

How to Effectively Evaluate Your Program

Evaluation – people either love it or hate it, but you cannot argue that it is a vital program component. You will want, and probably need, to PROVE that your program is effective and that the lives of youth are better for participating in your program. Evaluation is accomplished through two main sources: quantitative and qualitative data sets.

Quantitative simply means numbers. How many youth did you serve, how many experiences did you provide, how much growth happened as a result of your programming?

Qualitative means the story behind the numbers. What behaviors have changed because of your programming? For example, are kids turning in their school work because you made time for homework completion in your programming? Are parents employed at a higher rate because you made a community connection that led to more jobs?

Evaluation is something that needs to be built into all programming in some way as it is a natural mechanism for growth. The methods of evaluations can be flexible based on your individual program needs, the needs of your funders or supporters, and the needs of the youth and families served.

Internal evaluations can be very valuable as you work towards continuous quality improvement. Four examples or resources of internal evaluation that are included in this section are:

- » The Iowa Afterschool Alliance Internal Program Quality Standard Rubric for Self-Assessment <https://www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org/quality>
- » The David P. Weikert Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment. <http://www.cypq.org/>
- » The PEAR Institute's Dimensions of Success. <https://www.pearinc.org/dimensions-of-success>
- » Iowa Quality Rating System. (IQ4K) <https://dhs.iowa.gov/iqrs>

The IAA's Rubric is designed to be truly used as a self-assessment. The Weikert Center's Youth PQA tool requires additional steps to be used, including a training and online certification but a sample from the document is provided for your viewing. Harvard University's PEAR Institute's Dimensions of Success looks to better align your STEM programming with quality, and the Iowa Afterschool Alliance is certified to evaluate programs according to this framework if that is of interest to you. The Quality Rating System Quality Rating System now known as IQ4K is Iowa's answer to ensuring youth are well cared for.

Included in this section:

Click on the document title below to jump to that resource.

- * Iowa Afterschool Alliance Quality Standards Out of School Time Self-Assessment Rubric
- * David P. Weikert Center for Youth Program Quality: School-Age PQA sample
- * An Introductory Guide to the Dimensions of Success (DoS) Observation Tool
- * Iowa Department of Human Services: IQ4K School-Age Application Draft

Iowa Afterschool Alliance Quality Standards Out of School Time Self-Assessment Rubric

Goal: Build and sustain the organizational and staff capacity of OST programs to provide high quality learning activities before school, after school, and during the summer.

Note: Please refer to the IAA Quality Standards tab in this workbook for examples of evidence to the Indicator of Quality.



Click Here to Download Template

Positive Human Relationships

Indicator of Quality	Not Applicable	Limited	Developing	Proficient	Advanced	Notes
The program promotes and maintains a positive environment.						
The program utilizes positive conflict resolution techniques.						
Individualized conversations and interactions occur between adults and youth.						
Youth needs are identified and provided for by a diverse team of stakeholders.						
Ratios are appropriate to the needs and purposes of the program.						
A safe, supportive environment is prioritized and maintained.						

Appropriate Indoor and Outdoor Environments

Indicator of Quality	Not Applicable	Limited	Developing	Proficient	Advanced	Notes
Program space is suitable for the program offered.						
Program space is adequately supervised during program hours.						
Adequate developmentally appropriate materials are accessible to youth.						
All program space is accommodating of children with special needs.						

Effective Programming

Indicator of Quality	Not Applicable	Limited	Developing	Proficient	Advanced	Notes
Choice, creativity, independence, and responsibility are practiced.						
Opportunities for growth and development, learning and reflection, and exploring interests exist.						
Intentional planning and consistent execution of program activities occurs while allowing for flexibility as needed.						
Nutritional snacks and meals are offered.						
Youth contributions and accomplishments are recognized and showcased.						

Strong Partnerships

Indicator of Quality	Not Applicable	Limited	Developing	Proficient	Advanced	Notes
Frequent and positive family communications occur.						
Opportunities for family involvement/engagement exist.						
Community resource lists are available to families in need.						
Families serve as advocates for the program.						
Youth are actively involved in the community.						
Program information is effectively communicated to multiple stakeholders in support of youth development and of the program and to foster collaboration.						

Effective Administration

Indicator of Quality	Not Applicable	Limited	Developing	Proficient	Advanced	Notes
Plans are created, executed, and reviewed for all aspects of program planning, budgeting, and sustainability by a diverse group of stakeholders.						
Program offerings, policies, and procedures are based on research and/or evidence-based practices and are effectively communicated with a variety of stakeholders.						
The program is committed to continuous quality improvement.						
Adults are adequately oriented to the program before working/volunteering and are also offered ongoing professional development.						
Appropriate documentation is obtained and kept to ensure health and safety as well as minimize any potential liability.						
Program evaluation is conducted on regular basis with a variety of stakeholders. Changes made are reflective of the feedback given and are communicated with all stakeholders.						
Program stakeholders are advocates on behalf of the program and youth at large.						

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SCHOOL-AGE PQA

Form A - Program Offerings Children - Grades K-6

Organization name:	
Site/Program name:	
Name(s) of program offering(s) observed:	
Name of staff member(s) observed:	
Date scored:	
Name of rater (External Assessment only):	
Email for rater (External Assessment only):	



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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The School-Age Program Quality Assessment (School-Age PQA) is based on the validated Youth PQA and is designed to evaluate the quality of children's programs and identify staff training needs. It consists of a set of score-able 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 School-Age PQA is designed to empower people and organizations to envision optimal-quality programming for children 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 School-Age PQA measures the quality of children's experiences and promotes the creation of environments that tap the most important resource available to any child-serving organization: a young person's motivation to engage critically with the world.

THE 2012 REVISION

The School-Age PQA is an assessment tool for best practices for any child-serving program. For this edition of the tool, each scale was given a short label or name to focus the user's attention on the intent and purpose of the scale. This edition also contains some minor changes that should make the items easier to interpret and score. When an item was substantively rewritten to clarify scoring, the original intent of the item was preserved wherever possible. We added three items to Skill-Building to better assess this important scale. Minor changes were also made to increase consistency in wording across the School-Age PQA and the Youth PQA. Items that are in the School-Age PQA, but not in the Youth PQA, are identified by (SA) after the item number.

A few items moved from one scale to another. For example, items related to Child-Centered Space were designed with a particular type of program in mind, so these items were grouped into a single scale. For external assessment, if the administrator has determined the design and purpose of the program you are observing is not compatible with the Child-Centered Space scale, do not score it. Instead, mark an "X" in all of the score boxes.

BENEFITS

The School-Age PQA offers several important attributes:

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

TERMINOLOGY

- *Form* refers to the entire group of scales used for assessment. For example: Form A – Program Offerings and Form B – Organization Practices & Policies.
- *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 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 a scale. For example, the Healthy Environment scale, 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 row on the School-Age PQA for which there are descriptors for scores 1, 3 and 5. Level 5 is best practice.

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.
- *Site* refers to the physical location of the activities being observed. For example, Middleton School or Bay Area Country Club.
- *Program offerings* refer to structured activities that are led by regular staff with the same children over time. This includes the range of scheduled services available to children 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 in an art club might include making a collage, learning different painting techniques and making sculptures with found objects.
- *Program hours* are the normal hours that the full range of program offerings are in session.

