School-Age
PQA

Form A - Program Offerings

Children- Grades K-6

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PROGRAM QUALITY

Introduction

Purpose

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA) is a validated instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. The School-Age PQA has been adapted from the Youth PQA and is appropriate for programs that serve children in grades K-6.

The PQA consists of a set of scorable standards for best practices in afterschool programs, community organizations, schools, summer programs, and other places where children have fun, work, and learn with adults. The PQA is designed to empower people and organizations to envision optimal-quality youth programming by providing a shared language for practice and decision making, and by producing scores that can be used for comparison and assessment of progress over time. The PQA measures the quality of child experiences and promotes the creation of environments that tap the most important resource available to any youth-serving organization—a young person's motivation to engage critically with the world. The PQA is an assessment tool for best practices for any youth-serving program, not just those that use the HighScope participatory learning approach.

Benefits

The PQA offers several important attributes:

- *Experience–tested approach*—The standards for best practices that make up the PQA are grounded in extensive experience working with young people. Together, the items in the instrument represent a youth development approach that works.
- *Research-based rubrics*—The PQA contains proven measurement rubrics that allow observers to differentiate programs in important and meaningful ways.
- *Opportunities to observe practice*—Staff using the PQA must spend time watching what happens in their program.
- *Flexibility*—The PQA was designed to meet a range of accountability and improvement needs, from self assessment to research and evaluation.

Definitions

- *Organization* refers to the agency that operates services for young people. An organization may be a community-based nonprofit agency, a church or temple, a private center, a neighborhood association, or a school.
- *Program offerings* refer to the range of scheduled services available to children and youth at an organization, such as classes, workshops, meetings, special events, homework help, or discussion groups.
- *Session* is one scheduled period of a program offering. For example, a session might be when the photography club meets from 3 to 5 p.m. on Wednesday.
- *Staff* refers to the person or persons facilitating a session. Staff may include paid workers, volunteers, or peer leaders.
- *Activities* are the planned interactions led by staff within a program offering. For example, the activities that occur during a college preparation club might include conducting mock interviews, journaling, or exploring college Web sites.
- *Program hours* are the normal hours that the full range of program offerings are in session.
- *Form* refers to the entire group of scales used for assessment. Both *Form A—Program Offerings* and *Form B—Organization Practices & Policies* are forms.
- *Domain* refers to the group of scales falling under one of the sections I–VII. For example, in *Form A—Program Offerings,* a domain is "I. Safe Environment," which contains scales A–E that pertain to that domain. *Domain score* is the average of scale scores for each domain I–VII. For example, the domain "I. Safe Environment" contains five scale scores to be averaged for a domain score.
- *Scale score* refers to the average of the scores (one per item) that make up an item. For example, scale "I-B. The physical environment is safe and free of health hazards," has four items that can be scored as 1, 3, or 5 and then averaged for a scale score.
- *Item or item row* refers to a single descriptive row on the PQA for which you score a 1, 3, or 5. Level 5 is best practice.

SCORING FORM A

Step 1. Observe and/or interview as appropriate. Record supporting evidence as written anecdotal notes in the space provided on the form, on a separate sheet of paper, or on individual sticky notes. Most of your supporting evidence will come from direct observation. It takes an experienced rater a minimum of two to three hours to complete Form A—one to two hours for observation and collection of written evidence and one hour to score the items.

Your notes should be:

- Factual and objective (rather than judgmental, evaluative, or impressionistic)
- Specific and detailed (rather than general)
- Accessible (language should make sense six months from now)
- Chronological (include time markers)

Your notes should include:

- Anecdotal descriptions of interactions
- Quotes of what children and/or staff say when interacting
- Actions and language of the children involved
- Materials lists
- Sequences of daily events and routines

Step 2. Ask follow-up questions. At the end of the observation, if you do not observe an item during the session, ask the session leader(s) the corresponding follow-up questions (the questions written in the supporting evidence/anecdotes column for some of the items). Use the answers to the follow-up questions as evidence to score the items. If an item does not have a question(s) in the supporting evidence column, you do not need to ask follow-up questions.

TRY TO COMPLETE EVERY ITEM ON EVERY PAGE.

