



## *Breakthrough to Quality.....*

*by Roberta L. Newman*

*A series of articles and training resources from a national leader in out-of-school time.*

### **Article 2: Motivating Staff for Quality<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Motivating Staff for Quality**

(Adapted from a speech on motivating staff in child care and after-school programs)

by Roberta L. Newman

### **Introduction**

I first confronted the need for motivated staff over 40 years ago - not as a child care or youth professional, but as a working parent in Chicago looking for care for my 2 year old son. There were no licensed centers at the time and few guidelines for parents. But I had my own common-sense definition of quality. I searched for months to find an arrangement where my son would experience a safe, clean, healthy environment nurtured by caring people who would attend to his needs, make him feel special, and provide lots of interesting things to do. I didn't have much luck.

I was frustrated and stressed at the low quality of what I encountered when I visited programs. I was heartsick at the prospect of leaving my precious little boy in the care of people who seemed so disinterested in the work they were doing with children. I finally made a selection and placed my son in a center that had a reputation for being the best in the neighborhood – the *Busy Beaver Nursery School*. After a few weeks, I realized that the atmosphere was anything but busy.

Infants and toddlers spent hours in row after row of cribs and play pens in a drab, uninteresting environment. Preschoolers were confined to a small area in one corner supervised by a caregiver who never seemed to smile. After a few weeks, I pulled my son out and searched for someone to come to my home. I contacted an agency that guaranteed to send a caregiver to my home daily (though not necessarily the same person). The first agency person who came, fell asleep on the job the first day, resulting in a gash on my son's head when he fell while unattended.

Next, I tried a neighborhood babysitter (before the family child care era), who I overheard screaming and harshly be-rating my son when I arrived early one day. At my wits end, I convinced a trusted neighbor and friend to be my son's caregiver. The arrangement worked pretty well for the rest of the school year. I don't know what I would have done if she hadn't come to the rescue. Child care of any kind was tough to find in Chicago in the 60's. Caregivers motivated to provide quality were almost non-existent.

Things have changed a lot over the past forty years, but motivating staff for quality is still one of the biggest challenges for directors of preschools, child care centers, and after-school programs.

## **Staff Attitudes toward Quality**

As I've talked with staff across the country, I have found many who are highly motivated to provide high quality services for children and youth. I've also encountered a few who expressed the sentiment that "quality is more trouble than it's worth." A few years ago, I was leading a full day workshop for after-school staff for a large multi-site program housed in public schools. The workshop was titled "Keys to Quality in School-Age Child Care" and it focused on a taking a systematic approach to creating quality by addressing children's needs and interests; creating attractive, stimulating, dynamic environments; planning engaging activities; reaching out to parents; and using community resources effectively. I noticed that one of the participants seemed to becoming more and more agitated throughout the morning session. She folded her arms and sat back without participating during small group activities and large group discussions. I made an effort to encourage her to join in without success. By late morning she wore a deep frown and appeared to be quite angry. Finally, during the morning wrap-up session, she stood up and said: "How can you stand there and expect us to implement all these ideas for our programs? We don't get paid to provide quality; we're paid just enough to be there – that's it. When you start paying us to provide quality, we'll start doing it."

Her comments launched an animated discussion. Not everyone shared her opinion, but she certainly identified one of the reasons why motivating for quality can be frustrating – high performance expectations coupled with low pay and few benefits.

But even though salaries and benefits are low, I have discovered that by using the right strategies, it is still possible to get staff enthusiastically engaged as partners for quality. It's essential for us to make this effort because our children and youth deserve the best we can give, regardless of the challenges that face us as we try to provide high quality after-school experiences.

## **A Step by Step Approach to Motivating for Quality.**

Over the years, I have learned that Motivating for Quality can be accomplished in various settings serving children and youth through a systematic, step by step approach.

