



# SECA Leadership Letter

## Self-Assessment of Life’s Ten Themes

To be an effective leader, you need to live true to qualities you value. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being “Poor” and 10 being “Excellent”) rate yourself in each of the areas in terms of the extent to which you are living true to the qualities associated with each of these keys. Are you:

1. Celebrating your gifts? (Creativity, Generosity, Authenticity)
2. Connecting with your purpose? (Meaning, Purposefulness, Fulfillment)
3. Shaping fresh hope from new dreams? (Vision, Hope, Direction)
4. Pulling your own strings? (Responsibility, Mindfulness, Power)
5. Choosing faith over fear? (Courage, Faith, Choices)
6. Recognizing your teachers ? (Being teachable, Maturity, Humility)
7. Honoring your rhythm? (Balance, Wholeness, Integrity)
8. Living in color? (Wholeheartedness, Joy, Gratitude)
9. Remaining true to the soul? (Wisdom, Reverence, Self-awareness)
10. Seizing the day by harnessing the moments? (Determination, Self-discipline, Dedication)

Circle the three themes which hold the qualities you would like to more fully embrace in your life and work. Choose a practice or routine that will serve as a daily reminder to live truer to those qualities.

*Adapted from 2002 Denise Bissonnette, Diversity World at www.diversityworld.com*

## Rekindle Your Creativity

Has your idea pool run dry? Maybe you need to get back to the basics---the kind of creative freedom you enjoyed as a child. Buy a coloring book and crayons or some Play-Doh and see where your imagination takes you. Or seek out a swing set, carousel, or some other playground equipment and remember what it means to be a child again. Giving yourself permission to let go of adult worries and restrictions may be just the solution to help you to get your creative juices flowing again.

*Adapted from “10 Ways to Boost Your Creativity by Julie Plenty on the Creative Portal Web site.*

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## Build Careers Instead of Jobs

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Career orientated employees are usually eager to stretch themselves by learning new skills and mastering fresh challenges. Having a goal-centered action plan will focus their ambitions while encouraging them to envision a future with your organization/program. Follow this template for development:



### ***Set Goals***

- Set targeted short-term goals. Work with a promising staff member to identify a six-month goal—a special project, a competency in a new area, or meeting program standards, for instance. Define the goal in concrete terms: How will you measure results? By what date should the objective be completed?
- Define exactly where you want the employee to stretch. Breaking down the goal into individual steps is standard procedure, but don't stop there. Identify elements of the task that require the staff person to accomplish something new or difficult, and discuss how the employee should plan to reach these.
- Recognize training needs. Stepping outside the comfort zone takes more than will power. New skills call for training. Identify what the staff person needs; team up with others to research and provide the best resources.
- Spotlight personal rewards. What's in it for the employee? Link professional growth to the individual's personal needs and interests. Spell out the payoff that fulfills the employee's personal desires.
- Enrich the staff person's role. The achievement of your goal should not mean a return to the previous plateau. When an employee succeeds, take advantage of that development by setting fresh goals and offering greater responsibilities.

*Adapted from "Achieving Strategic Human Capital ROI from Career Development" by Paul Stevens, on the Worklife Web site.*

## Recruiting And Retaining Board Members

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Recruiting good board members and retaining them is an essential on-going task for nonprofit organizations. It is a task that is challenging, but can be accomplished with some focused work. In order to survive and thrive, you need motivated board members who have credibility in the community and a passion for your mission. Here are some ways to bolster your efforts to recruit and retain effective board members:

1. Conduct a board self-assessment: look for ways to increase effectiveness of meetings, e.g., more focused agendas, clear leadership from chair, keeping meetings from being dominated by a single board member.
2. Provide a thorough orientation for new board members.
3. Offer training to board members in the specifics of their board position.
4. Conduct exit interviews with outgoing board members.
5. Have the nominating committee outline areas of expertise to target in recruitment of board members, to complement present board members' areas of expertise.
6. Ask current board members, committee members, and volunteers to suggest board member candidates to the nominating committee.
7. Involve potential new board members at the committee level first.

If your board is functioning poorly, you must face up to it. Until you do, hold off on recruitment efforts. Recruiting good people to a dysfunctional system will not magically turn things around. It would be like bringing a new bunch of mates onto a ship you know is sinking. Concentrate first on making your board 'shipshape,' even if the necessary changes take time and you have few members during the process.

