



Starting an Afterschool Program Toolkit

Mission and Vision Guide

The essence of an organization is summed up in its mission statement. It is the purpose for being, it defines the direction and work to accomplish the goal set out to enact some form of change or direction within the community, a particular area or focus of work, or to create something.

Having a sound mission from the start helps to guide where the organization needs to go. It helps set the vision that allows people to see where they fit within the organization. It allows people to understand what the organization is all about.


Use this *Program Power Up* focused on Living the Mission in developing your program or providing a refresher for yourself or program staff. The materials contained in the Program Power Up can help you work with staff to ignite their passion and help them see the purpose behind the work they do everyday.

The module contains:

- Connecticut Quality Self-Assessment Tool (CT-QSAT) full version
- CT-QSAT Activities and Programming Section
- A user's guide for the session with staff (we recommend reading this first)
- A PowerPoint presentation with and without presenter notes
- A copy of the presentation notes for participants

Please send any questions or feedback to [Ken Anthony](#), Ed.D., Associate Executive Director for CTNCY.

CONNECTICUT
AFTER
SCHOOL
NETWORK

A student with a beard, wearing a dark polo shirt with a school crest, is focused on working on a bicycle wheel. The background is a workshop with a clock and a patterned wall. The entire image has a green overlay.

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

A quality program is one that is reflective and willing to improve, change, and grow. It believes in successful outcomes for its participants. It understands that improving program quality is an ongoing process. Self-assessment provides an important opportunity for programs to identify strengths and weaknesses free from the pressures of external monitoring and evaluation. Organizations that have linked the self-assessment process to decision-making report they meet their goals and achieve success.

The Connecticut After School Network is very pleased to publish this updated User's Guide for the Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool, Third Edition. The QSA Tool is a resource that builds upon the experience, knowledge, and research of afterschool practitioners and policymakers from across the country. It's called a "tool" because it is meant to help your organization grow over time, and it is designed to be tailored according to your needs. It is not meant to be used as a device for judging the program as "good" or "bad." Rather, the QSA Tool is intended to be used as a guide for reflecting on your program and making every part of it the best that it can be. How you use it depends on your organization's needs, strengths, challenges, maturity, and capacity. The QSA Tool will help your organization recognize what it's doing well and uncover strategies you can implement to improve on weaker areas.

We look forward to hearing from you as the QSA Tool is incorporated into your program planning, development, and continuous growth. Please do not hesitate to contact the Connecticut After School Network if you have any questions or wish to offer feedback about the self-assessment process, the QSA Tool, or this User's Guide. Please see our website **www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org** for additional supplementary materials and trainings that align with the QSA tool.

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SECTION I

OUTCOMES OF QUALITY IN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Children and youth who participate in high quality after school programs benefit academically, socially, and emotionally. These positive outcomes include:

INCREASED

- » Self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy
- » Positive attitudes about school with improved school attendance
 - » Academic achievement
- » Social and emotional development

DECREASED

- » Problem behaviors
 - » Drug use
- » Criminal behaviors
 - » Dropout rates
 - » Teen pregnancy

To ensure success in achieving these outcomes, after school programs need to be intentionally designed, properly equipped, and well managed. It is paramount that after school program staff participates in ongoing professional development and are knowledgeable about the practices that practitioners recognize as the highest indicators of quality programming. This quality self-assessment tool represents the most current research into after school programming. It incorporates the work of both national and locally respected individuals and agencies.

This self-assessment tool is designed to provide the after school practitioner with a framework that will guide them through the steps needed to recognize and achieve improvement goals. Through the self-assessment process, program leaders will gather information, examine what staff and other stakeholders are doing, and assess the program. Using this tool can generate meaningful conversations among all program stakeholders about quality and continuous improvement. Willingness to reflect, self-assess, and take action will improve program quality and make good programs great.

Getting Started

After school program assessment can be a daunting process without taking time to thoroughly prepare. Here are some tips to guide the process:

Establish a team. This could include program staff and administration, host personnel (building principal and school teachers), agency staff, families, and business leaders.

Create a time line of meetings (include agendas and minutes) pre- and post-self-assessment.

Provide training on the purpose and use of the tool through the Statewide After School Network.

When observing, each team member conducts their own assessment of program (on the same day so all observers are seeing the same thing).

- Not all sections need to be completed in a single observation. As a team, prioritize those areas that should be observed first.
- Children and youth should be included as observers. The team should determine how best to accomplish this by taking into consideration the age and maturity of program participants.

Plan a debriefing meeting to share observer findings. It is through this step that important discussions about quality standards will occur. Consensus about what was observed and how it was interpreted is built through this process.

Plan to celebrate program strengths. This will sustain a positive approach to the enhancement process while working to create an action plan.

Implement realistic action plans starting with two to three program goals.

Repeat observations to determine increases in performance levels and sustain continuous improvement.

A decade of research shows that program quality drives better outcomes for kids. We believe that quality improvement should not be a one-off intervention in the form of training here and there, but rather a continuous growth cycle. It should be grounded in quality standards that entire communities share, tools that front-line staff and funders can use to assess strengths and weaknesses, data systems that track participation rates and youth outcomes, and regular staff training.

—JESSICA DONNER, EVERY HOUR COUNTS

Self-assessment is an ongoing process that must be consistently revisited after the assessment has been completed. Optimally, programs will conduct an assessment at least twice per year to get a gauge on areas of strength and those that need improvement. The Connecticut After School Network hopes that this technique will provide you with insight, tools, and inspiration to advance program quality improvement efforts to the next level.

Creating a Quality Improvement Team

Successful implementation of this tool requires a team approach. This is an ongoing process involving staff, youth participants, families, and other stakeholders including school teachers and administrators as well as other community partners/agencies. An important part of the self-assessment process is reflection and dialogue. No one individual can initiate or maintain quality improvements without the conversations and “buy-in” that need to occur regarding quality standards.

To keep the momentum moving:

- Build staff experience in quality standards who can share their knowledge with new staff. The message is strengthened

by delivery and modeling from both colleagues and administration.

- Educate parents and board members about quality standards who will share the message over and over with neighbors and community partners. This greatly enhances the advocacy efforts of program administration.
- Encourage children and youth participation in a process that is inclusive of their voice. They will market the program to peers thus supporting attendance and sustainability.

The site directors and staff will be the ones implementing the action plan. Evaluate staff

members’ skills to determine what skill sets they presently have and what they need in order to make improvements. Professional development can be delivered in a variety of ways.

Keep in mind that professional development isn’t just about workshops that present “new skills.” It allows for everyone to get on the same page, provides tools and resources for achieving program goals, examples of promising practices and supports, and builds a community of learners. Research is clear: A skilled, stable, trained, and motivated workforce is a key determinant of quality programming.

What is Self-Assessment?

Self-assessment provides a lens for understanding the overall quality of your program, how it has evolved, and where it needs to go. Organizations that practice ongoing self-assessment are better prepared to share clear program goals, promising practices, and measurable outcomes and to incorporate them into an evaluation design. Although it can be used to inform and complement external evaluation efforts, self-assessment is free from the pressure of external monitoring systems. It should also be low-stakes to help create a culture of improvement within the organization, taking the fear of being penalized out of the equation and allowing problems of practice to be addressed.

A Self-Assessment Process...	A Formal Program Evaluation...
Provides structure for comparing perceptions, voicing concerns, and identifying outcomes.	Takes a more formal approach to studying and assessing programs to determine how they work and what their outcomes are.
Strengthens communication between stakeholders.	Is focused on outcomes.
Helps build a collective vision of desired outcomes and what’s needed to achieve those outcomes (e.g., staffing, activities, etc.).	Uses data gathered for accountability and compliance with grant requirements.
Uses data gathered to inform practice and build capacity.	Has higher stakes and less gray areas.
Is often facilitated by program staff and/or other stakeholders.	Is often facilitated by an external observer.
Is internal and therefore less objective.	Is external, objective, although may include additional costs.

Regular use of self-assessment helps sustain improvements and continue to provide better outcomes for children and youth. Staff members who use self-assessment find they can recognize high-quality programming and talk with ease and confidence when advocating on behalf of the program. In addition, self-assessment, when used as part of a team approach, supports the development of a more knowledgeable work force.

SECTION II

STRUCTURE OF THE TOOL

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

This self-assessment tool is organized around eight essential elements of an effective after school program:

Relationships — Interactions and Engagement

Family and Community Partnerships

Environment

Activities

Safety

Staffing/Professional Development

Administration/Organization

Sustainability and Evaluation

While all components are important to successful outcomes in after school programming, it is the belief of the Connecticut After School Network that “Relationships — Interactions and Engagement” is the most significant contributor to quality. Attractive equipment, materials and activities, and sound management are all valuable but the relationships among children, youth, families and staff are what matter the most. Relationships create the foundation for building quality in all other areas.

Each area includes several indicators that identify best practices. Each indicator has a performance level rating system to measure strengths and identify areas needing improvement.

RATING SYSTEM	DESCRIPTION
---------------	-------------

4 = Advanced	Is prepared to help and work with others in this area.
---------------------	--

3 = Proficient	Needs help to prepare staff to work with others in this area.
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2 = Developing	Could use additional focused assistance in this area.
-----------------------	---

1 = Entry	Needs significant support in this area.
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After school programs should strive for a satisfactory performance level (3) on all quality indicators. Over time, programs should continue to strive for an excellent performance level (4). At this level, programs show consistent evidence of promising practices through all program elements, serve as a model for other after school programs, and develop and support staff that can advocate for best practices in the profession of after school programming.

Indicators within each element include a time frame to help prioritize how quickly that item needs to be addressed.

