

Developing a Mission Statement

In early education and care, mission statements carry great meaning and are an important part of the program, no matter how small or large. Mission statements, sometimes called vision statements, typically describe the goals of a program; what unique qualities it offers and its overall vision. Mission statements are vital because they are unique to each program and they offer a voice to guide and share the definition and purpose of the program.

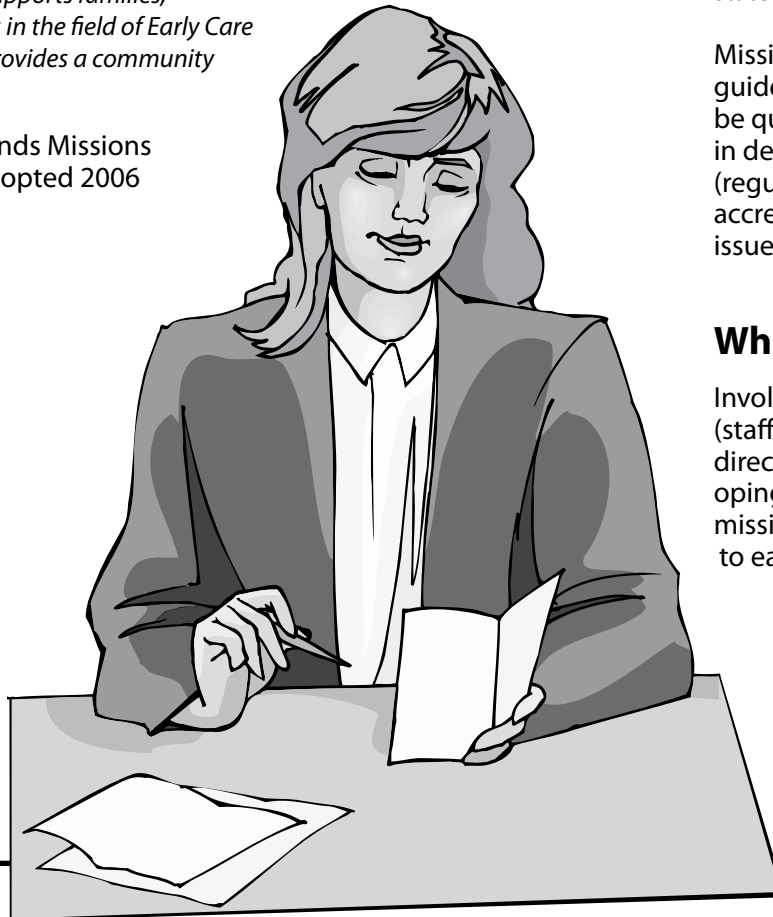
Not all mission statements look alike or even contain the same information. Here are two samples:

"Shady Lane is a Diverse Learning Community committed to programs of excellence for children, their families, and educators that embody best practices of early childhood education and promote collaborations that help all children realize their full potential."

- Shady Lane Mission Statement; adopted 2003

"To provide an inclusive child care program which promotes optimal development for each child, supports families, upholds best practices in the field of Early Care and Education, and provides a community model for quality."

- Hearts and Minds Missions Statement; adopted 2006



Why develop a mission or vision statement?

All programs are developed because of an idea that one person or groups of people had in creating something. Often these ideas carry forth valuable dreams and insights. Developing mission statements reconnects to that original idea.

Mission statements give us something in writing—clearly stating our program's views—to offer those interested in our program, such as families, staff, community, investors, funding programs, and volunteers. It is essential that everyone involved with the program know the mission statement and how it is implemented.

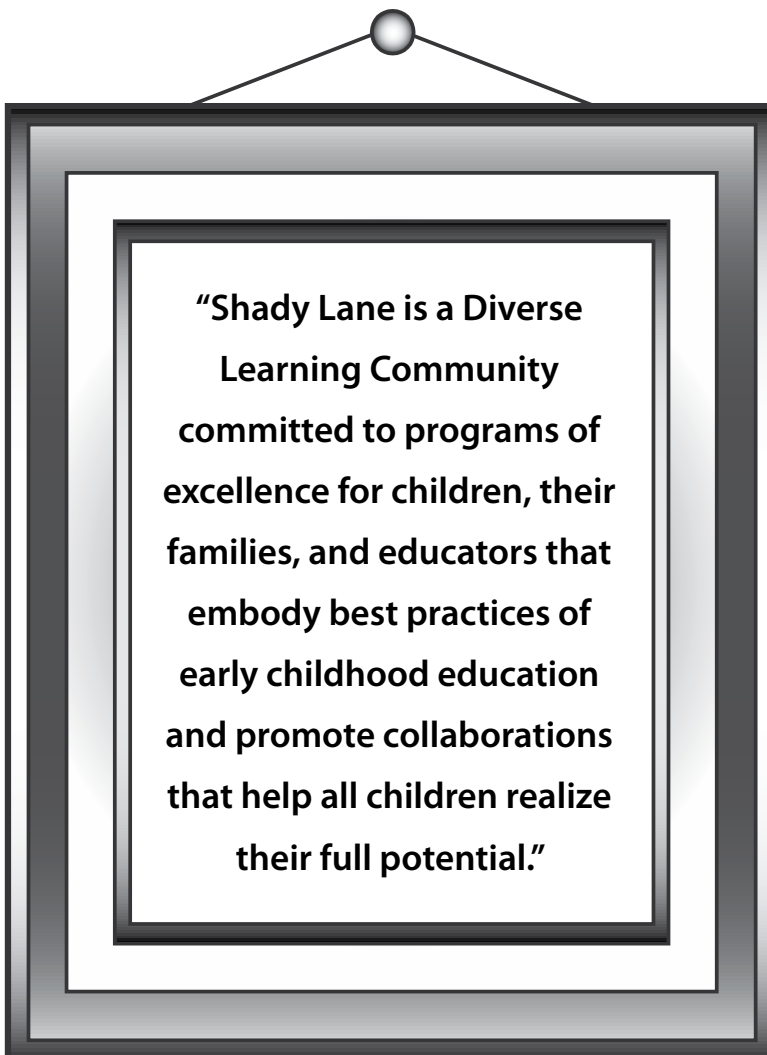
Mission statements can also act as a guide in working as a team. This can be quite valuable when you get lost in details that may blur your vision (regulations, paperwork, licensing, accreditation, planning, behavior issues, communication issues, etc.).

Where to start?

Involve the program's community (staff, families, children, board of directors, volunteers, etc.) in developing the mission statement. The mission becomes personal and clear to each person involved.

Considerations for developing a mission statement:

- Look at the beginning; revisit ideas of how and why the program started
- Examine and define the direction in which the program is growing
- Explore and describe what is special and valued in the program
- Communicate services and opportunities offered to others (children, families, staff, board members, volunteers, support services, etc.)
- Convey a sense of the program's philosophy, beliefs, and goals for children and families
- Create timelines to review your mission statement



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What does your mission statement say?

Carefully developing mission statements encourages us to look closely at our programs. How do we introduce ourselves? Are we staying true to our focus? Where are we going? How do we continue our path? Are all voices represented? It is this further thinking that continues to add quality, meaning, and reward to our programs and our work.

Share your mission statement:

- Display your mission statement in your environment (consider enlarging and framing for a professional look)
- Place in the front of your program's handbook
- Place on your business cards, program stationery, brochures
- Add to your newsletters, web sites, advertisements, and announcements
- Use as an introduction when holding meetings

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