

Ten Guiding Values of Extension Education

Knowledge of what has contributed to Extension's remarkable success in the past provides some guidance for staff members who want to further the organization's mission, as well as survive and thrive in their work. To that end, here are 10 guiding values of Extension education:

1. Know Thyself

Extension educators are agents of learning, growth and change. The staff's deepening self-knowledge is the primary source of Extension's vision and energy.

2. Extension's Mission: Helping People Help Themselves

For all its diversity, Extension education always works to encourage people to improve their condition in all dimensions of their lives. As Seaman Knapp said to the first Extension agents, "Your mission is to make a great common people and thus readjust the map of the world."

3. Extension's Goal: Human Development

The development of people is the ultimate goal of Extension education. Providing research-based information, teaching people new knowledge and skills, helping them to improve production or increase income--all these are means toward that end, and means only.

4. Extension's Methods: Encouraging Change in Many Ways

The Smith-Lever Act requires more than information transfer. It calls on Extension to "encourage the application" of useful and practical information. Extension work is most successful when it involves learners in its programs so thoroughly that they set their own goals, apply new ideas and receive feedback from others about their progress.

Extension does not dictate how people will solve problems or make decisions for them. Rather, it fosters the democratic ideal of self-governance by encouraging each person or group to choose the best among a variety of options.

The methods of Extension education arise from proven principles, and the most effective Extension educators know and use a variety of teaching methods.

5. Extension's Methods: An Emphasis on Working With Groups

Working with groups rather than simply with individuals is more cost-effective, allows more creativity and encourages democratic processes.

6. Extension's Methods: Helping Clients Become Volunteers

Helping learners become volunteer educators has at least two significant effects. For the learner, it reinforces learning and encourages leadership development; for Extension, it multiplies the outreach and impact of the Extension professional .

7. Extension's Organizational Strategies: Self-Review and RiskTaking

Extension renews itself continually by reviewing its purpose and priorities. When faculty members take risks with new or expanded publics and with new or rediscovered educational methods, Extension grows and maintains its relevance to the needs of people.

8. Extension's Organizational Strategies: Involving People Lessens Risk

Risk taking needs to be considered realistically. When people at all levels are involved, the greater are the chances of overcoming resistance and ensuring success .

9. Teamwork Is Effective

Extension unit members all share responsibility for the unit's educational program. Therefore, time and energy devoted to team development make for effective development and coordination of Extension programs.

Far from diminishing individual initiative, teamwork requires each team member to contribute ideas, feelings and skills in an atmosphere of mutual respect and open communication. Cooperation can achieve complex goals more creatively and more easily than individuals alone can do.

10. Public Support Is Essential

County, state, higher education and federal officials need to stay informed about Extension's efforts and impact.

Many indicate their desire to be involved by joining an advisory or program planning group, by attending educational activities or simply by visiting an Extension client or family. It is best not to ignore Extension's sponsors or to assume they know what we do.

Source: <http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/orientation/Education/values.htm>