- **Right Now** Area will be addressed immediately.
- **6 months** Area will be addressed during the program year.
- **12 months** Area will be re-evaluated prior to the start of the next program year.

The **Action Plan Template** on page 24 will help in developing a manageable plan that is realistic yet specific enough to ensure success. This tool will also help you stay on track. Program evaluation is an on-going process. Revisit, re-evaluate, and reflect frequently throughout the program year.

A second tool to determine the needed action steps per area is available on the website at ctafterschoolnetwork.org. This tool is the **Overall Score Sheet** and is an Excel spreadsheet that will calculate your scores and demonstrate at-a-glance where strengths abound and which areas need more support.



Zooming In!

Each element also includes a section that zooms in on a specific indicator.

These provide examples of each performance level score. Examples are generic and may not apply to every after school program. The goal is to provide a format for program leadership to use in discussion with staff, families, children/youth, and other program stakeholders. Each member of the team brings their own personal background, experience, and knowledge to bear on the interpretation of a quality indicator. It is important that all stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss how and why an indicator is scored. This is necessary for building consensus and continued support for quality initiatives.



Try This!

This portion, included in each element, is designed to spark ideas and thoughts as you build your action plan. Each after school program has unique characteristics and will need to brainstorm ideas that match program assets and challenges. The Connecticut After School Network welcomes additional suggestions in this area and will publish ideas on its blog.

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.

2. Family and Community Partnerships

A quality program understands that families and communities are assets and partners in building the program's learning environment.

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	Program staff acknowledge, welcome, and treat families respectfully.							
2	Program staff regularly consider the assets of families, their culture, background, values, and traditions as they relate to program activities and mission.							
3	Program staff involve families in decision making and program planning. 							
4	Program staff communicate regularly with families concerning the well-being and progress of the child.							
5	Program staff collaborate with community health and social service agencies to meet the needs of individual families and information available to families.							
6	Program staff act as liaison between school and families to increase parent knowledge about school resources, activities, and expectations.							
7	A sense of partnership is established between the school and after school program that involves frequent communication, sharing of academic resources (websites/curriculum), and aligned behavior management strategies.							
8	School building administration and the after school site leader meet regularly (at least monthly) to discuss the program and address student needs.							
9	After school staff attend 504/IEP meetings and are actively involved in the school community (committees/events/etc.).							
10	Program staff build relationships with arts, cultural and other community institutions to expand and enhance after school offerings.							
11	Program promotional materials (recruitment, handbooks, etc.) are in the language of the families and include the message that children/youth with special needs are welcome.							
12	Program engages in school and community collaborations to plan and implement intentionally designed programs based on youth needs and interests.							



Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #3: Program staff involve families in decision making and program planning.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- Opportunities for parents to express thoughts on program goals and planning are limited or nonexistent.
- Families have few opportunities to meet each other.
- Program meetings where parents might attend are held at inopportune times for working family members.

2 = Developing

- Program regularly distributes parent surveys.
- Program regularly hosts family night events to provide opportunities for families to meet each other.
- Meals and child care are provided at meetings to decrease barriers for families to participate.

3 = Proficient

- Program invites families to help plan and participate in fundraising efforts.
- Program invites all families to be a part of a family advisory committee.
- Program uses a suggestion box to solicit ideas from families. Ideas are implemented whenever possible and authors thanked through the program newsletter.

4 = Advanced

- Program establishes a family liaison position as part of the staffing structure.
- Program hosts family forums to discuss parent/guardian concerns about child rearing and other family matters and share ideas of how the program can support them.
- Program works with children/youth to plan and host a family appreciation event.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Hold staff trainings on family engagement.
- Create and distribute survey to families with an eye to learning more about assets parents can bring to the program. Tally and review results to determine next steps.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Develop a yearlong calendar of workshops and educational opportunities for families.
- Create a plan to provide meaningful leadership opportunities for families which could include leading clubs, coordinating events, fundraisers, or leading workshops.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Create a family council to assist with outreach to incoming families.
- Establish multiple means of communicating with families so that all families are familiar with how they can participate in shaping the program.



Try This! Examining attitudes regarding family partnerships can be a first step toward strengthening relationships and communication between program staff and families. Start a dialogue with staff exploring the following statements:

- 1) Parents/caregivers often don't seem to care about their children's developmental growth.
- 2) Parents/caregivers who do not participate in events are not actively involved in their children's lives.
- 3) Parents/caregivers of teenagers have done their job and don't need to be actively involved in program activities.

Determine if these statements are impacting program decisions and are hindering or helping improve program relationships with families.

3. Environment

A quality program strives to maintain a safe and supportive environment that addresses the physical, academic, and social and emotional spaces that children/youth live and work in.

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	Program provides a stimulating, welcoming, and supportive environment for all children/youth.							
2	Program staff apply behavior guidance techniques appropriately and consistently and encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.							
3	Program staff establish, maintain, and communicate code of conduct to participants, staff, and their families.							
4	Staff respect, listen to, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.							
5	Program staff recruit and welcome youth with disabilities.							
6	Program space is clean, safe, and inspected regularly.							
7	Program develops, implements, and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.							
8	The program is appropriately and adequately equipped for activities being conducted.							
9	Program's indoor/outdoor space meets or exceeds local health and safety codes (and child care licensing regulations if applicable).							
10	The daily schedule provides a balance of both indoor/outdoor and low/high energy activities.							
11	Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.							
12	Programs that share space have written agreements and communicate regularly with school teachers/staff/administration.							





Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #7: Program develops, implements, and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- The program has no formal safety plan.
- The program has no connection to their program host's safety plan.
- No plan is posted or reviewed with other staff or participants.

2 = Developing

- The program has developed a written safety plan, but it is not posted or shared.
- Staff members are aware of the program host's safety plan, but they are not connected to it.
- Staff members take responsibility for the safety of participants, but are mostly unaware of the official procedures outlined in the plan or other requirements such as reporting of "violent incidents" or fire drill protocols.

3 = Proficient

- The program has developed a written safety plan.
- The program has connected the program host's safety plans to the needs of the program and there are provisions for the program in the host's plan.
- The safety plan is posted throughout the program space and is pointed out to participants, staff, and families.
- Staff members are aware of the procedures and know what to do in case of an emergency, and they know what the official procedures and incident reporting requirements are.

4 = Advanced

- The program has developed a written safety plan, which is updated annually.
- The program has made a connection to the host's safety planning committee and plays a role in that committee.
- The safety plan is posted throughout the program space, sent to each participant's home, and is discussed with participants, staff, and families.
- Staff members are trained during their orientation on safety procedures and incident reporting requirements, and they are prepared to handle an emergency.



IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Research licensing regulations to review safety requirements, procedures, and resources.
- Meet with host site to find out more about current safety and evacuation procedures.
- Develop and implement safety plans.



THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Train all staff on safety plans and procedures.
- Include safety plans in program handbooks for both parents and staff.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Join the host site's committee on safety.
- Make sure that the after school program is included in the school day's safety plans.



Try This!

Program staff will practice basic fire drills on a regular basis but keep things interesting by **asking staff to plan a response to a potentially real disaster.**

Connecticut experiences an average of 2 tornadoes each year. Plan a scenario where a tornado touches down at 5pm (as it did in Springfield, MA in 2011).


Brainstorm the best way to respond to this emergency.

Consider communication needs, strategies to **reunite families and children/youth**, and what the **program administration** might need to consider in the days following the emergency.

4. Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	Daily activities support the program mission and vision.							
2	Activities are linked to school day but offer expanded and enriched exploration of topics.							
3	Activities are hands-on, project-based, intentional, and build on previous activities (sequential).							
4	Activities promote reflection, problem solving, and independent thinking (active).							
5	A wide variety of activities are available that reflect the interests of the children/youth and their increasing maturity and skill mastery (focused).							
6	Children have an active role in activity planning and implementation.							
7	Activities build links to the community and include service learning projects.							
8	Activities are fun and engaging. Children and youth are active participants. 							
9	Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.							
10	Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.							
11	The program uses assessment tools to identify individual learning needs and measure progress toward goals (explicit).							

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS



[CORESTANDARDS.ORG/THE-STANDARDS](http://corestandards.org/the-standards)

Activities in after school should align with what the children/youth are learning during the school day. Connecticut has adopted the Common Core State Standards in Language Arts and Math for preparing children/youth (K-12) to be college and career ready. After school programs that replicate the major goals of these standards are valuable partners in supporting that readiness to go out into the world. These goals, known as "Habits of Mind" are as follows:

Authors of the Common Core Standards add that a "belief in diligence and one's own efficacy" are keys to mastering concepts in both math and language. Do the activities in your after school program support these concepts?

For more information on curriculum frameworks and guidelines, talk to the school day teachers and principals.

- INDEPENDENCE OF STUDY
- STRONG CONTENT
- UNDERSTANDING AND CRITIQUING
- KNOWING HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY

- UNDERSTANDING CULTURES
- PERSEVERANCE
- CONSTRUCTING REASONABLE ARGUMENTS
- SEEKING PRECISION IN THOUGHT AND MEASUREMENT.



Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #8: Activities are fun and engaging. Children and youth are active participants.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- Few choices are available and these do not address the children's interest areas.
- Only some of the children participate in these activities. Others are clearly not engaged in productive activities.
- There are a number of poor behavior issues as children/youth express "boredom."
- No strategies are used to invite participation or excite curiosity about the activity.
- Activities are mostly craft-based, one-day projects implemented to keep children/youth busy but have no relation to participant interest or school day content.

