

GONE FISHING

By: Paula Tinker | Assistant Principal | Wichita Falls, TX

Time: 10-15 minutes (daily)



A simple, visual system that helps school leaders be intentional about short, meaningful, one-on-one check-ins with staff. Each day, the leader “pulls” one name and schedules a brief pop-in connection during a natural break in that person’s day.

Why try it?

To build trust, familiarity, and authentic relationships across all staff roles, not just classroom teachers, through consistent, low-pressure presence.

Leader tips:

- Include every staff member, from teachers to paras, custodians, cafeteria, office, and support staff.
- Share a bit about yourself to keep the conversation natural and two-way.

Activity Variations:

Build It Together: Write names on LEGO bricks and add one each time you connect.

Piece by Piece: Write names on puzzle pieces and build the display as you go.

Apple Orchard Connections: Write names on apples, pick one daily, and add it to a display tree.

Instructions

Step 1 Prepare Your “Fishing Pond”: Write the name of every staff member on a fish or another themed item that fits your school. Place them in a container or display where you can easily draw one each day.

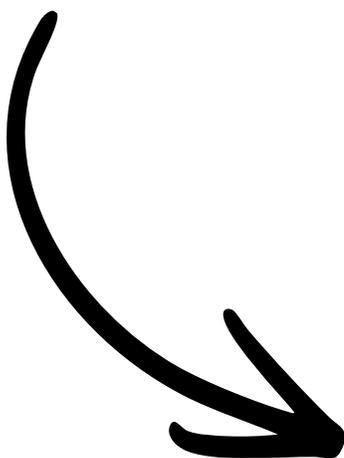
Step 2 Pull a Name Each Morning: At the start of the day, pull one fish to see which team member you will connect with. Aim to “catch” about five staff members each week. If a day gets busy or interrupted, simply add that fish back for the next day.

