

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER RECOMMENDATION FORM

Purpose

The Cooperating Teacher recommendation letter serves the following two functions:

- A final written narrative evaluation for the student teaching experience.
- A letter of recommendation for the student's credential file (see attached).

Surveys have shown that letters of recommendation are second in importance to personal interviews in determining who is hired for teaching positions. Your final evaluation plays a significant role in the student's future. Experience indicates that candid, specific statements best serve the interests of the student and the employer.

With ever increasing frequency recommendation letters are being sent via electronic transmission; consequently, the issue of confidentiality is less prevalent. Letters of recommendation for students in the College of Education at The University of Iowa are made available for students to read. Since student teaching is a learning process, appraisals of performance should be discussed with the Student Teacher.

Procedures

1. The final form should be printed using a word processing program and *signed in ink*. You may choose to print the letter of recommendation on your school or district stationary, on the form available from the Student Teacher's Forms Packet, or by using the form available at the following web address:
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~edstuser/recommendation/coopletter.html>
2. This form should be prepared and ready for sharing during the final 3-way conference.
3. Following the final 3-way conference, the College Supervisor will submit the letter of recommendation to the Office of Field Experiences. Recommendation letters will be forwarded to the Educational Placement Office. Copies should be made and kept for your personal files.

Suggested Techniques for Writing Recommendations

1. Identify the Student Teacher's strongest characteristics and cite specific examples that will support your viewpoint. Each example should be representative of the Student Teacher's entire performance and not based solely on an isolated incident.
2. If there are definite weaknesses that a prospective employer should know, mention them and note any progress that has been made.
3. The Student Teacher has worked many hours for this recommendation. If possible, limit your remarks to one page; however, the recommendation should be of sufficient length to adequately cover the important aspects of the student teaching experience.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION continued

Specific Writing Tips

1. It is appropriate and advisable when recommending an outstanding Student Teacher to begin the letter with a statement reflecting the candidate's excellence.
2. When making reference to the Student Teacher it is appropriate to use either titles such as Ms. Jones, or Mr. Brown or their first name; however, be consistent by using the same reference throughout the recommendation. Avoid information that would indicate the individual's race, religion, nationality, age, marital status, or disability.
3. Note the characteristics of the experience. Include information such as:
 - grade level, school, school district
 - number of students
 - length of assignment
 - classroom organization (e.g., self-contained, departmentalized)
 - diversity of populations (cultural, academic)
4. Discuss overall strengths and weaknesses of Student Teacher as well as special talents or accomplishments.
5. Avoid extreme statements unless they can be supported without reservation.
6. Characterize the Student Teacher's total experience rather than focusing on an isolated incident.
7. Refrain from commenting about problems that have been alleviated by the end of the experience.
8. Evaluate the Student Teacher in terms of his/her effectiveness rather than in terms of your personal style.
9. Include statements regarding Student Teacher potential for employment substantiating your prediction with evidence of past performance.
10. By stating that additional comments may be obtained by phone, the interviewer may interpret a reluctance to be honest in writing. However, a statement such as, "If you would like additional positive information about this candidate, please feel free to contact me," allows the interviewer an opportunity to obtain more specific positive information.
11. Try to limit the letter of recommendation to a one-page narrative.

*We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing,
while others judge us by what we have already done.*
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow