HOW TO WRITE THE FINAL EVALUATIONS OF STUDENTS
ATDP'S ELEMENTARY DIVISION

A. What is the purpose of the final evaluation of the student?
The final evaluation summarizes the student’s academic progress and interests in the class. The objective is to review and report on performance and achievement.

You can mention social behaviors if they relate to the student’s academic performance. You should explain why you think these behaviors help or hinder the student; however, do not offer psychological analysis. If there are areas of serious concern, the counselors and parents already need to know about the problem. When we evaluate a student for readmission in future years, we consider behaviors mentioned in previous evaluations.

B. What is the format for writing and submitting the student evaluations?
1. The instructor submits evaluations for review at atdp.berkeley.edu/evaluation. The course number (ED33xx) and instructor’s employee ID (found on the instructor’s ATDP ID card) are required to access the evaluation form.

2. The final evaluations have two major sections: the course description from the catalog changed to the past tense and the instructor’s narrative about the student. Below each narrative evaluation you must record student absences and tardies from your attendance sheet. Students do not receive any letter grades.

3. Narratives may vary in length from a bare minimum of five sentences to a maximum of one-half of a page.

4. When the evaluations are complete and the progress bar at the top of the page reads “100%,” instructors will be asked to verify that they have followed this guide, and they will be able to submit the evaluations for review. Once you submit your evaluations, a reviewer will proofread for spelling and grammar errors, proper formatting, and appropriateness of comments. If any changes are needed, the reviewer will e-mail you to let you know, and you will be able to use the same online form to edit your evaluations. We’ll later print the final evaluations on UC Berkeley letterhead and send them home to families.

C. Guidelines to help in writing narratives
1. As the class is progressing, make time to jot down notes regarding what each student is learning and enjoying. Some instructors assign their Instructional Associate the task of assisting in note taking.

2. Plan your schedule so that you have enough time to write evaluations. Since check-out conferences begin as soon as the program ends, many instructors start writing their evaluations before the program ends.

3. Describe activities in the past tense (e.g.: She worked hard rather than she works hard).

4. Offer constructive criticism that provides suggestions on how the student might improve academic performance. Be concise; state the student’s problem briefly and then make your suggestions for improvement (see section on "How to Offer Constructive Criticism"). Despite the warnings given in this document about offering criticism, realize that you can and even should criticize, as long as long as you offer constructive criticism! This will
benefit the student, parents, and ATDP staff when considering a student for readmission or placement next year.

5. Balance your criticisms with encouragement, suggestions, and praise. Begin and end the narrative with positive statements, even if it is advice for improvement. Your tone should be encouraging, not judgmental. (For example, “the quality of David’s work will improve greatly when he learns how to work slowly and carefully” or “I encourage Diego to read for pleasure.”)

6. Be tentative in your review of the student’s work. Remember that you’ve taught the students for only twelve brief meetings, classes are strictly for enrichment, and the students are young.

7. The narrative should contain no unpleasant surprises for the parents. If you have serious concerns in your final evaluation, you must have talked to the office and to the parents about the problem during the program. Inform the office about the problem and initiate counseling assistance by filling out the Counseling Referral Form as soon as the problem arises.

8. Remember that you are not just speaking for yourself, but also representing ATDP and the University. We will print your final evaluations on University of California stationery, thus signifying that we trust you to responsibly represent the University. Keeping this responsibility in mind, please carefully consider the appropriateness of your comments and proofread for misspellings, grammar errors, and awkward phrasing.

9. Since the written word is powerful and permanent, be more deliberate and discreet in your written evaluations than you were when speaking to the students and their parents during class. Many of the suggestions you could give a student verbally, or even write in a note during class, are inappropriate for the final written evaluation. For example, talk to a student during class about an insensitive or prejudiced remark; do not recap the incident and discuss its inappropriateness in the final evaluation.

10. Do not use the final evaluation as an opportunity to vent your general frustration with a student; to rehash a particular incident that you found disturbing; nor to comment on something that irritated you during class. The evaluation is also not the place to bombard the student with suggestions for change.

11. If you want to share your frustration, disappointment, or unhappiness with a student’s behavior, attitude or performance, write a note about the problem and bring it to your final checkout appointment. This note should include information that you have discussed previously with the student, a counselor and the student’s parents. You and the checkout counselor will review your comments. The checkout counselor will forward the note for placement in the student’s permanent file in the office. The file is always reviewed if a student applies for readmission. Use this note, in addition to the counseling form, to report a particular incident that disturbed you or to discuss a student’s problem (such as lack of motivation or disruptiveness) that affected his or her ability to learn.

