Journal of Extension

Tools and Strategies for Documenting Educational Connection with Diverse Audiences

Jeff Goodwin
University of Hawaii

David J. White
Oregon State University

Lisa A. Lauxman
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Recommended Citation

Tools and Strategies for Documenting Educational Connection with Diverse Audiences

Abstract

How does an educator ensure that an audience is receiving an intended message? Further complicating this matter, what happens if the audience members' primary language differs from that of the presenter and the use of an interpreter is not feasible? We explore these questions through a case study based on our experience as three Extension professionals from the U.S. mainland who led a 2-day training of Extension/4-H professionals from the greater Micronesia area in the western Pacific Ocean. The instrument and educational concepts we describe could be valuable tools as Extension educators work with audiences having diverse backgrounds and languages.

Keywords: teaching, multilingual audience, diverse audience, educational message reception, Micronesia

Jeff Goodwin
State 4-H Program
Leader
Department of Family
and Consumer
Sciences
University of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii
Jeffg3@hawaii.edu

David J. White
4-H Youth
Development
Specialist
Oregon State
University
Redmond, Oregon
david.white@oregonst
ate.edu

Lisa A. Lauxman
Director
4-H National
Headquarters, Division
of Youth and 4-H
Institute of Youth,
Family, and
Community, National
Institute of Food and
Agriculture, U.S.
Department of
Agriculture
Washington, DC
llauxman@nifa.usda.g
ov

Situation

How does an educator ensure that an audience is receiving an intended message? Further complicating this matter, what happens if the audience members' primary language differs from that of the presenter and the use of an interpreter is not feasible? Here, we present a case study that answers these questions.

In June 2017, we conducted a 2-day in-service workshop for the 4-H staff serving the western Pacific Islands. Our goal was to impart foundational positive youth development principles to guide the creation and improvement of youth development programs administered by the land-grant institutions in the western Pacific Ocean.

The 21 participants were Extension staff members (Extension administrators, directors, coordinators, and youth educators) from The Federated States of Micronesia (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae), Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, and Guam. Some of the islands had active youth programs; others had programs in

development or no active programs. English was a second language for most audience members, with 10 languages, other than English, as the participants' primary languages.

We assumed that the Pacific Islander audience considered us as "mainlanders" with English as our primary and only language. Being aware of the potential language barrier, we developed and implemented a daily evaluation tool to gauge the receptiveness of audience members to the subject matter presented and the applicability of the subject matter presented.

Implementation of the Daily Evaluation Tool

The daily evaluation tool we developed involved application of a simple three-option response rubric to each topic presented in the workshop. The response options were as follows: "This will apply where I live and work"; "With modifications, this might apply where I live and work"; and "This will not apply where I live and work." Participants could choose only one response for each topic.

We tested the instrument after the first 30-min segment of the workshop (Universal Principles of Working with People). Upon conclusion of that segment, workshop participants assessed the segment using the three-option response rubric from the daily evaluation tool and then submitted their assessments. In a cursory review of participants' assessments, we determined that the responses were positive and, therefore, made no adjustments in the presentation plan. We collected the remainder of the daily evaluation data at the conclusion of each day. See Tables 1 and 2 for summaries of the results.

Table 1.

Day 1 Evaluation Summary ($n = 21$)

	Response options		
Workshop topic	**This will apply where I live and work** f (%)	**With modifications, this might apply where I live and work** f (%)	**This will not apply where I live and work** f (%)
Universal principles of working with people	19 (90%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)
Framing positive youth developmenta	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)
4-H organizational chart	15 (71%)	5 (24%)	1 (5%)
Thriving and positive youth development	18 (86%)	3 (14%)	0 (0%)
The core principles of 4-H youth development	18 (86%)	3 (14%)	0 (0%)
Three commandments of 4-H work	21 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Volunteer development	17 (81%)	4 (19%)	0 (0%)

The art of teaching kids	20 (95%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

aWhile the n for the Day 1 evaluation was 21, one participant failed to answer the second item of the instrument, resulting in only 20 responses for that item.

Table 2.

