
Teaching Sportsman Education in New York State: Examining former volunteer instructors' experiences and satisfaction



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Successfully passing a sportsman education (SE) course is required for all first-time hunters in New York State (NYS). SE courses are taught by volunteer instructors under the guidance and direction of NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) central office (Albany), regional sportsman education program staff, and Master instructors. SE staff are concerned about maintaining sufficient numbers and diversity of SE instructors to meet citizen demand for course offerings across the state. DEC staff believe that a decline in the number of SE instructors would lead to fewer courses offered each year and impede hunter recruitment. Adding to the worry about sufficient volunteer instructors to service demand for SE courses, many SE instructors are minimally active; i.e., they often do not meet the basic requirements for recertification (e.g., teach at least one SE course per year, attend one refresher course every two years) or have stopped teaching SE altogether. In addition, some apprentice instructors never become certified.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study is to learn whether and to what degree former SE instructors were satisfied with their volunteer experience and why they stopped volunteering with the DEC SE program. Our objectives are to:

1. Describe former SE instructors' (including apprentices, certified, and Master instructors) volunteer experiences and assess their satisfaction as a volunteer.
2. Determine why former instructors stopped teaching SE in New York State.

Methods

We collected data from former SE instructors using a telephone survey. All former instructors, also referred to as "inactive" instructors by DEC SE regional coordinators, no longer teach SE in New York State and were included in the sampling frame. However, individuals who would have continued teaching if it weren't for extenuating circumstances (e.g., moved, health issues, retired) were removed from the final sample.

The questionnaire was modified from a previous survey instrument that focused on active SE volunteers' experiences and satisfaction. Former instructors were asked about their experiences as a volunteer; how satisfied they were with their experience; whether they believed they were able to influence the SE program during their tenure; why they stopped volunteering; and a variety of socio-demographic questions.

The interview instrument was implemented via telephone interviews between February 29 and March 31, 2016 by the Survey Research Institute (SRI) at Cornell University. In total, 106 telephone calls were made and 70 former instructors were interviewed (36 were ineligible based on the three criteria described above). No one who was eligible to participate in this study declined.

Key findings

- **Interviewee characteristics.** All 70 interviewees self-identified as white/Caucasian and nearly all were male (94%). The mean age of interviewees was 61 years old. Approximately one-quarter (23%) received only some high school education or a high school diploma/G.E.D; 28% received some college or an Associate's degree and 43% received a Bachelor's or graduate/professional degree.
 - **Previous role with DEC SE program.** The vast majority of interviewees had been certified instructors (94%); 5% were Master instructors and 1% were apprentice instructors. More interviewees taught Hunter Education (82%) than Bowhunting (49%), Waterfowl (7%), or Trapping (3%) Education courses. On average, interviewees had volunteered with the DEC SE program for 13 years, and during this time, taught 3 SE courses during a 12-month period.
- **Training and support: Instructor experiences.** To avoid potentially over (or under) estimating the degree to which interviewees agree with statements about their experience (and ability to influence the program), findings are presented by (a) overall agreement (slightly-to-strongly agree), and (b) strongly agree only (in parentheses). Overall, 81% of interviewees agreed that they received excellent instruction during the new instructor training (NIT) (45% strongly agreed). Nearly three-quarters (74%) were able to access teaching materials following the NIT (38% strongly agreed).

Findings suggest that some interviewees require additional support from DEC SE staff following the NIT beyond what is currently provided. Half (50%) of interviewees had limited help finding other instructors with whom they could teach SE (31% strongly agreed). Overall, interviewees also agreed that the apprenticeship and certification periods were too long. The majority (80%) agreed that getting certified took much longer than expected (49% strongly agreed). More than three-quarters (78%) felt the apprenticeship lasted longer than they expected (45% strongly agreed).

- **Internal-team relationships: Instructor experiences.** The vast majority of interviewees had positive experiences teaching SE with other volunteers. Nearly all interviewees (97%) enjoyed teaching with the instructors on their teaching team (74% strongly agree). Additionally, 94% got along well with the instructors on their team (74% strongly agree).
- **Volunteer satisfaction.** Overall, 83% of interviewees were satisfied with their volunteer experience.
- **Instructors' perceived ability to influence the SE program.** Less than half (46%) agreed that they had enough opportunities to provide input to DEC about SE (20% strongly agreed). Similarly, 50% agreed that their input was taken seriously by DEC SE staff (29% strongly agreed).
- **Reasons why instructors stopped teaching SE.** Nearly half (46%) of interviewees stopped volunteering with the DEC SE program because it took too much time away

from their family or work. More than one-third (34%) indicated they preferred spending time in other activities and 29% stopped volunteering because of a lack of support from DEC SE staff. Nearly one-fifth (19%) could not find a teaching team.

Half (50%) of interviewees stopped volunteering for reasons other than those listed on the interview instrument. These individuals provided verbal responses which were recorded and organized by topic and are provided in Appendix C. The two most prominent topics included statements describing issues with the SE program (e.g., recertification) or issues with DEC SE staff.

When asked which reason was the most influential in their decision to stop volunteering with the DEC SE program, 9% indicated spending time in other activities and not being able to find a teaching team; 30% indicated the time away from family/work and 40% indicated reasons provided in the “other” category (described above).

Summary

Each year, SE instructors in New York State provide crucial services to potential hunters. Minimal information exists about why SE instructors cease volunteering activities. Understanding former instructors’ experiences, satisfaction, and reasons why they decide to stop teaching SE will help DEC SE staff to maintain positive relationships with SE instructors and identify potential areas of the SE program needing improvement (or adjustment).