2 = Developing

- More choices are available and some are in direct response to interests the children/youth have expressed.
- Activities become more project based and are less craft based.
- Staff invite children to offer activity suggestions and include them in planning.
- As staff learn more strategies for engaging children/youth participation levels have increased (also leading to a decrease in poor behavior issues). Fewer children are observed as disengaged.

3 = Proficient

- Activity choices are project based and extend for a week or more at a time. These are based on the interests of the children/youth.
- Activities relate to school day content and are designed to stimulate curiosity and problem-solving skills.
- Staff create regular methods of collecting information about children's interests. This might include: monthly surveys, suggestion boxes, student councils.
- Most children can be observed as fully engaged in activities.

4 = Advanced

- Activity choices are project-based, suggested, planned, and implemented with the children/youth.
- Methods of collecting information on student interest are a regular part of program procedures.
- All children/youth are encouraged to participate in activities through multiple strategies.
- Both boys and girls are encouraged to be equally and actively involved in all activities.
- Children/youth with special needs are actively involved in all activities.
- Children express satisfaction with activities on surveys.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Implement staff training on methods of engaging the interest of children/youth.
- Review activity planning procedures and research new resources.
- Survey the children/youth to determine areas of interest.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Implement staff training on methods of inclusion so that all children with special needs can be full participants in program activities.
- Provide training on gender equity, particularly in STEM fields, so that all children have full access to activities.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Establish a student council that will plan and implement project-based activities (service learning projects, fundraising efforts, special event planning, etc.).
- Orientate new staff on strategies that are successful in engaging children/youth participation.




Try This! Including children/youth in

planning will most likely be a new challenge for all. Children/youth will need support in participating in planning processes.

Remember that this is also an opportunity to learn. Clarify roles, **be an active listener**, ask open-ended questions that will help children think about the possible ways to implement their ideas. Be sure to acknowledge the **contributions and efforts** of all children/youth involved in the process.

5. Safety

A quality program is one where:

	PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
	1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1 Operates within Connecticut OEC Licensing Statutes and Regulations even if not required to obtain a license. Staff should be aware of all requirements regarding health and safety procedures.							
2 Provides adequate security and participants are supervised by an approved adult at all times.							
3 Develops and manages effective arrival and dismissal procedures and plans for safe travel home.							
4 Conducts all required fire/safety drills.							
5 Ensures that all staff have current CPR, First Aid, and Blood Borne Pathogen training.							
6 Provides healthy and nutritious snacks and/or supper.							
7 Program staff are aware of and record any special health needs of children/youth. 							
8 Program staff strive to be role models of healthy behaviors.							





Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #7: Program staff are aware of and record any special health needs of children/youth.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- The program does not require medical forms.
- No tracking is done to ensure completed records of participants are received.
- Forms that are submitted are kept on file but rarely used. Therefore, staff members are not always aware of the special health needs of participants.

2 = Developing

- The program requires medical forms and tracking is done to ensure all forms are received.
- Forms are kept on file and are reviewed if there is a medical concern or emergency.
- No review of forms is done to make the staff aware of special needs. Staff members may only become aware of the issue during an emergency that prompts them to review a participant's form.

3 = Proficient

- The program requires medical forms and receives them from each participant.
- Forms are reviewed by staff members and special health needs are flagged; forms are then kept on file.
- Staff members are informed of relevant special health needs of participants, such as food allergies, at the beginning of each year.
- Adjustments are made to the program design as necessary based on participants' health needs.
- Any information shared with staff members is done so in consideration of confidentiality rules.

4 = Advanced

- The program requires medical forms and receives them from each participant.
- Forms are reviewed by staff members and by a nurse or health specialist and special health needs are flagged; forms are then kept on file.
- Staff members are informed of relevant special health needs of participants, such as food allergies, at the beginning of each year, and again in the middle of the year.
- Adjustments are made to the program design as necessary based on participants' health needs.
- The site director or other staff members maintains relationships with school nurses to receive updates on participants' health needs as they change.
- Any information shared with staff members is done so in consideration of confidentiality rules.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Immediately review child/youth records to determine medical needs and missing forms.
- Review program activities and meal plans to determine if medical risk may exist.
- Share pertinent information with program staff so they may be prepared to respond appropriately in a medical emergency situation.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Schedule regular review of records into program calendar to track any changes in medical requirements and to review program activities and meal plans for medical risk.
- All staff should be trained in Child and Adult Care First Aid/CPR.
- Train staff on how to respond to medical emergencies related to specific medical conditions (allergic reactions, diabetes, asthma, or condition related to specific child's medical need).
- Train staff on professional responsibilities for maintaining child/youth confidentiality.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Establish and maintain relationships with school day nursing staff for both training and information services.



Try This! Best practices in record keeping

include being concise, accurate, up-to-date, and confidential.

Create a system in your computer calendar to remind you to check records and identify deadlines for reports.

Get to know your local community partners. Many hospitals have programs to familiarize child/youth with hospital routines and procedures.

6. Staffing/Professional Development

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	The director is committed to his/her own professional development and attends and participates in training.							
2	Program recruits, hires, and develops staff who reflect the diversity and culture(s) of the community.							
3	Treats staff as professionals and provides opportunities for advancement and growth.							
4	Program ensures staff members have competence in core academic areas, where appropriate.							
5	Program maintains staff-to-participant ratio as per state regulations when applicable.							
6	Program provides positive working conditions for staff and appropriate supervision, support, and feedback.							
7	Program assesses professional development needs of staff and provides appropriate supports such as training, coaching, mentoring, and peer learning.							
8	Program has regular staff meetings with written agendas.							
9	All staff, including volunteers, receive orientation to work responsibilities, and emergency plans that are in place for natural or other disasters.							
10	All staff, including volunteers, are screened for prior criminal records, child protective service findings, and other improper conduct.							
11	Program has a plan in place to provide adequate staff coverage in case of emergency.							
12	Staff have access to professional development resources (library, organizational memberships, opportunities to visit other sites).							
13	Program provides salaries that support consistency and continuity of staffing.							
14	Program staff upholds basic principles of trust, confidence, honesty, integrity and respect in professional and business relationships and support the use of the NAA Professional Code of Ethics.							





Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #7: Program assesses professional development needs of staff and provides appropriate supports such as training, coaching, mentoring, and peer learning.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- The site director does not assess the professional development needs of staff.
- Staff input is not used to determine what is provided.
- The financial and time costs of holding trainings are often cited as a barrier.

2 = Developing

- The site director informally asks staff members about their professional development needs. Some trainings are held as a result of these conversations.
- Trainings are held infrequently and irregularly. The site director occasionally coaches staff members who need assistance.
- The financial and time costs of holding trainings are often cited as a barrier.
- The site director occasionally coaches staff members who need assistance.

3 = Proficient

- The site director systematically asks every staff member about his or her professional development needs. Regular trainings are held as a result of these conversations.
- To reduce cost barriers, the site director seeks grants for training and works with staff members to identify time in their schedules that can be used for training.
- The site director regularly coaches staff members who need assistance.

4 = Advanced

- The site director speaks to each staff member one-on-one, and uses a professional development planning tool to collect information and assess staff needs. Regular trainings are held as a result of these conversations; trainings are sequenced and build upon one another.
- Professional development is recognized and valued.
- The site director works with staff members to identify time in their schedules that can be used for training.
- The program looks for funding to support training and the program's cost model includes funds to pay staff to attend trainings.
- The site director and other program leaders regularly coach staff members who need assistance.
- The program has a peer learning initiative, which gives staff members the opportunity to learn from one another's expertise and experience.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Begin conversations with staff about training needs right away.
- Survey staff to determine specific areas of need or interest.
- Begin coaching sessions to support staff in areas where they may struggle.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Continue conversations and surveys with staff to determine current training needs.
- Build training time into staff work schedules.
- Construct plan to schedule and deliver training topics.
- Continue coaching and mentoring. Include opportunities for more experienced staff to offer peer mentoring.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Continue both conversations and surveys with staff to determine current training needs.
- Institute regularly scheduled training opportunities into program schedule.
- If funding is a barrier, seek other sources such as grants or scholarships to support training efforts.
- Allot sufficient funds to cover staff time in training sessions.
- Build opportunities for staff to visit other program sites to gain new perspectives and to talk with other professionals.
- Emphasize to staff the importance of professional development by attending conferences and other professional pursuits.



CONTINUED ↓

National AfterSchool Association Core Competencies

All professional societies share common characteristics. Among them are a body of knowledge and skills, culture, a code of ethics, and public recognition. The **NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies** have been developed to enable after school and youth development practitioners to demonstrate expertise and gain a higher level of recognition within their communities — particularly from school officials — that has long been sought after.

THE COMPETENCIES ARE GROUPED INTO TEN CONTENT AREAS:

1. Child and Youth Growth and Development
2. Learning Environment and Curriculum
3. Child/Youth Observation and Assessment
4. Interactions with Children and Youth
5. Youth Engagement
6. Cultural Competency and Responsiveness
7. Family, School, and Community Relationships
8. Safety and Wellness
9. Program Planning and Development
10. Professional Development and Leadership

READ MORE FROM THE NAA WEBSITE



Try This! Planning your staff meeting time wisely.

