The FISH! Philosophy is an invitation to re-awaken the self-trusting, creative spirit within each of us. It inspires you to start new conversations about what's possible and to develop new attitudes about how you show up in your community both at home and in the workplace. FISH! inspires you to have fun again, at work, at school and at home every day of the week!
FISH! in the Real World

FISH! It’s not the result of years of psychological analysis or volumes of marketing research. Like so many of life’s best lessons, it just showed up.

Who Are You Being?

Educators have enough on their plates already, but The FISH! Philosophy isn’t about doing extra. It’s about who you are being while you’re doing what you’re doing.

Doing is necessary, but it’s easy to get wrapped up in all of our doings. When that happens we may feel rushed and impatient. “Being” in the FISH! Philosophy means thinking about and taking responsibility for how you react to the world around you, how you treat others, how you treat yourself.

When we focus on being who we want to be, it changes how we see the world around us. We are free to deal with challenging students and situations more calmly—and the right path seems to show up. Choosing who you are going to be the most important commitment there is.

FISH! is a way of life. It’s a set of simple, interconnected principles that everyone can tailor to their own life and work. No one else can live these principles for you. When you choose to make these principles a part of your life, no matter what is going on around you or where you are in your life’s journey, you will notice a positive difference in your relationships and within yourself.

FISH! is old wisdom for each new day. It reminds us of what we often forget when we’re busy, stressed-out and self-absorbed. In people who are living FISH! principles already, it supports and reinforces them. FISH! behavior often starts with one person and attracts others. When a community of people commit to it together, the effect is powerful, creating a higher quality of life at work.

FISH! is NOT a program that can be imposed or mandated. It’s not a way to “fix” others.
The FISH! Philosophy

A Life-long learning approach that inspires us to feel alive and engaged in the work we do.

FISH!...

- An invitation to re-awaken the self-trusting, creative spirit within all of us.
- To start new conversations about what’s possible.
- To develop new attitudes,
- To have more fun again…
- At work…
- At school…
  and
- At home.
**Four Simple but Powerful Principles**

To begin to change anything, we have to change the way we speak about it, the way we feel about it and definitely the way we act about it day in and day out.

That’s the beauty of the four simple but powerful principles that are the bedrock of The FISH! Philosophy:

**Be There**

To “be there” for another person has a powerful effect. Think about how good it feels when someone gives you her or his undivided attention, focusing on your needs and feelings. Now think about how it feels when someone with whom you are “interacting” barely looks at you.

Listening is a big part of being there, but it’s more than that. Too often we listen like we are in a debate: Our minds are focused only on gathering information for the brilliant comeback we are determined to make. But it’s difficult to hear what another person is saying if our minds are stuck on what we want to hear. Being truly present means suspending judgment while you’re listening.

What’s more, given all of life’s distractions, to “be there” can be a challenge. Cell phones ringing, e-mails coming in, many people vying for your attention. But, there are many costs when you aren’t fully present: You’re likely to miss important moments if you’re not “there” for your friends, family, coworkers and students. You may be physically present, but you’re emotionally absent. Relationships start to feel empty and people seem like temporary stops on your way to some other destination.

In FISH!, a fishmonger says that when you aren’t present, you simply bring yourself back to now. There’s nothing magical or mystical about it. All it takes is awareness, commitment and practice.

**Play**

Everyone can benefit from a little lightening up during the day. People who find ways to incorporate “play” into their daily lives approach their work, responsibilities and challenges with energy and enthusiasm. In fact, some of the best innovations in the world are a result of playing with ideas. And some of the most serious environments can also benefit from a sense of playfulness. It is this that allows us the freedom to tap into our inner, innovative being — unearthing that which helps our organization fly forward into the future.

What is playing? Hide and seek? Tag? Well, in some cases, maybe! But overall, “play” speaks to that kid we all still have deep inside of us. That person who never hesitated to ask “Why?” or “How come?” That person who looked at the world creatively and openly. And who never hesitated to see the humor in it all.
**Make Their Day**

“Make their day” can be a big production—giving a present, taking someone out to dinner—but it doesn’t have to be. It might be as simple as holding open a door for someone, asking about a person’s family, saying thank you. It might mean telling a friend, from your heart, how much you appreciate all they do for you. It moves past just being civil or pleasant—it’s taking that extra step you didn’t have to take. And that makes all the difference.

At a deeper level, “make their day” means taking a genuine interest in the unique gifts of others. Spontaneous or planned, when you make the effort to brighten someone’s day—not because you want a reward, but because that’s the person you want to be—you receive an internal gift that makes life even more meaningful as well. No matter what, making someone’s day is a win-win every single time.

