



mission.

**Form A - Program Offerings**

**Youth- Grades 4-12**



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INSPIRING EDUCATORS to INSPIRE CHILDREN

## Introduction

### Purpose

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) is a validated instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. It consists of a set of scorable standards for best practices in afterschool programs, community organizations, schools, summer programs, and other places where youth have fun, work, and learn with adults. The Youth 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 Youth PQA measures the quality of youth 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 Youth 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 Youth PQA offers several important attributes:

- *Experience-tested approach*—The standards for best practices that make up the Youth PQA are grounded in extensive experience working with young people. Together, the scales in the instrument represent a youth development approach that works.
- *Research-based rubrics*—The Youth PQA contains proven measurement rubrics that allow observers to differentiate programs in important and meaningful ways.
- *Opportunities to observe practice*—Staff using the Youth PQA must spend time watching what happens in their program.
- *Flexibility*—The Youth 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 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 with 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 youth and/or staff say when interacting
- Actions and language of the youth 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 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

**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 youth 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 youth.

#### Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes

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
<p><b>1</b> The activities provide no opportunities for youth to engage with either materials <b>or</b> ideas or to improve a skill through guided practice; activities mostly involve waiting, listening, watching, and repeating.</p>	<p><b>3</b> The activities provide limited opportunities for youth to engage with materials <b>or</b> ideas or to improve a skill through guided practice.</p>	<p><b>5</b> The bulk of the activities involve youth in engaging with (creating, combining, reforming) materials <b>or</b> ideas or improving a skill through guided practice.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> n/o = 1</p>
<p><b>1</b> The activities do not (will not) lead to tangible products or performances.</p>	<p><b>3</b> The activities lead (or will lead) to tangible products or performances but do not reflect ideas or designs of youth (e.g., only staff's ideas are reflected).</p>	<p><b>5</b> The program activities lead (or will lead in future sessions) to tangible products or performances that reflect ideas or designs of youth.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> n/o = 1</p>
<p><b>1</b> The activities provide no opportunities for youth to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.</p>	<p><b>3</b> The activities provide at least one opportunity for some youth to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.</p>	<p><b>5</b> The activities provide all youth one or more opportunities to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> n/o = 1</p>
<p><b>1</b> The activities focus almost exclusively on abstract concepts, providing limited or no related concrete experiences.</p>	<p><b>3</b> The activities focus almost exclusively on concrete experiences, providing limited or no opportunities to engage with related abstract concepts.</p>	<p><b>5</b> The activities balance concrete experiences involving materials, people, and projects (e.g., field trips, experiments, interviews, service trips, creative writing) with abstract concepts (e.g., lectures, diagrams, formulas).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>

Sum  ÷  number of items scored =  scale score

## II. Supportive Environment

### II-I. Staff supports youth in building new skills.

Items	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
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<b>1</b> Youth are not encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance.	<b>3</b> Some youth are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance but others are not.	<b>5</b> All youth are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	n/o = 1
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<b>1</b> Some youth 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 <i>without</i> explanation.	<b>3</b> Some youth who try out new skills receive support from staff who problem-solve with youth despite imperfect results, errors, or failure, and/ or some youth are corrected <i>with</i> an explanation.	<b>5</b> All youth who try out new skills receive support from staff despite imperfect results, errors, or failure; staff allows youth to learn from and correct their own mistakes and encourage youth to keep trying to improve their skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	n/o = 1
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Sum  ÷  number of items scored =  scale score

### III. Interaction

#### III-N. Youth have opportunities to act as group facilitators and mentors.

If you do not observe an item, ask the corresponding follow-up questions.

Items			Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
<b>1</b> None or only some of the youth have an opportunity to practice group-process skills.	<b>3</b> All youth have at least one opportunity to practice group-process skills.	<b>5</b> All youth 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).	<input type="checkbox"/> n/o = 1
<b>1</b> During activities, no youth have an opportunity to mentor an individual.	<b>3</b> During activities, some youth have an opportunity to mentor an individual.	<b>5</b> During activities, all youth have one or more opportunities to mentor an individual (e.g., teach or coach another).	<input type="checkbox"/> Do youth ever take part in mentoring other youth?
<b>1</b> During activities, no youth have an opportunity to lead a group.	<b>3</b> During activities, some youth have an opportunity to lead a group.	<b>5</b> During activities, all youth have one or more opportunities to lead a group (e.g., teach others; lead a discussion, song, project, event, outing, or other activity).	<input type="checkbox"/> Do youth ever lead activities?

Sum  ÷  number of items scored =  scale score

## IV. Engagement

### IV-P. Youth have opportunities to set goals and make plans.

If you do not observe an item, ask the corresponding follow-up questions.

#### Items

**1** Youth do not have opportunities to make plans for projects or activities.

**3** Youth have at least one opportunity to make plans for a project or activity (individual or group).

**5** Youth have multiple opportunities to make plans for projects and activities (individual or group).

#### Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes

In reference to today's program offering, did the youth do any planning in prior sessions?  
n/o = 1

**1** There is no planning for projects or activities, **or** no identifiable planning strategies are used.

**3** When planning projects or activities, at least one identifiable planning strategy is used.

**5** In the course of planning the projects or activities, 2 or more planning strategies are used (e.g., brainstorming, idea webbing, and backwards planning).

In reference to planning for today's program offering, how did you help youth make plans?  
n/o = 1

Sum  ÷  number of items scored =  scale score

# Youth PQA Summary Sheet

## Form A- Program Offerings

### Youth - Grades 4-12

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](http://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 youth.
- H. Activities support active engagement.
- I. Staff supports youth in building new skills.
- J. Staff supports youth with encouragement.
- K. Staff uses youth-centered approaches to reframe conflict.

**Supportive Environment Sum**

**Supportive Environment Average Score**

#### III. Interaction

- L. Youth have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging.
- M. Youth have opportunities to practice in small groups.
- N. Youth have opportunities to act as group facilitators and mentors.
- O. Youth have opportunities to partner with adults.

**Interaction Sum**

**Interaction Average Score**

#### IV. Engagement

- P. Youth have opportunities to set goals and make plans.
- Q. Youth have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.
- R. Youth have opportunities to reflect.

**Engagement Sum**

**Engagement Average Score**