### **STEP ONE: MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO QUALITY**

Motivating for quality begins long before the first staff member walks through the door. The first step involves “branding your program” with a public commitment to quality through published statements about your program’s vision, philosophy, goals, and objectives with regard to providing a quality service. Certainly, quality can be hard to define. But, it’s essential for programs to pin down a definition of quality and put it “out there” for everyone to see in all printed material and for everyone to hear whenever anyone speaks about the program in public. Public quality statements should be simple, easy to understand, and free of educational jargon. An experience with my son when he was about five years old, helped me solidify my definition of quality child care and education programs. Here is the story.

One day afterschool, my son Clayton joined me in the living room of our Southside Chicago apartment where I was playing the piano and preparing for my piano exam. The exam was a requirement for receiving my Master’s degree in music education and I was determined to do well. I really needed to focus on my practice session. But, Clayton also needed something to do. One of his favorite activities at the time was building with blocks. So, I brought his blocks to the living room and set him up on the floor near the piano. Then, I went back to my practicing. As I worked on an especially difficult passage of the piece I would perform, Clayton began striking some blocks together to the beat of the music. It was very distracting, but I tried to “block out” the sound! I continued to play the passage over and over and Clayton continued to keep time with his blocks. Then, his participation escalated – he began humming to the music. Again, I tried to ignore the sounds and stayed focused on my task as his humming got louder. Suddenly, Clayton exclaimed, “Mom, stop playing, I need to tell you something really important!” Part of me wanted to say: “Clayton, please don’t interrupt me; I’m very busy right now; you’ll have to wait until later and tell me when I’m finished practicing.” But, another inner voice won out. This one said: “You need to stop a minute and listen, Roberta.” I chose to listen to that voice and said (with a tone of impatience), “OK Clayton. “What is it that’s so important?” Clayton looked at me with excitement and said, “Did you know I was singing while you were playing the piano?” I nodded and said with more impatience, “Yes, Clayton. I’ve been hearing you.” Then, he looked at me with wide-eyed innocence and asked: “Do you know what happens when you sing?”

Now, he had my attention; my impatience melted and I was curious. I responded warmly and said, “Tell me, what *does happen* when you sing?” Clayton stood up and proclaimed, “Well, it’s like a little seed pops open in your stomach and when you open your mouth to sing, a great big plant comes growing out your mouth!”

That was one of the most beautiful things my child has ever said – and I almost missed it! As a parent, I knew at that moment, *I would always evaluate the quality of a child care or educational program based on the ability of the program to “tune-in” to the needs and interests of my child, to listen to him, and help him maximize his full potential.* As a parent, I recognized that would require caregivers and teachers who had the sensitivity and skills to understand, manage, and respond appropriately to individual needs in a group setting. In every position I have held as an educator and as a child care and youth professional, I have dedicated myself to this vision of quality – *a vision where each child is valued and supported in ways where he or she can flourish individually as a part of a harmonious community.* This required me and my colleagues to plan programs with the needs of children in mind, to organize the environment and activities in ways that would accommodate varying individual and group needs, interests, talents, and readiness levels. It also required a commitment to working with parents as valuable partners and collaborating with others in the community who could help us achieve our vision.

You undoubtedly have your own vision and definition of QUALITY, but my guess is that it resonates in some way with mine. However you envision quality, it is essential to articulate it and publicize it in every way possible. When a potential employee walks in the door, he or she should be greeted with information and visual evidence that leaves no question in his or her mind about what you and your program stand for. By making a strong statement of quality at the outset, you take the first step in screening out those potential employees who may not be inclined to be motivated for quality or who may feel, as the participant in my quality workshop expressed – *providing quality requires more trouble than it’s worth.* It’s a tough stand to take, but more and more I believe that people who feel this way should probably be doing something else and we might as well acknowledge that up front.

## **STEP TWO: ACTIVELY RECRUIT AND HIRE STAFF WHO HAVE THE “RIGHT STUFF”**

It's difficult, and sometimes impossible, to motivate people who don't wish to be motivated. The most dramatic experience I've had with unmotivated people occurred not with staff, but with a large group of high school students.