INTRODUCTION TO ITEMS AND SCORING

The School-Age PQA items measure quality in different ways. Some items measure aspects of the environment or the way the session is structured. The bulk of these are in domain “I. Safe Environment.” Some items measure whether staff exhibit specific behaviors or best practice methods, or how frequently the staff carries out the practice. Some items distinguish between child-initiated behaviors that occur informally or spontaneously and those that have been set up intentionally by staff. Others measure *how many* children have certain opportunities. It is important to note that items generally capture either staff practices or child behaviors/opportunities, but not both. Both are indicators of a quality program, although the School-Age PQA and the continuous improvement approach focus on staff behaviors because that is where staff can directly make changes or improvements.

In observing and scoring, it is helpful to keep the following things in mind:

- Think about the intent of the item when scoring. Consult the handbook as needed.
- Follow through and pay attention to an entire sequence of events (e.g., child behavior, staff response, child response).
- If the item assesses children’s opportunity for something, score based on whether the opportunity was present or explicitly offered, even if some children do not take advantage of the opportunity.
- Score based on what you see that day, even if there were extenuating circumstances present that affected scores.
- If there are two or more staff members, score on whether any one of the staff members carry out a certain practice. Otherwise, focus on the primary staff member.
- *Structured* refers to the quality of being intentional, planned, prompted, initiated and/or named by the staff; it does not refer to children’s informal conversation or actions.

CONDUCTING A PROGRAM SELF ASSESSMENT

Team-based program self assessment using the School-Age PQA is a highly effective, low stakes strategy for building a quality-focused culture. Program self assessment can help managers and staff co-create meaningful improvement objectives for the quality of their programming and ultimately the outcomes for their young participants.

Throughout the process, keep in mind these three aspects of a constructive program self assessment process:

- work as a team
- base scores on observational evidence
- focus on conversations about quality

1. SELECT AND TRAIN A SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM

The program self assessment team should consist of the site leader and at least two program staff, volunteers or parents. The site leader attends PQA Basics training. Team members can prepare to be a part of the program self assessment process by completing the PQA Basics training online. The site lead should also conduct a meeting or mini-training for team members using the materials shared at PQA Basics.

2. PREPARE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Team members collect data by taking turns observing their programs in action. Sometimes, schedules need to be rearranged, or a program manager needs to arrange coverage in order to provide the opportunity for staff to observe each other. Plan time as soon as possible following the observations for discussion and scoring.

The site teams should observe *program offerings*: structured activities that are led by regular staff with the same children over time. Enrichment classes or afterschool clubs that get together at the same time each week for the entire school semester are a great example. Avoid homework help, open gym, unstructured computer lab time, drop-in, etc. Always notify program staff of scheduled observations ahead of time. This is not a test!

If timing and staff schedules do not allow for full observations, then try to observe at least one hour of programming, divided among self assessment team members (e.g., three people each observe for 20 minutes, four people each observe for 15 minutes). Vary observation times so that your observations include the beginning, middle and end of different sessions.

3. OBSERVE AND TAKE NOTES

When conducting an observation, find a place to sit that allows you to see and hear as much as possible without getting in the way. Take notes by hand or using a laptop. Bring a copy of the back page of the School-Age PQA. You can bring the full School-Age PQA to your observation, but do not write notes onto the form or try to score the form while observing.

Take notes throughout the offering on factual information; include quotes, actions, etc. As a general rule, expect to take 3–4 or more handwritten pages (1–2 typed) of notes per 30 minutes of observation.

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

At the end of the session, ask the session leader(s) any follow-up questions, as listed on the back of the PQA. After the observation, you will not score the PQA, but save your notes to use during the scoring meeting.

4. HOLD A TEAM-BASED SCORING MEETING

After all data has been collected, the site leader guides the team in scoring a single, program-wide School-Age PQA Form A. This scoring process can last three hours or more and may be divided among several shorter meetings. During the scoring meetings, the team will pool and review all anecdotal records and go through the School-Age PQA item by item, selecting an anecdote and agreeing on a score for each. It is important that the team rely on the anecdotes rather than their memories to produce scores.

The most important outcome of the scoring meeting is the conversation that occurs while discussing scores and arriving at agreement. The scores can provide a reliable indication of the quality of staff interactions with children, so it is important to be accurate.

5. Enter Scores

The School-Age PQA produces scores at the item, scale and domain level. All scores beyond the item level are created using mathematical means, or averages. Scales are averages of items, and domains are averages of scales.

After scoring the items in Form A of the School-Age PQA, you can enter the scores into the online Scores Reporter. You can access the online Scores Reporter through the Weikart Center website at www.cypq.org. The staff at the Weikart Center is available to offer technical assistance as needed.

CONDUCTING AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

For an external assessment, a trained, reliable external assessor visits a site to observe a single program offering and score a PQA based on the observation.

1. ATTEND AN EXTERNAL ASSESSOR RELIABILITY TRAINING

External assessors attend an External Assessment Reliability Training to practice skills and complete a reliability check. All assessors must pass the reliability check to be endorsed as external assessors prior to conducting any site visits.

2. PREPARE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The network leader will often coordinate schedules and assign assessors to sites. External assessors should confirm the date and time of observation with the site leader and ask him or her to inform the relevant staff that they will be visiting to conduct an observation.

3. OBSERVE AND TAKE NOTES

When travelling to the assigned children's program, assessors should arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled observation time. Assessors will view program offerings in their entirety (usually 45-90 minutes long).

Assessors take objective observational notes which describe only observable behaviors, language and materials. They focus on the behaviors of the staff and children with whom the staff is interacting and record as many quotations as possible.

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)

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

At the end of the session, the assessor asks the session leader(s) any follow-up questions, as listed on the back of the PQA. Also at the end of the session, the assessor should ask the staff who led the session the questions on the Staff Information page.

4. SCORING THE PQA

After the visit, assessors fit and score using their notes, making sure to fill out all evidence boxes and program description information. The assessor uses the answers to the follow-up questions as evidence to score the items as applicable.

Some evidence can be cross-referenced against multiple items. In fact, items with a score of 5 may provide a full listing of relevant evidence. If an item is not applicable, assessors should place an "X" in the box for that item.

5. ENTER SCORES

The School-Age PQA produces scores at the item, scale and domain levels. All scores beyond the item level are created using mathematical means, or averages. Scales are averages of items, and domains are averages of scales.

After scoring the items in the School-Age PQA, the assessor can enter the scores into the online Scores Reporter. The online Scores Reporter can be accessed through the Weikart Center website at www.cypq.org. The staff at the Weikart Center is available to offer technical assistance as needed.

SCHOOL-AGE PQA OBSERVATION GUIDE

Program Offerings Children – Grades K-6

Summary of Scales

I. Safe Environment

Emotional Safety
Healthy Environment
Emergency Preparedness
Accommodating Environment
Nourishment

II. Supportive Environment

Warm Welcome
Session Flow
Active Engagement
Skill-Building
Encouragement
Child-Centered Space

III. Interaction

Managing Feelings
Belonging
School-Age Leadership
Interaction with Adults

IV. Engagement

School-Age Planning
School-Age Choice
Reflection
Responsibility

Follow-Up Questions

- Where are the emergency procedures posted?
- Is there an accessible fire extinguisher?
- Is there an accessible first-aid kit?
- Does site have any special safety or emergency equipment?
- Are entrances to the indoor program space supervised?
- Is access to the outdoor program space supervised?
- Can the furniture be moved around?
- Who made and/or selected what is displayed on the walls? (Ask only if scoring the Child-Centered Space scale.)

Scheduled starting time: _____ Actual starting time: _____

Scheduled end time: _____ Actual end time: _____

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- D. PQA. A family of observational assessment tools designed to assess the instructional quality of programs and to identify staff training needs.
 - a. Youth PQA. A validated observational assessment for programs that serve youth in grades 4 - 12.
 - b. School-Age PQA. A PQA designed for programs that serve children in grades K - 6.
 - c. Health & Wellness PQA. A PQA designed for health and wellness-related programming.
 - d. STEM PQA. A PQA designed Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-related programs.
 - e. ARTS PQA. A PQA designed for Arts enrichment-related programs.
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EMOTIONAL SAFETY | Psychological and emotional safety is promoted.

ITEMS

1. **1** The emotional climate of the session is predominantly negative (e.g., disrespectful, tense, exclusive, even angry or hostile); negative behaviors, such as rudeness, bragging, insults, “trash talking,” negative gestures or other such actions 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.



SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES

2. **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; rather, there is mutual respect for and inclusion of others of a different religion, race/ethnicity, class, gender, ability, appearance or sexual orientation.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS | Appropriate emergency procedures and supplies are present.

Note: Local fire codes govern the number and location of fire extinguishers.

ITEMS			SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1.	1 There are no written emergency procedures (e.g., fire escape route, lost swimmer drill, severe weather instructions), or staff are unable to locate procedures.	3 Written emergency procedures are not posted, but staff is able to locate them.	5 Written emergency procedures are posted in plain view. <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	1 There is no charged fire extinguisher accessible from the program space.	3 At least one charged fire extinguisher is accessible (but not plainly visible) from the program space.	5 At least one charged fire extinguisher is accessible and visible from the program space. <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	1 A complete first-aid kit is not accessible from the program space.	3 At least one complete first-aid kit is accessible (but not plainly visible) from the program space.	5 At least one complete first-aid kit is accessible and visible from the program space. <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	1 Other safety or emergency equipment appropriate to the activities is not available to the program offering.	3 Other safety and/or emergency equipment appropriate for the program offering is in poor condition, and/or staff cannot locate it.	5 Other appropriate safety and emergency equipment (e.g., for water or vehicle safety, sports or repairs) is available to the program offering as needed, can be located by staff and is maintained in full-service condition. <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	1 Entrances to the indoor program space are unsupervised during program hours.	3 At least one entrance to the indoor program space is supervised for security during program hours but others are not, or entrance(s) are sometimes supervised and sometimes not.	5 All entrances to the indoor program space are supervised for security during program hours. (Can include electronic security system.) <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	1 Access to outdoor program space is unsupervised during program hours.	3 Access to outdoor program space is sometimes supervised during program hours.	5 Access to outdoor program space is supervised during program hours. <input type="checkbox"/>
			Where are the emergency procedures posted?
			Is there an accessible fire extinguisher?
			Is there an accessible first-aid kit?
			Does the site have any special safety or emergency equipment? If other equipment is not needed, do not rate. Write an "X" in the box at the left.
			Are entrances to the indoor program space supervised? If there is no indoor program space, do not rate. Write an "X" in the box at the left.
			Is access to the outdoor program space supervised? If there is no outdoor program space, do not rate. Write an "X" in the box at the left.

NOURISHMENT | Healthy food and drinks are provided.

ITEMS			SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1. 1 Drinking water is not available.	3 Drinking water is available but not easily accessible (e.g., water is located away from program space; faucet is difficult to use).	5 Drinking water is available and easily accessible to all children.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. 1 Food or drinks are not available to children during the session.	3 Food and drinks are available at appropriate times, but there is not enough for every child to receive a serving.	5 Food and drinks are plentiful and available at appropriate times for all children during the session.	<input type="checkbox"/> If a meal or snack is not necessary because of structure of program offering, do not rate. Write an "X" in the box at the left.
3. 1 Available food or drink is not nutritious (e.g., junk food – high in fat, sugar or hydrogenated oils).	3 Some available food or drink is not nutritious and some is healthy.	5 Available food and drink is healthy (e.g., vegetables, fresh fruit, real juices).	<input type="checkbox"/> If no food or drink is served, do not rate. Write an "X" in the box at the left.

II. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT SUPPLEMENT

CHILD-CENTERED SPACE | The physical environment is flexible and child-centered (continued).

Note: If not compatible with the design and purpose of the program, do not score this scale. Mark all items with an "X".

ITEMS			SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
<p>5. (SA) 1 Most materials lead to prescribed outcomes (e.g., art cutouts, lotto games, worksheets, coloring books, commercial toys).</p>	<p>3 Some open-ended materials are available.</p>	<p>5 Most of the available materials are open-ended (e.g., boxes, paper, beads, paints, blocks, books, sand, water, corks, scarves, paints, musical instruments, microscopes, dress-up clothes).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>6. (SA) 1 Learning materials cannot easily be reached by children or are typically brought out by staff.</p>	<p>3 Some learning materials are accessible to children.</p>	<p>5 Most learning materials are easily accessible to children (e.g., placed on low shelves, in easy-to-handle containers).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>7. (SA) 1 No time is provided for activities based on children's interests.</p>	<p>3 Some time is provided for activities based on children's interests, but it is not regularly scheduled or it is less than thirty minutes.</p>	<p>5 Thirty minutes or more are provided in a session for children to be involved in activities based on their interests.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SCHOOL-AGE CHOICE | Children have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.

Note: Authentic choices refer to real, meaningful choices, as opposed to token or false choices.

ITEMS			SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1. (SA)	1 Staff does not provide opportunities for children to make choices within activities, or choices given are false, token ones (e.g., staff says, "You can choose to be here or not"; children are allowed to choose only the color of marker to use, but all draw an owl).	3 Staff provides opportunities for some children to make authentic choices within activities (e.g., one small group gets to decorate the outside of invitations in any way they'd like, while another group has to copy invitation wording verbatim).	5 Staff provides opportunities for all children to make authentic choices within activities (e.g., all children choose what to build; all children can choose whether to paint, draw, or use markers; all children get to act out an animal of their choice).
2. (SA)	1 Staff does not provide opportunities for children to make choices within activities.	3 Staff provides opportunities for children to make discrete choices between set options within activities (e.g., children choose between three movies to watch, draw an owl, penguin or ostrich).	5 Staff provides opportunities for children to make open-ended choices within activities rather than choosing from limited options provided to them (e.g., they choose what to draw, how to use costumes, how to carry out an activity).

REFLECTION | Children have opportunities to reflect.

Note: **Reflect** means to review, summarize and/or evaluate recent events or activities. **Reflections** are usually expressed by talking with others and/or in writing (a journal or report, for example).

ITEMS			SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1.	1 Staff does not engage children in an intentional process of reflecting on what they have done during the program session.	3 Staff engages some children in an intentional process of reflecting on what they have done during the program session.	5 Staff engages all children in an intentional process of reflecting on what they have done during the program session (e.g., writing in journals; reviewing minutes; sharing progress, accomplishments, or feelings about the experience).	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	1 Staff does not encourage children to share what they have done with others or to reflect on their experiences.	3 Staff uses at least one identifiable strategy to help children to share what they have done and reflect on their experiences (e.g., staff asks children, "What did you do today?").	5 Staff uses two or more strategies to encourage children to share what they have done and reflect on their experiences (e.g., writing, role playing, using media or technology, drawing, using props such as puppets, hula hoops and maps).	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	1 Staff dismisses feedback from children who initiate it, or children have no opportunities to provide feedback on the activities.	3 Staff is receptive to feedback initiated by children on the activities but does not solicit it.	5 Staff initiates structured opportunities for children to give feedback on the activities (e.g., staff asks feedback questions, provides session evaluations).	<input type="checkbox"/>

RESPONSIBILITY | Children are encouraged to exercise independence and take on responsibilities.