Findings indicate that most interviewees were satisfied with their volunteer experience. Specifically, interviewees were satisfied with teaching SE and working with other volunteers. Interviewees also identified several areas of their experience that were less satisfactory.

Many interviewees suggested that the duration of the apprenticeship and the amount of time it took to be certified were longer than expected. Further, some interviewees had insufficient help finding a teaching team following the instructor training program. These types of unmet expectations make it more difficult for new volunteers to get and stay involved. We also identified a variety of reasons why instructors stopped teaching SE. Several involved aspects which DEC SE staff may be able to address including: perceived lack of support from DEC SE staff and frustration with the SE program itself (e.g., issues with recertification). Sentiments about the lack of support from DEC SE staff were echoed in interviewees’ perceptions about their ability to influence the SE program. Many instructors believed they were not provided enough opportunities to share information to DEC about SE and others believed their input was rarely taken seriously by DEC SE staff.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Acknowledgments.....	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Purpose and Objectives.....	3
Methods.....	4
Survey sampling frame	4
Survey instrument	4
Survey implementation and analysis	4
Results.....	4
Respondent characteristics.....	4
Previous role with DEC SE program	4
Training and support: Instructor experiences	6
Internal-team relationships: Instructor experiences	6
Former instructors' satisfaction	7
Previous instructors' perceptions about their ability to influence the SE program	7
Reasons why instructors stopped teaching SE.....	9
Discussion	9
Conclusion	12
Literature Cited	13
Appendix A.....	14
Appendix B.....	18
Appendix C.....	19

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Core SE course instructor qualifications and responsibilities.	3
Table 2. Training and support: Instructor experiences.	7
Table 3. Internal-team relationships: Instructor experiences.	7
Table 4. Reasons why interviewees stopped volunteering.	10

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Model of SE instructor recruitment and retention.....	2
Figure 2. Age of previous SE instructors.....	5
Figure 3. Number of courses inactive volunteers used to teach per year.	5
Figure 4. Length of time inactive volunteers participated in SE program.....	6
Figure 5. Previous instructors' satisfaction.	8
Figure 6. Previous instructors' perceptions about their ability to influence SE program.....	8

INTRODUCTION

Background

Sportsman education (SE) is required for all for first-time hunters in New York State. Hunter and bowhunter education courses teach students how to be safe, responsible and ethical hunters. Topics covered in the standardized Hunter Education course include: firearm handling and safety techniques, history of firearms, knowledge of firearms and ammunition, proper gun handling and storage, marksmanship fundamentals, specific laws and regulations, principles of wildlife management and wildlife identification, outdoor safety, and hunter ethics and responsibilities (toward wildlife, the environment, landowners and the general public) (dec.ny.gov).

Most SE courses are taught by volunteer instructors. Through their voluntary efforts, SE course instructors provide a significant resource for beginning hunters. There is concern among New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) professionals about maintaining sufficient numbers of instructors to meet demand for course offerings across NYS. Thus, it is important for wildlife managers to understand why some instructors decide to stop teaching SE.¹ By identifying factors which influence these decisions, wildlife managers may be able to address potential areas of concern before volunteers decide to quit. It is also important to identify if there is a point in the volunteer process when instructors stop volunteering.

The model presented below depicts stages a potential instructor may experience as he or she enters and becomes part of the instructor community (Figure 1). Individuals interested in becoming a SE instructor (“applicant” stage) must be at least 18 years old and “have good personality and communication skills” (Table 1). To become a certified SE instructor, applicants must also complete approximately eight hours of instructor training and serve a period of apprenticeship (“apprentice” stage). The apprentice stage represents a time when many volunteers are exposed to various roles and group norms about teaching SE. Volunteers who successfully complete their apprenticeship are certified as SE instructors (“active” instructor stage).

Following certification, instructors are expected to teach at least one SE course per year and attend a refresher course once every two years. Instructors who do not meet these requirements may have their certification temporarily or permanently revoked. After teaching SE education for a minimum of five years, certified active instructors can apply to become Master instructors. Master instructors are responsible for teaching instructor training, conducting refresher courses, and often audit courses to help active instructors improve presentations.

At any stage in the volunteer process, an individual may decide to permanently withdraw from the SE program (“dropout/inactive”). The decision to stop volunteering can occur for a variety of reasons ranging from changes in personal (e.g., health) or professional situations (e.g., new job), to reasons related to changes occurring within the volunteer organization itself (McLennan et al. 2008). In many cases, the decision to cease volunteering activities represents a tradeoff between

¹ This report is part of a larger study of volunteer SE instructors in New York State. The findings presented here focus exclusively on former or currently inactive SE instructors. Additional studies were conducted to understand why current SE instructors continue volunteering with the DEC SE program.

an individuals' motivations (e.g., reasons why they volunteer) and factors related to the volunteer experience itself (e.g., lack of organizational support) (Willems 2012; McLennan 2008).