Day 2 Evaluation Summary (n = 19)

	Response options		
	This will apply where I live and work	**With modifications, this might apply where I live and work**	**This will not apply where I live and work**
Workshop topic	***f* (%)**	***f* (%)**	***f* (%)**
Positive youth engagement strategies	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The 4-H club model	17 (89%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)
The development of high functioning teams	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Communication exercise	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Expanding the 4-H reach with school enrichment	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Risk management	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Understanding 4-H professional development	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Impact measurement made easy	18 (95%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
Putting the fun into 4-H	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Badging and career pathways	13 (68%)	6 (32%)	0 (0%)
The things you need to know on your first day here	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Two participants from the first day of training were unable to attend the second day of training resulting in the difference in sample size between Day 1 (n = 21) and Day 2 (n = 19).

Assessment of Daily Evaluation Data

We submit that the data from this simple daily evaluation tool indicated that the information we presented was both understandable to the Extension staff attending the workshop and applicable to the Extension clientele they serve on their various home islands. We sensed on Day 2 of the workshop that the audience was more receptive to the subject matter presented as everyone in the room became more familiar with each other. The more positive trend in the evaluation data from Day 2 supports this assumption.

At the conclusion of the second day of the workshop, we conducted an overall program evaluation. Participant responses to open-ended questions on the program evaluation instrument also supported the assumption that the subject matter was well received and applicable. One written comment is evidence of the success of the training: "It's good to adopt the view which the 4-H consultants continue to emphasize on the positive value of young people. Everybody has potential to be somebody someday, even the most troubled kids."

Other Strategies for Ensuring Connection with an Audience

In addition to use of the daily evaluation tool, we implemented several educational strategies to ensure a connection to the audience. Here, we discuss some of those strategies.

- The use of three presenters, with very different presentation styles, was intentional.

- We injected a healthy dose of humor and fun into the 2-day training.

- Using various methods of audience participation helped keep the participants engaged. Audience members also shared the presentation duties as they communicated information to the group about the 4-H programs on their home islands.

- A well-designed graphic can be used to clarify the message presented or even replace large blocks of text (Ingram, Dorsey, & Smith, 2004). We used simple visual messages and images to reinforce the subject matter presented, posting many of these messages and images on the wall for the entire 2-day training.

- We focused on active listening (especially during breaks) to discover when subject matter and/or language connections were not as strong as desired. This approach helped us clear up instances in which words we used had unintended connotations.

- We rotated the role of active presenter regularly and kept individual presentation times to 15 to 30 min.

- We ensured that our agenda was flexible enough to allow for discussion of relevant topics, such as local issues and concerns, available resources, and potential community connections.

Implications for Extension

Connecting with an audience is an essential skill of an effective educator. Methods for establishing and maintaining that connection are important in any situation; however, they are critical when there is a significant cultural or language barrier between presenter and audience. Effective presenters acknowledge and communicate the need to bridge any cultural divides that exist between themselves and their audiences.

Best practices for reviewing Extension educational curricula (content, readability, utility, and evaluation), as documented by Coleman, Byrd-Bredbenner, Baker, and Bowen (2011), involve using checklists, questionnaires,

and observational instruments to assess the effectiveness of educational messages. In this vein, use of the daily evaluation instrument we developed can provide valuable insight as educators address audience connection concerns. Our intent is to share an instrument that can be used to document connectivity and applicability of subject matter presented to audience members whose backgrounds differ vastly from those of the presenters. More importantly, we hope that the instrument we have described and the educational concepts we have shared will inspire Extension educators to strive for the highest levels of connection and applicability with any audience.

References

Coleman, G., Byrd-Bredbenner, C., Baker, S., & Bowen, E., (2011). Best practices for Extension curricula review. *Journal of Extension*, *49*(2), Article 2TOT1. Available at: https://www.joe.org/joe/2011april/pdf/JOE_v49_2tt1.pdf

Ingram, P., Dorsey, M., & Smith, S. (2014). Tips for designing publications for underrepresented audiences. *Journal of Extension*, *42*(4), Article 4TOT2. Available at: https://www.joe.org/joe/2004august/tt2.php