**Choose Your Attitude**

Most of us believe our attitudes are caused directly by outside influences like unpleasant experiences or negative people. But while external pressures may trigger our feelings, we are the ones wearing those feelings like a suit of clothes. We can either be subservient to external events, few of which we have any control over, or we can take charge of our own response.

“Choosing your attitude” is not always putting on a happy face or feeling pressure to adopt the outlook that’s “officially” acceptable. Sometimes angry or sad are what’s called for. That’s why choosing your attitude is about being aware of what your attitude is, and that it does affect you and others. Once you are aware of the impact, you may view your attitude differently, even if the situation or person that upset you hasn’t changed. Then you can ask yourself, “Does my attitude help me or others? Is it helping me be the way I want to be?”

“Choose your attitude” asks only that you make your own choice and not try to pass it off on something or someone else. Once you accept that you are the only one who is choosing your attitude at this moment, you can decide whether to keep it or shape it into an attitude that’s more satisfying. You control your attitude, not the other way around.

As Bear says in FISH!, “You got to choose where you’re going to be as soon as you get out of bed. I consciously make that choice every day.”

*Click on a principle to learn more.*

These principles give people a common language that inspires new conversations about what’s possible. New attitudes develop. Performance improves. Customers notice. Trust increases. FISH! gets into the hearts and minds of everyone at work, empowering them to be alive and engaged.
BE THERE
How does it feel when someone gives you his or her undivided attention? By contrast, what’s your reaction when those you are trying to communicate with constantly look over your shoulder, check their watches, or continue to work while you are talking?

Oftentimes we’re so wrapped up in our own heads, we forget about other people—the very ones for whom we’re not being there. Kids, especially, know when we’re present. One teacher refers to this as “being in the game.” She says, “Kids can sense it if you’re not playing 100 percent—and they’ll take advantage of it. But if they know you’re in the game, it changes the relationship.”

It may change how they react to their own mistakes. If your relationship with the student is poor, often the reaction is, “I know you don’t care about me, so why should I care?” Conversely, if your relationship with a student is healthy—when you’re consistently there for them—they may simply say, “I’m sorry. I messed up. Can you help me?”

That duality also transfers to adult relationships. As daily pressures compete for our attention, it’s amazing how people can seem rude or, equally how simple gestures stand out. For example, a certain principal never answers his phone when talking with a visitor. “It will ring and the other person will say, ‘It’s OK if you get that,’” he explains, “I tell them, ‘No, you’re more important to me right now.’ They’re always surprised.” Why? Possibly because it’s such a powerful statement of respect and commitment.

OH NO…NOT THAT STUDENT!
Be There also centers around how we think about others. For example, it can be difficult to look past the reputation that some students carry with them from year to year, and easy to get locked into negative comments, made offhandedly or not, by colleagues who have taught them before.

Instead of getting to know these students as they are today—or who they might become—we may treat them as they were in the past. The student often responds by thinking, “You’ve already made up your mind about me, so why should I be different?” The relationship remains stuck in continuous cycle until someone decides to give today (and the possibilities of tomorrow) a chance.

AWAERENESS, COMMITMENT, PRACTICE
Be There with the decision to be physically and mentally present. When you get distracted—as we all do—you simply catch yourself and bring yourself back to now. There’s nothing magical or mystical about it. All it takes is awareness, commitment, and practice.
The glue in humanity is in being fully present for one another. Being there also is a great way to practice wholeheartedness and fight burnout, for those halfhearted tasks you perform while juggling other things that wear you out.

We expect people who serve us in stores and restaurants to be there for us. But are we there for them?

If you find yourself worrying about things in the future, say, “How fascinating!” Then take a deep breath and return to the now.

Ways to “Be There”, use the person’s name as often as you can while talking with them, when someone comes to talk, either say, “This is not a good time,” or shut down the computer and ignore the phone while you are in conversation, or let the person know how much time you have available at that moment.

The First Days of School, by Harry and Rosemary Wong, discuss the three most important things a teacher should do: listen, listen, and listen. You do not get a second chance at a first impression. The average child receives 12 minutes attention each day from his or her parents.

See children as your teachers. Listen to them. Observe them. Be fully present and open to them.

Team Activity

Read the passage from, “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff and its all Small Stuff” by Kristine Carlson. Think about how this small passage made a connection to you. Discuss as a team the meaning that the passage had for you.
PLAY
It’s not surprising why people are drawn to Play. When we’re having a great time, we’re energized. When we’re enjoying ourselves, we’re in the moment. Psychologists say fun is a basic human need, right up with having a sense of control over one’s life and the need to be loved. So what’s keeping us from playing more at school?