Step 3. Fit and score the supporting evidence on the items. To determine the appropriate score, read the row of items and your evidence. Then, based on your evidence, score the item. Circle the number (1, 3, or 5) of the item that best matches your evidence. Write the score in the box at the end of the item. If you recorded your evidence elsewhere, you'll need to match your notes to relevant scales on the PQA and then *fit* the evidence to the most appropriate item row under that scale (in the space provided). Always try to cross-reference evidence against multiple items—avoid wasting evidence. In most cases, items with a score of 5 provide a full listing of relevant evidence. If the evidence box is marked with a "n/o=1," "n/o=3" or "n/o=5" (for *not observed*), and if applicable evidence was not observed, then the item is scored a 1, 3, or 5 as instructed. If an item is not applicable or cannot be observed or determined by follow-up questions, place an "X" in the box at the left.

Step 4. Determine the score for each scale. The scale score is an average of scores (one per item) that fall under each scale. To calculate the scale score, simply add the score for each item (1, 3, or 5) to get the sum and divide by the total number of items that were scored. Round scale scores to two decimal places. If an item is not applicable or cannot be observed or determined by follow-up or interview questions, calculate the scale score based on the number of items scored for that scale. If some items are left unscored, you can still attain reliable and valid composite scores. However, to maintain the validity of PQA results, every effort should be made to collect data for every item.

Step 5. Determine the score for each domain. The domain scores are averages of each of the corresponding scale scores. Transfer scale scores from the scale pages to the summary sheet at the end of this form. Use the summary sheet in each form to total the scale scores within each domain. Calculate average scores for each of the domains by dividing the sum by the number of scales scored in that domain. Round average scores to two decimal places. Note: If none of the items can be scored for a scale, enter "NS" on the summary sheet for that scale and remember to divide by the number of scales *actually scored* for that domain.

I. Safe Environment

I-A. Psychological and emotional safety is promoted.

Items

Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes

1 The emotional climate of the session is predominantly negative (e.g., disrespectful, tense, exclusive, even angry or hostile; with negative behaviors, such as rudeness, bragging, insults, "trash talking," negative gestures, or other such actions that are not mediated by either children or staff).	**3** The emotional climate of the session is neutral or characterized by both positive and negative behaviors.	**5** The emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, supportive; characterized by teamwork, camaraderie, inclusiveness, and an absence of negative behaviors).Any playful negative behaviors (not considered offensive by parties involved) are mediated (countered, curtailed, defused) by staff or children.

☐ n/o = 3

1 Comments or slurs intended to hurt someone who is present explicitly indicate religious, ethnic, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation bias(es).	**3** There is evidence (e.g., comments or slurs) of religious, ethnic, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation bias, but comments are not directed at anyone present.	**5** There is no evidence of bias but rather there is mutual respect for and inclusion of others of a different religion, ethnicity, class, gender, ability, appearance or sexual orientation.

☐ n/o = 5

Sum ☐ ÷ ☐ **number of items scored =** ☐ **scale score**

II. Supportive Environment
II-H. Activities support active engagement.

Items			Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 The activities provide no opportunities for children to engage with materials or ideas; activities mostly involve waiting, listening, watching, and repeating.	**3** The activities provide limited opportunities for children to engage with materials or ideas.	**5** The bulk of the activities involve children in engaging with (creating, combining, reforming) materials or ideas (e.g., role play, projects, experiments, writing and illustrating stories, outside exploration).	☐ n/o = 1
1 The activities provide no opportunities for children to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.	**3** The activities provide at least one opportunity for some children to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.	**5** The activities provide all children one or more opportunities to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.	☐ n/o = 1
1 Staff does not provide explicit opportunities for children to make connections between current activities and prior experiences and/or knowledge.	**3** Staff provides limited opportunities for children to make connections between current activities and prior experiences and/or knowledge.	**5** Staff provides ample opportunities for children to make connections between current activities and prior experiences and/or knowledge (e.g., staff asks children how today's game compared to a previous game; after a science experiment, staff reminds children of a related experiment; during an art project, staff has children draw diagrams of common tools they have used).	☐ n/o = 1

Sum ☐ ÷ ☐ **number of items scored =** ☐ **scale score**

II. Supportive Environment
II-I. Staff supports children in building new skills.

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 Children are not encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance.	**3** Some children are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance but others are not.	**5** All children are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance.	☐	n/o = 1
1 Some children who try out new skills with imperfect results, errors, or failure are informed of their errors (e.g., "That's wrong") and/or are corrected, criticized, made fun of, or punished by staff *without* explanation.	**3** Some children who try out new skills receive support from staff who problem-solve with children despite imperfect results, errors, or failure, and/ or some children are corrected *with* an explanation.	**5** All children who try out new skills receive support from staff despite imperfect results, errors, or failure; staff allows children to learn from and correct their own mistakes and encourage children to keep trying to improve their skills.	☐	n/o = 1

Sum ☐ **÷** ☐ **number of items scored =** ☐ **scale score**

III. Interaction

III-O. Children have opportunities to practice leadership skills.