A number of years ago, my husband and I had the opportunity to take over the administration of a co-educational boarding school for “tuned-out,” troubled high school students. The 250 students at this school were very bright, but had a reputation for being very unmotivated. Because we were young, energetic and full of new ideas for getting kids excited about learning, we were confident we would succeed where past administrations had failed. We traveled across country from Chicago to Massachusetts to take on the challenge. A special meeting was arranged to introduce us to the 250 students who attended the school. As we entered the auditorium, we noticed that all of the students were simultaneously putting on printed T-shirts over the clothes they were wearing. At first glance we thought it was part of some sort of school uniform. But, when we looked closely, we saw that the T-Shirts were printed with the following message in large bold letters: “WHY BOTHER???” Quite a statement to us about the challenge we were facing!

Actually, these students were highly motivated to make a point, even though they presented themselves as “burnouts.” They used a lot of creativity and energy to pull off their dramatic statement and they succeeded. Our challenge was to recognize their creative capacities and redirect their creativity in positive ways. Sometimes that's the challenge we face with staff, as well.

There is no doubt we're better off if we can recruit people who already have a positive attitude. Even though it's often challenging to fill what many feel are low paying, undervalued positions, it's critical to exert the effort and energy required to find people with the “right stuff.” After many years interviewing potential staff members, I learned to spot people who came to an interview with a “Why Bother?” attitude. I did everything I could to avoid hiring them just to have a “body” in a position.

A few years ago I was invited to write a training manual for new after-school staff. In preparation, School-Age NOTES and I jointly surveyed after-school directors around the country. We asked them a number of questions about what they looked for in staff. They told us they wanted to hire staff who:

- Really like school-age children
- Have good communication skills
- Are energetic
- Are good observers
- Can solve problems
- Use common sense
- Are good at cooperating and planning with others
- Have a good sense of humor
- Are patient, understanding, and supportive
- Are flexible
- Are positive thinkers
- Are reliable, resourceful, and creative
- Feel good about themselves

Whether we're looking for staff in early childhood or after-school programs, people with these kinds of characteristics and qualities are ready and willing to be motivated for quality once they're on the job.

By asking the right kinds of open-ended interview questions, we can get potential candidates to tell us about experiences that demonstrate whether they are the kind of people that would respond to efforts to motivate them for quality. We need to ask questions like: "What do you like best about children?" "What's the most enjoyable experience you've had working with children?" "What do you find challenging about interacting with children?" We need to invite potential employees to "Tell me about a time when you really felt successful working with children," or "Tell me about something you've observed in a child care program that concerned you." Answers to these probings will yield rich information about whether potential staff have the "right stuff." For example: If you were interviewing me, here's how I would have responded to some of those questions:

### **“What do you like best about children?”**

I love the way they think and their sense of wonder. To give you an example, One day my grandson Eli was riding in the car with me to do some errands. It was a blustery, fall day. I could see his face in the rearview mirror and noticed that he was staring out the window at a wooded area. After a few minutes, he called out from the back seat: “Nana, I didn’t know trees could move by themselves!” I feel so privileged that I was with Eli the day his sense of wonder led him to discover wind!

I love the honesty and the analytical abilities of school-age children. One afternoon while I was visiting an after-school program, I found myself consoling a five year old girl, Joyce, who entered the program in tears. She had fallen on the playground equipment at school and gotten a few minor bruises. The bruises had been tended to, but Joyce was upset because she wanted to talk with her mommy and the school hadn’t been able to reach her. Joyce was shaking and sobbing, “I want my Mommy,” over and over. She was distraught. I had done an art activity with her the day before, so I offered to try and comfort her while staff continued to try to locate mom. Since I had traveled half way across the country to visit this program, I told Joyce that I understood what it was like to miss your mommy. I went on to say that I had taken an airplane for 6 hours and that my mommy didn’t come with me. I told her I missed my mommy a lot when I had to travel and that I liked to call her every day. Joyce’s sobbing lessened as she listened to my story. She began to calm down as I assured her we were calling her mommy. As I continued empathizing, I noticed a 12 year old girl was standing nearby and taking the whole thing in. When she heard me talking about “missing my mommy” and “calling her every day,” she leaned her head in to face me and said “Hello, you’re a Grandma! What do you mean you miss your mommy?” She analyzed what was happening and called it like she saw it! It’s really refreshing to interact with kids who share their thoughts so honestly.