Instructor Recruitment & Retention

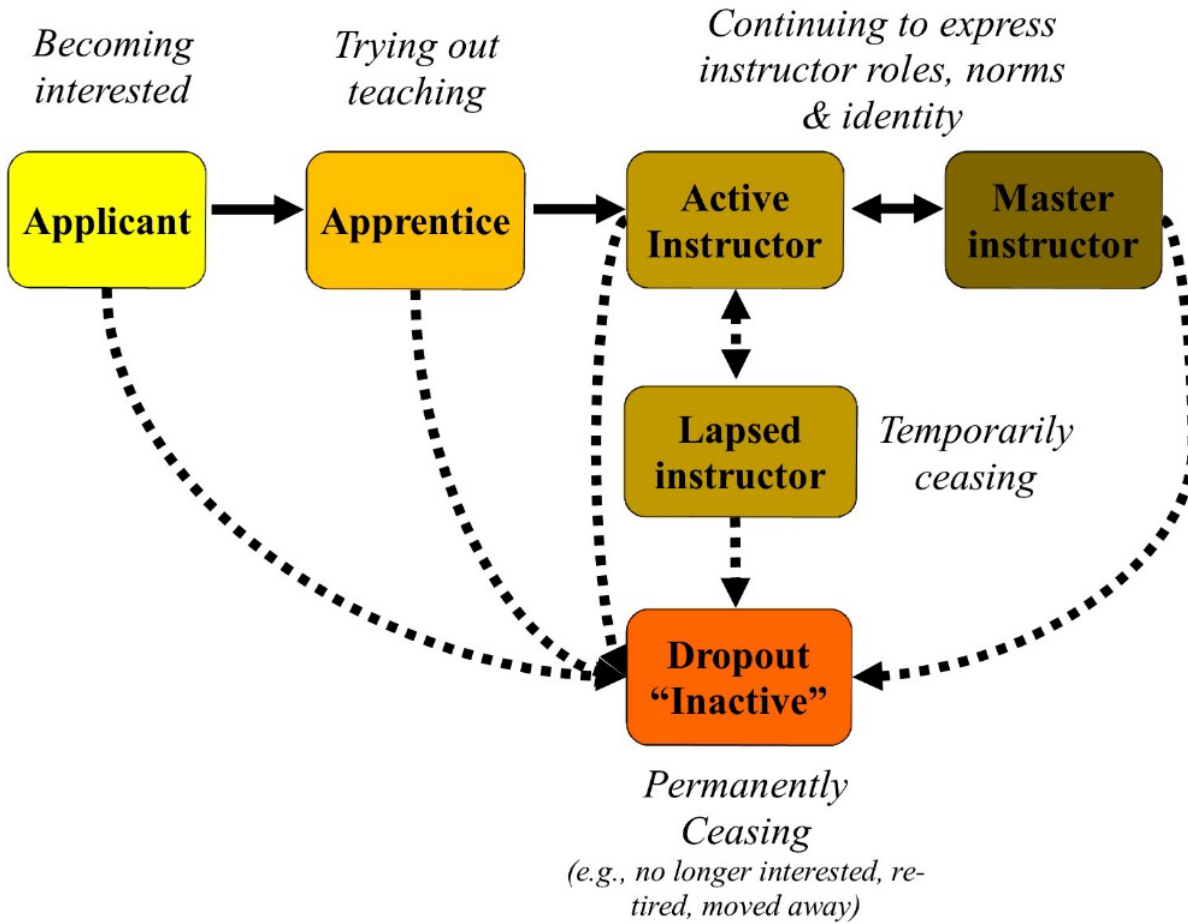


Figure 1. Model of SE instructor recruitment and retention.

Table 1. Core SE course instructor qualifications and responsibilities.

Types of SE Instructors	Qualifications and Training	Responsibilities
Certified active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 18 years old • Possess good communication skills • Hunting experience is preferred • Completed new instructor training course in area they wish to teach • Completed an apprenticeship • Passed local law enforcement investigation/background check (e.g., Public Registry of Sex Offenders, Environmental Conservation Appearance Ticket) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach/assist in a minimum of one course annually to be considered “active” • Attend refresher workshop at least once within previous two-year period to be considered “active” • Must adhere to all policies and procedures of the SE Program (e.g., course requirements, curriculums, etc.).
Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualifications and training required of Master instructors are in addition to what is required of certified active instructors • 5 years of experience as instructor (additional training and apprenticeship with a certified Master instructor may be required) • Interviewed by DEC Regional SE Coordinator • Possess exceptional communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide at least 12 hours of training for prospective SE instructors • Conduct refresher courses for certified instructors • Audit courses (minimum of one student course per year) and assist instructors to enhance their teaching/presentation skills

*Information obtained from NYS DEC Sportsman Education Program, Instructor Manual 2016.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to learn how satisfied former SE instructors were with their volunteer experience and why they stopped volunteering with the DEC SE program.

Our objectives are to:

1. Describe former SE instructors’ (including apprentices, certified, and Master instructors) volunteer experiences and assess their satisfaction as a volunteer.
2. Determine why former instructors stopped teaching SE in New York State.

METHODS

Survey sampling frame

We collected data from former SE instructors using a telephone survey. Former or “inactive” instructors are defined by DEC as individuals who had not attended a refresher course in the previous 2-4 years and had not taught at least one course during the previous 12 months. We identified inactive instructors using DEC SE Regional Coordinator databases. All inactive instructors were initially eligible to participate in the study. However, we developed three criteria to remove inactive instructors who would have otherwise continued teaching if not for extenuating circumstances. The first two criteria removed individuals for whom the decision to stop teaching SE was out of their volitional control (i.e., stopped teaching due to illness/health issues or because they moved). The third criteria removed volunteers who had officially “retired” from the DEC SE program. The final sample included 70 previous instructors.

Survey instrument

The survey instrument, focused on respondent experiences as a volunteer; how satisfied they were with their experience; whether they believed they were able to influence the SE program as volunteers; why they stopped volunteering; and a variety of socio-demographic questions. The survey instrument received approval from the Cornell University Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (protocol number: 1006001472) prior to implementation.

Survey implementation and analysis

The survey was implemented via computer assisted telephone interview between February 29 and March 31, 2016 by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University. In total, 106 potential interviewees were contacted, 36 were ineligible based on the criteria described above resulting in a final sample of 70 former instructors. No one who was eligible refused to participate in this study. Descriptive statistics were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 21 (IBM SPSS 21).