REMINDERS—1). Spell check!
2). Proofread!
3) Use cut and paste carefully!
Every year we have teachers who make embarrassing errors while cutting and pasting. For example, within a paragraph a teacher will accidentally re-assign a gender or change a student’s name!

D. Questions to answer in student narratives
The questions below are to guide teachers in writing final evaluations that constructively review student performance, interests and achievement. When answering the questions, give specific examples of assignments you made and discuss the resulting student work.

1. What skills did the student learn, practice, or improve during class?
   (e.g.: Speaking in front of a group, the use of the scientific method of experimentation, working cooperatively, revision of writing, time management, organization)

2. What topics especially interested or inspired the student?
   (e.g.: Evaporation, limericks, probability, improvisation)

3. Summarize how the student performed on various class assignments. During which activities did the student do his or her best work?
   (e.g.: She dissected skillfully, she spoke confidently during oral presentations, her lab reports were thorough, his haikus were original and creative)

4. What were the student’s learning behaviors or work habits that contributed to his or her ability to perform?
   (e.g.: Asked good questions, paid meticulous attention to detail, listened attentively, showed enthusiasm, cooperated during group work, persisted when work was challenging, followed directions, sought help when needed, had a positive attitude)

5. How did the student learn and work in different learning situations or activities?
   (e.g.: Worked especially well when working alone, with partners, in small groups, or in whole group instruction; Expressed herself best in writing, in oral presentations, or through hands-on activities; Performed best when given specific instructions, working on open-ended projects, or experimenting)

6. Do you have academically useful advice as to how a student might increase a strength or eliminate a weakness?
   (e.g.: Review multiplication tables, go on field trip to a science museum, continue reading for pleasure, work on writing during the school year)
E. How to offer constructive criticism

It is more difficult to write narratives when you are displeased with a student's work or progress. Since you've taught the student for only twelve brief meetings, classes are strictly for enrichment, and the students are very young, the narrative is not the appropriate place to offer a detailed analysis of a student's learning problem. Also, please keep in mind you are creating a permanent document on behalf of the University when you write your evaluations. Be honest, but err on the side of discretion.

Despite the cautions given in this document about offering criticism, realize that you can and even should criticize, as long as you offer constructive criticism! This will be beneficial to the student, parents, and student’s teacher next year.

1. If you are displeased with a student's performance or behavior, please contact the office and the parents immediately. Inform the office by filling out the Counseling Referral Form. Someone from the office will consult with you and counsel the student. Since the program is brief, it is imperative that a student's performance or behavior problem be addressed quickly. Do not hesitate before contacting the office and the parents.

2. Be concise in your criticism. State the student's problem briefly and then make your suggestions for improvement.

3. Balance your criticisms with encouragement, suggestions, and praise. Begin and end the narrative with positive statements or academically useful advice.

4. Explain how you worked to modify the student's behavior. Discuss any changes or adjustments you made in the course or lesson plans to suit this particular student.

   (Encouraged her to speak more in class by calling on her, grouped her with serious students to help her focus, told her to ask questions when she did not understand directions, gave her the extra time she needed to complete projects)

5. Give suggestions for positive change as opposed to merely criticizing behavior.

   Jane would benefit from . . .
   Jane will become a better student by . . .
   If Jane does x, then y will result.

6. Phrase your comments so as to emphasize what the student is doing right, not wrong.

   For example: When called upon, Mary contributed competently to class discussions.
   Or: Mary listened attentively during class discussions, but saved her opinions until she could express them in writing.
   Instead of: Mary was a shy, quiet child who never volunteered during class discussions.

   For example: Jack was an energetic student who performed best during hands-on activities.
   Instead of: Jack was unable to sit still for more than a minute
F. Sample evaluations

Every year after parents receive their child’s final evaluation some write or phone the ATDP office to give thanks and others to complain. The appreciative parents are impressed by academically helpful, specific, encouraging evaluations. The dissatisfied parents are distressed by evaluations they consider unfair, insensitive, or unduly critical. The examples below will help you to write final evaluations that fulfill ATDP’s objective of developing academic talent in a constructive and encouraging way.

1. For a good student

The instructor wrote this encouraging, detailed evaluation using the “Questions to answer in student narratives” (see page 3).

