

CONNECTICUT
AFTER
SCHOOL
NETWORK




PROGRAM QUALITY
SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
USER'S GUIDE 3RD EDITION

1. Relationships – Interactions and Engagement

A quality program works with intention to build positive relationships with children/youth which are the foundation of all other quality components.

A quality program is one where:

	PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
	1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1 Adults are role models of positive and respectful relationships with both fellow staff and children/youth.							
2 Adults build a sense of community and a welcoming, positive social/emotional climate.							
3 Adults actively implement strategies to build positive relationships with each and every child/youth participant.							
4 Adults are actively engaged with the children/youth as observed through their enthusiasm, interest, and interactions.							
5 Children/youth are shown how to make responsible choices and offered opportunities to practice these skills.							
6 Children/youth are empowered to request, design, and/or select activities that follow emerging interests. 							
7 Children/youth are active participants in leadership activities that may include program planning, activity leading, evaluation, and community outreach.							
8 Both adults and children/youth promote physical and emotional safety through a culture of support, inclusion and mutual respect.							

The social and emotional skills needed for effective workforce readiness include:

- Communication Skills
- Collaboration Skills
- Cross-Cultural Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Social Skills





Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #6: Children/youth are empowered to request, design, and/or select activities that follow emerging interests.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- Program materials are limited.
- Children/youth do not have choices in activities.
- The physical space does not allow for successful implementation of activities.

2 = Developing

- Some materials are available but are often kept in a locked closet.
- Children/youth must ask to use stored materials.
- Staff understand the importance of providing children/youth with choices but are not consistent about doing so.

3 = Proficient

- Supplies and materials are always accessible.
- Children/youth are encouraged to provide feedback.
- Staff provide opportunities for youth choice by administering monthly surveys on program options.
- The physical space is intentionally arranged to complement activities.

4 = Advanced

- Supplies and materials are consistently stocked and accessible to children/youth.
- All staff provide multiple opportunities for youth choice in their groups.
- There is a youth council that participates in program decisions, design, plans, and events.
- The physical space is organized to allow positive peer interaction and promote collaboration on projects.
- Space is often used as a model for other program providers to learn from.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Program materials and supplies are purchased.
- Broken equipment is replaced.
- Materials are made easily accessible to children.
- Staff work with children/youth to create regular methods of incorporating youth voice in programming.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- During meetings, staff discuss how activities can offer children/youth opportunities to take initiative and explore their interests.
- Staff work with children/youth to re-organize space to meet activity needs.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Staff meet at the beginning of the year to plan activities and reflect on the program environment.
- Staff identify opportunities for children/youth to be engaged as leaders and create intentional avenues for feedback.
- Children/youth are recruited to create a youth council.
- Staff take inventory of program supplies and place orders quarterly.
- Children/youth are acknowledged for the leadership and contributions to the program.



Try This!

Shift from thinking as a “service provider” to becoming “a partner with children/youth” to facilitate and truly create a positive and engaging program culture. Instead of planning “for” children, plan “with” them.

Be open to all ideas — even the crazy ones!

Ask open-ended questions such as “What would we need to do that?” “Where can we find resources?” “Who could we talk to about it?” Listening builds relationships that enable children and youth to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Questions build critical thinking skills and improve confidence.