

# CONNECTICUT AFTER SCHOOL NETWORK

## Living the Mission of After School



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### Living the Mission of After School

Purpose: To learn about the purpose of mission statements and how to use these as a guide in activity planning in after school programs.

The child in this photo is entering school, probably on his first day. He will have many expectations about the school day AND he will have many expectations about what he expects to find in his afterschool program. Mission Statements are guides to help children, families, and staff be very clear (on the same page) about what this child can expect to find.

*The author's experience with afterschool staff and mission statements is that few frontline staff people are aware of the existence of a program mission statement. Fewer still are aware of what that statement may say or mean. This workshop is a great way to establish a mission statement or to remind staff of the existing goals and values of the program and evaluate how well these are supported in the daily activities.*

Perform introductions, when/if refreshments will be served, and the location of restrooms. Thank the host.

## Game of Popcorn



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### Popcorn:

Easy game for approximately 10 or more people

No materials required (Optional: Music of your choice with a speaker)

### Rules:

Explain that in this game you are the leader and will call out a number and an object. As soon as participants hear this they must form a team of that number and then use their bodies to create the object. Example: “2, rocking chair.” They must form teams of 2 and form a rocking chair. (You might have them do this to see and feel how it works.) Each time you call out a number and object they should seek out new people to team with.

Ask participants to stand in an open area and mill about. They must keep moving (option of using music to keep people moving).

Call out some of the following items:

Washing machine

Hot air popcorn popper

Toaster

Car

Piano

Oak Tree

Eagle

Elephant

For a final item call out “Everyone, Roller Coaster”

Congratulate and compliment the teams each time they make an object

### Debrief:

Each team produced a unique object but it was based on guidance or directions from the leader. When we plan activities in our afterschool programs we have a great deal of flexibility yet we do have guidance in the form of the program mission statement or the “Connecticut Quality Self-Assessment Tool (CT-QSAT)” from the CT Network for Children and Youth



## 4. Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

A quality program is one where:

| 1 | Daily activities support the program mission and vision. | PERFORMANCE LEVEL |   |   |   | PLAN TO IMPROVE |               |
|---|--|-------------------|---|---|---|-----------------|---------------|
|   |  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NINE MONTHS     | TWELVE MONTHS |
|   |  |                   |   |   |   |                 |               |

Share the handout which includes the CT-QSAT Section 4: Activities and Programming. Starting with item 1, explain that these are indicators of high quality practice. Today's topic will help us to improve our skills in these areas.

## What is a “mission statement”?



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A **mission statement** is a formal, short, written statement of the purpose of a [company](#) or [organization](#) that should:

1. guide the actions of the organization
2. spell out its overall goal
3. provide a sense of direction, and
4. guide decision-making – administratively and with daily interactions with children
5. be broad enough to allow for creative growth
6. be stated clearly enough to be understood by all.

A mission statement defines exactly what the organization’s reason for existence.

A mission statement should contain:

1. The purpose of the organization
2. The organization’s core values
3. The organization’s vision

A mission statement should be used to:

1. Define the organization
2. Define the aspirations of the organization
3. Serve as a framework to evaluate current activities

Why do we need a mission statement?

A mission statement should be used to:

- Define the organization
- Define the aspirations of the organization
- Serve as a framework to evaluate current activities

It makes sure that all stakeholders (families, staff, administration, and children, too) know what to expect.

It establishes priorities

Serves as a standard to evaluate success

“Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime.”



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Let’s take a closer look at a mission statement (use sample or your own program mission statement). Sample mission statement: “Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime.”

Ask “How well do you think we are meeting the goals?” (*Ask for specific examples.*)

Do children feel “safe” from physical harm in this program?

Do children feel “safe” from bullying or teasing?

What are children “learning and exploring” at our program?

Do we actively support the skills children need to learn to “make friends”? How?

Are we all having “fun”? Give examples.

How do we support “skills to last a lifetime”? What are those skills?

Based on our collective responses to these questions how well are we meeting the mission?

1. Programs should celebrate the ways in which the goals of the mission are achieved.

2. Reviewing the mission focuses on areas of improvement:

staff training

facility improvements

funding decisions

long range planning

Making mission goals a reality  
“Practice makes perfect!”