The report “**A Practitioner’s Guide: Building and Managing Quality After School Programs**” found that a characteristic of high performing programs included regular staff meetings with written agendas. Meetings were most often biweekly or monthly and included management, organizational topics as well as specific learning topics. In these meeting times, program leaders intentionally reinforced program goals, worked on team building, and kept staff focused on program quality. A written agenda keeps all staff accountable.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT



7. Administration/Organization

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	The program complies with government mandates such as licensing.							
2	The program has policies, procedures, and schedules that are responsive to the needs of children/youth and families in the community.							
3	The program has sound fiscal accounting policies and procedures.							
4	The program establishes strong links to the school day that includes, for example, activity planning, sharing space and resources, and emergency procedures.							
5	Collaborative partners' roles and expectations are clearly defined through Memoranda of Understanding or other documents and maintain regular and ongoing communication.							
6	The program has a handbook for families that includes policies and procedures for scheduling, fees, behavior, emergencies, field trips, linkages to the school day, and inclusion of special needs children/youth.							
7	The program has a comprehensive staff handbook that includes, for example, clear expectations, behavior management protocol, and social media use policy.							
8	The program provides staff with frequent regular opportunities for professional development and program administrators seek training in supervision and program management.							
9	The program maintains current and accurate records, including, for example, schedules, enrollment registration documents, and personnel files.							





Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #4: The program establishes strong links to the school day that includes, for example, activity planning, sharing space and resources, and emergency procedures.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- Staff are unaware of academic and behavior standards used by school day staff.
- Staff are unaware of school day emergency plans.
- Program frequently loses use of school resources (ex.: gym or library) with little or no notice.
- There are no conversations between school day and after school staff to discuss children/youth academic or behavior progress.
- Program staff do not participate in any school day professional development activities.

2 = Developing

- Some staff are aware of academic standards. These staff take the initiative on their own to talk with school day staff about how they might support each other.
- Most program staff help children with homework as best they can.
- Staff are aware of school day emergency plans but do not participate on planning committees.
- Program and school staff members decide on use of facilities and resources at the beginning of the year and then communicate about problem areas.
- Some staff have conversations with school staff to discuss how best to support an individual child/youth who may need extra attention for either academic or behavioral assistance.
- Some program staff are invited to participate in school day professional development activities.

3 = Proficient

- Meetings between school and after school staff happen frequently to discuss how learning can be supported through after school activities and align with the goals of the Common Core Standards.
- Most staff are familiar with the goals of the Common Core Standards and consider these in activity planning.
- School day teachers are often consulted during activity planning so that activities expand and enrich concepts taught during the day.
- After school staff are familiar with school day emergency plans.
- After school staff participate in emergency planning committees.
- The school and after school program have a formal written and negotiated agreement regarding the commitment of resources.

- Regular communication occurs regarding resources and problems are immediately addressed to ensure that both school day and after school needs are met to best support the children/youth's learning and success.
- The after school staff are included in regular discussions of individual children/youth's progress in both academic and behavioral progress.
- All staff participate in school day professional development activities.

4 = Advanced

- All after school staff are familiar with Common Core Standards and apply these in activity planning.
- After school staff and school day staff meet regularly to share common goals, and identify common objectives to meet academic and behavioral standards.
- After school staff are involved in school committees (attendance, school improvement, data).
- After school staff are full and active participants in school day emergency planning committees. After school program participates in drills to test procedures.
- There is a formal written and negotiated agreement signed by the principal and site director regarding the commitment of school resources.
- The components of the plan are communicated to all staff several times throughout the year.
- All staff work together respectfully to ensure all property is cared for and treated respectfully.
- School and program staff members frequently and regularly communicate and share learnings, progress, challenges, supports, and needs.
- Information regarding academic and behavioral progress is shared regularly.
- Staff work together to achieve positive outcomes for students.
- The school and after school staff identify, plan, and participate in joint professional development (topics should include modifications, behavioral support strategies, and issues related to including children/youth with special needs).



IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Obtain information about the Common Core State Standards.
- Talk to school staff to discover emergency planning procedures.
- Schedule a meeting with the school principal to discuss use of school resources, how after school can support the goals of the school day, and to learn more about school day professional development activities.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Plan and implement training for after school day on the Common Core State Standards for academic achievement.
- Plan and implement staff orientation to school day emergency management procedures.
- Negotiate written agreement regarding use of school resources to begin in new school year.
- Establish regular communication strategies with school day staff. This should include a meeting schedule and written communications.
- Negotiate participation in school day professional development activities for the following year.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Plan joint meetings of after school and school day staff to identify common goals and strategies so that after school activities support children/youth's academic and behavioral goals.
- After school site director becomes member of school day emergency planning committee.
- Implement negotiated agreement regarding use of school resources. Repeat the components of the agreement to all staff throughout the school year.
- After school site director regularly participates in school day meetings regarding the academic and behavioral progress of students.
- After school and school day staff work together to plan and participate in joint professional development.



Try This!

The after school program is a strong component of student success. Establishing a solid partnership with school day staff is important on a multitude of levels that include: 1) safety; 2) academic achievement; 3) sustainability, and; 4) school/family communications. The responsibility for creating and sustaining this partnership belongs equally to the school principal and the administrator or site coordinator of the after school program.

The National AfterSchool Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) have a prepared statement, "Aligning the School Day," located at naaweb.org which includes strategies and tools to establish working relationships.

8. Sustainability and Evaluation

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	The program has a clear mission statement and is accountable for measuring progress toward those goals.							
2	The program employs staff members who know, understand, and embrace the program's mission and goals.							
3	A quality program involves key stakeholders, including staff, board of directors, school administration and personnel, and families and children/youth in long-term planning, fiscal management, and decision-making.							
4	The program seeks active partnerships with higher education, businesses, arts and cultural institutions, and community organizations that can help to support the program's mission.							
5	The program forges relationships with advocates for program quality and availability with community leaders, businesses, other after school providers, and elected officials.							
6	The program has an effective marketing strategy that publicizes the program and its achievement within the school and broader community.							
7	The program establishes a regular and systematic method for assessment of all program aspects. (activities, staffing, student engagement) and uses these findings for continuous program improvement.							
8	Fosters understanding and appreciation for established program quality standards, evaluation, and program improvement strategies among staff.							





Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #8: Fosters understanding and appreciation for established program quality standards, evaluation, and program improvement strategies among staff.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- The program does not use a distinct set of quality standards, evaluation frameworks, and/or program improvement strategies. Therefore, staff members, families, and youth do not have a clear understanding of the program's philosophy on quality.

2 = Developing

- The program uses an established set of quality standards, evaluation frameworks, and/or program improvement strategies.
- Staff members are mostly aware of the program's philosophy on quality, but it is not communicated well to families and youth.
- Families and youth are unclear of what they can expect from the program and how well it is achieving its goals.



3 = Proficient

- The program uses an established set of quality standards, evaluation frameworks, and program improvement strategies based on research and evidence-based models.
- All staff members are aware of and believe in the program's philosophy on quality, and it is regularly communicated to families and youth.
- Families and youth have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the program and how well it is achieving its goals.

4 = Advanced

- The program uses an established set of quality standards, evaluation frameworks, and program improvement strategies based on research, evidence-based models, and what has historically been successful in the program and community.
- All staff members are aware of and believe in the program's philosophy on quality, and families and youth have regular opportunities to learn about it and offer input on what quality looks like.
- Families and youth have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the program and how well it is achieving its goals.
- Program leaders frequently reference quality standards and promising practices when making decisions about the program.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- A mission statement describes the purpose of the organization. It should spell out the program's goals and provide a tool to guide future decisions. Begin work on creating a program mission statement.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Plan and deliver orientation sessions for staff on the mission statement and how it will be implemented into program activity planning.
- Plan to share the mission statement with families at every opportunity: open house, family night, newsletters, and any other event where families are included.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Continue to emphasize use of the mission statement with staff and families.
- Compare activity plans to mission statement to determine if actions of the program are in line with the goals.
- All staff are familiar with the mission statement and use it regularly to plan activities, guide behavior, and interact with families.



Try This! Teamwork has a dramatic effect on any organization's performance.

An effective team can help achieve incredible outcomes. A team that is not effective can disrupt planning, stall initiatives, and results in weak or poor outcomes. Program evaluations will highlight strengths to celebrate but may also shine a spotlight on some glaring weaknesses. Take a positive approach to addressing these areas.

Build your team motivation, cooperation, and openness to change through regularly scheduled team building activities. Staff members who feel supported and respected for their contributions are more likely to remain committed to quality initiatives.

Our Program Deserves to Celebrate:

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

Item #	What will we do?	Who	When

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/TRAINING NEEDS

Item #	What do we need?	Who	When

Additional Assistance

The Connecticut After School Network has many resources available to assist programs in the self-assessment process. These include a comprehensive resource library, training service, annual conferences, on-site technical assistance, and peer mentoring opportunities. Please see our website www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org for additional supplementary materials and trainings that support and align with this Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool. Our vision is that every child in our state has the opportunity to participate in high quality, affordable after school programs. Our mission is to lead, educate and advocate for excellence in the field by building professionalism, strengthening program quality and increasing the availability and affordability of after school programs.

We encourage you to contact us with questions, suggestions, and recommendations.  info@ctafterschoolnetwork.org

Our Resource Partners

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

The 50 State Afterschool Networks

Afterschool Alliance

National AfterSchool Association (NAA)

National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)





Staff Skills to Consider

Relationships — Interactions and Engagement

A competent staff person is one who:

- Is a role model of positive and respectful relationships with both fellow staff and children/youth and their families.
- Builds a sense of community and a positive social/emotional climate.
- Actively implements strategies to build positive relationships with each and every child/youth participant.
- Is actively engaged with the children/youth as can be observed through their enthusiasm, interest, and interactions.
- Empowers children/youth to request, design, and select activities that follow emerging interests.
- Encourages children/youth to be active participants in leadership activities that may include program planning, activity leading, evaluation, and community outreach.
- Promotes physical and emotional safety through a culture of support, inclusion and mutual respect.