RESULTS

Respondent characteristics

Every respondent self-identified as white/Caucasian and the vast majority were male (94.3%). The mean age of interviewees was 61 years (Figure 2). Approximately one-quarter (22.8%) received only some high school education or a high school diploma/G.E.D. More than one-quarter (28.0%) received some college/technical school education or an Associate’s degree and 42.9% received a Bachelor’s or graduate/professional degree.

Previous role with DEC SE program

Nearly all interviewees were formerly certified instructors (94.3%); 5.7% were Master instructors and 1.4% were apprentice instructors. However, 12.9% indicated multiple

overlapping volunteer roles. These individuals either forgot, chose not to disclose, or believed they served multiple roles while volunteering with the SE program (e.g., certified and Master).

More interviewees taught Hunter Education (82.0%) than Bow (48.6%), Waterfowl (7.1%), or Trapping (2.9%) Education courses. Interviewees taught a mean of 3 SE courses during a typical 12 month period (Figure 3) and volunteered with the DEC SE program for a mean of 13 years (Figure 2). However, nearly one-third (31.4%) volunteered for 5 years or less. More than two-thirds (67.7%) stopped volunteering between the years 2006-2016.

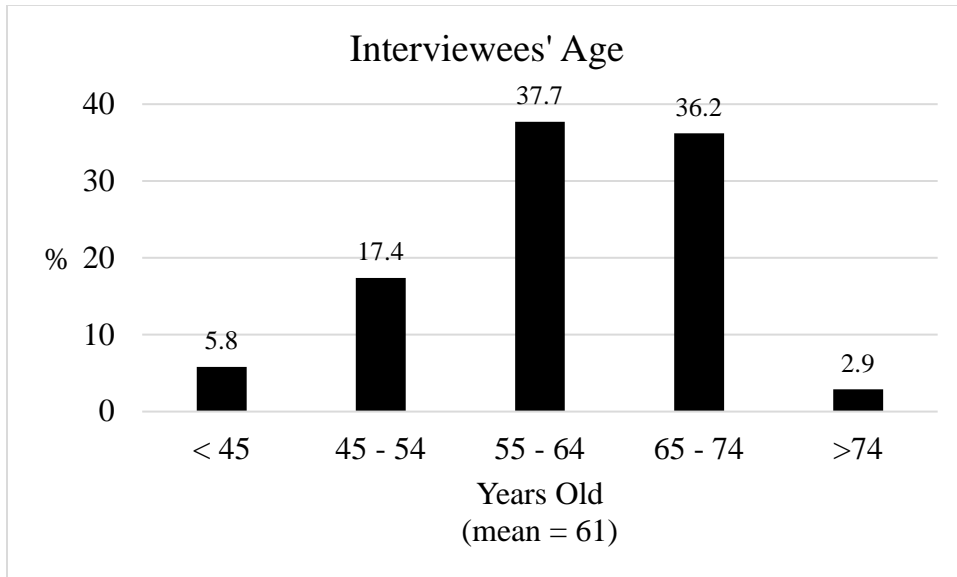


Figure 2. Age of previous SE instructors.

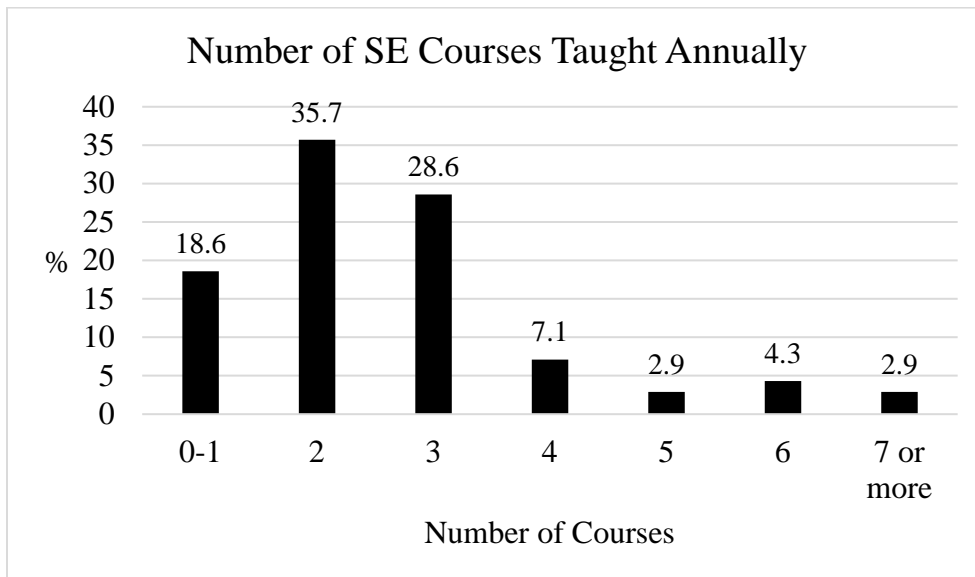


Figure 3. Number of courses inactive volunteers used to teach per year.