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Practice makes perfect – How to make mission goals a reality.  
Interpret the mission statement and determine what it means to each individual staff person.

Example #1: Physical safety interpretations:

No cooking activities because the children would have access to sharp knives and hot stoves. *(It is good to be vigilant about safety.)*  
Clear explanations and close supervision is needed during cooking activities to prevent cuts or burns. *(Small groups are best for potentially dangerous activities.)*

Example #2: Activity planning is based on:

Keeping children busy and out of trouble. *(Always a good idea!)*  
Finding out what the children are interested in this year and plan activities based on those interests. *(Activities are more successful if based on what the children are already interested in.)*

One view is not necessarily better than the other. The question should be, “Does this interpretation meet our program goals and mission?” And, “Do we all share the same goals?”

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FISH! – A business philosophy (share handout on Pike Place Fish Market)  
Explain that since this small business got excited about their mission statement they have achieved their goal of being world famous and are now the basis for a series of management books and seminars on the FISH! Philosophy.

## FISH! Philosophy

- **Be There.**
- **Play.**
- **Make Their Day.**
- **Choose Your Attitude.**



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FISH! Philosophy can be applied to any business by using four interconnected practices:

**Be There.** Be emotionally present for people. It is a powerful message of respect that improves communication and strengthens relationships.

**Play.** This taps into your natural way of being creative, enthusiastic and having fun. Play is the spirit that drives the curious mind, as in “Let’s play with that idea!” It is a mindset you can bring to everything you do.

**Make Their Day.** Find simple ways to serve or delight people in a meaningful, memorable way. It is about contributing to someone else’s life, not because you want something but because that is the person you want to be.

**Choose Your Attitude.** Take responsibility for how you respond to what life throws at you. Once you are aware that your choice impacts everyone around you, you can ask yourself, “Is my attitude helping my team or my customers? Is it helping me to be the person I want to be?”



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**“Through The FISH! Philosophy, we build stronger relationships with the team members we work with, the customers we serve, the students we teach and the people we love.”**

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From the Pike Place Fish Market handout,  
“Jim told us we didn't have to know how to become world famous. He told us that when you're generating a powerful vision, the future just unfolds. He told us not to believe in it. We just had to be it. Muhammad Ali didn't say, 'I believe I am the greatest.' He said, 'I am the greatest.' It's the difference between believing in the idea of being great, versus being your commitment to being great right now. Jim said, 'Your commitment to being world famous will naturally give you what to do.' So, as individuals, each of us choose to align ourselves with the commitment and declared, 'I Am World Famous Pike Place Fish.' Jim was right. Once we declared our commitment, things really started happening.”

Key word is “commitment” to the goal.

## Make the commitment stick!

Proclaim it.

- Live it.
- And...



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Make the commitment stick: follow up by using these steps:

Proclaim it. When you tell others (customers, families, students) what you stand for, they expect it of you – and you expect it of yourself and thus increasing your performance.

Live it. An effective team consistently lives the values it says it believes in. Your values point you toward behaviors that fulfill your mission, and away from behaviors that don't. Try to "live a mission moment" each day at work. Conscious attention to your values is the glue that makes them stick!