ITEMS			SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
<p>1. (SA) 1 Staff does not create opportunities for or encourage children to take care of practical needs and accomplish routine tasks.</p>	<p>3 Once or twice, staff creates opportunities for or encourages children to take care of practical needs and accomplish routine tasks.</p>	<p>5 Three or more times, staff creates opportunities for children to take care of practical needs and accomplish routine tasks or encourages them to do so (e.g., clean up, get supplies, run errands in building, pass out materials or snacks, wipe dry erase boards, put up chairs, feed pets, get themselves a new box of tissues or needed supply from the closet).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. (SA) 1 More than once, staff takes over or intervenes intrusively in activities or tasks assigned to a child.</p>	<p>3 Only once, staff takes over or intervenes intrusively in activities or tasks assigned to a child.</p>	<p>5 Staff does not take over or intervene intrusively in activities or a task assigned to a child, even if the child takes a long time or does not employ the methods staff had in mind.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> If item above is scored a 1, do not score this item. Write an "X" in the box at the left.

An Introductory Guide to the Dimensions of Success (DoS) Observation Tool

What is DoS?

The Dimensions of Success observation tool, or DoS, pinpoints twelve indicators of STEM program quality in out-of-school time. It was developed and studied with funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) by The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education and Resiliency (PEAR), along with partners at Educational Testing Service (ETS) and Project Liftoff. The DoS tool focuses on understanding the quality of a STEM activity in an out-of-school time learning environment and includes an explanation of each dimension and its key indicators, as well as a 4-level rubric with descriptions of increasing quality (see p.4 for sample rubric).

How can you use DoS?

DoS was designed to be a self-assessment observation tool for STEM program administrators and staff. It can also be used by external evaluators or funders to track quality in programs over time or quality across a city or a state.

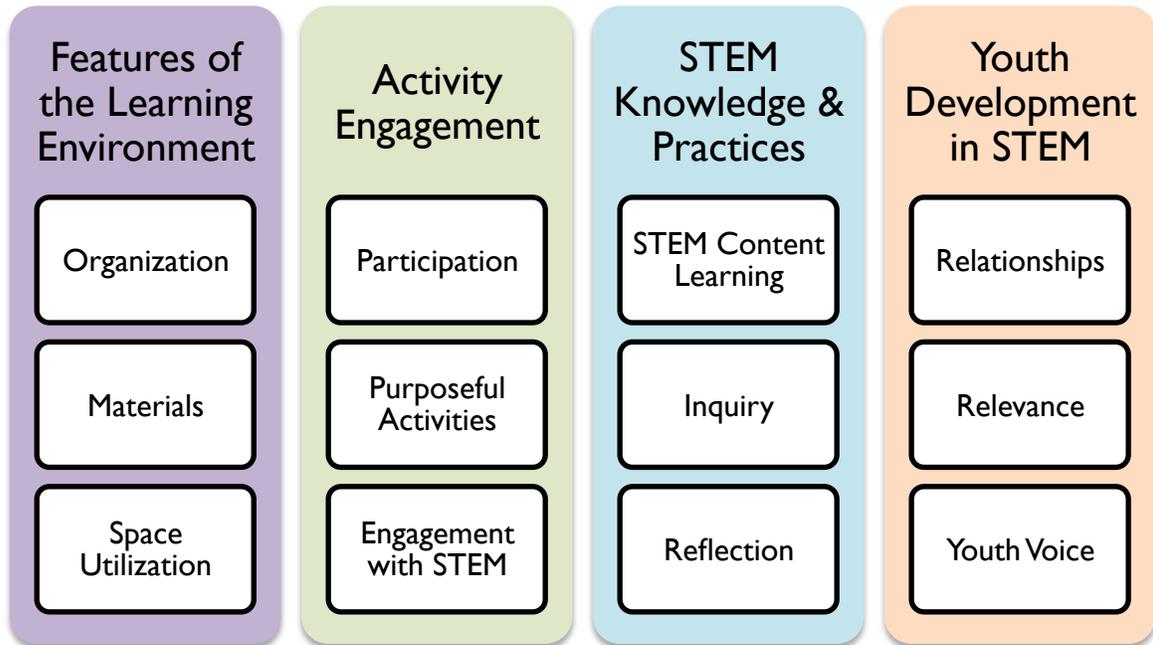
To use DoS, you must be trained and certified (see section below). After certification, you can use the tool as often as you would like to measure the quality of STEM activities.

Observation notes and scores are entered online, and PEAR provides reports that show trends over time and across particular dimensions.

When used for program quality improvement, we suggest debriefing the activities or lessons with your ratings with staff, and having them join in the process of pinpointing strengths, weaknesses, and next steps for improving quality.



What are the dimensions?



DoS measures twelve dimensions that fall in 4 broad domains: *Features of the Learning Environment*, *Activity Engagement*, *STEM Knowledge and Practices*, and *Youth Development in STEM*.

The first three dimensions look at features of the learning environment that make it suitable for STEM programming (e.g., do kids have room to explore and move freely, are the materials exciting and appropriate for the topic, is time used wisely and is everything prepared ahead of time?).

The second three dimensions look at how the activity engages students: for example, they measure whether or not all students are getting opportunities to participate, whether they are doing activities that are engaging them with STEM concepts or something unrelated, and whether or not the activities are hands-on, and designed to support students to think for themselves versus being given the answer.

The next domain looks at how the informal STEM activities are helping students understand STEM concepts, make connections, and participate in the inquiry practices that STEM professionals use (e.g., collecting data, using scientific models, building explanations, etc.).

Finally, the last domain assesses the student-facilitator and student-student interactions and how they encourage or discourage participation in STEM activities, whether or not the activities make STEM relevant and meaningful to students' everyday lives, and the experiences. Together, these twelve dimensions capture key components of a STEM activity in an informal afterschool or summer program.

Planning to use DoS

Step 1: What are your goals for assessment/evaluation?

- Do you want to help individual afterschool science program sites pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses?
- Do you want data about entire programs (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs or YMCAs)?
- Do you want external evaluators to use DoS to report quality across the state?

Step 2: Who will be using DoS and how often?

- The staff at each site will observe each other's lessons
- The staff leaders at each site will observe each unit twice
- The program leaders will observe each site twice
- State representatives from STEM board will visit each site in Fall and Winter

Step 3: What will you do with the data?

- Ratings will be discussed internally with staff and then next steps will be outlined
- Quarterly Reports (created by PEAR) will be distributed to stakeholders; these reports show a site or program's scores on each dimension four times a year.
- By Module Reports—show scores on each dimension for each type of module or curricular unit (can be aggregated across sites or just for a single site)
- Regional or Statewide Trend Report—aggregates data across all programs and shows scores on dimensions over a year; or divided by region; or divided by type of program (e.g., school-based program, museum-sponsored program, community-center program)



How do you get certified to use DoS?

