

MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT (QSA) TOOL

FOR MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS PROGRAM
IMPROVEMENT



REGION: _____

PROGRAM NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DIRECTOR: _____

DATES OF ASSESSMENT: _____

Working together to increase quality afterschool
programs in Montana communities.

PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT (QSA) TOOL

STEPS TOWARD QUALITY IN MONTANA

When promoting quality in afterschool programming and how it impacts the children who participate, there are a wide variety of nationally recognized standards that may be assessed. Among these are strong program management, qualified and professional staff, safety and nutrition, proper evaluation, school day linkage, strong family involvement, effective partnerships, sustainability, and much more. For a rural state such as Montana, with its large geographic and cultural disparity, it can be confusing for programs to decide what to measure and how quality can be ensured. Determining what indicators to use and how to implement them in specific urban or rural environments can be a difficult process. However, with more emphasis being focused nationally on measuring program quality, it is crucial for programs to assess these standards. It will not only foster community support, but it will be a critical tool when funding considerations are being made.

COMPONENTS OF THE QSA TOOL

The MTCCR&R Network has designed this tool to be helpful to a large array of programs in various stages of operation. Programs can use the QSA as a planning tool to improve the afterschool program, as a Request For Proposals for funders, and as an element of review and evaluation. This QSA holds no accreditation to programs and should be used accordingly. It is only to the benefit of Montana's afterschool programs that this tool was created.

The elements of the tool are set up in eight standards of best practice in successful afterschool programs. These eight standards include:

1. Goal Setting/Strong Management/Sustainability
2. Quality Staffing/Professional Development
3. Effective Partnerships
4. Evaluation/Measuring Outcomes
5. Linkage to the School Day
6. Safety/Health/Nutrition
7. Enriching Learning Opportunities
8. Family Involvement

Measuring Performance and Planning Guide

When measuring the performance of a program according to the eight standards listed, it is important to be realistic and honest about the level of achievement. Programs should engage all of their staff in familiarizing themselves with the QSA tool and in the evaluation process. There are four levels to each element.

- 4) Exemplary—Program is above and beyond all standard requirements.
- 3) Satisfactory—Standards met, but improvement is still possible.
- 2) Improvement Needed—Additional effort and focus is needed in this area.
- 1) Unsatisfactory—Much improvement is needed to bring area to an adequate performance level.

With evaluation come plans for improvement. Since each element of a program constantly evolves, it is important to remember that there can always be constant improvement. As evaluation is taking place, this guide provides a way for programs to plan for improvement. For each element being evaluated, programs will have the option to choose a time frame concerning when issues will be addressed.

- Present—The issue can be improved at time of evaluation.
- Current Year-The issue can be improved during the program year.
- Next Year—The issue will be addressed during next program year.

Space is then provided for the actions and steps that will be taken for quality improvement. Discussions should take place concerning these steps such as, who will implement them, challenges that may be faced, and the desired outcomes. Constant monitoring is an important step in evaluating if your plans for improvement are successful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MTCCR&R Network acknowledges these sources: New York State Afterschool Network's (NYSAN) Program Quality Assessment Tool, Office of Public Instruction's 21st Century Learning Program Monitoring and Quality Improvement Tool, US Department of Education's National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, Afterschool Alliance, Kansas and Missouri's Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals, North Carolina's Established Standards of Excellence Self-Assessment Tool: K-12, C.S. Mott Foundation-Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs, The National School-Age Care Alliance- The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care

GOAL SETTING / STRONG MANAGEMENT / SUSTAINABILITY

	Performance Level			
	4	3	2	1
1. Program has developed a written mission statement that includes goals and objectives.				
2. Program has developed written policies and procedures supporting strong management.				
3. Program is aware, understands, and implements policies and procedures consistently.				
4. Program makes use of community support and relationships with local businesses and organizations.				
5. Program has created strong relationships with advocates such as leaders, legislators, and other officials.				
6. Program maintains a strong volunteer group.				
7. Program has created marketing strategies and is then able to expose the program and accomplishments to the community.				
8. Program has created a long-term sustainability plan for the program and has included partners, family, and staff in long-term decisions.				