Family and Community Partnerships

A competent staff person is one who:

- Welcomes and treats families respectfully.
- Regularly considers the assets of families, their culture, background, values, and traditions as it relates to program activities and mission.
- Involves families in decision making and program planning.
- Communicates regularly with families concerning the well-being and progress of the child/youth.
- Collaborates with community health and social service agencies to meet the needs of individual families.
- Acts as liaison between school and families to increase parent knowledge about school resources, activities, and expectations.
- Establishes and maintains ongoing communication between the school administration and after school program regarding linkages and opportunities to align efforts to help children academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Builds relationships with arts, cultural and other community institutions to expand and enhance program offerings.
- Shares promotional materials (recruitment, handbooks, etc.) in the language of the families and includes the message that children/youth with special needs are welcome.



Environment

A competent staff person is one who:

- Provides a stimulating, welcoming, and supportive environment for all children/youth.
- Applies behavior guidance techniques appropriately and consistently.
- Is actively engaged with the children and intentionally builds positive adult-child relationships.
- Establishes, maintains, and communicates a code of conduct to participants, staff and their families.
- Recruits and welcomes children/youth with disabilities.
- Maintains a clean and safe physical environment.
- Develops, implements, and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.
- Balances a daily schedule of both indoor/outdoor and low/high energy activities.



Activities and Programming

A competent staff person is one who:

- Plans daily activities that support the program mission and vision.
- Links expanded and enriching activities to school day topics.
- Implements hands-on, project-based, intentional activities that build on previous plans (sequential).
- Plans activities that promote active engagement, reflections, problem solving, and independent thinking.
- Plans activities that reflect the interests of the children/youth and their increasing maturity and skill mastery.
- Plans activities that build links to the school and community and include service learning projects.
- Plans activities that are fun and engaging and that all children/youth participate in.
- Uses assessment tools to identify individual learning needs and measure progress toward goals.



Safety

A competent staff person is one who:

- Is familiar with Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Licensing Statutes and Regulations (even if the program is exempt from licensing requirements).
- Provides healthy and nutritious snacks and/or meals.
- Stays aware of any special health needs of the children/youth.
- Strives to be role models of health behaviors.



Staffing/Professional Development

A competent staff person is one who:

- Is committed to his/her own professional development.
- Who has competence in core academic areas, where appropriate.
- Maintains staff-to-participant ratios per state regulations when applicable.
- Maintains a positive work environment for fellow staff.
- Engages in training, coaching, and/or mentoring to foster the skills of fellow professionals.
- Is fully oriented to work responsibilities and emergency safety plans.
- Has completely cleared all screenings for prior criminal records, child protective services findings, and other improper conduct.
- Seeks out access to professional development resources (library, organizational memberships, and opportunities to visit other sites).
- Upholds basic principles of trust, confidence, honesty, integrity and respect in professional and business relationships and who support the use of the NAA Professional Code of Ethics.



Sustainability and Evaluation

A competent staff person is one who:

- Knows, understands, and embraces the program's mission and goals.
- Engages in activities that support continuous program improvement.
- Fosters understanding and appreciation for established program quality standards, evaluation and program improvement strategies among staff.
- Is committed to helping the program and organization grow through continuous improvement including regular self-assessment, personal examination of practice, and understanding the impact high quality programming has on children and their families.





For Further Information

Afterschool Alliance	www.afterschoolalliance.org
Asia Society.....	bit.ly/2LecGmp
California After School Network	www.afterschoolnetwork.org
CIS/MeLife Foundation: Building Sustainable After-School Programs Checklist of Core Elements.....	bit.ly/2uy9iJV
Common Core State Standards.....	www.corestandards.org
Connecticut School Age Core Competencies	www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org/resources
Connecticut Statutes and Regulations for Child Day Care Centers — Oct. 2005.....	bit.ly/2LbhTLP
Connecticut State Department of Education.....	bit.ly/2mo78YO
Georgia After School Investment Council.....	www.afterschoolga.org
Harvard Family Research Project.....	www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp
MENTOR After School Web Resources	bit.ly/2LnQI2E
Minnesota School Age Core Competencies	bit.ly/2Nn9RwL
National After-School Association	www.naaweb.org
National Collaboration for Youth, An Initiative of the National Human Services Assembly.....	www.collab4youth.org
National Institute for Out-Of-School Time	www.niost.org
National Youth Employment Coalition: PEPNet Quality Self-Assessment	bit.ly/2L2HoQr
New York State Afterschool Network: Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool	bit.ly/2LkTdNH
New York State Office of Children and Families School Age Child Care Regulations	bit.ly/2NVm11h
Newman, Roberta, 2002, Training New After-School Staff: Welcome to the World of School-Age Care, School Age Notes	bit.ly/2urtXPL
Promising Practices in After School	bit.ly/2NhRgSS
Rhode Island.....	bit.ly/2mo78YO
Utah Afterschool Network Quality Tool.....	bit.ly/2L4C9ji



Acknowledgments

The Best Practice Guidelines for Connecticut After School Programs was originally created in 2007 with much careful thought, study and time devoted to the process including more than fifty individuals as advisors. New research into the positive effects of quality after school programs and feedback from programs that have used the tool has led to this redesign. The Connecticut After School Network wishes to thank all of the people, organizations, agencies, and after school programs that assisted in the development of the original tool and the Quality Task Force which supported the development of this new edition.

Special thanks goes to the National AfterSchool Association, of which the Connecticut After School Network is a state-level affiliate. Their publication, "The NAA Standards for Quality School-Age Care," served as a foundation for the original tool developed in 2005. Their leadership at the national level on improving the quality of after school programs helps the field immeasurably. We also wish to extend our gratitude to the states and organizations around the country whose research and leadership laid the groundwork for this publication, especially the "NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool and User's Guide," Kelly Malone, Ben Trentelman, Leisa Pasquariello, and Kathy Wilby.

PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

USER'S GUIDE — 3RD EDITION

EIGHT ELEMENTS OF QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

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.

2

Family and Community Partnerships

A quality program understands that families and communities are assets and partners in building the program's learning environment.

3

Environment

A quality program strives to maintain a safe and supportive environment that addresses the physical, academic, and social and emotional spaces that children/youth live and work in.

4

Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

5

Safety

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

6

Staffing/Professional Development

A quality program recruits, hires, and develops diverse staff members who understand, value, and are actively involved in promoting high-quality practices.

7

Administration/Organization

A quality program has well-developed systems and sound fiscal management to support and enhance worthwhile programming and activities for all participants, and utilizes partnerships to strengthen the program and community in which it is located.

8


Sustainability and Evaluation

A quality program has a coherent vision/mission and a plan for measuring outcomes for ongoing program planning, improvement, and growth.

4. Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	Daily activities support the program mission and vision.							
2	Activities are linked to school day but offer expanded and enriched exploration of topics.							
3	Activities are hands-on, project-based, intentional, and build on previous activities (sequential).							
4	Activities promote reflection, problem solving, and independent thinking (active).							
5	A wide variety of activities are available that reflect the interests of the children/youth and their increasing maturity and skill mastery (focused).							
6	Children have an active role in activity planning and implementation.							
7	Activities build links to the community and include service learning projects.							
8	Activities are fun and engaging. Children and youth are active participants. 							
9	Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.							
10	Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.							
11	The program uses assessment tools to identify individual learning needs and measure progress toward goals (explicit).							

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS



[CORESTANDARDS.ORG/THE-STANDARDS](http://corestandards.org/the-standards)

Activities in after school should align with what the children/youth are learning during the school day. Connecticut has adopted the Common Core State Standards in Language Arts and Math for preparing children/youth (K-12) to be college and career ready. After school programs that replicate the major goals of these standards are valuable partners in supporting that readiness to go out into the world. These goals, known as "Habits of Mind" are as follows:

Authors of the Common Core Standards add that a "belief in diligence and one's own efficacy" are keys to mastering concepts in both math and language. Do the activities in your after school program support these concepts?

For more information on curriculum frameworks and guidelines, talk to the school day teachers and principals.

- INDEPENDENCE OF STUDY
- STRONG CONTENT
- UNDERSTANDING AND CRITIQUING
- KNOWING HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY

- UNDERSTANDING CULTURES
- PERSEVERANCE
- CONSTRUCTING REASONABLE ARGUMENTS
- SEEKING PRECISION IN THOUGHT AND MEASUREMENT.



Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #8: Activities are fun and engaging. Children and youth are active participants.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- Few choices are available and these do not address the children's interest areas.
- Only some of the children participate in these activities. Others are clearly not engaged in productive activities.
- There are a number of poor behavior issues as children/youth express "boredom."
- No strategies are used to invite participation or excite curiosity about the activity.
- Activities are mostly craft-based, one-day projects implemented to keep children/youth busy but have no relation to participant interest or school day content.

2 = Developing

- More choices are available and some are in direct response to interests the children/youth have expressed.
- Activities become more project based and are less craft based.
- Staff invite children to offer activity suggestions and include them in planning.
- As staff learn more strategies for engaging children/youth participation levels have increased (also leading to a decrease in poor behavior issues). Fewer children are observed as disengaged.

3 = Proficient

- Activity choices are project based and extend for a week or more at a time. These are based on the interests of the children/youth.
- Activities relate to school day content and are designed to stimulate curiosity and problem-solving skills.
- Staff create regular methods of collecting information about children's interests. This might include: monthly surveys, suggestion boxes, student councils.
- Most children can be observed as fully engaged in activities.