To use DoS, a potential observer must complete a certification process. First, he/she must attend a 2-day training (in-person or online) to learn how to define and observe quality in each dimension. Next, potential observers must complete a set of video simulation exercises to practice their understanding of the tool. PEAR will then review their ratings and evidence from these exercises, and will provide customized feedback at a one-hour calibration session (phone conference). At this session, PEAR trainers will help to address any questions and to provide additional examples that might be needed to clarify use of the tool. Finally, potential observers will then arrange to practice using DoS in the field at afterschool sites in their local area. This step allows them to use the tool in the field and to incorporate the feedback they received on the video simulations. Upon successful completion of all these requirements, observers will be DoS certified for 2 years and can use the tool as often as they would like during that period. After 2 years, there are opportunities for re-certification if needed.

For pricing and registration for an upcoming training, please contact Rebecca Browne at rkbrowne@mclean.harvard.edu



How long does the certification process take?

We can support trainees to complete the steps as fast or slow as they would like, but we encourage each trainee to commit to completing the steps within 2 months. The longer one waits, the harder it is to remember what is learned in each step of the process. We have had trainees finish all steps in less than 2 weeks—so you can go as fast as you would like—just let us know, so we can support you and make sure you get feedback at the right times. It is up to your own organization and leaders to set and maintain deadlines—we provide guidelines, but can not enforce deadlines as we know many of our trainees have other jobs/commitments.

What if we need help?

Technical Assistance will be provided by the PEAR team during the training and afterwards as you start using the tool. You will also receive updates about possible professional development opportunities or resources you can use to improve particular dimensions where you are identifying weaknesses.

Overall, DoS can empower afterschool and summer STEM program staff to embrace their role in inspiring the next generation to do STEM, be interested in STEM, and understand important STEM ideas that they can take with them throughout their lives. The tool helps to provide the common language that program/state administrators, staff, evaluators, etc. can use to describe their activities and where they excel and where they can improve.



Overview of DoS Dimensions

FEATURES OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT		
Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are the activities delivered in an organized matter? •Are materials available and do transitions flow? 	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are the materials appropriate for the students, aligned with the STEM learning goals, and appealing to the students? 	Space Utilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is the space utilized in a way that is conducive to OST learning? •Are there any distractions that impact the learning experience?
ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT		
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are student participating in all aspects of activities equally? •Are boys participating more than girls? Are some students dominating group work? 	Purposeful Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are the activities related to the STEM learning goals? 	Engagement with STEM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are students doing the cognitive work while engaging in hands-on activities that help them explore STEM content?
STEM KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES		
STEM Content Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is STEM content presented accurately during activities? •Do the students' comments, questions, and performance during activities reflect accurate uptake of STEM content 	Inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are students participating in the practices of scientists, mathematicians, engineers, etc.? •Are students observing, collecting data, building explanations, etc.? 	Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do students have opportunities to reflect and engage in meaning-making about the activities and related content?
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN STEM		
Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there positive student-facilitator and student-student interactions? 	Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is there evidence that the facilitator and students are making connections between the STEM content and activities and students' everyday lives and experiences. 	Youth Voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are students encouraged to voice their ideas/opinions? •Do students make important and meaningful choices that shape their learning experience?

Sample Rubrics

Inquiry Rubric

EVIDENCE ABSENT	INCONSISTENT EVIDENCE	REASONABLE EVIDENCE	COMPELLING EVIDENCE
There is minimal evidence that students are engaging in or taught about STEM practices during activities.	Students are taught about STEM practices during activities but are not engaging in STEM practices themselves.	Students are engaging in STEM practices during the activities but the engagement is superficial	There is consistent evidence that students are engaging in STEM practices during the activities.
1	2	3	4
Students do not have any opportunities to engage in STEM practices.	<p>Students observe STEM practices (by the facilitator, a guest presenter, or a peer), but do not have opportunities to engage in them on their own.</p> <p>For example, they may watch the activity leader or a student do an experiment or demonstration, or watch the teacher make and explain a scientific model.</p>	<p>Students use some STEM practices, however, they are used superficially and do not help students deeply engage in the thinking and reasoning of STEM professionals.</p> <p>For example, they may do an investigation, but by following a cookbook-approach, step-by-step set of instructions. Participation in STEM practices is scripted or inauthentic.</p>	<p>Students have opportunities to use STEM practices by pursuing scientific questions, tackling engineering design issues, or create mathematical arguments.</p> <p>They are supported to use the practices in authentic ways, where they are trying to actually solve a problem or gather data to answer a question.</p>

Engagement with STEM Rubric

EVIDENCE ABSENT	INCONSISTENT EVIDENCE	REASONABLE EVIDENCE	COMPELLING EVIDENCE
There is minimal evidence that the students are engaged with hands-on or interesting activities where they can explore STEM content.	There is weak evidence that the students are engaged with hands-on or interesting activities where they can explore STEM content.	There is clear evidence that the students are engaged with hands-on or interesting activities where they can explore STEM content.	There is consistent and meaningful evidence that students are engaged with hands-on or interesting activities where they can explore STEM content.
1	2	3	4
The activities mostly leave students in a passive role, where they are observing a demonstration or listening to the facilitator talk. (minimal hands-on opportunities)	Students engage in hands-on activities; however, there is limited evidence that the hands-on activities encourage students to engage with STEM content in meaningful ways. (“hands-on, minds-off”)	There are some opportunities for students to engage in hands-on activities that allow them to actively explore STEM content. Some parts of the activities still leave students as passive observers while the facilitator does all the cognitive work.	There are consistent opportunities for students to actively explore STEM content by engaging in hands-on activities, where students do the cognitive work themselves and the facilitator maintains the role as facilitator versus teller.

Sample of how an observer scored an activity using this rubric:

Dimension	Evidence	Rating (1-4)
Engagement with STEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students are <u>engaged in a hands-on activity</u> where they can touch several aquatic organisms.</i> • <i>However, the students are only hearing disconnected facts or descriptions about the animals, and are <u>not having a hands-on experience that allows them to explore STEM content.</u></i> • <i>The Activity Leaders are doing all the cognitive work by providing information, they are not asking students to think. This is a good example of a very hands-on activity that is unfortunately only designed to be fun and not “mind-on”</i> 	2

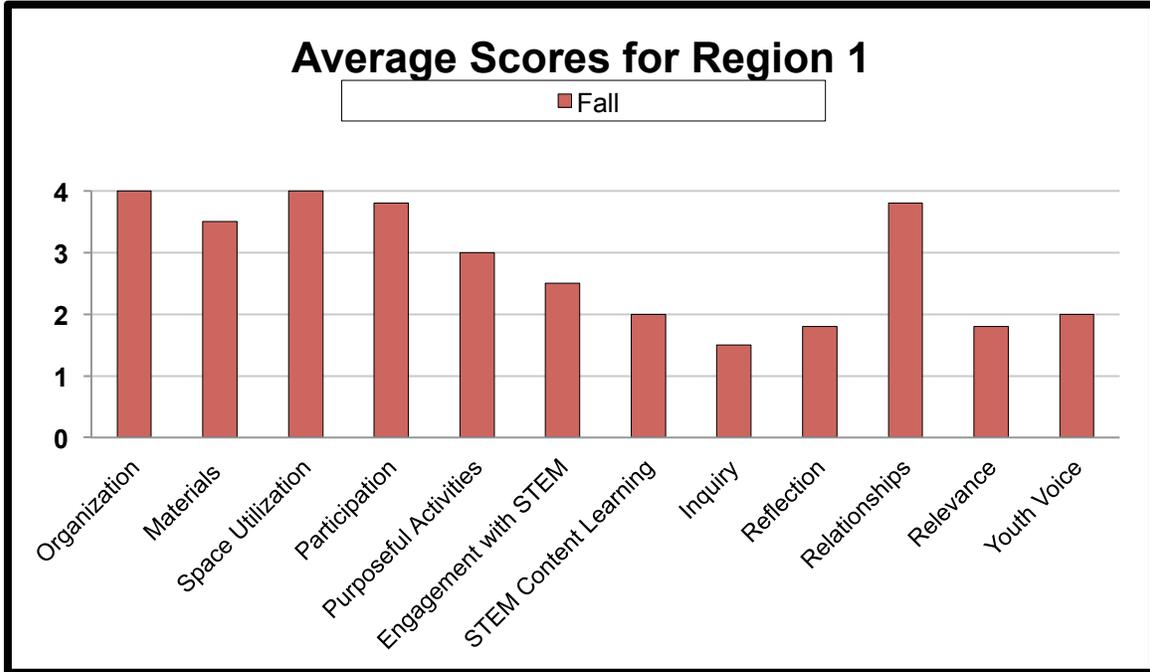
- **Feedback to program:** Have a few big questions to guide students’ observations of the different animal tanks. For example, “what do you observe on these animals that might help them survive under water?” “how are the legs different on this animal from this other animal or how are the legs similar or different from yours and why?”—this way the students are observers with the purpose of gathering information to answer these questions.