Sandra was an enthusiastic student and a creative, playful writer. Her exuberance and confidence served her well, greatly contributing to her being a prolific and inventive writer. In her writing she especially enjoyed experimenting with the different forms of literature we studied in class. Drawing inspiration from animals, she wrote stories about real and imagined pets.

Sandra’s classmates benefited from the many good ideas she contributed to group projects. She was the leader of her drama group, adding zest and energy to their original skit about "The Lazy Leopard." Her insightful comments always added to whole and small group discussions, sometimes taking them in unexpected directions. She was usually the first student to finish a project. When she had written too quickly to produce good work, she listened receptively to our suggestions for improvement and revised her work.

We enjoyed having Sandra in class and encourage her to continue developing her already considerable writing skills.

2. For a good student who had some difficulties

Especially note that this evaluation’s phrasing emphasizes what the student did right. A more judgmental, less constructive evaluation could emphasize that Doug didn’t complete assignments on time and never talked willingly in class discussions.

Doug was a meticulous, methodical student who planned his work carefully before starting. Due to his attention to detail, he often needed extra time to finish projects. For example, he completed his organized, accurate lab reports at home.

Although Doug did not participate voluntarily during class discussions, he listened attentively and had something to add when called upon. He would further his growth as a scientist by hypothesizing during class discussions, even if he is unsure whether his theory is correct. He followed directions well and usually understood the purpose of an experiment. Keeping a detailed journal helped him to solidify his understanding of scientific theories. Based on his journal, I believe his understanding of magnetism was among the most advanced in the class. He worked cooperatively with partners on experiments, but seemed to prefer working independently.

Doug was most interested in learning about the atom, even staying in during recess to ask me questions about atomic energy. We suggest that Doug pursue his interest in the atom through reading and museum trips.
3. **For a student who had many difficulties**

   This evaluation begins and ends with positive statements; states problems briefly; explains how the teacher worked to improve the student’s performance; emphasizes what the student did right, not wrong; and offers suggestions for improvement as opposed to merely criticizing performance. The tone is always encouraging, not judgmental. Also, since the teacher and the parent talked about the performance problem during class, the student’s evaluation was not a surprise to the parent.

   Heather is a talented student who worked toward becoming a better problem solver this summer. She understood a number of the abstract problem-solving approaches we discussed in class, frequently after we worked with her one-on-one. Her ability to concentrate improved when we moved her away from friends who distracted her.

   As with every problem solver, Heather was sometimes unsure of how to proceed. At those times when she was not able to employ a strategy or determine an answer immediately, I would tell her never to quit after just reading the problem once and would encourage her to experiment with different strategies. To her credit, she gradually became more willing to ask for help as the course progressed.

   Heather’s most successful project was the "Pirate Map" problem, which taught some basic geometric concepts and involved drawing a picture to solve a problem. She made effective use of her artistic skills to deduce the solution logically. Her noteworthy work on this project is indicative of her problem-solving capability. When she was interested in a project, as she was in this one, the quality of her work improved substantially.

   As we discussed on the telephone, my main suggestion is that Heather focus on developing persistence with problem solving, especially when the work is more challenging. By continuing to solve problems and gaining more confidence in her abilities, she will grow as a problem solver. She made progress toward this goal in class.

4. **Don't do this!**

   The following evaluation is relentlessly negative, too psychological, doesn’t discuss specific assignments, and doesn’t offer suggestions for improvement or encouragement. Don’t wait until the final evaluation to address a student’s learning or behavior problem; instead, to initiate improvement, please counsel the student, consult with the office, and confer with the parents during the program.

   Ian was as frustrated by the class as I was teaching him. With his negative comments and disruptive behavior, he constantly demanded more than his fair share of attention. He showed disrespect for his peers and teachers by talking out of turn.

   Ian had trouble making friends, perhaps because his sarcasm alienated him from his classmates. Several of his fellow group members complained repeatedly that he was making fun of them. Once his teasing made another student cry. His sarcasm may actually reflect his own insecurity, especially when confronted with bright classmates of the opposite sex.

   Ian had bad work habits, often turning in late, sloppy assignments. As a bright student, he has probably become accustomed to succeeding without expending much effort. His unwillingness to do his best may also stem from a fear of failing. If he does not become serious about his work, he is going to have a lot of trouble in school, especially when the expectations become greater.