

## **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 recommendation given to the student for a “self-managed” credential file.

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. Since student teaching is a learning process, appraisals of performance should be discussed with the Student Teacher.

### **Procedures**

1. The final form should be developed using a word processing program, should appear on your school or district stationary, and be *signed in ink*.
2. This form should be prepared and ready for sharing during the final 3-way conference.
3. During the final 3-way conference, the College Supervisor and Cooperating Teacher will submit their letters of recommendation directly to the student teacher. The Student Teacher can “self-manage” their letters of recommendation by maintaining electronic and hard copies of all letters received. PDF versions of letters are accepted at most districts. For those that cannot accept an electronic copy, a copy of the original signed and dated letter should be sufficient. Additional suggestions and tips regarding letters of recommendation can be found on the Pomerantz Career Services webpage at: <http://careers.uiowa.edu/files/careers.uiowa.edu/files/EducationReferencesGuide.pdf>

### **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*