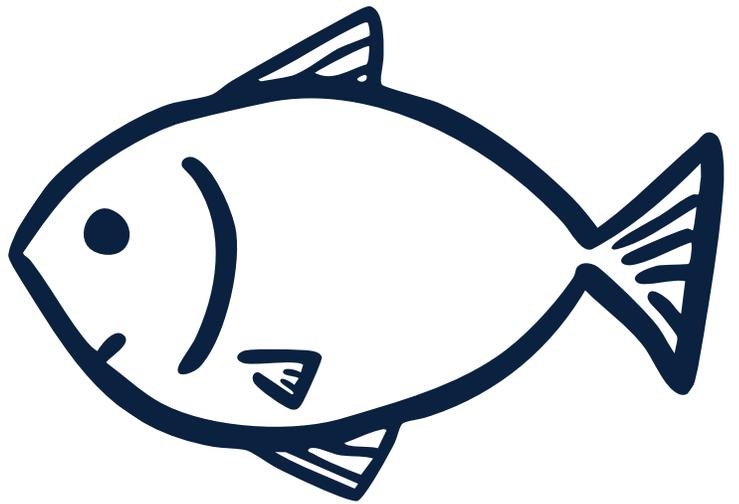
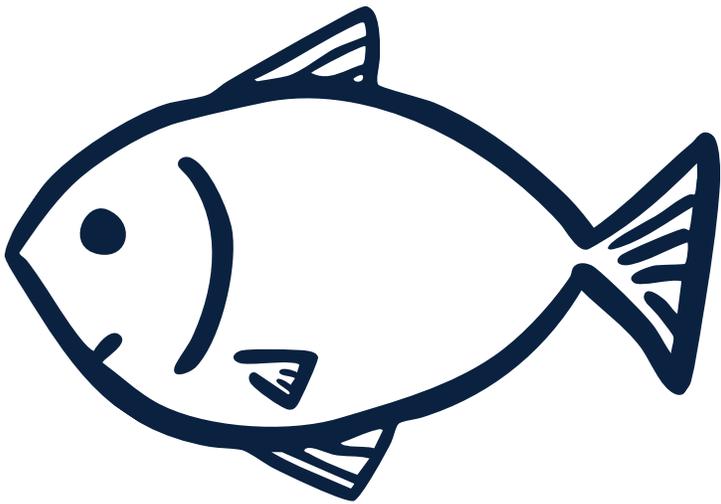
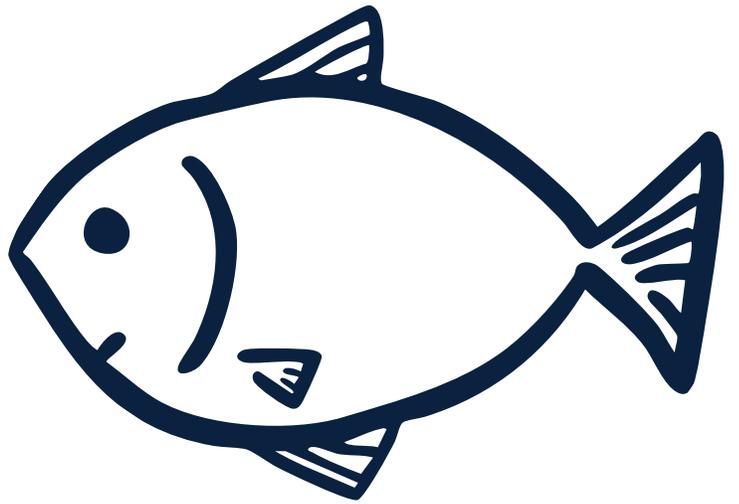
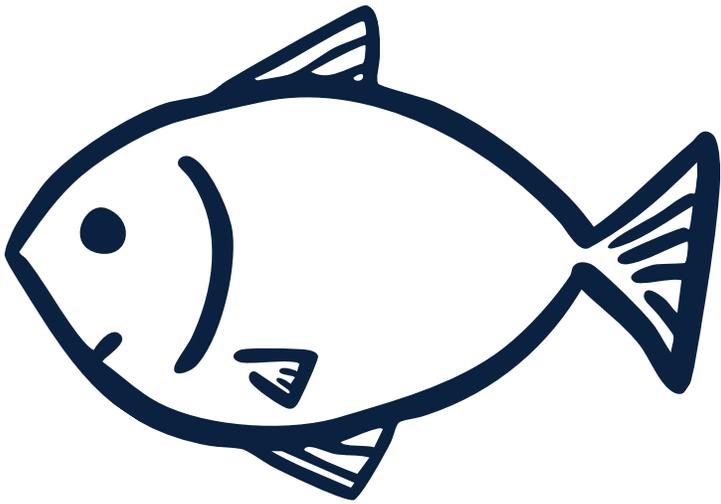
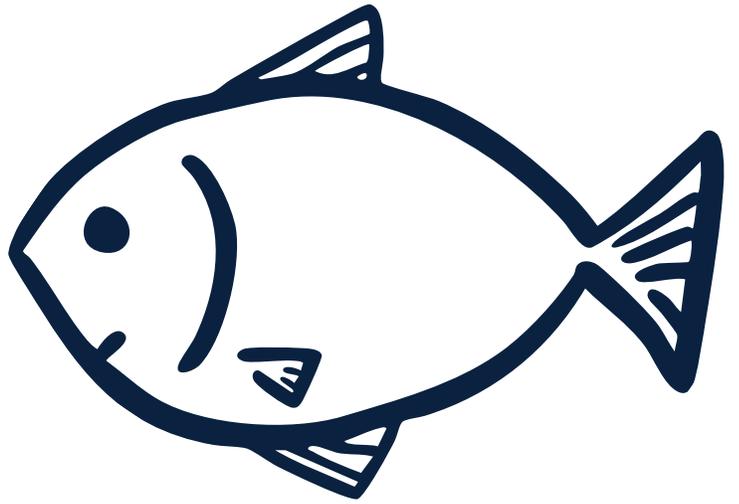
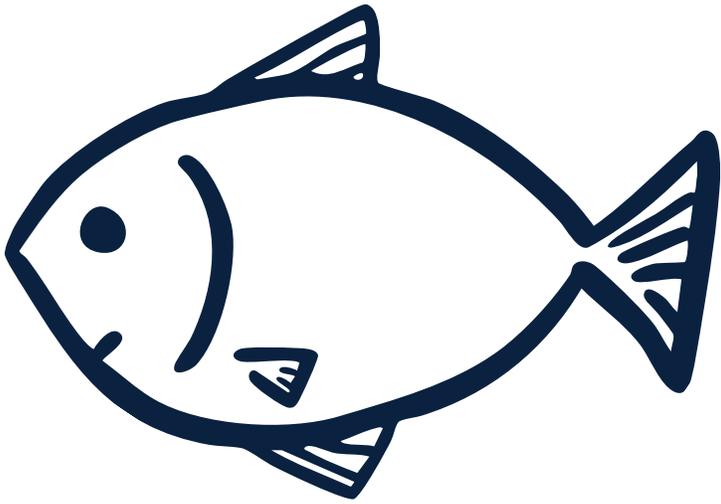
Step 3 Schedule a Quick Check-In: Look at that staff member’s schedule and block a short visit on your calendar. Most leaders schedule about 20 minutes so they have time to walk to the space and enjoy a relaxed 10-minute conversation.

Step 4: Visit and Connect: Stop by the staff member’s space during a natural break in their day. Keep the conversation informal and relationship focused. The goal is simply to connect, learn a little about them, and build trust over time.

(Optional) Step 5: After your visit with your staff members, write them each a personalized note from your visit and put it on their desk or in their mailbox.

Activity Printables







**THANKS FOR
LETTING ME STOP BY!**



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LETTING ME STOP BY!**



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COLLABORATION

BUILT BY EDUCATORS, FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

This resource was created in collaboration with passionate educators and school leaders who believe in the power of intentional connection.

Special thanks to Paula, Assistant Principal of Early Learning in Wichita Falls, Texas, whose "Gone Fishing" idea inspired this activity. Paula's simple, consistent approach to building relationships is a reminder that small, intentional moments can make a big impact.



Paula Tinker

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