Sample Reports

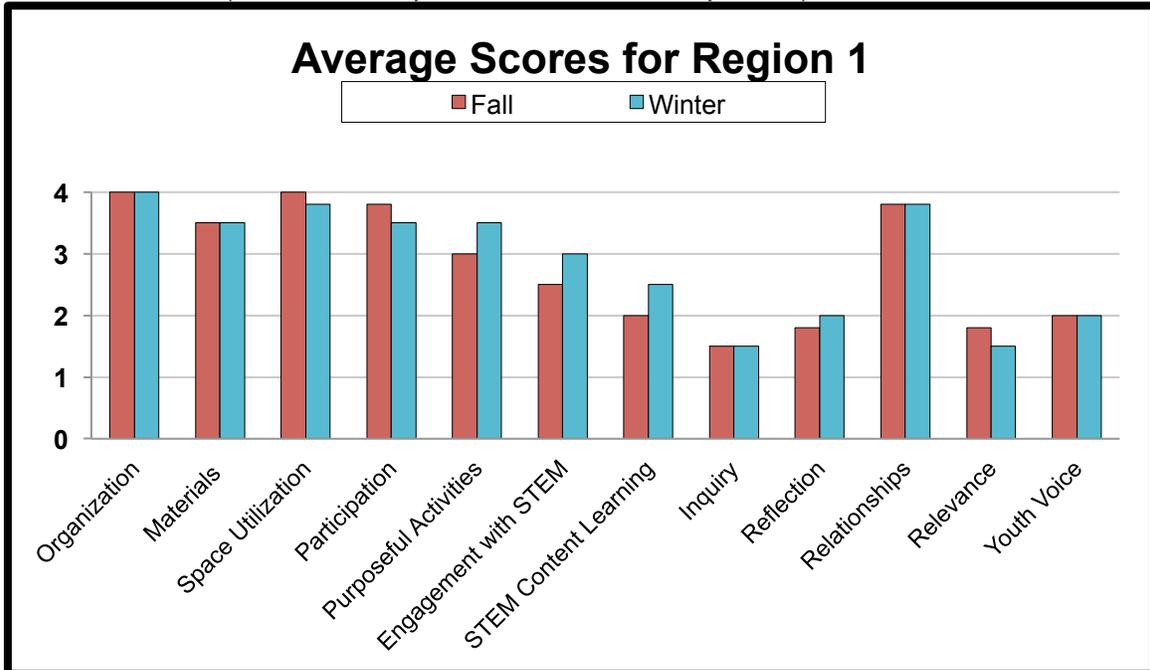
(reports will be customized to the needs of each region/state/network)

Quarterly Report for a Region

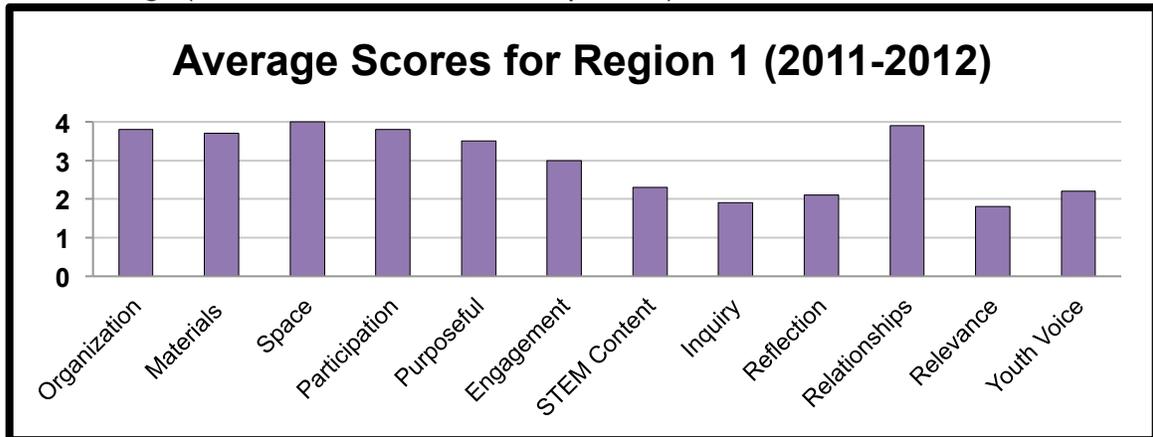
First Quarter



Second Quarter (includes first quarter results for comparison)



Year Average (includes data across all four quarters)