**“Tell me about a time you really felt successful working with children.”**

I once directed a preschool/kindergarten for 225 children. Many of the children had separation anxieties and had difficulty adjusting to a new environment that didn't include mom or dad. A five year old boy named Derrick had an especially difficult time getting comfortable in his new school. Derrick had never been to preschool before. He was very close to mom and dad, although dad was away a lot because he was an airline pilot. Derrick cried every morning when mom dropped him off. He sat crying during circle time and was often inconsolable. He didn't want to do any of the activities once circle time was over. One morning I invited Derrick to go for a walk with me. Instead of trying to distract him with interesting activities, I invited him to talk with me about his family and what they liked to do together. He responded with all kinds of happy stories and also talked about how much he missed his dad when he was away. As we talked, the tears disappeared. I asked if he would like to decorate his cubby with pictures of his mom and dad and pets. He smiled for the first time and said he would really like that. Later in the day, I talked with mom about our idea and she was thrilled. She and Derrick gathered together a group of photos and brought them in the next day. We decorated the cubby and Derrick visited the photos whenever he was missing his family. Gradually, he became more and more involved and happy in the program.

Nine year old Sarah was standing next to the art area in a program I was visiting. The art activity for the day involved creating self-portraits by decorating pre cut “human shapes” using a wide variety of interesting fabrics, yarns, ribbons, etc. The activity focused on diversity and encouraged children to create self-portraits by dressing the cut outs with materials that reflected their own cultural and racial backgrounds. Many children were happily and productively engaged in the activity. Sarah was not. She paced around the table with a frown on her face, huffing and puffing as she looked at what the kids were doing. I thought Sarah might want to join the activity and couldn't find a place at the table, so I asked, “Would you like to do this activity, Sarah? I'll help you find a seat.” She looked at me and said, “Are you kidding? That is a really stupid activity. I'm going to be a fashion designer when I grow up. Have you ever seen a fashion model that looks like those things (pointing to the cut outs)? They look like gingerbread men, not people!” So, I asked Sarah to tell me about her dream of being a fashion designer. She told me that she saves up all of her money to buy remnants at the fabric store. Then she drapes them on a “dummy” that she bought at a yard sale and sketches out a fashion design inspired by the draped fabrics. She said, “I have sketch books filled with designs I've made up. Would

you like me to design you an outfit?” I said, “Sure, that would be great!” I got her some plain paper and colored pencils and we found an empty table. Sarah looked at me and said, “You really should wear blues and greens! Then, she sketched out an electric blue and black pants suit and a long dress with panels of greens, blues, and purple! They were beautiful! If I had the money, I’d have someone make them up for me! This was a successful experience with Sarah because I took the time to talk with her, find out what was on her mind, and learn something about her. (None of the staff in the program had known about Sarah’s fashion design hobby and dreams.) As a result of our interaction, staff made efforts to build on Sarah’s interests and she became the leader of a Fashion Club in her program.

**“Tell me something you’ve observed in a child care program that concerned you.”**

I visited a school-based after-school program near my home for two hours one afternoon. There were 60 children in attendance and 4 staff members. From the time I arrived until the time I left, staff barked directions and orders and threats at the children. Not one of the 4 staff members smiled at a child during my entire visit.

From my answers, I think you could tell that I’d be an easy person to motivate for quality. Of course we must look at educational background, experience, and skills when we recruit and hire staff, but I can’t emphasize enough the importance of trying to uncover the presence of positive traits, characteristics, and attitudes if we want to hire staff that are capable of being motivated for quality.