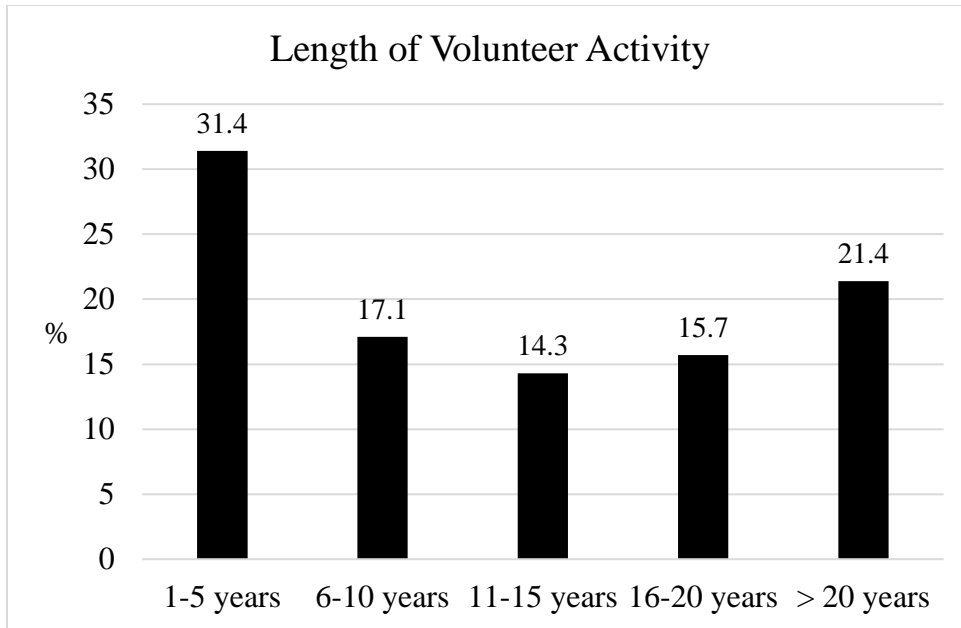


Figure 4. Length of time inactive volunteers participated in SE program.

Training and support: Instructor experiences

Over three-quarters (81.1%) of interviewees agreed that the instruction they received during the new instructor training was excellent (Table 2). However, less than half (44.9%) strongly agreed that they received excellent instruction. Thus, to avoid potentially over (or under) estimating interviewees perspectives, we present overall agreement and the percentage of interviewees who strongly agree (in parentheses).

Approximately, three-quarters (73.9%) of interviewees agreed that they had access to teaching materials following the new instructor training (37.7% strongly agreed) (Table 2). Half (50.0%) of interviewees agreed that they had limited help finding other instructors with whom they could teach SE (31.4% strongly agreed) (see Appendix B for complete set of responses to experience items).

The majority of interviewees believed the apprenticeship and certification periods lasted longer than expected. Specifically, 84.3% agreed that getting certified took much longer than they thought (48.6% strongly agreed) and 78.3% agreed that the apprenticeship took longer than expected (44.9% strongly agree) (Table 2).

Internal-team relationships: Instructor experiences

Overall, the majority of interviewees had positive experiences teaching SE with other volunteers (Table 3). Nearly all interviewees (97.1%) enjoyed teaching SE with the instructors on their teaching team (73.9% strongly agreed). The vast majority (94.2%) got along well with the instructors on their team (73.9% strongly agreed) (see Appendix B for complete set of responses to experience items).

Table 2. Training and support: Instructor experiences.

Experience items	% Slightly agree	% Strongly agree*
Getting certified took much longer than I thought**	35.7	48.6
My apprenticeship lasted much longer than I expected**	33.3	44.9
Instruction I received during the new instructor training was excellent	36.2	44.9
I was able to access a variety of teaching materials following the new instructor training	36.2	37.7
I had limited help finding other instructors with whom I could teach SE**	18.6	31.4

*All items were measured using a 5-point, Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)

**Items were reverse coded during analysis.

Table 3. Internal-team relationships: Instructor experiences.

Experience items	% Slightly agree	% Strongly agree*
I enjoyed teaching SE with the instructors on my team	23.2	73.9
I got along well with other instructors on my teaching team	20.3	73.9
I was able to teach the topics that most interested me	21.7	68.1
The other instructors on my teaching team were very good at teaching SE	26.1	66.7

*All items were measured using a 5-point, Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)

Former instructors' satisfaction

More than half (55.7%) of interviewees were very satisfied with their volunteer experience and another 27.1% were somewhat satisfied (Figure 5).

Previous instructors' perceptions about their ability to influence the SE program

More than three-quarters (78.6%) of interviewees agreed that they were comfortable voicing their opinion about the SE program to DEC SE staff (50.0% strongly agreed). Half (50.4%) believed their input was taken seriously (28.6% strongly agreed). However, less than half (46.4%) felt they had ample opportunities to provide input to DEC about SE (20.3% strongly agreed) (Figure 6).

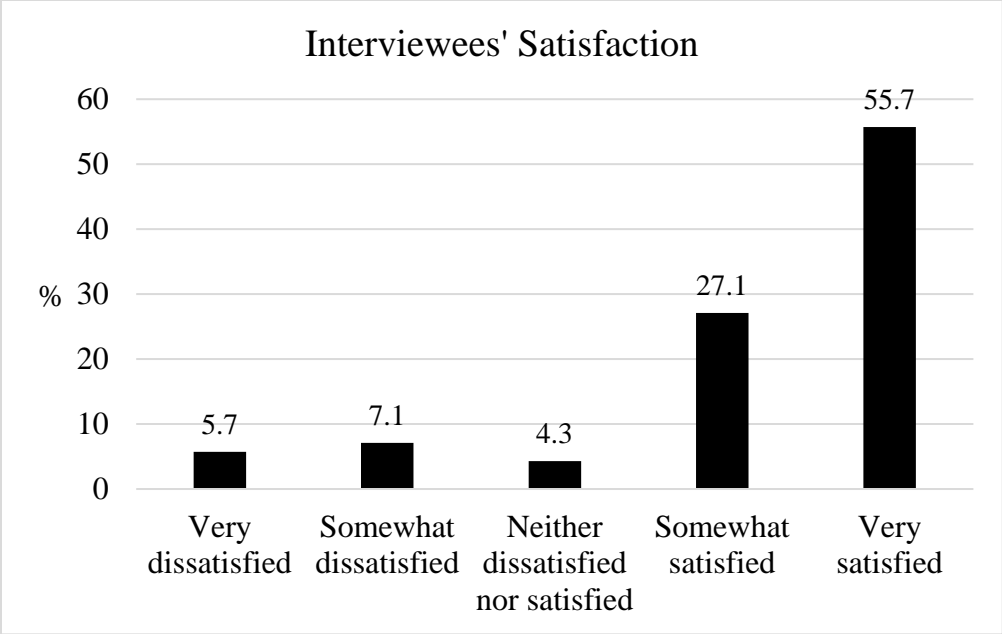


Figure 5. Previous instructors' satisfaction.