*Adapted from [http://www.ctnonprofits.org/Pages/NonProfitResources/BoardBuilderSept\\_Oct2002.asp](http://www.ctnonprofits.org/Pages/NonProfitResources/BoardBuilderSept_Oct2002.asp)*

***Concentrate first on making your board shipshape first.***

## More Effective Meetings

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If you want to have more effective meetings, first you have to learn the basics. Here are some simple, easy-to-follow and proven guidelines that should be followed each and every time your group meets. Print this page. Hang it on your meeting room wall. Write the guidelines on a poster. Memorize them by heart. Do whatever it's going to take to improve your meetings!

Guidelines you and your group can follow before, during and after your meeting:

1. Only hold a meeting if necessary.
2. All meetings must have clear objectives
3. Invite a neutral facilitator to sensitive meetings.
4. Have an agenda which includes topics for discussion, person responsible for each topic, and time allotment for each topic.
5. Circulate meeting information to everyone prior to the meeting.
6. Start on time and be prepared as leader or discussant.
7. Take notes and circulate them to attendees and others.
8. Document decisions made by the group.
9. Be sure action items have a person identified to see that the job gets done.
10. Have participants evaluate the meeting and apply suggestions to the next meeting.

*Adapted from <http://www.effectivemeetings.com/meetingbasics/training.asp>*

***Take responsibility for helping  
to get the job done!***



*Winner of the  
"Not My Job" Award*

## Evaluating the Meeting

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Meetings are about pleasing two groups, the attendees and the people hosting the meeting. To find out if your meeting was successful you'll need to consult both groups. Attendees will tell you if they've benefited from the meeting, while those in your planning group can tell you whether you've accomplished the goals for the event. As U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell once said, "There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure." You are wise to want to hear people's feedback about your meeting.

*Adapted from <http://www.effectivemeetings.com/guru/solution52.asp>*

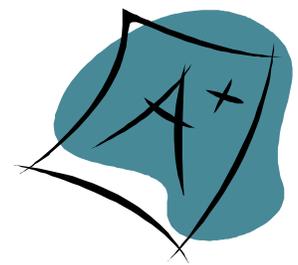
### BOARD MEETING EVALUATION FORM

Please complete and give this form to the president at the end of the meeting.  
Rate each item as GOOD or NEEDS IMPROVEMENT.

Meeting Date:

1. Agenda was clear, supported by the necessary documents and provided prior to the meeting.
2. Materials for discussion were sent in advance.
3. Reports were clear and contained needed information.
4. We avoided getting into administrative details.
5. A diversity of opinions were expressed and issues were dealt with in a respectful manner.
6. The chair guided the meeting effectively.
7. Members avoided side-bar conversations and participated responsibly.
8. All board members were present.
9. The next steps were identified and responsibilities assigned.
10. Issues that I would like to see discussed by the board at future meetings are:
11. Other concerns, suggestions:

*Adapted from the VAECE 2004 Policy Manual*



## Increasing Attendance at Meetings

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To increase attendance at meetings, consider the environment, consider the schedule of engagement, consider finding resources to help enhance your presentations. For that purpose, consider:

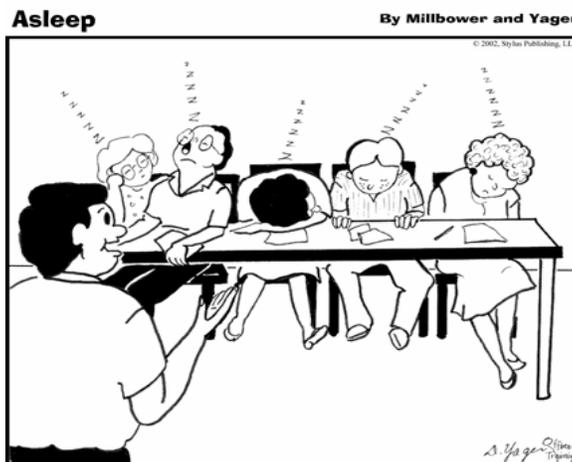
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*Promoting Quality Care and Education for  
Young Children and Their Families*

[http://www.  
southernearlychildhood.org/](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/)

*The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:*

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- *Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*
- *Increasing public understanding and support for policies and programs which ensure developmentally based services to young children and their families.*
- \* *Focusing on Southern issues concerning children and families.*