### **STEP THREE: MAKE EXPECTATIONS CLEAR AND PUT THEM IN WRITING.**

Once staff are hired, it’s essential to make it clear that a commitment to providing quality is a #1 job requirement. Job descriptions should make a clear link between quality programming and job responsibilities. Orientation should include discussion about your vision, philosophy, and goals related to quality. There should be no question about your intention to provide quality and your expectation that staff will join you in that effort. When expectations and guidelines aren’t clear, the results can be disastrous. Here is an example.

One afternoon, I was asked to observe an after-school program where two lead staff members were not getting along. They seemed to be in constant conflict. Actually, this was not surprising. One of the leaders had been working in the program for 20 years and according to the administrator of the program, she was “set in her ways.” He was very concerned about the program’s lack of quality. To shake things up a bit, the administrator had hired a recent college graduate with a recreation degree and experience working in summer programs while going to college. This young woman was noted for her creativity and “thinking out of the box style.” The result was that the two leaders butted heads on everything from activity planning, to creating the environment, to leading playground games, to guiding behavior. The administrator admitted that he hoped the new leader would “shake things up” and force the veteran leader to change her ways and move the program to a higher level of quality. However, as I walked in to the program to do my observation, things had escalated to a state of crisis. The veteran teacher was ripping displays she had created off the walls and was handing them out to different children as they arrived, saying, “Keep this as a souvenir of me; I won’t be back tomorrow.” The new leader was horrified and broke in to tears. She said, “That’s it; I can’t take this anymore, I’m leaving now.” She ran out the door to her car and walked off the job as children were entering for the day.

I must say I have never witnessed anything like this before or since. But, it was clear to me that the “set up” created by the administrator was a recipe for disaster. His misguided efforts to improve program quality without setting guidelines and clear expectations resulted in chaos and trauma for everyone involved. These employees had no shared vision of quality – they were not aware of the organization’s commitment to quality, and were set up to fail as they battled each other’s individual visions.

#### **STEP FOUR: LEARN ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS, INTERESTS, AND PERSONAL GOALS OF STAFF**

Mary Kay Ash, Founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, once said “Every single person you meet has a sign around his or her neck that says, ‘Make me feel important.’ If you can do that, you’ll be a success not only in business but in life as well.” One of the most important keys to Motivating for Quality is to recognize that in reality, motivation is an inside job. Each person has the seeds of motivation to do well inside him or herself. If we expect staff to be motivated for quality, we must look for ways to treat staff the same way we treat children in quality programs. That is, we must exhibit interest in their personal goals and dreams as a key to understanding what motivates each of them. Let me give you an example.

During a conversation with a young man who was a group leader in an after-school program, I learned that for over a year, he had refused to participate in any of the training required by his program, even though he would receive compensation for doing so. As a result, he was about to lose his job. I told him I was curious why he refused to participate in the training. He said, "Because I don't want to get sucked in to this field; I don't want to work here forever and I'm afraid if I do the training, that could happen. I might buy in to someone else's goals instead of my real dreams." I asked: "Really? What do you see yourself doing in the future?" He replied, "I want to be a Pediatric Dental Hygienist. I was going to school to get qualified and I had to quit because my wife was transferred to this location and her career takes priority right now. Since there are no institutions near here where I could pursue my goal, I had to take this job. I love the kids, but it's not where I want to be."

