

NEW YORK STATE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

PROGRAM QUALITY
Self-Assessment Tool
2ND EDITION

Welcome!

The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool is an instrument used by out-of-school time program providers to assess the quality of their programs and to assist staff and stakeholders to create an action plan for continuous program improvement. The QSA Tool is a resource that builds upon the experience, knowledge, and research of afterschool practitioners and policymakers from across the country.

QSA Tool Structure

The QSA Tool is organized around ten essential elements of an effective afterschool program, all of which come from evidence-based practice. Under each element, there is a list of quality indicators. An asterisk (*) next to an indicator denotes that it is critical to address prior to program start-up or, for programs currently operating, as soon as possible.

As you address each indicator, you will give the program a performance level from 1-4. The results of these ratings should be discussed as a group in order to gain a full perspective on a site's programming, operations, and management. The performance level rating system is as follows:

4 Excellent/Exceeds Standards.

Is prepared to help and work with others in this area.

3 Satisfactory/Meets Standards.

Needs help to prepare staff to work with others in this area.

2 Some Progress Made/Approaching Standard.

Could use additional focused assistance in this area.

1 Must Address and Improve/Standard Not Met.

Needs significant support in this area.

Organizations are expected to strive for a satisfactory performance level (3) on all of the quality indicators within each of the ten elements of program quality. Over time, programs should continue to strive for an excellent performance level (4). At this level of performance, organizations consistently show evidence of promising practices throughout all program elements, serve as a model for other afterschool programs, and develop and support staff such that they could serve as coaches and mentors for other practitioners.

Program Planning and Improvement with the QSA Tool

The self-assessment process offers all of the core components of program planning and improvement, including identifying areas in need of improvement, setting goals and timelines, finding resources, and assigning responsibility for strategies. For programs that already have a process for program improvement, such as annual meetings, the use of or findings from the QSA Tool can be integrated into the process and can help guide your conversations. Embedded in the QSA Tool are places to prioritize improvement efforts by marking them as in need of improvement "right now," "this year," or "next year." Every program should create an action plan for improvement after the self-assessment is conducted.

ELEMENT 1 ENVIRONMENT/CLIMATE

A quality program provides a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for all participants, staff members, and families.

A quality program:

- 1. *Provides a stimulating, welcoming, and supportive environment for all young people.
- 2. *Uses program space that is safe and clean.
- 3. Has program space that is appropriately equipped and suitable for activities being conducted.
- 4. *Develops, implements, and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.
- 5. *Provides adequate security and participants are supervised by an approved adult at all times.
- 6. *Develops and manages effective arrival and dismissal procedures and plans for safe travel home.
- 7. *Provides healthy and nutritious snacks and/or supper.
- 8. *Is aware of, records, and informs staff of special health needs of participants.
- 9. Conducts all required fire/safety drills.
- 10. Has a culture that allows participants to take initiative and explore their interests.
- 11. Establishes, maintains and communicates code of conduct to participants, staff, and their families.
- 12. Applies rewards and consequences for participant behavior appropriately and consistently.
- 13. Actively recruits and welcomes youth with disabilities.
- 14. Promotes psychological and emotional safety through a culture of support, inclusion, and mutual respect.

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Performance

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ELEMENT 2 ADMINISTRATION/ORGANIZATION

A quality program has well-developed systems and sound fiscal management to support and enhance worthwhile programming and activities for all participants.

