

**Proven and Creative Strategies and Techniques for Teaching Evaluation
Demonstration Session AEA 2009**

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MetaEvaluation Assignment Rationale

Learning Objective: The purpose of this task is to give student the opportunity to practice evaluation skills, more specifically to conduct a metaevaluation. They will also become familiar with evaluation standards and gain practice reporting their evaluation findings.

Limitations: The metaevaluation in this task focuses on the evaluation of an evaluation report. As with many teaching strategies this involves a simulated authentic task. An external evaluator conducting a metaevaluation in a professional capacity would likely have better access to stakeholders, artifacts, and other information that students will not likely be able to obtain. While some students do have access to a more complete set of relevant artifacts and information, most students will be looking solely at the written report. Still, the written report is often the only report of findings available to consumers of evaluation. Stakeholders not directly associated with an evaluation must judge the quality of an evaluation based solely on the evaluation report.

Task Elements and Pedagogical Rationale:

- **Finding Evaluation Reports** – One aspect of this task, which is at times challenging for some students, is the requirement that students locate an evaluation report they wish to review. I feel this is important as students often need practice locating evaluations on topics in their area of interest. One issue some students encounter involves the quality of the reports they find. Not all reports they find are well written or complete. This could be seen as a negative but I have found students become more aware of the need to be more complete when writing evaluation reports. They also tend to better understand the concept of writing to an audience and the impact it has on readability and presentation.
- **Evaluating using Standards** – Students generally use the Joint Committee’s Standards for Program Evaluation when conducting this metaevaluation of the evaluation’s quality. I also encourage students to use AEA’s Guiding Principles for Evaluators as a valuable reference for evaluating the evaluation. Using these standards provides students with the opportunity to better understand what the standards are and how these standards could be used to improve the quality of an evaluation.
- **Writing up findings** – Another important part of this task involves reporting their evaluation findings. Writing in a clear, well organized manner is difficult for some students. I try to reinforce the notion that this is not to be just an opinion piece but rather a well thought out evaluation based on standards, substantiated by evidence.

MetaEvaluation Assignment

Evaluating Evaluations

As you learn to be a trained evaluator, or an informed consumer of evaluation, you must be able to judge the quality of an evaluation. To do this properly you should have an understanding of the purpose of evaluation in general, various approaches to doing evaluation, and most importantly an understanding that evaluations are value driven. Clearly an evaluation must be accurate and useful; it should be conducted systematically by competent evaluators; it should be done in an ethical and efficient manner; but it must also consider values in terms of what is important. This can be a challenge in that value and what is important varies, sometimes drastically, from person to person. Metaevaluation also requires a set of standards (i.e., criteria) by which the evaluation will be judged. The standards you should use are the Joint Committee's Standards for Program Evaluation and the AEA's Guiding Principles for Evaluators.

This task is an opportunity for you to become better acquainted with evaluation standards and to develop your skills as a metaevaluator. I would suggest you follow the following steps.

1. Select an evaluation report on a topic of interest to you.
2. Select a metaevaluation checklist (see <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/> for examples)
3. Read the report and then evaluate the quality of the report using the checklist you selected. Make sure to document (record) your thoughts, reasoning and rationale for each aspect on the evaluation checklist. If a portion of the evaluation report is less than satisfactory, make a judgment of its importance to the goals (completeness or quality) of the overall evaluation.
4. Write a reflective summary. This should include:
 - I. A brief statement of the evaluation purpose and a brief description of the evaluand.
 - II. Your overall judgment of the quality of the evaluation being evaluated.
 - III. A clear but concise statement (a paragraph or two) justifying your decision. This may include reasons and examples of where the evaluation excelled (strengths) and where the evaluation was inadequate (weaknesses).
 - IV. If appropriate, include recommendations for how the evaluation might have been improved.

Metaevaluation Task Submission

Format your metaevaluation in a clear readable fashion. Use APA formatting styles. Depending on the checklist you use, your metaevaluation need not be long (2-3 pages).