What amazed me was that when I spoke with the program's Director, she had no idea what was behind his refusal to participate in the training. She just thought of him as a "difficult personality" and was happy to see him on the way out. I thought about how great he was with the kids. And I wondered to myself about how different things might have been if someone had taken the time to learn what was on his mind and helped him see the connections between his current work and his long term goals. Though it was too late by the time I met him, someone along the way might have been able to help him link the training he would receive to his future as a Pediatric Dental Hygienist. After all, as a future Pediatric Dental Hygienist, he could have benefited greatly from the training he refused to take on a host of valuable topics: *building relationships with children, understanding their individual temperaments, communicating effectively, working through conflicts with children, bonding with parents to benefit children, keeping children safe, guiding children's behavior, reassuring children, and more!* Someone might have helped him view his current job and the training as valuable stepping stones to the future. Unfortunately, it was too late to make a difference with this young man – he wasted 18 months of his own time, frustrated his Director, and drained the energy and enthusiasm from his co-workers. It didn't need to happen.

## **STEP FIVE: CREATE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GOALS OF INDIVIDUAL STAFF AND THE PROGRAM'S COMMITMENT TO QUALITY.**

At the time of my encounter with the young man who wanted to be a Pediatric Dental Hygienist, I was writing my book, *Training New After-School Staff*. Originally I had planned to include sections on developmental needs of school-age children, tips for getting off to a good start on the first day at work, common do's and don'ts for staff, developing and implementing program rules and limits, strategies for planning program activities kids will enjoy, handling problems and conflicts among children, and connecting with parents and families. All of these topics centered on strategies for providing quality programming.

After my conversation with him, I decided to include a section up front titled: *School-Age Care: One of the Most Important Jobs You'll Ever Have*. The overall purpose of this section is to provide information and self-reflection activities that would help the staff member to consider questions such as:

- What will I gain from working in a school-age program?
- What do I have to give?
- Do I have the right stuff to work with children?
- How can I be a positive role model for children?
- How do I think of my position? As a routine job? As an opportunity to join and help build an important profession? As a learning experience? As a chance to help children grow and learn? Or as something else? How could my answer to this question affect the way I carry out my responsibilities?
- What are some ways I can connect my experiences in school-age care with my main personal goals and interests?
- What can I do to be sure this work is rewarding and fulfilling for me?

These questions recognize that time is precious and we need to make the most of it.

Programs that have used this book as a training tool have shared with me that this first section has had a significant positive impact in helping staff make a connection with the program's goals and motivate themselves for quality.

## **STEP SIX: PROVIDE SUPERVISION AND TRAINING THAT HELP STAFF MAKE THE VISION OF QUALITY A REALITY.**

I have had the privilege of developing extensive training materials for a number of large organizations. During a meeting with a planning team for one of these writing projects, one of the team members said: “What we have in our program now are a lot of staff members who are *breathers*. They don’t get involved with kids or initiate activities. They are nice people who mean well, but they don’t seem to know what to do and they aren’t motivated. When we visit our program sites, we often see them standing around the room or the playground, just looking blankly at the kids or visiting with each other. They are just there, *breathing*, and not doing much else. What we’re looking for is a training program that will raise the bar and help us develop our *breathers* into staff who are excited, competent, and motivated to provide high quality activities and experiences for kids every day.”

Having staff with the “right stuff” that are clear about expectations and connected to the program’s commitment to quality puts us in a strong position to move forward to quality. The next step is providing staff with the tools they need to act on their good intentions. We need to help them embrace a shared vision of quality throughout the program. To accomplish this, every staff member needs opportunities to participate in:

- a thorough orientation
- training sessions targeted to their goals, needs, interests, and skill levels
- individualized supervision that features ongoing communication about their performance
- regular performance evaluations that include discussion about professional development plans and opportunities

## **STEP SEVEN: EMPOWER STAFF TO TAKE INITIATIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY.**

Keeping staff motivated for quality becomes the next challenge. Motivated staff feel a sense of ownership of the tasks at hand. They are people who feel they can make a contribution and that their contributions will make a positive difference in creating and maintaining a quality program. Here are some of the opportunities we can provide to ensure that motivated staff stay motivated by continuing to grow and feeling empowered to make a difference:

- Mentoring (Teaching Others and Learning from Others – one on one or group sessions)
- Developing and Leading Special Projects, Events, and Activities
- Participating in a Professional Organization
- Serving on Policy-Making Task Forces and Committees
- Maintaining an Ongoing Professional Portfolio and Resource Collection

