NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool Survey Report, *Executive Summary*

March 2010

For more information, please contact:

New York State Afterschool Network

(646) 943-8670

Info@nysan.org

Overview and Purpose

The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) designed and disseminated a web-based survey on use and impact of the NYSAN QSA Tool. The survey provided a means to collect information about how the QSA Tool is being used throughout New York State; to determine its effectiveness in supporting program quality; and to inform NYSAN's future quality assurance work. The survey was open from August – September 2009 in a web-based response collector. The survey requested one respondent per afterschool site. The survey announcement was sent to school- and community-based program providers, public agency staff, evaluators, and other stakeholders via NYSAN's statewide electronic listserv. A response rate was not calculated because survey announcement recipients were encouraged to share the link to the survey with colleagues in order to generate as large a response as possible.

Survey Respondents

One hundred and six (106) afterschool program providers responded to the survey. Nearly 50% of the respondents are located in New York City. Approximately 75% of the respondents operate school-based programs, though program settings also include community centers, religious institutions, family child care and day care facilities, and a nursing home. Almost all of the programs offer multiple, varied activities, with one arts-only program also responding. Respondents represent large and small programs in rural (14%), suburban (16%), and urban (70%) communities. The survey respondents are from all regions of New York State.

Findings and Implications of the Survey Results

– Analysis of the survey results revealed several trends about use (or non-use) of the QSA Tool: Over 75% of responses indicate that the use of the QSA Tool provided benefits and created changes in their program. These results suggest that the QSA Tool is successfully fulfilling its purpose of supporting schools and organizations in making positive management and programmatic improvements to their afterschool sites. Although a public funding agency mandate remains the motivation to use the QSA Tool for approximately one-third of respondents, over 22% indicated that previous use of the QSA Tool yielded quality improvements and they chose to use the QSA Tool again because of it.

– Slightly more than half of respondents reported improved program quality after completing their self-assessment; not surprisingly, given the inherent challenges of measuring program quality, 30% were unsure as to whether quality had changed. This finding may illustrate the need for a follow-up study that tracks program quality in programs before and after using the QSA Tool.

- Use of the QSA Tool is very useful in strengthening relationships with family and community members. The results have also showed that the process of using the QSA Tool for self-assessment is particularly beneficial in efforts to align afterschool programming with school day activities and to facilitate relationships between program providers and schools. This seems to occur both in the process of bringing together a self-assessment team, and in taking time to reflect on specific activities offered and ensuring that they are of high-quality and relevant to participants' academic growth, where applicable.

- Additional professional development is needed around what the QSA Tool is, how it is used, and how it can be beneficial to programs and youth. A number of respondents reported that they would be more compelled to use the QSA Tool if they felt better equipped to develop a self-assessment team and facilitate the process. Respondents also reported that they would benefit from assistance with following-up to the self-assessment and creating a feasible action plan and implementation timeline. Others noted they felt unprepared to launch a self-assessment because they are unequipped to explain why investing in this process would add value to their program.

- Based on the NYSED mid-year reports, it seems that programs use the QSA Tool sections in order. This may mean that programs do not spend as much time on the later sections of the QSA Tool, despite their importance to program quality. This may also mean that some programs do not address these elements, including sustainability and evaluation, until very late in the program year or even until several years after the program has begun using the QSA Tool. Additional guidance is needed about structuring self-assessment such that all of the elements of quality are addressed in a timely manner.

- Finally, greater clarity is needed about what the QSA Tool is and is not. For example, some respondents did not know that the QSA Tool is available electronically; in fact, the QSA Tool is available in a PDF format as well as in an interactive version of the QSA Tool User's Guide (www.nysan.org/usersguide). Additionally, several responses referred to the QSA Tool as being interchangeable with program accreditation tools and the NYS school-age child care regulations. To mitigate this confusion, NYSAN will provide clarifying information through additional communication and professional development in the field.