- 1. *Establishes clear attendance and participation expectations.
- 2. Has a system for the collection and monitoring of participant attendance data.
- 3. *Maintains all required documents (e.g., health certificate, security clearance, insurance, etc.) where applicable.
- 4. *Creates and uses an employee handbook that clarifies internal policies and procedures.
- 5. *Has complete and current enrollment/registration documents for all participants.
- Maintains accurate and accessible medical records on participants.
- 7. *Has a clear salary structure for program staff.
- 8. *Has well-defined methods of communication with program stakeholders.
- 9. Has approved budget; reviews and adjusts budget periodically.
- Establishes and maintains a centralized database of participant and program information that is regularly updated and usable by staff.
- 11. Completes all required reports and submits them in a timely manner.
- 12. Ensures that supplies are organized, maintained, and accessible.
- 13. Records and tracks expenses.
- 14. Complies with government mandates.+

 Date of last licensing if applicable: _______
- 15. Maintains current and accurate activity schedule with room assignments.
- 16. *Develops, reviews, and updates plan for family involvement.
- Negotiates optimal use of school, CBO, and community resources to best meet the needs of participants and their families.
- 18. *Documents where participants are during program hours.

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 $⁺ For \ a \ list \ of \ applicable \ government \ mandates, \ see \ www.nysan.org/usersguide.$

ELEMENT 3 RELATIONSHIPS

A quality program develops, nurtures, and maintains positive relationships and interactions among staff, participants, families, and communities.

- 1. *Has staff that respect and communicate with one another and are role models of positive adult relationships.
- *Interacts with families in a comfortable, respectful, welcoming way.
- 3. *Treats participants with respect and listens to what they say.
- Teaches participants to interact with one another in positive ways.
- 5. Teaches participants to make responsible choices and encourages positive outcomes.
- 6. Is sensitive to the culture and language of participants.
- 7. Establishes meaningful community collaborations.
- 8. Builds a sense of community among participants.
- 9. Is structured to create close, sustained relationships between individual participants and caring adults.
- 10. Has scheduled meetings with its major stakeholders.
- 11. Encourages former participants to contribute as volunteers or staff.

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ELEMENT 4 STAFFING/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A quality program recruits, hires, and develops diverse staff members who understand, value, and promote high-quality practices.

- 1. *Has a program director that is committed to his/her own professional development and attends and participates in training.
- 2. *Recruits, hires, and develops staff who reflect the diversity and culture(s) of the community.
- Treats staff as professionals and provides opportunities for advancement.
- 4. *Ensures staff members have competence in core academic areas, where appropriate.
- Provides ongoing staff development in order to engage and retain staff.
- 6. *Maintains staff-to-participant ratio as per state regulations when applicable.
- 7. *Provides positive working conditions for staff and appropriate supervision, support, and feedback.
- Assesses professional development needs of staff and provides appropriate supports such as training, coaching, mentoring, and peer learning.
- 9. Has program director and staff who comply with state training regulations where applicable.
- 10. Develops and supports staff to plan suitable activities that correspond to the developmental needs of participants.
- 11. Has regular staff meetings.
- 12. Works with staff to achieve credentialing and accreditation where available.
- 13. Where appropriate, develops and supports staff to provide educational opportunities for and work with adult learners.
- 14. Fosters understanding and appreciation for established program quality standards, evaluation, and program improvement strategies among staff.

Performance Level				Plan To Improve		
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ELEMENT 5 PROGRAMMING/ACTIVITIES

A quality program provides a well-rounded variety of activities and opportunities that support the physical, social, and cognitive growth and development of all participants.

- 1. *Provides activities that reflect the mission of the program.
- 2. Addresses academic, physical, social, and emotional needs of all participants.
- *Features activities that are commensurate with the age and skill level of the participants and enable participants to develop new skills during the program year.
- 4. *Offers project-based, experiential activities that promote creativity and development of participant self-expression.
- 5. *Offers high quality academic support, including tutoring and/or homework help.
- 6. *Offers enrichment opportunities in core academic areas as well as in the arts, technology, recreation, and health.
- *Includes activities that take into account the language and culture of the participants.
- 8. *Establishes and follows a schedule that is known to all staff, participants, and their families.
- 9. Provides a range of opportunities in which participants' work can be showcased.
- Integrates opportunities for the development of personal responsibility, self-direction, and leadership throughout the program.
- 11. Provides reasonable accommodations and special materials as necessary for youth with disabilities during the program and at special events.
- 12. Employs a variety of grouping strategies, for both structured and unstructured activities, including individual, small group, and large group.
- 13. Provides regular opportunities to be outdoors.
- Provides supports as children and youth transition across age groups and school grades, and school day to afterschool.