## **STEP EIGHT: PUBLICIZE STAFF AS KEY PLAYERS IN PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES.**

Acknowledging staff contributions to quality is an invaluable tool for maintaining motivation for quality. We need to prominently publicize staff commitment to quality within the program and in the community. For example:

- We can prominently feature staff photos, background, and experience on staff bulletin boards. We can display staff statements describing “What I like best about working with children” along with staff photos.
- We can publicly acknowledge staff efforts in helping the program achieve goals related to quality.
- We can feature photos of staff in action providing quality experiences on bulletin boards and in articles we submit to community newspapers or displays in malls and other community facilities.
- These are just a few examples. I’m sure you can think of many other ways to publicize and acknowledge quality work.

## **STEP NINE: REWARD STAFF ACHIEVEMENT IN PROVIDING A QUALITY PROGRAM.**

In addition to publicly acknowledging staff accomplishments, it’s important to put in place systematic efforts to reward quality performance and incentives to maintain quality. I once heard a story about a woman (we’ll call Susan) who worked as a salesperson for Mary Kay Cosmetics. Susan was top notch and earned a Pink Cadillac for her efforts. Her neighbor who was a bit envious of the elegant car stopped by one day and asked: “Susan, how do you like driving that pink Cadillac around town? Don’t you feel embarrassed in it?” Susan paused and said, “Actually, I’m fine with it. Tell me, what color car did your employer buy for you?”

In this field, we know we’re not going to get a Pink Cadillac or any other kind of car for doing a great job. But, even though we work in a field where significant monetary rewards and benefits are usually not available, we can create other meaningful rewards that recognize achievement.

- Bonuses
- Reserved parking spaces
- Small gifts
- Weekly or monthly celebrations
- Pins, badges, and certificates recognizing accomplishments
- Special luncheons
- Treats at staff meetings
- *Great Job* notes on bulletin boards

- Encouraging parents to give positive feedback: (Develop and post “I’ve Got a Compliment” Forms)
- Writing thank you notes and letters
- Giving frequent informal compliments related to quality
- Special coupons from community businesses

There are literally thousands of things we can do if we think creatively.

### **STEP TEN: BE A ROLE MODEL OF COMMITMENT TO QUALITY.**

Motivating for quality is a never-ending cycle that revolves around *Commitment*. I began by stressing the importance of making a *PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO QUALITY*. I want to close by stressing the critical importance of walking our talk as personal role models for quality. It is well known that actions speak louder than words. In the end, it is our own commitment to the value of every child that makes it possible for us to motivate staff for quality. Our commitment must be vibrant and visible. We must exhibit our commitment by moving with grace and a positive spirit through the good times and the challenging times. We must hold dear the belief that we have the power to change things for the better, no matter how much our patience and courage is tested. As leaders, every action we take, day in and day out, must shine as evidence of our own *PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO QUALITY*.

## **TRAINING RESOURCE: TAKING THE NEXT STEPS**

### **Questions to Think and Talk About**

1. How would you describe staff attitudes toward quality in your program?
2. To what extent does your program exhibit a public commitment to quality?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your level of motivation to provide quality services for youth? What, if anything, could you or someone else do to increase your level of motivation? If you rated your motivation at 10, how will you maintain that level of motivation?
4. To what extent do you have the “right stuff: for working in an after-school program?
5. To what extent is there a connection between your personal and professional goals? What can you or someone else do to strengthen the connection in a positive way?

### **Learning Activities**

1. Develop a plan for empowering staff in your program to take initiative and responsibility for providing a quality program. (Refer to STEP SEVEN in the article.)
2. Develop a plan for publicizing staff as key players in providing quality services in your program. (Refer to STEP EIGHT in the article.)
3. Develop a plan for rewarding staff achievement in providing a quality program. (Refer to STEP NINE in the article.)