

Creating a Personal Mission Statement Activity

Questions adapted from *Quintessential Careers - Are You Living Your Life on Purpose*

Provide an overview of what mission statements are, their purpose and how mission statements can act to guide future actions and choices. Share examples of good mission statements with the students. Use both those of individuals and of organizations that reflect who we are, what we stand for, what we do and why we do it.

(Before asking students to answer the following questions, let them know that they will be writing for themselves and will not be asked to share their answers or to turn them in. Encourage them to answer the questions honestly to get the best results for themselves. Let them know that at the end of the entire exercise, you will ask if any students want to share a sentence from the final results, but that it is optional and not required.)

Have the students answer these three questions:

1. Describe your ideal day. This is not about being practical. Include as many sides of you, and your interests and passions as possible – You have 24 hours with all the resources you need....
2. Imagine yourself 150 years old and surrounded by your descendants and/or the descendants of your friends in comfortable surroundings. What would you say to them is important in life?
3. Imagine it is your 30th, 50th, 75th birthday, or another milestone in your life. You have been asked by national media to write a press release about your achievements. Consider what you would want your family, friends, co-workers in your profession, peers and community to say about you. What kind of difference would you like to have made in their lives? How do you want to be remembered?

Next, ask them to review their three answers and to reflect on how the answers to these three questions provides the information needed for their mission statement by also answering the following questions:

Who am I? What do I stand for? What do I do? Why do I do it?

Have the students draft their mission statement. This is generally a paragraph or two, and about 1/2 page.

When they have finished, share examples of taglines that reflect an organization's purpose or value. For example:

International Red Cross - To serve the most vulnerable,
FedEx - The world on time,
Lens Crafters - Helping people see better one hour at a time,
Verizon - Can You Hear Me Now?
Play Station - Live in your world, play in ours.
Hallmark - When you care enough to send the very best.
Nature Conservancy - Saving the last great places.

Ask the students to go back over their mission statement draft and to circle five to ten words that capture the heart or core of their mission statement. Note that they may find they circle the same word more than once, as it is important to them. With these five to ten words chosen, ask them to use any or all to draft their own personal tagline that is no more than one sentence long and captures the ideas in their mission statement. Describe this as their bumper sticker, t-shirt slogan or personal ad campaign.

At this point ask the class if anyone would like to share their tagline. Usually several choose to speak up. Hearing the variety of taglines points out the unique qualities, values and goals of this particular group of students. The professor who designed this activity has a button/badge maker, so the students spend the next few minutes making individual buttons with their taglines on them; maybe have a creative exercise/craft that incorporates something like this.