- The ability to collect quotes from participants can be quite useful for fundraising and marketing / helping to "sell" your program / If someone else is already doing the research should we be doing it as well?
- Resources for sharing forms and results... how could we all work together to collect that data and present it to everyone
- Website from U of MI: Environmental Ed. Assessment Project – site is still being developed but should be a common location for evals/program stats
- How are surveys for prospective school useful?
- Keep them simple! Answer the one or two key questions that will really help to get something that can be measured... are we really having a behavioral impact down the road.
- Winters into wonderland – Electronic Fieldtrips from Yellowstone
- Evaluation association – www.Eval.org Bringing in an outsider to help you assess your program/get information for donors
- Having an external person can help you monitor potential problems without the "politics" becoming as involved
- Implementing and Educator Advisory Board can assist you in what the needs are from the educator standpoint
- How can an educator evaluations help justify the "need" for coming to a residential EE program / use it as a tool for recruitment
- Correlation to the state course of study can be critical to having a successful program

- Bill has offered to set up a basic database online of .pdf files of our evaluation forms that can be viewed by everyone and shared among the group
- Be prepared to find negative results! These results could be useful as a staff in finding out if your program is getting content and/or attitudes across
- The older generation that grew up outdoors and comfortable in the outdoors did not necessarily create a huge “crop” of “environmentalists”/”Conservationists”