

SOME IDEAS ABOUT EVALUATION

EVALUATION is a large and important part of the 4-H Program. Because there are so many questions about evaluation we hope this information will be of help to you as a 4-H evaluator.

WHO IS ASKED TO BE A 4-H EVALUATOR?

There are several specific qualities we look for when inviting people to become a 4-H evaluators. We want people who:

1. Understand the 4-H programs, projects and philosophies.
2. Understand the capabilities of different age groups of youngsters.
3. Know the correct standards, techniques or procedures against which to measure.
4. Have a pleasing and encouraging manner while judging so they can encourage a member and help him/her learn.

WHAT IS ACCOMPLISHED BY EVALUATION?

Evaluation goes on in everyday life. Friends, parents, bosses, even strangers evaluate each of us constantly. For 4-H members, evaluation is done by members, leaders, agents and “judges” or evaluators.

Evaluation should:

1. Help members gain a greater appreciation of excellence and quality of workmanship or performance.
2. Educate the youngsters and help improve their skills and techniques.
3. Encourage youngsters to discover and develop their talents and potentials.
4. Make members think critically and objectively about their work and themselves.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL. We want the youngster to DEVELOP SELF EVALUATION SKILLS that will be used in adult life.

HOW IS JUDGING DONE?

Judging is done according to quality standards. It should not be a matter of personal taste or whim. The standards are high but attainable. They are appropriate to different age levels. They are known and understood by 4-H members and leaders.

The Danish award system is used for evaluation.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF AN EVALUATOR?

The evaluator is expected to express judgements in a clear, educational and supportive manner. This is done through written comments on the score sheet, verbal questions, and suggestions.

Comments should be constructive and encouraging. Start with a compliment and work in a criticism or an area where the youth needs practice.

Written comments should be understandable and legible. Pens work better than pencils. Try to use complete sentences. Comments should justify awards. Statements should tell the reason why an item doesn't measure up to the standards. Members and leaders should be able to learn and improve after reading the comments.

EVALUATORS SHOULD DEVELOP A "QUESTIONING" attitude. Instead of telling youngsters the good and bad points, ask the youngsters what they think they did well and how they would do this item differently next time. Have youngsters begin to evaluate themselves. Ask them if they know why some attempt failed and then give suggestions to help them succeed the next time. A statement like "perhaps this yeast bread was baked in too hot an oven or baked too long – check your oven temperature and time" is much better than "this bread is burned."

AN EVALUATOR SHOULD:

- Take time to become familiar with the class description and requirements.
- Become thoroughly familiar with the exhibit standards.
- Consider each item separately ITEMS ARE COMPARED TO A STANDARD, not to other items.
- Not give top placings if the items are not worthy of them.
- Not rule out unfamiliar ways of doing things if the results obtained are satisfactory and suitable. Judge the results you see, rather than what might have been done.
- Be consistent.
- Be objective.

Finally, the evaluator uses mannerisms, gestures and other forms of behavior which communicate feelings behind the words that are said. Emotional reactions show. The evaluator should:

SMILE - its contagious.

Have a sympathetic and tactful manner.

Inspire confidence

Try to make the member feel that the evaluator is a friend, not a foe.

Evaluations should be an informal but personal experience for the member. The member should feel free to question and answer without being embarrassed or being put on display.

KEEP THESE THOUGHTS IN MIND...

Projects are a mean to an end, not an end in themselves

No exhibit is so poorly done that it is not worthy of an encouraging word

Few exhibits are so well done that some improvements may not be made.

ABOVE ALL a "judge must recognize that the process is more important than the product and that the doing is more important than the thing done."