One reason is the belief that work and play have no common ground. Play is often associated with laziness or frivolity, and work with serious pursuits. This mindset dictates that too much fun only distracts students from the effort and concentration that learning demands. In this mindset, Play gets in the way. Fun becomes foe.

Play, however, has nothing to do with laziness. Watch kids in a basketball game, creating elaborate dramas, doing an art project. They aren’t talking it easy. Play is when students are trying their hardest, giving it their all. Play is when they're achieving, accomplishing, and excelling. Play is when they're focused and having fun.

FINDING THIS FUN
In The FISH! Philosophy, Play is not limited to activities separate from work. Instead, work and Play are interdependent, each necessary to create magic moments when real learning occurs.

In this mindset, then, the issue becomes: How do we unearth such moments?

A good place to begin is to pull out your fear-o-meter. It’s hard for students to find a spirit of Play if fear exists in the classroom-fear of making mistakes, of violating rules, of being judged for being different.

Focusing on all four FISH! Philosophy principles will help you find an appropriate “playing field.” For example, if you tell jokes that offend others, or goof around when people are talking to you, you are not being there. If you play in a way that excludes others or makes fun at their expense, you are not making their day. If your Play is negative or sarcastic, you are not choosing an attitude of openness and lightheartedness. Play occurs naturally, genuinely-and fear gets the boot. In its place comes curiosity, enthusiasm, creativity, and, often, higher-level thinking.

You can’t force people to Play, but you can free them to play.
PLAY
(ADAPTED FROM FISH! TALES)

Work made fun gets done, especially when we choose to do serious tasks in lighthearted, spontaneous way. Play is not just an activity; it’s a state of mind that brings new energy to the tasks at hand and sparks creative solutions.

It is the lighthearted feeling you release inside people when they are enthused, committed, and the free of fear. It’s playing with ideas, exploring the creative mind and not putting limits on the mind.

“We have fun working while delivering the ideal customer experience in consumer communications.” stated Gary Owens, Sprint’s vice president of service operations. The shift in their vision statement allowed the department employees to connect to the belief that it is “ok” to play. This management style shows employees the human side of leadership.

“Play” is not endangering anyone by putting them at physical risk and it is not speaking or generating malice toward one another. Play is not making fun of one another; it is designed to celebrate the energy, creativity and imagination of the place of business.

Team Activity
Choose at least one activity that your team will do to “PLAY” each week. How is your team planning on keeping the lighthearted energy going throughout the stressful times? Brainstorm some ideas.
MAKE THEIR DAY
Make Their Day is often a big production at schools—from letter jackets to trophies to valedictorians. It’s wonderful to recognize, and be recognized for, hard work and accomplishment. It’s a natural, human motivator. It’s what many students, and teachers, strive for every day.

But what if you’re not the best athlete, scholar, or musician? What if you’re not the best, the brightest, or the boldest? You may get the message that something is only worth doing if it’s rewarded. And if you’re not rewarded, then perhaps what you’re doing must not be important.

To combat this, it’s important to remember that even the simplest of actions can make all the difference.

When we show others that they are worthy of our respect and concern, we set a tone of our school that invites everyone to feel included. We foster a sense of hope that encourages kids and adults to keep trying. We create an atmosphere of support and compassion.

GIVE TO GIVE
Make Their Day means taking a genuine interest in the gifts of others. It does not come with strings attached. It has no other purpose than to bring a little joy into someone’s life.

But there is a side effect. You may find that when you make this effort—not because you want something, but because that’s the person you want to be—you receive an internal gift that gives purpose to your own life. Not only are you helping others, but also you’re helping yourself.
When you “make someone’s day” (or moment) through a small kindness or unforgettable engagement, you can turn even routine encounters into special memories.

We are not just teaching, we are making the world a better place to live one student at a time.

There is nothing quite as powerful as turning your attention away from yourself and asking how you might connect with another.

Making someone’s day is often about the element of surprise.

Instituting a “Code Swim” is one way of making someone’s day; “Code Swim” can be announced over the intercom and everyone stops what they are doing and takes part in a standing ovation for 10 seconds.

No matter how much love we give to others, more rushes in to take its place.

Team Activity:

Make a short list of ways you can “Make Their Day” for your grade level students. Post them in an area where they can be reviewed.

Make a short list of ways you can “Make Their Day” for your colleagues. Refer to it often.
FISH! Thought

The notion of self-esteem is to make sure that no one ever feels bad. This usually leads to an inflated sense of one’s abilities, this is not self-esteem. A study conducted worldwide asking students how they feel about their math competency. Americans scored highest in self-image, but lowest in math proficiency. Children that never make mistakes do not have the opportunity to develop self-reliance and sense of accomplishment that comes from actually overcoming obstacles.