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year

Action Steps:

QUALITY STAFFING / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

	Performance Level			
	4	3	2	1
1. The Program Director is qualified and committed to the professional development of him/herself and that of the staff.				
2. Program recruits professional, qualified staff with proper experience, specialized training, or certification in required areas.				
3. Staff is provided with appropriate training and planning time to carry out job related tasks.				
4. Program schedules staff meetings and staff/volunteer performance appraisals on a timely basis.				
5. Staff is appropriately compensated with competitive wages, benefits, and/or other incentives to maintain a consistent staff.				
6. Staff's experience and background related to the diversity of the group and community.				
7. Staff involvement is encouraged and staff is given proper support and feedback to make their work experience positive.				
8. Staff is involved in the maintenance of quality within the program and it's activities.				

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year
 Action Steps:

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

1. Families are involved in program decision making.

2. Community and families are involved in all program events (i.e. Lights On!).

3. Families are provided with information on resources, opportunities, and other matters involving the best outcomes for their child’s success in and out of the program.

4. Effort is made by the program to maintain positive relationships with partners with long-term commitments to goals, quality, and outcomes.

5. There is regular communication and involvement with parents.

6. To meet the growing needs of the program, the program constantly seeks new partners.

7. Program reaches out to groups that could expand various opportunities and services within the program.

8. The program reaches out to leaders, policy makers, and other members of the community that can participate in advocacy and outreach.

Performance Level			
4	3	2	1

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year

Action Steps:

EVALUATION / MEASURING OUTCOMES

1. The program maintains measurable goals and objectives that supports the program mission statement.

2. Program has identified an evaluation process that effectively measures set goals and objectives, including qualitative and quantitative data.

3. The program requests and utilizes information from partners, families, and the community in the evaluation process.

4. Information gathered during evaluations is shared with partners, families, and the community.

5. Staff performance, program activities, child involvement are all included in evaluations.

6. Objective data is used to measure academic progress.

7. The information gathered through the evaluations is used for program improvements in all areas.

8. The information gathered through the evaluations is used in determining future goals, program planning, and for potential partners, advocates, and funders.

Performance Level			
4	3	2	1

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year

Action Steps:

LINKAGE TO THE SCHOOL DAY

1. Program connects activities to school's learning and academic standards.
2. Program provides professional development opportunities for afterschool and school-day staff to ensure consistency in teaching and learning.
3. Activities complement, but differ from school-day learning.
4. School and afterschool staff work cooperatively together.
5. Resources are shared between program director, school, and afterschool staff.
6. Program offers a variety of activities and students have input on how to structure these activities.
7. Program has incorporated the schools' vision, goals, and objectives in activities.
8. Students do not view the program as more school.

Performance Level			
4	3	2	1

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year
 Action Steps:

SAFETY / HEALTH / NUTRITION

1. All staff working at the program are CPR and First-Aid certified.

2. An emergency/disaster plan is in place, displayed, and rehearsed on a regular basis.

3. Program has policies and procedures to protect the health and safety of the children.

4. Program maintains safety in all areas and communicates characteristics of a safe environment, both inside and outside.

5. Program has a plan or a procedure in place to keep all staff informed of special health needs such as allergies or asthma.

6. Program encourages good health practices and provides an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness.

7. Staff observes for any signs of child abuse and neglect and reports any signs.

8. Program serves food/snacks that follow the USDA Food Pyramid guidelines to meet the health needs of participating children.

Performance Level			
4	3	2	1

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year

Action Steps:

ENRICHING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Program provides opportunities to practice academic skills through diverse activities (i.e. games, poetry, fieldtrips, production of a play).

2. Program provides opportunities that allow students to participate in activities that promote leadership, responsibility, social skills, etc.

3. Program offers activities that engage students in peer/same-age mentoring, group-based and community based projects.

4. Books, resources, and other materials that stimulate students interest and interest in the community are available.

5. Program offers activities that allow students to engage in and demonstrate creativity and self-expression.

6. There are opportunities or a place for children to showcase their work and/or accomplishments.

7. Program plans activities that integrate technology to engage students and enhance skills.

8. Program provides real-world projects that connect with the community.

Performance Level			
4	3	2	1

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year

Action Steps:

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

1. Families are encouraged to share their opinions and ideas.
2. Program encourages families to support and participate in afterschool learning.
3. Program creates environments and events that welcome families and support families needs.
4. Program builds linkages between families, schools, and communities (i.e. involve the PTA).
5. Program staff and families share important information to support the positive development and well being of the children.
6. A plan is in place for staff to orient new families on the program. Handbooks, policies, procedures, etc. are handed out at this time.
7. Notices and newsletters are sent home on a scheduling basis discussing upcoming activities and events.
8. A plan is in place for formal and informal communication and involvement with parents and families.

Performance Level			
4	3	2	1

Planning Guide: Present Current Year Next Year

Action Steps:



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