

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: SELF-REFLECTION TOOL

### ***What Will I Gain from Working in a School-Age Program?***

### ***What Do I Have to Give? How Do I Want to Grow?***

(Excerpted and adapted with permission from Roberta L. Newman. *Training New After-School Staff: Welcome to the World of School-Age Care!* Cape Charles, VA: Newroads Media, 2009.)

*Those privileged to touch the lives of children and youth  
Should constantly be aware that their impact on a single child  
May affect a multitude of others a thousand years from now.  
Anonymous*

### ***Do I have the “right stuff” to work with school-age children and youth?***

Whether you work in a school-age program for a few months or for many years, you will leave a lasting impression on the lives of the children and youth for years to come. Your school-age program offers a daily opportunity to enrich the lives of children and youth.

As you take on your responsibilities, it’s a good idea to think about what it takes to be successful working with school-age children and youth. The staff characteristics listed below were identified as *typical characteristics of school-age staff with the “right stuff”* in a national survey of school-age directors.

## Typical Characteristics of School-Age Staff with the “Right Stuff”

Place a check next to the characteristics you think describe you.

Then complete the worksheet on the next page.

\_\_\_\_\_ I really **like school-age children and youth**.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have **good communication skills**. I’m a **good listener** and I try to **learn about** other people’s ideas, interests, and concerns. I am **comfortable expressing my thoughts, opinions, and feelings without being sarcastic or hurtful to others**.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am **energetic** and like to be actively involved with children and youth.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a **good observer**. I’m **alert** and **aware** of what’s going on around me. I’m **sensitive** and **tuned-in** to the needs and traditions of other individuals and cultures.

\_\_\_\_\_ I know how to **solve problems**. I try to stay calm, think about what the problem is about, talk with others about possible solutions, and try to choose the best solution.

\_\_\_\_\_ I try to use **common sense**.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am good at **cooperating, planning, and working with others**; I’m a **team player**.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a **good sense of humor**. Even if I don’t laugh or joke a lot, I try to take things lightly and see the humor in a situation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am **patient, understanding, and supportive** when working with others.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am **flexible**; when my plans aren’t working, I’m willing to try something else.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am **reliable**; you can count on me to follow through when I make a commitment.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a **positive thinker**; when faced with a challenge or difficulty, I try to be **resourceful and creative** – to think about what **I can do**, not what **I can’t do**.

\_\_\_\_\_ Generally, **I feel good about myself**; I don’t have problems that could make it difficult to work and play successfully with school-age children and youth.

## ***Identifying My Strengths and How I Want to Grow***

It's unlikely that you checked all of the characteristics on the "right stuff" list, especially if you are new to the field. Most staff have some of the "right stuff" characteristics and need to work on others. The important thing to do is to identify your strengths (the items you checked) and the characteristics you may need to develop (the items you did not check).

Use the form below to list three personal characteristics that you think make you a good match for the job as well as three personal characteristics you may need to work on. Share your list with your supervisor and talk about ways you can use your strengths to the maximum and improve in areas where you think you need to develop.

### ***Three Personal Characteristics That Show I Have the "Right Stuff" for the Job....***

1. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ideas I have for putting this characteristic to work in my program:*

2. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ideas I have for putting this characteristic to work in my program:*

3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ideas I have for putting this characteristic to work in my program:*

***Three Personal Characteristics I Would Like to Strengthen or Develop.....***

1. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ideas I have for putting this characteristic to work in my program:*

2. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ideas I have for putting this characteristic to work in my program:*

3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ideas I have for putting this characteristic to work in my program:*

## ***Reflecting on My Role as a Child and Youth Professional***

Take a few moments to think about how you feel about your responsibilities working in a school-age program. Write some of your thoughts below and share them with a colleague or your supervisor. Make a plan for dealing with any potential problems or concerns.

1. How do I think of my position in school-age care? As a ***ROUTINE JOB***? As an ***OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN, LEAD, AND HELP BUILD AN IMPORTANT PROFESSION***? As a ***LEARNING EXPERIENCE***? Or as something else.....? How could my answer to this question affect the way I carry out my responsibilities?
  
2. What are some ways I can connect my experiences in child and youth work with my main personal goals and interests? What can I do to be sure this work is rewarding and fulfilling for me?

### ***Now complete the following sentence openers:***

Three things I can do every day to make sure I give my best as a child and youth professional are.....

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

One personal interest, hobby, skill, or talent I think it would be appropriate to share with children in my school-age program is.....