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### **Celebrate!**

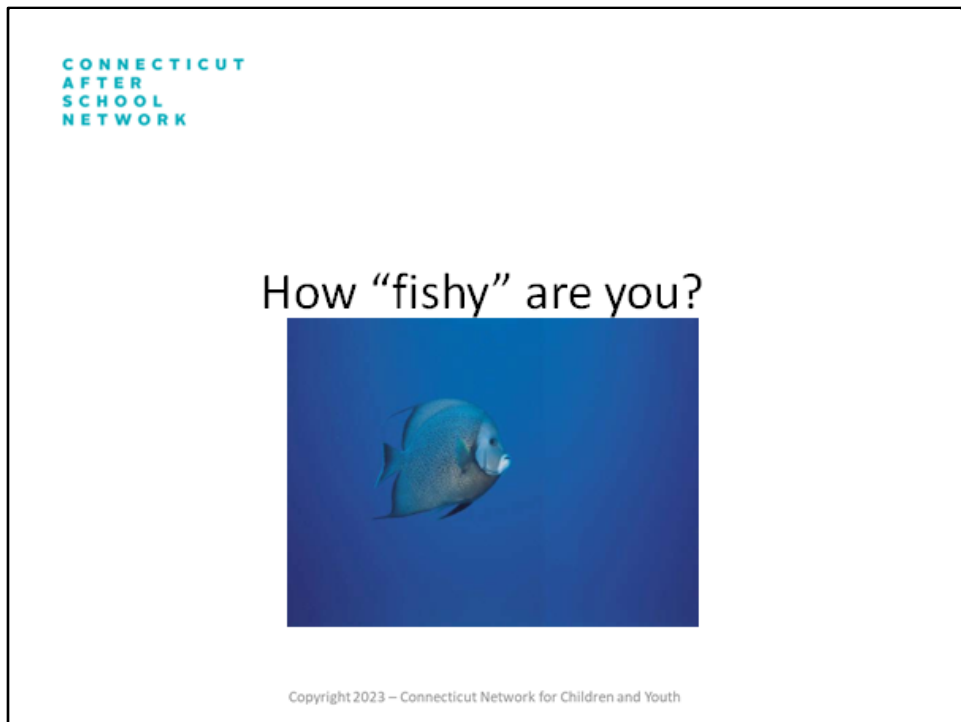
“Usually when we prepare for a celebration, we work hard to decorate the physical space with balloons, posters and streamers. What if we put as much effort into decorating our emotional space— with thanks, compliments and encouragement?”

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**Celebrate it. When you celebrate each other for living your values, people know they are appreciated, increasing their engagement.**

What strategies can we implement to make sure we are “living our mission”? Include the mission statement on our daily planning schedules to remind ourselves to review it each week. Here is an example:

1. Monday Snack: crackers, peanut butter, milk. Children sit in small groups with other children of their choice. A staff person sits with the children to



Craft: Paper Plate Fish

Materials needed: small paper plates, scissors, stapler or tape, markers or crayons, and yarn or string.

Cut a pie-sized wedge out of the paper plate. This is the fish mouth. Turn the wedge around and staple it on the opposite side of the plate so it forms a tail. Punch a hole at the top so string can be tied to hang the fish. Use markers to fill in eyes and gills. As each person makes their fish ask them to reflect on how they can make the mission statement come alive. Ask them to write this thought on their fish.

Allow approximately 5 minutes for this activity and ask those who are willing to share what they have written.

After the meeting concludes hang the fish in a prominent location:

To remind participants of their statements

To let others know of the staff's commitment to the mission of the program.

Debrief:

1. Tying a physical action (such as a craft activity) to a concept helps people to remember that concept more clearly than a simple lecture.
2. Incorporating a reflection activity (such as "what does this concept mean to me?") also helps to create the personal change needed to be able to use this concept later on.
3. Making a written response helps to build ownership of the concept and commitment to the principle.

Quality After School Programming is our goal. To reach that goal we must:

1. Plan activities to meet the mission goals.
2. Create a team of people who are committed to making the mission happen in real time.



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Our goal is to be a topnotch after school program. The CT-QSAT is the standard we want to achieve.

Activities:

The activities that we do each day of the week are the proof of our quality. Activities are the engine that drives the mission.

To be a quality program we need to make sure we are actively supporting the mission through the activities we plan.

It takes a team working together to make the mission effective. This includes:

Reflection on what the mission statement means personally

Communicating our thoughts effectively, and

Making a commitment to the program and each other to see the mission in action.

Does any one have any questions or thoughts they would like to share?

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**For more information visit:**

Connecticut Network for Children and Youth  
at [www.ctncy.org](http://www.ctncy.org)

Pike Place Fish Market  
86 Pike Place, Seattle, WA 98101 USA  
[pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com](mailto:pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com)

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Connecticut Network for Children and Youth at [www.ctncy.org](http://www.ctncy.org)  
Pike Place Fish Market  
86 Pike Place, Seattle, WA 98101 USA  
PHONE: 206-682-7181 | TOLL FREE: 800-542-7732 | FAX 206-682-4629  
[pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com](mailto:pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com)

Thank participants for sharing.