4 = Advanced

- Activity choices are project-based, suggested, planned, and implemented with the children/youth.
- Methods of collecting information on student interest are a regular part of program procedures.
- All children/youth are encouraged to participate in activities through multiple strategies.
- Both boys and girls are encouraged to be equally and actively involved in all activities.
- Children/youth with special needs are actively involved in all activities.
- Children express satisfaction with activities on surveys.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Implement staff training on methods of engaging the interest of children/youth.
- Review activity planning procedures and research new resources.
- Survey the children/youth to determine areas of interest.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Implement staff training on methods of inclusion so that all children with special needs can be full participants in program activities.
- Provide training on gender equity, particularly in STEM fields, so that all children have full access to activities.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Establish a student council that will plan and implement project-based activities (service learning projects, fundraising efforts, special event planning, etc.).
- Orientate new staff on strategies that are successful in engaging children/youth participation.



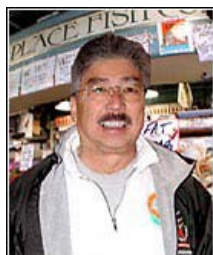
Try This! Including children/youth in

planning will most likely be a new challenge for all. Children/youth will need support in participating in planning processes.

Remember that this is also an opportunity to learn. Clarify roles, **be an active listener**, ask open-ended questions that will help children think about the possible ways to implement their ideas. Be sure to acknowledge the **contributions and efforts** of all children/youth involved in the process.



You can find us in Seattle's Pike Place Market, an historic, open air market located in the heart of Seattle, Washington. People come from all over the world to see our world famous crew of fishmongers throwing fish and having fun with customers. They also come to buy some of the best seafood available anywhere in the world and have it shipped home.



John Yokoyama purchased Pike Place Fish in 1965. At that time, John was one of several employees of the quiet, unassuming little fish stand. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to sell the business, John's employer offered him the opportunity to purchase Pike Place Fish. As a young man of 25, John was at first hesitant to buy the business. The monthly payments on his new 1965 Buick Riviera, however, were taking much of his \$150.00 weekly pay. He decided he could do better on an owner's salary. John purchased Pike Place Fish to help make his car payments - amazing how things turned out!



The first step for us at Pike Place Fish was to decide who we wanted to be. In the words of John Yokoyama: "In one of our early Pike Place Fish meetings with Jim (our coach from bizFutures), we began an inquiry into 'Who do we want to be? We wanted to create a new future for ourselves. One of the young kids working for me said, 'Hey! Let's be World Famous!' At first I thought, 'World Famous...what a stupid thing to say!' But the more we talked about it, the more we all got excited about being World Famous. So we committed to it. We added 'World Famous' to our logo and had it printed on our shipping boxes.

Then, after a while, we asked ourselves, "What does this mean - being world famous?" And we created our own definition. For us it means going beyond just providing outstanding service to people. It means really being present with people and relating to them as human beings. You know, stepping outside the usual "we're in business and you're a customer" way of relating to people and intentionally being with them right now, in the present moment, person to person. We take all our attention off ourselves to be only with them...looking for ways to serve them. We're out to discover how we can make their day.



We've made a commitment to have our customers leave with the experience of having been served. They experience being known and appreciated whether they buy fish or not. And it's not good enough just to want that - it takes an unrelenting commitment. We've made it our job to make sure that experience happens for every customer." To us, being 'World Famous' is a way of being. You can't manualize it. It gets created by each one of us, newly every time. It comes out differently for different people. It also depends on who the customer is...how they react. It's about taking care of people. We're always on the lookout for how we can make a difference in people's lives.

Originally we wondered, 'How are we going to become world famous? We don't have any money to advertise!' Jim told us we didn't have to know how to become world famous. He told us that when you're generating a powerful vision, the future just unfolds. He told us not to believe in it. We just had to be it. Muhammad Ali didn't say, 'I believe I am the greatest.' He said, 'I am the greatest.' It's the difference between believing in the idea of being great, versus being your commitment to being great right now. Jim said, 'Your commitment to being world famous will naturally give you what to do.' So, as individuals, each of us choose to align ourselves with the commitment and declared, 'I Am World Famous Pike Place Fish.' Jim was right. Once we declared our commitment, things really started happening.




People want to copy us - to do what we're doing. We keep telling them, 'Your success isn't in doing what we do; it's in discovering your own way. Don't do what we do - we made it all up...do what inspires you...make it up! You just have to be (yourself...what inspires you). And it means commit yourself to who you say you are: act like it, think like it, look like it, feel like it, speak it...be it! You will create your own way by just being yourself, doing what inspires you. The secret to our secret lies in our commitment to being who we say we are. JUST BE IT. Your challenge is to 'just be' who you want to be...for free...just because you said so.

Pike Place Fish Market
86 Pike Place, Seattle, WA 98101 USA
pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com

4. Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

A quality program is one where:

		PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
		1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1	Daily activities support the program mission and vision.							
2	Activities are linked to school day but offer expanded and enriched exploration of topics.							
3	Activities are hands-on, project-based, intentional, and build on previous activities (sequential).							
4	Activities promote reflection, problem solving, and independent thinking (active).							
5	A wide variety of activities are available that reflect the interests of the children/youth and their increasing maturity and skill mastery (focused).							
6	Children have an active role in activity planning and implementation.							
7	Activities build links to the community and include service learning projects.							
8	Activities are fun and engaging. Children and youth are active participants. 							
9	Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.							
10	Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.							
11	The program uses assessment tools to identify individual learning needs and measure progress toward goals (explicit).							

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS



[CORESTANDARDS.ORG/THE-STANDARDS](http://corestandards.org/the-standards)

Activities in after school should align with what the children/youth are learning during the school day. Connecticut has adopted the Common Core State Standards in Language Arts and Math for preparing children/youth (K-12) to be college and career ready. After school programs that replicate the major goals of these standards are valuable partners in supporting that readiness to go out into the world. These goals, known as "Habits of Mind" are as follows:

Authors of the Common Core Standards add that a "belief in diligence and one's own efficacy" are keys to mastering concepts in both math and language. Do the activities in your after school program support these concepts?

For more information on curriculum frameworks and guidelines, talk to the school day teachers and principals.

- INDEPENDENCE OF STUDY
- STRONG CONTENT
- UNDERSTANDING AND CRITIQUING
- KNOWING HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY

- UNDERSTANDING CULTURES
- PERSEVERANCE
- CONSTRUCTING REASONABLE ARGUMENTS
- SEEKING PRECISION IN THOUGHT AND MEASUREMENT.



Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #8: Activities are fun and engaging. Children and youth are active participants.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

1 = Entry

- Few choices are available and these do not address the children's interest areas.
- Only some of the children participate in these activities. Others are clearly not engaged in productive activities.
- There are a number of poor behavior issues as children/youth express "boredom."
- No strategies are used to invite participation or excite curiosity about the activity.
- Activities are mostly craft-based, one-day projects implemented to keep children/youth busy but have no relation to participant interest or school day content.

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- More choices are available and some are in direct response to interests the children/youth have expressed.
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- Methods of collecting information on student interest are a regular part of program procedures.
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- Children/youth with special needs are actively involved in all activities.
- Children express satisfaction with activities on surveys.

IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30–60 days of assessment

- Implement staff training on methods of engaging the interest of children/youth.
- Review activity planning procedures and research new resources.
- Survey the children/youth to determine areas of interest.

THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- Implement staff training on methods of inclusion so that all children with special needs can be full participants in program activities.
- Provide training on gender equity, particularly in STEM fields, so that all children have full access to activities.

NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Establish a student council that will plan and implement project-based activities (service learning projects, fundraising efforts, special event planning, etc.).
- Orientate new staff on strategies that are successful in engaging children/youth participation.



Try This! Including children/youth in

planning will most likely be a new challenge for all. Children/youth will need support in participating in planning processes.

Remember that this is also an opportunity to learn. Clarify roles, **be an active listener**, ask open-ended questions that will help children think about the possible ways to implement their ideas. Be sure to acknowledge the **contributions and efforts** of all children/youth involved in the process.

CONNECTICUT AFTER SCHOOL NETWORK

Living the Mission of After School



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Living the Mission of After School

Purpose: To learn about the purpose of mission statements and how to use these as a guide in activity planning in after school programs.

The child in this photo is entering school, probably on his first day. He will have many expectations about the school day AND he will have many expectations about what he expects to find in his afterschool program. Mission Statements are guides to help children, families, and staff be very clear (on the same page) about what this child can expect to find.

The author's experience with afterschool staff and mission statements is that few frontline staff people are aware of the existence of a program mission statement. Fewer still are aware of what that statement may say or mean. This workshop is a great way to establish a mission statement or to remind staff of the existing goals and values of the program and evaluate how well these are supported in the daily activities.

Perform introductions, when/if refreshments will be served, and the location of restrooms. Thank the host.

Game of Popcorn



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Popcorn:

Easy game for approximately 10 or more people

No materials required (Optional: Music of your choice with a speaker)

Rules:

Explain that in this game you are the leader and will call out a number and an object. As soon as participants hear this they must form a team of that number and then use their bodies to create the object. Example: “2, rocking chair.” They must form teams of 2 and form a rocking chair. (You might have them do this to see and feel how it works.) Each time you call out a number and object they should seek out new people to team with.

Ask participants to stand in an open area and mill about. They must keep moving (option of using music to keep people moving).

Call out some of the following items:

Washing machine

Hot air popcorn popper

Toaster

Car

Piano

Oak Tree

Eagle

Elephant

For a final item call out “Everyone, Roller Coaster”

Congratulate and compliment the teams each time they make an object

Debrief:

Each team produced a unique object but it was based on guidance or directions from the leader. When we plan activities in our afterschool programs we have a great deal of flexibility yet we do have guidance in the form of the program mission statement or the “Connecticut Quality Self-Assessment Tool (CT-QSAT)” from the CT Network for Children and Youth



4. Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

A quality program is one where:

	PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
	1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	IN TWELVE MONTHS	IN TWELVE MONTHS
1 Daily activities support the program mission and vision.							