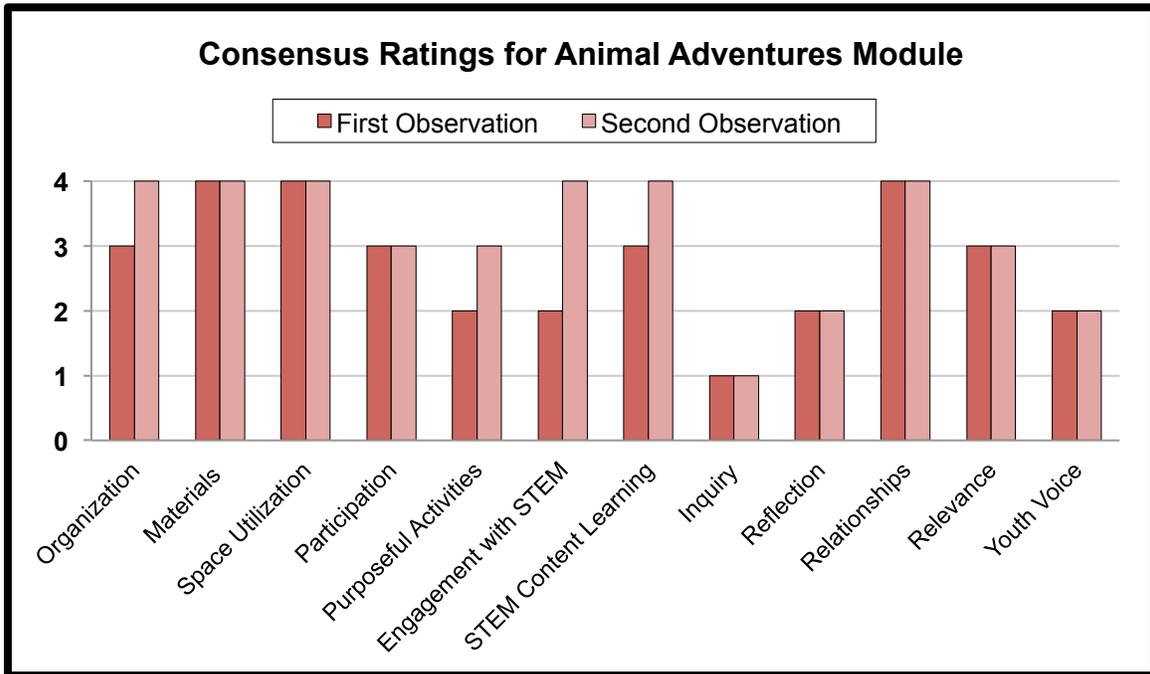
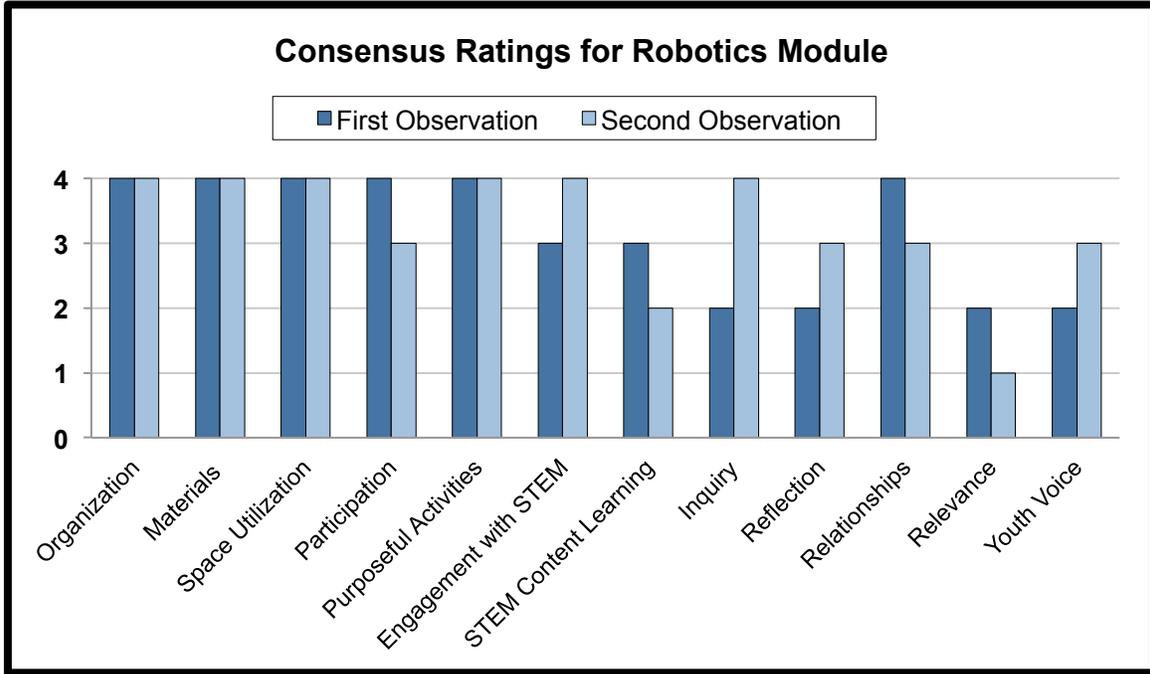


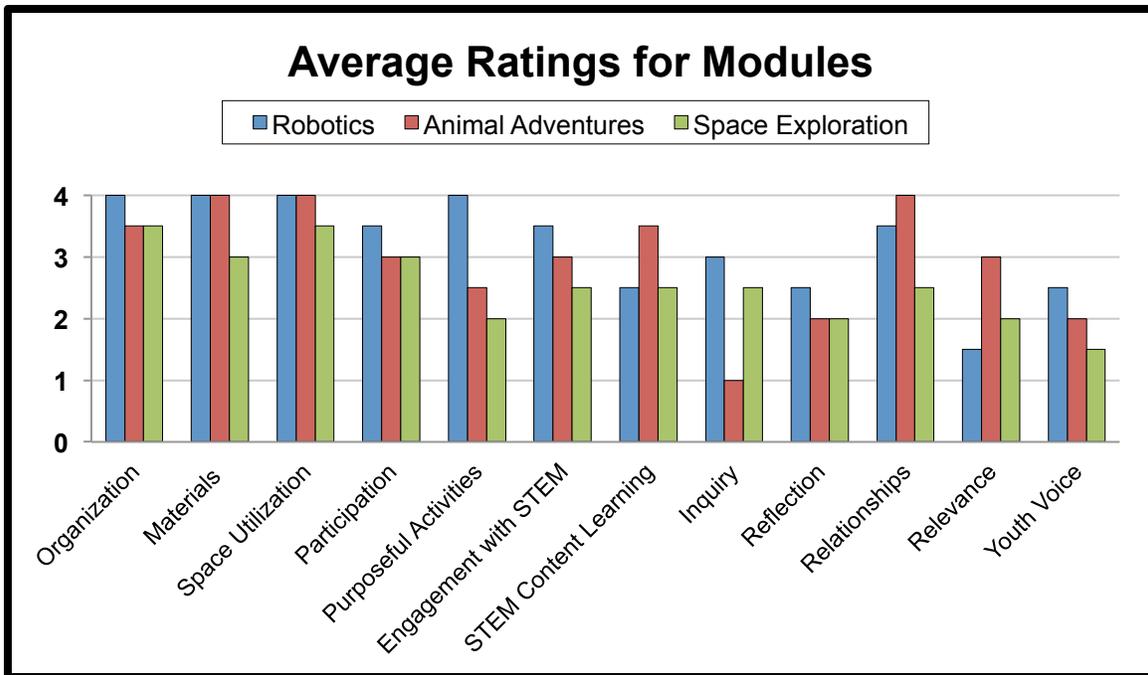
Summary Table for Region I (2011-2012)

Dimension	Fall Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter	Summer Quarter	Year Average
Organization	4	4	3.8	3.5	3.8
Materials	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.7
Space Utilization	4	3.8	4	4	4
Participation	3.8	3.5	4	4	3.8
Purposeful Activities	3	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.5
Engagement with STEM	2.5	3	3	3.5	3
STEM Content Learning	2	2.5	2	2.8	2.3
Inquiry	1.5	1.5	2	2.5	2.1
Reflection	1.8	2	2.5	2	2.1
Relationships	3.8	3.8	3.8	4	3.9
Relevance	1.8	1.5	2	1.8	1.8
Youth Voice	2	2	2.2	2.5	2.2

* Includes data for Boys and Girls Club of Cityville, Cityville Community Center, Science Center of Cityville, and Cityville Afterschool STEM Project

Module Report (allows for comparisons across different science units)