Items			Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 None or only some of the children have an opportunity to practice group-process skills.	**3** All children have at least one opportunity to practice group-process skills.	**5** All children have multiple opportunities to practice group-process skills (e.g., actively listen, contribute ideas or actions to the group, do a task with others, take responsibility for a part).	☐ n/o = 1
1 Over the course of the program offering, no children have an opportunity to lead a group.	**3** Over the course of the program offering, some children have an opportunity to lead a group.	**5** Over the course of the program offering, all children have one or more opportunities to lead a group (e.g., facilitate a discussion, lead a song, project, event, or other activity).	☐ Do children ever lead activities?
1 Over the course of the program offering, no children have the explicit opportunity to help other children.	**3** Over the course of the program offering, some children have an opportunity to help another child with a task.	**5** Over the course of the program offering, each child has one or more opportunities to help another child with a task (e.g., staff asks a child to help another child print a page from the computer.)	☐ Do children ever help other children with tasks?

Sum ☐ ÷ ☐ number of items scored = ☐ scale score

IV. Engagement

IV-Q. Children have opportunities to set goals and make plans.

Items			Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 No time is provided for children to plan activities or set goals.	**3** Staff sometimes asks children to make plans or set goals for activities.	**5** Time is regularly provided for children to make (individual or group) plans and/or to set goals for activities.	☐ In reference to today's program offering, did the children do any planning in prior sessions? n/o = 1
1 Staff plans and directs the day's activities (e.g., staff tells children where to play, what materials to use, or what activities to complete; staff closes certain areas).	**3** Staff uses rote or routine strategies for planning (e.g., children always verbalize their plans).	**5** Staff uses a range of strategies to support children's planning (e.g., area signs; idea webbing; planning in pairs; planning journals or forms; props such as puppets, hula hoops, and maps).	☐ In reference to planning for today's program offering, how did you help children make plans? n/o = 1
1 Children are not encouraged to share plans.	**3** Children are encouraged to share plans, but only do so through informal conversation.	**5** Children are encouraged to share their plans and represent their plans in a tangible way (e.g., a small group draws a diagram before building; staff helps full group make a large idea web to plan an event).	☐ In reference to planning for today's program offering, how did you help children make plans? n/o = 1
1 No children are given structured opportunities to set long-term goals.	**3** In the course of the program offering, some children are given a structured opportunity to set one or more long-term goals.	**5** In the course of the program offering, all children are given a structured opportunity to set one or more long-term goals.	☐ In reference to today's program offering, did the children set any goals in prior sessions?

Sum ☐ ÷ ☐ **number of items scored =** ☐ **scale score**

School-Age PQA Summary Sheet
Form A- Program Offerings
Children - Grades K-6

Fill out the information on the left. Transfer the Scale Scores (rounded to two decimal places) into the corresponding blank. If a scale was not scored, enter "NS", and in calculating the average score, remember to divide the number by the number of scales actually scored for that domain. Refer to the scoring instructions on page 4 for more information.

To enter your scores into the Online Scores Reporter,

visit www.cypq.org.

I. Safe Environment

_____ A. Psychological and emotional safety is promoted.

_____ B. The physical environment is safe and free of health hazards.

_____ C. Appropriate emergency procedures and supplies are present.

_____ D. Program space and furniture accommodate the activities.

_____ E. Healthy food and drinks are provided.

Safe Environment Sum

Safe Environment Average Score

II. Supportive Environment

_____ F. Staff provides a welcoming atmosphere.

_____ G. Session flow is planned, presented, and paced for children.

_____ H. Activities support active engagement.

_____ I. Staff supports children in building new skills.

_____ J. Staff supports children with encouragement.

_____ K. The physical environment is flexible and child-centered.

_____ L. Materials are plentiful, appropriate, and accessible.

Supportive Environment Sum

Supportive Environment Average Score

III. Interaction

_____ M. Children have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging.

_____ N. Staff engages with children in positive ways.

_____ O. Children have opportunities to practice leadership skills.

_____ P. Staff encourages children to manage feelings and resolve conflicts appropriately.

Interaction Sum

Interaction Average Score

IV. Engagement

_____ Q. Children have opportunities to set goals and make plans.

_____ R. Children have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.

_____ S. Children are encouraged to take on responsibilities.

_____ T. Children have opportunities to reflect.

Engagement Sum

Engagement Average Score