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Share the handout which includes the CT-QSAT Section 4: Activities and Programming. Starting with item 1, explain that these are indicators of high quality practice. Today's topic will help us to improve our skills in these areas.

What is a “mission statement”?



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A **mission statement** is a formal, short, written statement of the purpose of a [company](#) or [organization](#) that should:

1. guide the actions of the organization
2. spell out its overall goal
3. provide a sense of direction, and
4. guide decision-making – administratively and with daily interactions with children
5. be broad enough to allow for creative growth
6. be stated clearly enough to be understood by all.

A mission statement defines exactly what the organization’s reason for existence.

A mission statement should contain:

1. The purpose of the organization
2. The organization’s core values
3. The organization’s vision

A mission statement should be used to:

1. Define the organization
2. Define the aspirations of the organization
3. Serve as a framework to evaluate current activities

Why do we need a mission statement?

A mission statement should be used to:

Define the organization

Define the aspirations of the organization

Serve as a framework to evaluate current activities

It makes sure that all stakeholders (families, staff, administration, and children, too) know what to expect.

It establishes priorities

Serves as a standard to evaluate success

“Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime.”



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Let's take a closer look at a mission statement (use sample or your own program mission statement). Sample mission statement: “Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime.”

Ask “How well do you think we are meeting the goals?” (*Ask for specific examples.*)

Do children feel “safe” from physical harm in this program?

Do children feel “safe” from bullying or teasing?

What are children “learning and exploring” at our program?

Do we actively support the skills children need to learn to “make friends”? How?

Are we all having “fun”? Give examples.

How do we support “skills to last a lifetime”? What are those skills?

Based on our collective responses to these questions how well are we meeting the mission?

1. Programs should celebrate the ways in which the goals of the mission are achieved.

2. Reviewing the mission focuses on areas of improvement:
staff training
facility improvements
funding decisions
long range planning

Making mission goals a reality
“Practice makes perfect!”



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Practice makes perfect – How to make mission goals a reality.
Interpret the mission statement and determine what it means to each individual staff person.

Example #1: Physical safety interpretations:

No cooking activities because the children would have access to sharp knives and hot stoves. *(It is good to be vigilant about safety.)*

Clear explanations and close supervision is needed during cooking activities to prevent cuts or burns. *(Small groups are best for potentially dangerous activities.)*

Example #2: Activity planning is based on:

Keeping children busy and out of trouble. *(Always a good idea!)*

Finding out what the children are interested in this year and plan activities based on those interests. *(Activities are more successful if based on what the children are already interested in.)*

One view is not necessarily better than the other. The question should be, “Does this interpretation meet our program goals and mission?” And, “Do we all share the same goals?”

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FISH! – A business philosophy (share handout on Pike Place Fish Market)
Explain that since this small business got excited about their mission statement they have achieved their goal of being world famous and are now the basis for a series of management books and seminars on the FISH! Philosophy.

FISH! Philosophy

- **Be There.**
- **Play.**
- **Make Their Day.**
- **Choose Your Attitude.**



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FISH! Philosophy can be applied to any business by using four interconnected practices:

Be There. Be emotionally present for people. It is a powerful message of respect that improves communication and strengthens relationships.

Play. This taps into your natural way of being creative, enthusiastic and having fun. Play is the spirit that drives the curious mind, as in “Let’s play with that idea!” It is a mindset you can bring to everything you do.

Make Their Day. Find simple ways to serve or delight people in a meaningful, memorable way. It is about contributing to someone else’s life, not because you want something but because that is the person you want to be.

Choose Your Attitude. Take responsibility for how you respond to what life throws at you. Once you are aware that your choice impacts everyone around you, you can ask yourself, “Is my attitude helping my team or my customers? Is it helping me to be the person I want to be?”



“Through The FISH! Philosophy, we build stronger relationships with the team members we work with, the customers we serve, the students we teach and the people we love.”

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From the Pike Place Fish Market handout,

“Jim told us we didn't have to know how to become world famous. He told us that when you're generating a powerful vision, the future just unfolds. He told us not to believe in it. We just had to be it. Muhammad Ali didn't say, 'I believe I am the greatest.' He said, 'I am the greatest.' It's the difference between believing in the idea of being great, versus being your commitment to being great right now. Jim said, 'Your commitment to being world famous will naturally give you what to do.' So, as individuals, each of us choose to align ourselves with the commitment and declared, 'I Am World Famous Pike Place Fish.' Jim was right. Once we declared our commitment, things really started happening.”

Key word is “commitment” to the goal.

Make the commitment stick!

Proclaim it.

- Live it.
- And...



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Make the commitment stick: follow up by using these steps:

Proclaim it. When you tell others (customers, families, students) what you stand for, they expect it of you – and you expect it of yourself and thus increasing your performance.

Live it. An effective team consistently lives the values it says it believes in. Your values point you toward behaviors that fulfill your mission, and away from behaviors that don't. Try to "live a mission moment" each day at work. Conscious attention to your values is the glue that makes them stick!



Celebrate!

“Usually when we prepare for a celebration, we work hard to decorate the physical space with balloons, posters and streamers. What if we put as much effort into decorating our emotional space— with thanks, compliments and encouragement?”

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Celebrate it. When you celebrate each other for living your values, people know they are appreciated, increasing their engagement.

What strategies can we implement to make sure we are “living our mission”? Include the mission statement on our daily planning schedules to remind ourselves to review it each week. Here is an example:

1. Monday Snack: crackers, peanut butter, milk. Children sit in small groups with other children of their choice. A staff person sits with the children to



Craft: Paper Plate Fish

Materials needed: small paper plates, scissors, stapler or tape, markers or crayons, and yarn or string.

Cut a pie-sized wedge out of the paper plate. This is the fish mouth. Turn the wedge around and staple it on the opposite side of the plate so it forms a tail. Punch a hole at the top so string can be tied to hang the fish. Use markers to fill in eyes and gills. As each person makes their fish ask them to reflect on how they can make the mission statement come alive. Ask them to write this thought on their fish.

Allow approximately 5 minutes for this activity and ask those who are willing to share what they have written.

After the meeting concludes hang the fish in a prominent location:

- To remind participants of their statements

- To let others know of the staff's commitment to the mission of the program.

Debrief:

1. Tying a physical action (such as a craft activity) to a concept helps people to remember that concept more clearly than a simple lecture.
2. Incorporating a reflection activity (such as "what does this concept mean to me?") also helps to create the personal change needed to be able to use this concept later on.
3. Making a written response helps to build ownership of the concept and commitment to the principle.

Quality After School Programming is our goal. To reach that goal we must:

1. Plan activities to meet the mission goals.
2. Create a team of people who are committed to making the mission happen in real time.



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Our goal is to be a topnotch after school program. The CT-QSAT is the standard we want to achieve.

Activities:

The activities that we do each day of the week are the proof of our quality.

Activities are the engine that drives the mission.

To be a quality program we need to make sure we are actively supporting the mission through the activities we plan.

It takes a team working together to make the mission effective. This includes:

Reflection on what the mission statement means personally

Communicating our thoughts effectively, and

Making a commitment to the program and each other to see the mission in action.

Does any one have any questions or thoughts they would like to share?

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For more information visit:

Connecticut Network for Children and Youth
at www.ctncy.org

Pike Place Fish Market
86 Pike Place, Seattle, WA 98101 USA
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Connecticut Network for Children and Youth at www.ctncy.org

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pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com

Thank participants for sharing.

Living the Mission of After School



Purpose of session:	To learn about the purpose of mission statements and how to use these as a guide in activity planning in after school programs.
Trainer Tips:	<i>The author's experience with afterschool staff and mission statements is that few frontline staff people are aware of the existence of a program mission statement. Fewer still are aware of what that statement may say or mean. This workshop is a great way to establish a mission statement or to remind staff of the existing goals and values of the program and evaluate how well these are supported in the daily activities.</i>
Materials Needed:	Small paper plates, scissors, stapler or tape, markers or crayons, yarn or string
Handouts:	CT After School Quality Self Assessment Tool (CT-QSAT), Pike Place Fish Market
Welcome/ Housekeeping:	Perform introductions, state the session topic, how long it will last, when/if refreshments will be served, and the location of restrooms. Thank the host.
Trainer Tips:	<i>Welcomes set the stage for training. Be sure to thank the host agency for providing meeting space and/or refreshments. Sharing housekeeping details such as the location of restrooms and the schedule of activities prevents interruptions during your session. Letting people know when food will be served helps participants to stay focused. Introduce any new participants or guests so all feel comfortable.</i>

Opening Activity:	<p>Popcorn:</p> <p>Easy game for approximately 10 or more people</p> <p>No materials required (Optional: Music of your choice with a speaker)</p> <p>Rules:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain that in this game you are the leader and will call out a number and an object. As soon as participants hear this they must form a team of that number and then use their bodies to create the object. Example: "2, rocking chair." They must form teams of 2 and form a rocking chair. (You might have them do this to see and feel how it works.) Each time you call out a number and object they should seek out new people to team with. 2. Ask participants to stand in an open area and mill about. They must keep moving (option of using music to keep people moving). 3. Call out some of the following items: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Washing machine b. Hot air popcorn popper c. Toaster d. Car e. Piano f. Oak Tree g. Eagle h. Elephant i. For a final item call out "Everyone, Roller Coaster" 4. Congratulate and compliment the teams each time they make an object
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Trainer Tips: *Ice breakers or group activities can be used for introducing a topic, team building, or tension reducing activities. Make sure you include a debriefing time so participants understand the purpose of the activity. Adult learners want to understand why they are being asked to learn something that may be new to them.*

