

ELEMENT 7

Youth Participation & Engagement

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

A QUALITY PROGRAM:

1. Engages participants and adults to promote consistent and active participation.
2. Engages participants and adults to develop and promote a culture of respect and co-constructed disciplinary policies.
3. Involves participants in program design and implementation in a meaningful way.
4. Involves participants in data collection and evaluation for program reporting and continuous improvement purposes in a meaningful way.
5. Engages participants and adults to make activities meaningful, applicable to the real world, and developed around participant interests.
6. Has a culture that encourages youth to take initiative, explore their interests, set goals for personal achievement, and work to meet them.

PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	THIS YEAR	NEXT YEAR

NOTES:

Youth Participation & Engagement

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

A quality program intentionally incorporates meaningful opportunities for youth participation. Participants are seen as assets and take on leadership roles, plan and facilitate meetings, workshops, and/or orientation sessions for their peers, and participate in program evaluation. Participants and adults partner on most aspects of the program. Participant voices are heard and incorporated into program planning.

Youth Participation & Engagement, Indicator 1

Engages participants and adults to promote consistent and active participation.

Performance Level 1

Participants do not know details about how to register or who can be contacted for more information about program registration. Participants are allowed to drop in and out of the program with no formal commitment to regular participation. Different participants are present every day and it is difficult to run sequential activities that require several days or weeks to complete. Participants often decide to sit out of activities and staff do not actively work to re-engage them. Many participants do not seem actively engaged.

Performance Level 2

Participants generally know which staff members manage program registration. Participants are asked to come to the program on a consistent and regular basis but some still drop in whenever they choose without consequence. The program offers some activities that require several days or weeks to complete and some participants engage in them. During an activity, participants are asked participate, though some do not seem actively engaged.

Performance Level 3

Staff members regularly encourage participants to bring their peers to the program. Participants and families are aware of who is designated as the contact person for information regarding registration. Participants are required to come to the program on a consistent and regular basis, and a majority of participants attend regularly. The majority of program offerings require several days or weeks to complete, and most participants join these activities. During activities, participants are encouraged to participate and most seem actively engaged.

Performance Level 4

There is a designated staff member as the contact person for information regarding registration, and their contact information is displayed on all outreach materials and social media. Participants are required to come to the program on a consistent and regular basis, and all of the participants attend regularly. Program offerings require several days or weeks to complete and all participants join activities. During activities, participants are encouraged to join in by adults and peers. Most or all participants are actively engaged. Participant leaders serve as program liaisons, promoting the program's benefits, building relationships, and encouraging more participant enrollment into their program.

Youth Participation & Engagement, Indicator 2

Engages participants and adults to develop and promote a culture of respect and co-constructed disciplinary policies.

Performance Level 1

The program's mission, goals, objectives, and activities do not address a culture of respect, and it is not part of community agreements. Adults do not demonstrate pro-social behavior and communication amongst themselves and with participants. Staff members develop discipline policies that are punitive-focused. Participants are told about behavior policies and discipline practices and are expected to follow them.

Performance Level 2

Respect is part of the program's community agreement, but the agreement is not always enforced. Signs of disrespectful behavior are not always addressed. Adults demonstrate pro-social behavior and communication with participants but inconsistently amongst themselves. Participants and staff do not explicitly work together to identify and develop pro-social behavior and communication. Participants are not formally involved in the development of behavioral practices and disciplinary policies but some of the feedback they give to staff members is incorporated into the policies.

Performance Level 3

The program's mission, goals, and objectives explicitly promote a culture of respect. Participants are prepared by the staff to work with others through exercises that address leading and following, sharing, and other team-building skills in the beginning of the year. Respect is part of the program's community agreement, and participants know that respecting one another is necessary to being in the program. Signs of disrespectful behavior are generally addressed by a staff member to remind participants of the importance of respect. Participants are formally involved in the development of behavioral expectations and disciplinary policies, and participants sign an agreement to follow them. Staff and participants work together to monitor and support the following of agreements.

Performance Level 4

The program's mission, goals, objectives, and community agreements explicitly promote and support a culture of teamwork and respect. Participants are prepared by the staff to work with others through exercises that address leading and following, sharing, and other team-building skills. Participants work with staff members, school partners, and family members to create positive behavior policies, expectations, and disciplinary practices, and sign an agreement to follow them. Participants, staff members, and families define and translate what respect and positive behavior looks like and sounds like in different settings.

Staff model, teach, support, acknowledge, and celebrate respectful behavior on a regular basis. Behavior policies and expectations are posted throughout the program space and are revisited several times throughout the year to ensure participants understand them and receive support to follow them. Signs of disrespectful behavior are always immediately addressed by a staff member asking participants if their behavior is aligned and what they could do differently to be respectful. Severe or continuous disrespectful behavior is addressed uniformly and fairly.

Youth Participation & Engagement, Indicator 3

Involves participants in program design and implementation in a meaningful way.

Performance Level 1

Participants are rarely or never asked to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions. There is no formal way for participants to deliver feedback about the program and as such, staff members plan and select all program activities. Participants do not have an opportunity to contribute to program planning. Participants are not encouraged to lead or assist with implementing activities.

Performance Level 2

Participants are sometimes asked to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions. However, these conversations happen irregularly or only when a problem arises. Participants who express themselves to staff members are listened to, but their suggestions are rarely acted upon. There is no formal way for participants to deliver feedback about the program or formally participate in program planning. Participants have few opportunities to lead or assist with implementing activities.