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ELEMENT 6 LINKAGES BETWEEN DAY & AFTER SCHOOL

A quality program has its staff work closely with school staff to ensure that afterschool academic components and activities are aligned with and enrich school standards and curricula.

- *Secures commitment of resources (e.g., classroom space, bulletin boards, storage space, computer facilities, and site coordinator's office) from school principal, when possible.
- 2. Maintains communication with school principal and administration.
- 3. Establishes strong links to the school day.
- 4. Incorporates programming that integrates and complements school day activities.
- 5. Collaborates regularly with school-day personnel regarding use of facilities and resources.
- 6. Supports state and local performance standards and benchmarks.
- 7. Communicates with school-day staff to monitor academic and behavioral progress of students.
- 8. Allocates sufficient program time for homework and homework help.
- 9. Is represented in local schools' planning efforts.

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ELEMENT 7 YOUTH PARTICIPATION/ENGAGEMENT

A quality program provides opportunities for youth to participate in planning, to exercise choice, and to engage in a rich variety of offerings.

- 1. *Engages participants with a variety of strategies.
- 2. Has participants who take ownership of program selection and development.
- 3. Enables participants to develop life skills, resiliency, and self-esteem via activities.
- 4. Affords participants opportunities to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions.
- 5. Enables participants to explore resources and issues in their community through projects and activities.
- 6. Promotes consistent and active participation.
- 7. Promotes teamwork and respect for others.
- 8. Involves participants in the development of disciplinary practices.
- Encourages participants to recruit others into the program.
- 10. Allows participants to be meaningfully involved in program planning, implementation, data collection, and evaluation.

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ELEMENT 8 PARENT/FAMILY/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A quality program establishes a strong partnership with families and communities in order to achieve program goals.

- 1. Involves families in decision making and planning.
- 2. Involves families and the community in program events.
- 3. *Communicates with families on matters concerning the well-being of the child.
- 4. Provides opportunities for literacy and related educational experiences for the families of the participants in the program.
- 5. Provides families with information about community resources to meet their needs.
- Builds relationships with arts, cultural, and other community institutions to expand and enhance program offerings.
- 7. Coordinates staff development activities with those of school and community partners.
- Makes intentional connections with early care and education programs and stakeholders in the community.

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ELEMENT 9 PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY/GROWTH

A quality program has a coherent vision/mission and a plan for increasing capacity that supports continuing growth.

- 1. *Has a written statement of mission and goals.
- 2. *Employs staff members who understand and embrace the program's mission and goals.
- 3. Involves participants, families, staff, and board members in long-term decision-making and planning efforts.
- 4. Develops a long-term plan for sustaining the afterschool program.
- Accesses resources within the community by seeking support from and building relationships with local businesses and institutions.
- Forges relationships with advocates for program quality and availability, such as community leaders, businesses, and elected officials.
- Has an effective marketing strategy that publicizes the program and its achievement within the school and broader community.

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ELEMENT 10 MEASURING OUTCOMES/EVALUATION

A quality program has a system for measuring outcomes and using that information for ongoing program planning, improvement, and evaluation.

- Has measurable program goals and objectives that are aligned with the organizational mission and identified needs.
- 2. *Develops and/or plans for program evaluation that includes gathering both qualitative and quantitative data.
- 3. Uses objective data to measure progress toward outcomes as defined by programs and individual participants.
- 4. Identifies and shares promising practices.
- 5. Makes summaries of evaluations and/or other collected data available to the general public.
- Creates an internal method for assessing program activities.
- Creates an internal method for assessing staff performance.
- 8. Creates an internal method for assessing student engagement levels.
- Includes feedback from stakeholders in the program evaluation.
- Uses evaluation findings for continuous program improvement.

Performance Level				Plan To Improve		
1	2	3	4	Right Now	This Year	Next Year