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SCHOOL AGE (rev. 12/27/19)	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Nutrition and Physical Activity	1. The program administrator and any staff member who prepares meals completes one of the following food safety trainings (choose ONE): a) Food Safety in Child Care-4 hours (Institute of Child Nutrition online training) OR b) Iowa State University Extension: 4 Food Safety Lessons OR c) Other DHS or IQ4K-approved Food Safety training OR d) ServSafe	1. The program (choose ONE): a) Participates in CACFP or NSLP OR b) Completes all of the following (as applicable to ages served): I. Iowa CACFP Steps to Success Module 2: Menu Planning for Meals that Meet Requirements (staff planning the menu and their supervisor) II. Iowa CACFP Steps to Success Module 4: Recommendations to Promote Wellness III. Implement the following policies regarding beverages: A. Serve only 1%, skim or non-fat milk. B. Make water available throughout the day including at snacks and meals. C. Serve only 100% fruit juice. D. Serve juice no more than one time per day.	1. The program (choose ONE): a) Participates in CACFP or NSLP OR b) If exempt from CACFP, the program identifies and implements two nutrition goals from the completed action plan in Level 1.	1. The program (choose ONE): a) Participates in CACFP or NSLP AND identifies and implements one nutrition goal from the completed action plan in Level 1 OR b) If exempt from CACFP, the program identifies and implements three nutrition goals from the completed action plan in Level 1.	1. The program (choose ONE): a) Participates in CACFP or NSLP AND identifies and implements two nutrition goals from the completed action plan in Level 1 OR b) If exempt from CACFP, the program identifies and implements four nutrition goals from the completed action plan in Level 1.
	2. The program completes a self-assessment and creates an action plan in the area of nutrition.	2. The program identifies and implements one physical activity goal from the completed action plan in Level 1.	2. The program identifies and implements two physical activity goals from the completed action plan in Level 1.	2. The program identifies and implements three physical activity goals from the completed action plan in Level 1.	2. The program identifies and implements four physical activity goals from the completed action plan in Level 1.
	3. The program completes a self-assessment and creates an action plan in the area of physical activity.				
Professional Development	4. All Staff complete a professional development plan within 6 months of employment and the plan is updated annually.	3. All staff who administer medication complete the Medication Administration Skills Competency Course (or other training as approved by DHS) and successfully complete a Competency Skills Evaluation Assessment Checklist (or DHS-approved equivalent). There must be one person who meets this criterion present onsite at all times.	3. All Staff complete 10 annual training hours of professional development.	3. All Staff complete 12 annual training hours of professional development.	3. All Staff complete 12 annual training hours of professional development.
	5. All Staff complete the Iowa State University Extension's orientation for new staff training within 9 months of employment.	4. All Staff complete 10 annual training hours of professional development.		4. 30% or more of all staff have completed 6 hours of DHS or IQ4K-approved training in the area of Social Emotional Behavior Mental Health (SEBMH).	4. 60% or more of all staff have completed 6 hours of DHS or IQ4K-approved training in the area of Social Emotional Behavior Mental Health (SEBMH).
Family and Community Partnerships	6. The program provides an orientation for new families.	5. The program offers one conference with each family per year to discuss each child's progress, strengths, and needs in	4. The program promotes culturally-sensitive practices and procedures.	5. The program completes 4 activities annually that promote partnerships (see Family and Community Partnership Activity Options).	5. The program completes 5 activities annually that promote partnerships (see Family and Community Partnership Activity Options).
	7. The program completes 1 activity annually that promotes partnerships (see Family and Community Partnership Activity Options).	6. The program completes 2 activities annually that promote partnerships (see Family and Community Partnership Activity Options).	5. The program completes 3 annually activities that promote partnerships (see Family and Community Partnership Activity Options).		
Teaching and Learning	8. The program provides assistance or access to tutors to support homework or student's learning needs.	6. The program develops and implements a curriculum that includes all of the following opportunities each day: -active physical activity -creative expression -cooperative games -free choice with a variety of materials -academic support.	6. Staff utilizes an appropriate tool throughout the year to gather information about children's strengths, progress, and needs.	6. Staff use information gathered about children and families to make changes in their learning environment and activities.	6. Staff work with families and other experts to implement instructional and/or environmental adaptations that support the learning for each child, including those with diverse needs, identified disabilities, dual language learners, identified behavioral health needs, and/or specialized health needs.
	9. The program develops and implements a comprehensive discipline/behavior policy that promotes positive relationships.	7. The program develops and implements a policy that eliminates or severely limits expulsion, suspension, punitive or other exclusionary discipline.	7. The program shares community resources with families as needed, based on the gathered information (example: provide contact information for the local AEA for further evaluation).	7. Staff participate in planning with families and/or outside experts, as needed, for children with diverse needs, including those with identified disabilities, dual language learners, identified behavioral needs, and/or specialized health needs.	
	10. The program develops and implements a comprehensive and age-appropriate schedule of activities.		8. The program develops and implements policies and procedures for inclusive practices for children with diverse needs, including those with identified disabilities, dual language learners, identified behavioral needs, and/or specialized health needs.		
Environment	11. The program develops and implements, as applicable to ages served, the following policies aligned to Caring for Our Children: a) Supervision b) Bullying Prevention c) Playground Equipment Stability and Fall Surfacing & Inspection d) Missing child e) Strangulation Prevention f) Sign-in/sign-out tracking system for children and visitors g) Technology	8. The Program Administrator or Assistant Administrator completes the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Training (SACERS).	9. The onsite director completes the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Training (SACERS).	8. At least one staff member completes the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Training series (SACERS).	7. 80% or more of Lead Teachers complete the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Training series (SACERS).
	12. The program submits (choose ONE): a) Interaction and Relationship Self-Assessment (completed annually by all staff) OR b) CLASS assessment for the age-level being served (one per classroom completed by a trained observer)	9. The program provides an environment supportive to, and encouraging of, culture, age, race, ability, special needs, gender diversity, etc, 10. The program develops and implements a Tobacco-Free/Nicotine-Free policy aligned to the Iowa Department of Public Health's policy guidelines (see resource guide).	10. The program completes the Health and Safety Checklist for Early Care and Education Programs.	9. 1/3 of classrooms complete the ERS scoresheet and improvement plan using appropriate scale (a minimum of 1 classroom per scale, if applicable). 10. The program scores an average of 2.5 or higher on the Health and Safety Checklist for Early Care and Education Programs.	8. 1/3 of classrooms receive an overall score of 5 or higher on the ERS assessment (a minimum of 1 classroom per scale, if applicable). 9. The program scores an average of 2.75 or higher on the Health and Safety Checklist for Early Care and Education Programs.
	13 All Staff annually complete the IQ4K Staff Self-Assessment. The Program Administrator annually completes the IQ4K Program Assessment. Self-assessments and reviews are used to improve the professional and the organization, not used as punitive.	11. The Program Administrator completes and annually updates the Quality Improvement Action Plan.	11. The Program Administrator completes (choose ONE): a) NAC (or other series training as approved by DHS) OR b) 30 training hours in a related field and 10 training hours in leadership, administration, or management.	11. The Program Administrator has 120 training hours in a related field AND 10 training hours in leadership, administration or management	10. The Program Administrator has 9 credit hours in a related field AND 12 training hours in leadership, administration, or management.
14. Meetings for all staff are conducted at least twice a year.	12. All Staff receive a written evaluation at least once a year.	12. The Program Administrator has at least 3 years of full-time experience working in the field or 1 year of full-time experience as a Program Administrator.	12. The Program Administrator has at least 2 years of full-time experience as a Program Administrator.	11. The Program Administrator has at least 3 years of full-time experience as a Program Administrator.	
	13. The Program Administrator has at least 2 years of full-time experience working in the field.	13. The Onsite Supervisor has 30 training hours in a related field and 2 years of full-time experience working in the field.	13. The Onsite Supervisor has 90 training hours in a related field and 1 year of full-time experience as an onsite supervisor.	12. The Onsite Supervisor has 6 credit hours in a related field and 2 years of full-time experience as an onsite supervisor.	