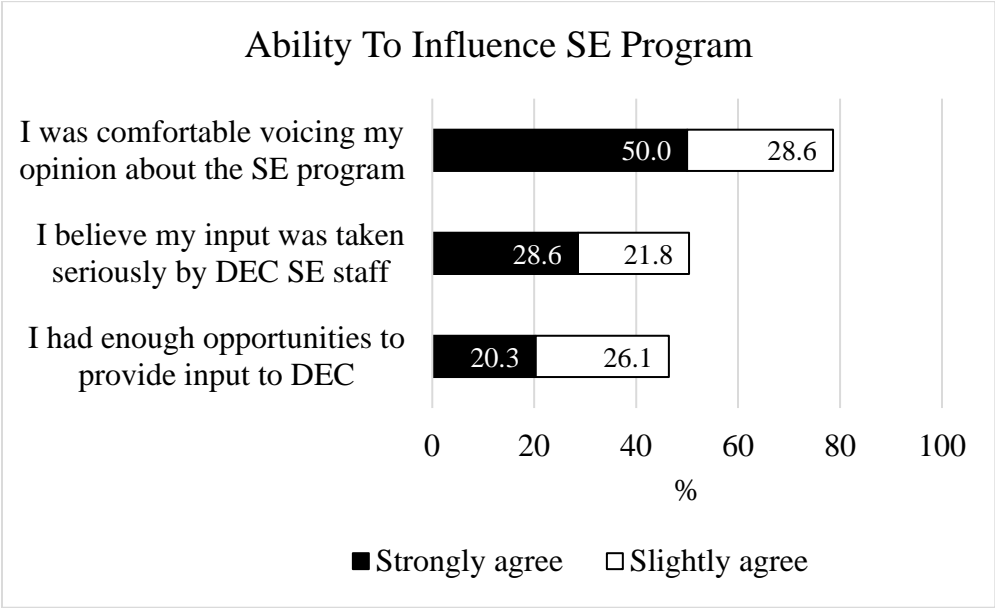


Figure 6. Previous instructors' perceptions about their ability to influence SE program.

Reasons why instructors stopped teaching SE

We asked interviewees to indicate, from a list of 8 potential reasons, why they stopped teaching SE. We also included an additional open-ended response option allowing interviewees to verbally describe other reasons why they stopped volunteering. Several response options were combined for ease of interpretation (Table 4). Overall, interviewees indicated a lack of support from DEC SE staff, the length of time required to teach SE, and unrewarding volunteer experiences as three of the most commonly cited reasons to stop teaching SE. However, half (50.0%) of interviewees stopped volunteering for reasons other than those listed on the questionnaire. These individuals provided verbal responses which were recorded and organized by topic (see Appendix C for detailed description). The two most prominent topics included statements describing issues with the SE program (e.g., recertification) or issues with DEC SE staff.

Next, we asked interviewees to indicate which particular reason from the previous question, was the most influential in their decision to stop volunteering. About 60% of respondents identified one of the specific reasons listed in the previous question (e.g., prefer other activities) as the most influential reason why they stopped (Table 4, categories with two asterisks). The remaining 40% indicated the “other” option from the previous question and provided verbal responses (Table 4, categories with one asterisk). Each reason is provided in Table 4.

The upper portion of Table 4 represents reasons interviewees stopped teaching SE that DEC SE staff may be able to directly influence by modifying certain aspects of the current SE program. Specifically, 17.1% expressed a lack of support from DEC staff as the most influential reason why they quit; while 23.5% were frustrated with either the DEC SE program itself (14.5%) or with DEC SE staff (9.0%). The lower portion of Table 4 illustrates reasons interviewees provided that DEC SE staff may be able to indirectly influence by addressing other components of the program (e.g., those listed in the upper half of Table 4). For example, nearly one-third (30.0%) identified time away from family/work as the most important reason and 11.5% suggested the experience wasn't rewarding enough.

DISCUSSION

Volunteer SE instructors in New York provide a critical service to the state. These individuals play an important role in hunter recruitment yet there is concern about maintaining sufficient numbers of instructors. Information about why instructors stop teaching SE is limited. This study attempted to identify the experiences and satisfaction of former instructors as well as the reasons why they stopped volunteering. Findings indicate that most former instructors enjoyed teaching SE courses with other volunteers but also struggled with the training and certification processes. Many former instructors also expressed frustration with the perceived lack of support from DEC SE staff and with certain aspects of the SE program itself.

Table 4. Reasons why interviewees stopped volunteering.