Nathaniel Branden, a noted author and psychotherapist, defined self-esteem as knowing you are “competent to cope with the basic challenges of life” and “worthy of happiness.” Such inner strength makes it possible to handle criticism, make healthy choices, and be accountable for how you treat yourself and others (Choose Your Attitude); to try new things and take risks (Play); and to know you are loved and, in that self-confidence, to love and respect others (Be There and Make Their Day).
The attitude you have right now is the one you are choosing. Is it the one you want?

Whatever you do in the morning sets the tone for the entire day. Next time you feel upset or angry—pounding heartbeat, knotted stomach—ask yourself if what you are about to say will be harmful. If yes, don’t say it. Simply become aware of your body’s reaction and physical sensations of anger.

Resolve to no longer react negatively to the things that happen around you.

Control the menu of thoughts and images that flash through your mind. Dwell on the positive and let them inspire you.

The way to be happy is to make others happy.

All you can control are the reactions to the circumstances in your life.

The First Days of School, by Harry and Rosemary Wong, discuss beliefs that teachers must maintain for themselves. “An Effective Teacher makes a difference, is competent, is a good classroom manager and uses research-based practices.” Wong states that if a teacher has strong beliefs in themselves, it is easier and more satisfying to help others.

Wong continues by saying if teachers set positive expectations, their students will reach high standards. “This will be an exciting year, and you are going to have the most memorable year you have ever had; as a result, you will do very well.”

A person’s behavior will determine what choices that person will make.

Teach With Your Strengths by Rosanne Liesveld and Jo Ann Miller talks about the fact that students learn more from teachers who laugh with them, cheer with them, and sometimes, cry with them. When students see real emotion coming from a teacher, they realize that a real person is teaching them.

Team Activity

How can you work together as a team to help each other to, “Choose Your attitude?” What can you do to help yourself and others stay positive and focused on student success? Write it down.
Fresh FISH! Experiences

1. Each teacher received a copy of the FISH! book. The administration received so many requests for the other three FISH! books that the school keeps six copies of the entire series on hand.
2. Each faculty meeting begins with five minutes of FISH! time, an opportunity to re-focus on the four principles. During this time, faculty shares stories and activities with their peers and discuss classroom ideas.
3. At the beginning of the school year, faculty drew names and was instructed to “be there” for that person during the first few weeks of school.
4. Students who go out of their way to “make someone’s day” or “be there” receive a stuffed fish to keep on their desk for the day.
5. More than 20 teachers have attended the FISH! For Schools workshop.
6. The school introduced FISH! For Families in September 2006. More than 50 parents attended a session to learn more about the FISH! Philosophy, how it’s used at school and how it can be used at home.
7. Teachers have re-written class language to incorporate the FISH! Principles.
8. School administration has begun giving copies of the FISH! book to faculty members who go out of their way for a student or another staff member.

Inside Story
At the first faculty meeting of the school year, I passed out construction paper fish to staff members. Each fish had the name of another staff member. Those first couple of weeks of school can be very stressful so I asked the staff to make it their job to be mindful of their assigned person during that time and really “be there” for them. A couple weeks later, one of our new teachers told me she was struggling to figure out which staff member had drawn her name. She said she couldn’t figure out who it was because everyone had been so nice to her.”
--Nancy Smith, Program Specialist

A colleague came to school the other day and was having a bad day. She immediately shared with us that that things weren’t going well and that she was trying to choose the right attitude. Immediately, people began looking for ways to help her feel better and make her day – it was amazing. Before FISH!, she probably wouldn’t have shared how she was feeling. But our experience with FISH! has shown that the moment we have those conversations, things are already better.
--Natalie Hemmit, Guidance Counselor

Results
1. Teachers have become more spontaneous and there is a playful spirit throughout the school.
2. Both faculty and students have embraced a common FISH! language that is used from everything from playground discipline to classroom recognition.
3. Teachers and students have become more mindful of others and their needs.
4. 100 percent of the staff is voluntarily using FISH! on a regular basis.

FISH! has become embedded in who and what we are at Estates Elementary. It’s been incredible to watch it unfold and see how teachers, students and parents respond to it. We have really embraced The FISH! Philosophy and made it part of our culture.
--Susan Edwards, Assistant Principal

As we have used the language it is very clear to me, from my past experiences in other schools, that using The FISH! Principles could change the total affective environment of a struggling school. Kids need connection and to know they have power over their own lives. FISH! helps them to be happy, greet people in a solid, real way.
--Carole Mathy, Media Specialist

FISH!
Now set some goals and make some commitments about what you will do this week to move that category in a positive direction. These need to be things you can do without anyone’s help. List a couple of goals to start.

1.

2.

3.