Performance Level 3

Participants are encouraged to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions on an ongoing basis. Staff members solicit their feedback on activities, structure, and policies through surveys, interviews and/or a youth council. Participants who express themselves to staff members are listened to, and their feelings are incorporated into program planning and staff debriefs. Staff members consult with participants throughout the year about activities they believe would be helpful, relevant, and meaningful and other program suggestions and concerns. Staff members then develop the program based on these recommendations. Participants have multiple opportunities to lead or assist with implementing activities.

Performance Level 4

Participants along with staff members, family members, and other stakeholders are included on the program planning and leadership team and regularly have formal opportunities to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions. This group discusses learning opportunities and related activities that would be relevant, meaningful, and of interest to participants, and other program suggestions or concerns. They develop the program based on these recommendations and regularly assesses and revise the program based on regular feedback and data collection. Participants have ample opportunities to lead or assist with implementing activities.

Youth Participation & Engagement, Indicator 4

Involves participants in data collection and evaluation for program reporting and continuous improvement purposes in a meaningful way.

Performance Level 1

The program does not include participants in data collection and evaluation.

Performance Level 2

The program includes less than half of program participants in data collection and evaluation. Staff members solicit their opinions on activities and structure, but infrequently and only through informal conversations. Participant opinions are collected by staff members and may be incorporated into the program's evaluation.

Performance Level 3

The program formally includes more than half of the program participants in data collection and evaluation multiple times a year. Staff members solicit their opinions on activities, structure, and policies through surveys and interviews. Participant opinions are collected by staff members, incorporated in the evaluation, and always considered when updating the program's plan. Participants are also involved in data collection and evaluation by providing feedback on all aspects of the program to be used for continuous improvement purposes.

Performance Level 4

The program formally includes all participants in data collection and evaluation. It includes groups of participants in evaluation planning discussions, and then solicits all participants' opinions on the program's activities, structure, and policies through surveys and interviews. Participant opinions are collected by staff members, incorporated in the evaluation, and always considered when updating the program's plan. Participants are involved in the design of data collection and evaluation methodologies, and are given the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of the program to be used for continuous improvement purposes frequently and regularly throughout the year.

Youth Participation & Engagement, Indicator 5

Engages participants and adults to make activities meaningful, applicable to the real world, and developed around participant interests.

Performance Level 1

Participants have no or few opportunities to engage in their community through meaningful projects and activities. Participant work and projects are selected without thought to real world applicability, and therefore few to no activities have real world application. Activities are selected by staff members who have not solicited feedback from participants on their interests.

Performance Level 2

The program occasionally engages participants in their community through meaningful projects and activities. Some activities selected by staff members are designed to have real world application and an impact on the community. Staff members survey participants on their interests at the beginning of the year, and occasionally plan activities that meet those interests.

Performance Level 3

The program engages participants in their community through meaningful projects and activities on a regular basis. Staff members and participants collaborate to plan projects and activities based on participant interests. They are usually designed to have an impact on the community and are therefore applicable to the real world.

Performance Level 4

Participants engage in their community through meaningful projects and activities on a regular basis. Participants often learn of community opportunities or generate suggestions for meaningful, relevant, and helpful community opportunities. Staff members seek information from participants, families, and other sources on potential opportunities and needs in the community. Staff members and participants collaborate to plan projects based on participant interests and identified community needs. They are always designed to have an impact on the community and be applicable to the real world.

Youth Participation & Engagement, Indicator 6

Has a culture that encourages youth to take initiative, explore their interests, set goals for personal achievement, and work to meet them.

Performance Level 1

There is no opportunity for participants to contribute to the direction of programming or express their interests. No leadership opportunities exist for students to show initiative. It is difficult for participants to become engaged with activities due to limited space and supplies. Participants are not given choices. Rather, they are assigned to activities and tasks. The arrangement of the physical space does not allow for positive interactions among participants, successful implementation of activities, or exploration of personal interests.

Performance Level 2

At the beginning of the program year, participants set a personal goal they wish to achieve. Goals are revisited to determine progress infrequently or not at all. Program supplies may limit participants' ability to reach their goals. Although supplies are limited, participants are given opportunities to engage in activities that are of interest to them. Supplies and materials are available for some activities, but they are often kept in a locked closet. Participants are seldom asked for their opinions and ideas for enhancing activities. When suggestions are made, they are often not implemented. Although staff members understand the importance of providing participants choices, they are not consistent in doing so.

Performance Level 3

Participants are encouraged to provide feedback on the program. At multiple points throughout the program year, participants set personal goals they wish to achieve. Goals are frequently revisited to determine progress. Supplies and materials are always accessible to participants and kept at a central location, which encourages participants to find activities that interest them and help them reach their goals. Staff members provide opportunities for participant choice by administering monthly surveys on program options. The physical space is intentionally selected to complement activities.

Performance Level 4

All the staff members provide multiple opportunities for participant choice in their groups, and participants are always encouraged to provide feedback on the program. At multiple points throughout the program year, participants set personal goals they wish to achieve. Goals are frequently revisited to determine progress, and activities are selected to help participants reach their goals. Supplies and materials are consistently stocked, accessible, and visible to all participants. The physical space is organized to allow positive peer interaction, facilitate rich discussions, and promote collaboration on projects. Space is often used as a model for other program providers to learn from.