Category	Category description	% Mentioned	% Most important
DEC directly able to influence			
Lack of support**	Interviewees who were unable to find a teaching team; experienced little freedom to carry out responsibilities and those who indicated an overall lack of support from DEC SE staff	60	17.1
Disagreements with SE volunteers**	Interviewees who disagreed with instructors <i>outside</i> their teaching team	13	1.4
Frustration with DEC SE program*	Interviewees who expressed issues about: recertification, increasing “online” component, finding places to teach SE courses, etc.	28	14.5
Frustration with DEC SE staff or “Albany/NYS”*	Interviewees who expressed issues about: lack of support and acknowledgement of services from DEC SE staff	18	9.0
Frustration with other people*	Interviewees who expressed discontent with other instructors and students	4	3.0
<i>Sub-total</i>			45.0
DEC indirectly able to influence			
Not rewarding enough**	Interviewees who preferred spending time in other activities and those who felt their experience was not rewarding	46	11.5
Too time consuming**	Interviewees who believed volunteering took too much time away from family/work	46	30.0
Lost interest or preferred other activities*	Interviewees who indicated they lost interest in teaching SE or preferred doing other things	8	4.3
Volunteered for long enough*	Interviewees who felt they had taught SE long enough	4	3.0
Other responsibilities*	Interviewees who experienced a change in their life (e.g., new job/increasing work demands) and corresponding scheduling conflicts	8	6.0
<i>Sub-total</i>			54.8

*Categories were developed based on open-ended responses provided in question 9 (“other” option); See Appendix for additional description.

**Categories were developed based on response options provided in question 9

One of the primary objectives of this study was to understand the experiences of former instructors. Overall, interviewees were satisfied with their experiences as DEC SE instructors. Interviewees volunteered for a mean of 13 years and taught approximately 3 SE courses per year. Social relationships influenced instructors' experiences. The vast majority got along well and enjoyed teaching with the instructors on their teaching team. Very few had anything negative to say about teaching SE or about other volunteers.

Clearly, personal relationships with other instructors influence former volunteers' satisfaction. Continuing to promote positive relationships among team members will likely lead to enhanced long-term retention of SE instructors. However, what remains unclear is how and at what point these relationships develop. Some individuals may have pre-existing relationships with SE instructors prior to volunteering with the SE program; others may not know anyone in advance of applying to become an instructor. Understanding how new instructors are socialized into teaching teams will facilitate greater understanding of both instructor recruitment and retention.

A second major objective of this study was to identify reasons why interviewees stopped teaching SE in NYS. Approximately half of interviewees decided to stop teaching for reasons DEC SE staff would find difficult to directly influence without first addressing other components of the SE course. Some interviewees experienced difficulty trying to balance family/work responsibilities and volunteer activities. Scheduling conflicts, increasing demands at work, and the time required to teach SE pose significant obstacles for some SE instructors. Finding a way to reduce the time commitment associated with volunteering for the SE program (e.g., streamlining course content and length) may help reduce some instructors' decisions to stop teaching altogether.

Nearly half of interviewees stopped teaching SE for reasons related specifically to the SE program, SE staff, or a perceived lack of organizational support. DEC SE staff may be able to directly influence these types of concerns and in doing so, retain additional instructors. For example, some interviewees struggled to find a suitable place to teach SE courses; others expressed frustration about the way in which the course is organized. Specifically, interviewees were concerned about the increasing online emphasis of SE courses. This perceived programmatic "shift" was viewed as a direct threat to instructors' ability to teach aspects of SE they considered equally as important to student learning (e.g., hunter safety).

The lack of organizational support from SE staff also contributed to interviewees' decision to stop teaching SE. Research suggests that individuals are more likely to continue volunteering if they feel supported by the volunteer agency/organization (Cuskelly and Boag 2001). This perception was echoed when interviewees were asked about their ability to influence the SE program. Many instructors believed they had limited opportunities to provide feedback about the SE program. When they did share their views with DEC SE staff, they felt as though their input was not taken seriously.

It is important for volunteers to believe their work is making a difference, to be acknowledged for their services, and to have some degree of autonomy over volunteer responsibilities (Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley 2001; Pearce 1983). Promoting these types experiences may increase instructor satisfaction causing some to re-consider their decision to stop teaching SE. Further,

acknowledging and attempting to positively influence instructors' perceptions about the SE program and their role as volunteer instructors may enhance recruitment and retention of SE instructors.

CONCLUSION

Retaining SE instructors is critical to the continued success of the SE program in New York State. This study attempted to understand why instructors stop teaching SE and to describe how satisfied they were with their volunteer experience. It comes as no surprise to DEC SE staff or SE instructors that teaching SE represents a significant time commitment. Finding a way to standardize the apprenticeship period or streamline the certification process may facilitate long-term retention. Many instructors indicated that both the apprenticeship period and time it took to be certified exceeded their expectations.

Similarly, many interviewees stopped teaching SE because of the time it took away from personal relationships (e.g., family members) and professional responsibilities (e.g., work-place demands). It may be possible to retain *some* of these instructors if the amount of time spent teaching SE was reduced in a way that did not negatively affect the team teaching aspect of the course. One way to accomplish this would be to formally create new, less "time-intensive" roles within the existing volunteer structure. If, for example, instructors believed they could continue to contribute to the SE program in meaningful ways but only needed to volunteer for a few hours, they may be more inclined to continue volunteering in the future. Doing so may also appeal to prospective instructors who are concerned about balancing personal, professional, and volunteer responsibilities.

