

# NYSAN

NEW YORK STATE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

**Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool  
Planning for Ongoing Program Improvement**

CBO/District: \_\_\_\_\_

After-school site: \_\_\_\_\_

Program director: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment period: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Working to ensure that all of New York State's children  
and youth have access to high-quality programs  
during non-school hours.



# Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool

## *Overview & Purpose*

Improving afterschool program quality must begin with a commitment on the part of practitioners to examining their programs with a critical eye. A quality program is one that is reflective, willing to improve, change and grow, and believes in successful outcomes for its participants. Moreover, practitioners must understand and embrace the idea that improving program quality is an ongoing process. It is upon these concepts that the Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool is based. This document builds upon the experience, knowledge, research and documentation of afterschool practitioners and policy makers from across the country. The result, we hope, is a tool that can be used to promote continuous improvement in all aspects of afterschool programs.

This self-assessment tool provides an opportunity for program leaders and key staff, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to utilize a common set of standards to assess, plan, design and execute strategies for ongoing program improvement. The self-assessment tool itself is an evolving document. The goal is for it to be used throughout New York State, and possibly beyond, but also to continue to be refined based on the knowledge gleaned from its use, to maximize the effectiveness of self-assessment as a tool for appraisal, planning and implementation.

This instrument is expected to be useful for a variety of stakeholders in the out of school time arena. For example, it can be used by new programs as a planning tool and by mature programs for ongoing program improvement. Program partners and collaborators will find it provides a structure for comparing perceptions and identifying concerns early in the process of working together. Funders will find the instrument useful for developing requests for proposals (RFPs), as well as in the evaluation of applications. Evaluators can use it as a framework for program reviews. A user's guide is currently in development and referrals for technical assistance in using the instrument can be obtained from NYSAN.

Please note that while this instrument can serve many purposes, using it does not confer any credential or accreditation to programs. If you are interested in seeking accreditation for your program, please visit the website of the the New York State School-Age Care Coalition at [www.nyssacc.org](http://www.nyssacc.org).

## *How the Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool Works*

This instrument is organized under ten essential elements of an effective afterschool program. Each element contains a list of standards of practice or "quality indicators" that provide guidelines for ensuring quality outcomes. The asterisk (\*) denotes those indicators that are critical to address prior to program start-up. Once the program is underway, each indicator should be given equal significance. Using the Performance Levels rating system (1-4), one can assess the level of competency or mastery of each benchmark, as defined by the quality indicators. The Priority Planning Level grid allows programs to set priorities and determine the appropriate timeframe in which to meet or exceed the standards. This assessment, when performed in concert with other formal and informal evaluative efforts, such as participant, parent, and staff surveys, staff meetings, and participant and parent forums, can and should enable programs to identify strengths and deficits and arrive at a sound plan for addressing their needs accordingly.

## *Performance Levels*

Organizations are expected to work towards achieving, at minimum, a Satisfactory level in all of the quality indicators within each of the ten elements. Over time, programs must continue to strive to achieve a level of Excellence. The four Performance Levels are as follows:

- 4 Excellent/Exceeds Standards.....Is prepared to help and work with others in this area.
- 3 Satisfactory/Meets Standards..... Needs help to prepare staff to work with others in this area.
- 2 Some Progress Made/Approaching Standard..... Could use additional focused assistance in this area.
- 1 Must Address and Improve/Standard not Met.....Needs significant support in this area.

## ***Improvement Planning Guidance***

---

Once programs assess their Performance Level for each of the quality indicators, they should develop a timeline for program improvement, using the “Plan to Improve” section for each quality indicator. The quality indicators denoted by an asterisk (\*) should receive priority in the improvement plan, as those are deemed most critical to program start up. In devising an improvement plan, programs should begin to establish benchmarks and develop an Action Plan to reach or exceed those benchmarks, that will be assessed periodically during the program year. The Plan to Improve levels are as follows:

Right Now	Area will be addressed prior to or at the start of program.
This Year	Area will be addressed during the program year.
Next Year	Area will be re-evaluated prior to the start of the next program year.

The goal of this Self-Assessment tool is to assist programs in their pursuit of ongoing program improvement. It is not to be used simply as a checklist to highlight program strengths and deficiencies; nor is its use meant to overwhelm program providers such that they are unable to discharge daily program responsibilities. The Plan to Improve section should serve as a guide that will help programs develop both short and long-term plans for addressing program needs.

## ***Professional Development and Technical Assistance***

---

The results of the self-assessment will have many important implications that will enable programs to address the areas in need of support by providing staff development. The New York State After-School Network will also use this instrument as the framework for its ongoing training and technical assistance initiative. Feedback from its users will help shape the professional development strategy and content for all future trainings.

## ***New York State Afterschool Network***

---

New York State's Afterschool Network (NYSAN) is a public-private partnership of statewide, regional and local groups dedicated to promoting young people's safety, learning and healthy development outside the traditional classroom. NYSAN's activities are directed toward building the capacity and commitment of communities to increase the quality and availability of programs during non-school hours. Originating in 2001 as an advisory group to the New York State Education Department for the planning and implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers in New York, the advisory group formally became NYSAN in 2003. NYSAN is now one of 25 statewide afterschool networks throughout the nation funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Today, our partners include The After-School Corporation (TASC), the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus, the Children's Aid Society (CAS), the Coalition for After-School Funding (CASF), Cornell University: The Cornell Early Childhood Program and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Partnership for After School Education (PASE), the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Center for School Safety (NYSCSS), the New York State Education Department (NYSED), the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the New York State School Age Care Coalition (NYSSACC), and the United Way of New York State.

## ***Acknowledgments***

---

This document was created based on the research and experience of NYSAN members and colleagues. A full list of references is published on the NYSAN website: [www.nysan.org](http://www.nysan.org).





## Program Quality Self-Assessment

### Relationships

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

#### Quality Indicator

*A quality program:*

1. \*Has staff who respect and communicate with one another and are role models of positive adult relationships.
2. \*Interacts with families in a comfortable, respectful, welcoming way.
3. \*Treats participants with respect and listens to what they say.
4. Teaches participants to interact with one another in positive ways.
5. Teaches participants to make responsible choices and encourages positive outcomes.
6. Is sensitive to the culture and language of participants.
7. Establishes meaningful community collaborations.
8. Has scheduled meetings with its major stakeholders.
9. Encourages former participants to contribute as volunteers or staff.

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

#### Action Plan

#### Training/Technical Assistance Needed

*\*Denotes items to be assessed prior to program start-up.*





## Program Quality Self-Assessment

---

### Linkages Between Day and After-School

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

#### Quality Indicator

##### *A quality program:*

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

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

#### Action Plan

#### Training/Technical Assistance Needed

---

*\*Denotes items to be assessed prior to program start-up*

## Program Quality Self-Assessment

---

### Youth Participation / Engagement

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

#### Quality Indicator

##### *A quality program:*

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

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

#### Action Plan

#### Training/Technical Assistance Needed

---

*\*Denotes items to be assessed prior to program start-up.*

**Program Quality Self-Assessment**

---

**Parent / Family / Community Partnerships**

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

**Quality Indicator**

*A quality program:*

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

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

**Action Plan**

**Training/Technical Assistance Needed**

---

*\*Denotes items to be assessed prior to program start-up.*

**Program Quality Self-Assessment**

---

**Program Sustainability / Growth**

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

**Quality Indicator**

*A quality program:*

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

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

**Action Plan**

**Training/Technical Assistance Needed**

---

*\*Denotes items to be assessed prior to program start-up.*