Debrief (1st Activity):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each team produced a unique object but it was based on guidance or directions from the leader. 2. When we plan activities in our afterschool programs we have a great deal of flexibility yet we do have guidance in the form of the program mission statement or the "Connecticut Quality Self-Assessment Tool" from the CT Network for Children and Youth. 3. Our success as a unique program is <u>measured</u> by how well we meet the goals set in our mission. 4. This workshop will review the purpose of a mission statement and generate ideas for making sure we are meeting our goals.
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CT-QSAT Section 4: Activities and Programming	Share the handout which includes the CT-QSAT Section 4: Activities and Programming. Starting with item 1, explain that these are indicators of high quality practice. Today's topic will help us to improve our skills in these areas.
Lecture:	<p>What is a "mission statement"?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. A mission statement is a formal, short, written statement of the purpose of a company or organization that should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. guide the actions of the organization b. spell out its overall goal c. provide a sense of direction, and d. guide decision-making – administratively and with daily interactions with children e. be broad enough to allow for creative growth f. be stated clearly enough to be understood by all. g. A mission statement defines exactly what the organization's <u>reason for existence</u>. II. A mission statement should contain: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The purpose of the organization ii. The organization's core values iii. The organization's vision <p>Why do we need a mission statement?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A mission statement should be used to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Define the organization v. Define the aspirations of the organization vi. Serve as a framework to evaluate current activities b. It makes sure that all stakeholders (families, staff, administration, and children, too) know what to expect. c. It establishes priorities d. Serves as a standard to evaluate success <p>Let's take a look at a mission statement (use sample or your own program mission statement). Sample mission statement: "Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime."</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Read, share copies, or post on the wall the program's mission or the sample and review the contents. Ask "How well do you think we are meeting the following goals?" (<i>Ask for specific examples.</i>) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> vii. Do children feel "safe" from physical harm in this program? viii. Do children feel "safe" from bullying or teasing? ix. What are children "learning and exploring" at our program?

-
- x. Do we actively support the skills children need to learn to “make friends”? How?
 - xi. Are we all having “fun”? Give examples.
 - xii. How do we support “skills to last a lifetime”? What are those skills?
 - b. Based on our collective responses to these questions how well are we meeting the mission?
 - xiii. Programs should celebrate the ways in which the goals of the mission are achieved.
 - xiv. Reviewing the mission focuses on areas of improvement:
 1. staff training
 2. facility improvements
 3. funding decisions
 4. long range planning

Practice makes perfect – How to make mission goals a reality.

- a. Interpret the mission statement and determine what it means to each individual staff person.
 - i. Example #1: Physical safety interpretations:
 1. No cooking activities because the children would have access to sharp knives and hot stoves. *(It is good to be vigilant about safety.)*
 2. Clear explanations and close supervision is needed during cooking activities to prevent cuts or burns. *(Small groups are best for potentially dangerous activities.)*
 - ii. Example #2: Activity planning is based on:
 1. Keeping children busy and out of trouble. *(Always a good idea!)*
 2. Finding out what the children are interested in this year and plan activities based on those interests. *(Activities are more successful if based on what the children are already interested in.)*
- b. One view is not necessarily better than the other. The question should be, “Does this interpretation meet our program goals and mission?” And, “Do we all share the same goals?”

FISH! – A business philosophy (share handout on Pike Place Fish Market)

- a. Explain that since this small business got excited about their mission statement they have achieved their goal of being world famous and are now the basis for a series of management books and seminars on the FISH! Philosophy.
-

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- b. **FISH! Philosophy** can be applied to any business by using four interconnected practices:
- i. **Be There.** Be emotionally present for people. It is a powerful message of respect that improves communication and strengthens relationships.
 - ii. **Play.** This taps into your natural way of being creative, enthusiastic and having fun. Play is the spirit that drives the curious mind, as in “Let’s play with that idea!” It is a mindset you can bring to everything you do.
 - iii. **Make Their Day.** Find simple ways to serve or delight people in a meaningful, memorable way. It is about contributing to someone else’s life, not because you want something but because that is the person you want to be.
 - iv. **Choose Your Attitude.** Take responsibility for how you respond to what life throws at you. Once you are aware that your choice impacts everyone around you, you can ask yourself, “Is my attitude helping my team or my customers? Is it helping me to be the person I want to be?”

“Through The FISH! Philosophy, we build stronger relationships with the team members we work with, the customers we serve, the students we teach and the people we love.”

Make the commitment stick: follow up by using these steps:

- a. Proclaim it. When you tell others (customers, families, students) what you stand for, they expect it of you – and you expect it of yourself and thus increasing your performance.
- b. Live it. An effective team consistently lives the values it says it believes in. Your values point you toward behaviors that fulfill your mission, and away from behaviors that don’t.
- c. Celebrate it. When you celebrate each other for living your values, people know they are appreciated, increasing their engagement.

“Usually when we prepare for a celebration, we work hard to decorate the physical space with balloons, posters and streamers. What if we put as much effort into decorating our emotional space— with thanks, compliments and encouragement?”

What strategies can we implement to make sure we are “living

our mission”?

- a. Include the mission statement on our daily planning schedules to remind ourselves to review it each week. Here is an example:
 - i. Monday Snack: crackers, peanut butter, milk. Children sit in small groups with other children of their choice. A staff person sits with the children to model appropriate social skills and to chat with children about their interests and ideas for activities.
 - ii. Monday Craft: beading. To support the development of social skills staff will casually ask children who chose to participate a question related to the topic of making and keeping friends. Example: “I had an argument with a friend and now I want to apologize. What do you think is the best way to apologize?”
 - iii. Monday Gym: soccer: Staff will remind children of the rules before the game begins and include the explanation that following the rules not only keeps us safe but makes sure we all have fun.
- b. Regular self reflection: using the CT-QSAT several times throughout the year.
- c. Include all the participants
- d. Remind ourselves to “live a mission moment” each day at work.
- e. What are some other suggestions that staff can suggest?

**Group Activity
Option 1:**

Craft: Paper Plate Fish

- I. Materials needed: small paper plates, scissors, stapler or tape, markers or crayons, and yarn or string.
 - II. Cut a pie-sized wedge out of the paper plate. This is the fish mouth. Turn the wedge around and staple it on the opposite side of the plate so it forms a tail. Punch a hole at the top so string can be tied to hang the fish. Use markers to fill in eyes and gills.
 - III. As each person makes their fish ask them to reflect on how they can make the mission statement come alive. Ask them to write this thought on their fish.
 - IV. Allow approximately 5 minutes for this activity and ask those who are willing to share what they have written.
 - V. After the meeting concludes hang the fish in a prominent location:
 - a. To remind participants of their statements
 - b. To let others know of the staff’s commitment to the
-

	mission of the program.
Trainer Tips:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Tying a physical action (such as a craft activity) to a concept helps people to remember that concept more clearly than a simple lecture.</i> 2. <i>Incorporating a reflection activity (such as “what does this concept mean to me?”) also helps to create the personal change needed to be able to use this concept later on.</i> 3. <i>Making a written response helps to build ownership of the concept and commitment to the principle.</i>
Conclusion:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Our goal is to be a topnotch after school program. The CT-QSAT is the standard we want to achieve. II. Activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The activities that we do each day of the week are the proof of our quality. b. Activities drive the connection to the mission. c. To be a quality program we need to make sure we are actively supporting the mission through the activities we plan. III. It takes a team working together to make the mission effective. This includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reflection on what the mission statement means personally b. Communicating our thoughts effectively, and c. Making a commitment to the program and each other to see the mission in action. IV. Does any one have any questions or thoughts they would like to share?
For More Info go:	Connecticut Network for Children and Youth www.ctncy.org Pike Place Fish Market 86 Pike Place, Seattle, WA 98101 USA PHONE: 206-682-7181 TOLL FREE: 800-542-7732 FAX 206-682-4629 pikeplacefish@pikeplacefish.com FISH! Philosophy at www.charthouse.com

CONNECTICUT AFTER SCHOOL NETWORK

Living the Mission of After School



Game of Popcorn





4. Activities and Programming

A quality program offers interesting, enriching, and engaging activities that foster creative thinking, spark curiosity, develop academic and social skills...and are fun!

A quality program is one where:

1

Daily activities support the program mission and vision.

PERFORMANCE LEVEL

1 2 3 4

PLAN TO IMPROVE

RIGHT NOW SIX MONTHS TWELVE MONTHS

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What is a “mission statement”?



“Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime.”



Making mission goals a reality
“Practice makes perfect!”



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FISH! Philosophy

- Be There.
- Play.
- Make Their Day.
- Choose Your Attitude.





“Through The FISH! Philosophy, we build stronger relationships with the team members we work with, the customers we serve, the students we teach and the people we love.”

Make the commitment stick!

Proclaim it.

- Live it.
- And...





Celebrate!

“Usually when we prepare for a celebration, we work hard to decorate the physical space with balloons, posters and streamers. What if we put as much effort into decorating our emotional space— with thanks, compliments and encouragement?”

How “fishy” are you?



Quality After School Programming is our goal. To reach that goal we must:

1. Plan activities to meet the mission goals.
2. Create a team of people who are committed to making the mission happen in real time.




For more information visit:

Connecticut Network for Children and Youth
at www.ctncy.org

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PLAN TO IMPROVE


WHAT HOW WHY PRACTICE MONITOR EVALUATE

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What is a "mission statement"?



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"Kool Kidz After School Program provides a safe place for children to learn, explore, make friends, have fun, and build skills to last a lifetime."



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Making mission goals a reality
"Practice makes perfect!"



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FISH! Philosophy

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How “fishy” are you?



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