Results from this study also illustrate the influence of inter-personal relationships and organizational support on instructors' experiences. Teaching SE with other volunteers was an enjoyable experience for the vast majority of interviewees. Clearly, the teaching team approach is perceived positively to most former instructors and likely influenced their decisions to continue teaching SE. However, the perceived lack of support from DEC SE staff was identified as one of several reasons why instructors stopped teaching SE. Many interviewees' believed DEC SE staff needed to play a more active role in assisting and supporting instructors. Examples of this included helping instructors identify teaching teams following the new instructor training and acknowledging volunteer contributions. Finding ways to promote two-way communication between SE instructors and DEC SE staff may help retain instructors who feel frustrated with the SE program.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

Teaching Sportsman Education in New York State: Insights from Former Instructors

1. Did you stop volunteering with the DEC SE program because you moved?

- Yes (If "Yes" → → Thank them for their time and end call)
 No

2. Did you stop volunteering with the DEC SE program due to illness or health issues?

- Yes (If "Yes" → → Thank them for their time and end call)
 No

3. Did you retire from the DEC SE program?

- Yes (If "Yes" → → Thank them for their time and end call)
 No

4. What was your role as a Sportsman Education (SE) volunteer in New York State? (Check all that apply.)

- Apprentice instructor
 Certified instructor
 Master instructor

5. Approximately when did you stop volunteering with the DEC SE program? _____

6. Approximately how long did you volunteer with the SE program? _____

7. Which SE courses did you teach? (Check all that apply.)

- Hunter
 Bow
 Trapping
 Waterfowl

8. Approximately how many SE courses did you typically teach during a 12-month period?

9. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your training and teaching experiences. (Check one response for each statement.)

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
The instruction I received during the new instructor training was excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to access a variety of teaching materials following the new instructor training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had limited help finding other instructors with whom I could teach SE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My apprenticeship lasted much longer than I expected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting certified took much longer than I thought	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I got along well with other instructors on my teaching team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to teach the topics that most interested me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The other instructors on my teaching team were very good at teaching SE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoyed teaching SE with the instructors on my teaching team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Overall, how satisfied were you with your volunteer experience in the SE program?

(Please check one.)

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

11. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about your ability to influence the SE program. (Please check one.)

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
I had enough opportunities to provide input to DEC on SE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe my input was taken seriously by DEC SE staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was comfortable voicing my opinion about issues or concerns about the SE program to DEC SE staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Why did you stop volunteering with the SE program? (Please check all that apply.)

- Preferred spending time in other activities
- Volunteering with the DEC SE program took too much time away from my family/work
- Could not find a teaching team
- Lack of support from DEC SE staff
- Disagreements with instructors on my teaching team
- Too little freedom to decide how to carry out my volunteer assignment
- Disagreements with instructors outside my teaching team
- Volunteering with the DEC SE program was not rewarding
- Other (please specify): _____

13. From the options provided above, which was the most influential in your decision to stop volunteering with the DEC SE program? _____

14. In what year were you born? _____

15. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please check all that apply.)

- Asian American
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- White/Caucasian
- Other (please describe): _____
- Prefer not to say

16. What is the highest level of education you obtained? *(Please check one.)*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.S.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma/
G.E.D. | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate or professional
degree (e.g., MS, MA,
M.D., Ph.D.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some college or technical
School | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate's degree | |

Sex (SRI, please record without asking question)

- Male
 Female

APPENDIX B

Former instructors' experiences (percentages provided).

Experiences	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
Instruction I received was excellent	4.3	5.8	8.7	36.2	44.9
I was able to access a variety of teaching materials	7.2	7.2	11.6	36.2	37.7
I had limited help finding other instructors with whom I could teach	21.4	20.0	8.6	18.6	31.4
My apprenticeship lasted much longer than I expected	8.7	5.8	7.2	33.3	44.9
Getting certified took much longer than I thought	8.6	1.4	5.7	35.7	48.6
I get along well with other instructors on my team	1.4	1.4	2.9	20.3	73.9
I am able to teach the topics that most interest me	1.4	7.2	1.4	21.7	68.1
The other instructors on my team are very good at teaching	7.4	2.9	2.9	26.1	66.7
I enjoy teaching with the instructors on my team	1.4	1.4	1.4	23.2	97.1

Former instructors' ability to influence the program (percentages provided).

Influencing program	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
I have enough opportunities to provide input to DEC on SE	21.7	15.9	15.9	26.1	20.3
I believe my input is taken seriously by DEC SE staff	15.7	15.7	18.6	21.8	28.6
I am comfortable voicing my opinion about issues/concerns about the SE program	8.6	5.7	7.1	28.6	50.0

APPENDIX C

"Other" reasons why interviewees stopped volunteering (open-ended responses).

Category	Description of category	Example statements
Frustration with the DEC SE program	Interviewees who expressed issues about: recertification, limited field component, increasing "online" component, and finding places to teach SE courses.	<p>"All this new stuff that was poured online...I thought it was not what I was going to do."</p> <p>"They wanted me to recertify to teach...and I didn't want to or didn't think I needed to."</p>
Frustration with DEC SE staff or "Albany"	Interviewees who expressed issues about: lack of support and/or acknowledgement of services.	<p>"Inability to get DEC staff to come to classes."</p> <p>"I taught for 20 years and didn't get my pin or anything...There was no appreciation"</p> <p>"NY State wants everything for nothing. They want you to spend all your time selling licenses for them and they don't give you anything back."</p>
Frustration with other people (e.g., students, other volunteers) Lost interest/Prefer other activities	<p>Interviewees expressed frustration with: being mis-treated by other volunteers and students.</p> <p>Interviewees who indicated they lost interest in teaching SE or preferred other activities.</p>	<p>"I found the experience to be sexist and uncomfortable...They (other instructors) made it difficult for me to be certified."</p> <p>"Partner instructor and wife passed away in a short period of time and I felt I was done. I enjoyed it, but times changes and I wanted to do different things."</p> <p>"I just lost interest in the program"</p>
Did it long enough	Interviewees felt they had taught SE long enough and it was time for them to step down.	"Just felt I had done it long enough and was ready to stop."
Other responsibilities/time commitment	Interviewees who experienced a change in their life (e.g., new job/increasing demands) and corresponding scheduling conflicts.	<p>"Got a new job and as a result I couldn't find the time to teach the 10 hour course"</p> <p>"My job was the biggest reason and schedule conflicts with the program."</p>