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AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN UTAH

Development of a Program Quality Framework



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The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) is a research-based center at the University of Utah founded in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy in 1990 and administered through the College of Education since 2007. As an integral part of the College's commitment to improving educational access and opportunities, the purpose of the UEPC is to improve the quality of educational policies, practices, and leadership in public schools and higher education by informing and influencing educational policy and practice in Utah and the surrounding region through research, evaluation, and technical assistance.

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Introduction

This report presents findings and considerations from two related studies of afterschool program quality in Utah. The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) conducted these studies in response to Utah Senate Bill 125, 2017 General Session. Sponsored by Senator Luz Escamilla, SB 125 required the Utah State Board of Education to make rules for afterschool programs regarding the following four standards:

- Provide safe, healthy, and nurturing environments for all participants,
- Develop and maintain positive relationships among staff, participants, families, schools, and communities,
- Encourage participants to learn new skills, and
- Effective program administration¹.

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) contracted with the UEPC to study current efforts to improve afterschool program quality and make recommendations to inform the statewide rules required in SB 125. This work includes key partners such as the Department of Workforce Services Office of Childcare (DWS OCC), Utah Afterschool Network (UAN)², and five organizations that operate afterschool programs. Following a brief explanation of afterschool program quality, this report provides methods and results from two related studies and concludes with considerations for ongoing efforts to support and improve afterschool program quality statewide.

Afterschool Program Quality and Why it is Important

Not all afterschool programs are effective. Researchers looking for differences in outcomes across programs have concluded that implementation quality is a defining characteristic of effective programs (Smith, Akiva, McGovern, & Peck, 2014; Miller, 2005). Some researchers assert that we have limited empirical understanding of the relationship of program quality and outcomes (Smith, et al., 2014; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). However, several studies have reported positive relationships between high quality program implementation and outcomes, and that low quality programs are less effective (Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell, 2010; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Pierce, Bolt, & Vandell, 2010; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). There is growing consensus that maximizing youth outcomes depends on intentionally designed, high quality programming (Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010; Mahoney, Parente, & Lord, 2007; Oh, Osgood, & Smith, 2015). This awareness has resulted in efforts to develop frameworks for defining, measuring, and studying afterschool program quality.

The quality of an afterschool program is a matter of planning and daily practices. Authors and researchers have described afterschool program quality as *how well* a program is implemented (Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell, 2010; Durlak & Dupre, 2008) and have suggested that program quality occurs in the “successful implementation of the program design” (Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010. p 449). These definitions emphasize

For the purpose of this study, we view afterschool program quality as the presence and robustness of specific program features that are implemented intentionally to maximize specific youth outcomes.

¹ After-school Programs Amendments SB 125, lines 40 – 44, 2016

² For additional information about the UAN and their ongoing efforts to support Utah’s afterschool programs, please visit their website: utahafterschool.org

the need for well-informed and well-articulated program designs that provide guidance for daily program implementation.

Features of Quality Afterschool Programs

The field of afterschool programming has not yet adopted a specific set of program quality features. However, within the literature there is some consensus regarding key features of high quality programs. For example, in a review of popular quality improvement tools, Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2010) established that most instruments included aspects of the following six broad features: relationships, environment, engagement, social/behavioral norms, skill building, and routine or structure. In a more recent explanation of afterschool program quality, Smith, Akiva, McGovern, and Peck (2014) noted the diversity of arguments for what constitutes the most important features of program quality. Despite the reported general lack of agreement, they identified three areas of consensus: 1) “a central focus on the quality of adult-child interaction, 2) exclusion of specific subject matter, and 3) role of program managers (p 34).” Similarly, Oh, Osgood, and Smith (2015) identified four key dimensions of afterschool quality: 1) supportive relationships with staff, 2) supportive relationships with peers, 3) developmentally appropriate structure and supervision, and 4) youth engagement (e.g., opportunities to build skills, competence, and self-worth). These and other studies relied on a frequently cited National Research Council (NRC) report that named eight program features³ believed to support positive youth outcomes (Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, 2002).

Afterschool Program Quality in Utah

Utah’s network of afterschool program providers, funders, and supporters realized the importance of program quality, and in 2006, gathered a group of stakeholders to discuss how to improve the quality and effectiveness of afterschool programs across the state. Those stakeholders created a set of quality standards, known as the *Utah Afterschool Program Quality Assessment and Improvement Tool (QT)*. Since 2010, over 300 program sites have used the QT to guide ongoing program improvement efforts.

The QT functions as an internal evaluation instrument that afterschool providers use to review and document annual program quality and improvement efforts. The administration procedures require program providers to meet with staff teams and stakeholders to complete the QT through a group consensus process. Once complete, the group can print their responses as a report to use for ongoing program improvement, to provide information for future funding proposals, and to document current program practices. The QT has also served as a data source for program evaluation and has provided data for publicly distributed summaries of current statewide program offerings.

The QT includes four key areas of program quality that encompass the themes discussed above. 1) *Program safety* addresses staff qualifications, student supervision, transportation policies, behavior management, physical space, and overall safety of participants. 2) *Administration* covers topics such as sustainability, policies and procedures, fiscal management, personnel issues and professional development. 3) *Learn New Skills* provides guidance regarding youth engagement, alignment with the school day, identification of common outcomes, and the types of opportunities that programs should

³ The NRC report named the following eight features: 1) physical and psychological safety, 2) appropriate structure, 3) supportive relationships, 4) opportunities to belong, 5) positive social norms, 6) support for efficacy and mattering, 7) opportunities for skill building, and 8) integration of family, school, and community efforts.

provide. 4) *Developing Meaningful Relationships* addresses staff and student interactions and relationships, as well as collaborations with schools, the community, and with families.

Toward a Continuous Improvement Model of Afterschool Program Quality

Although the QT has served Utah's afterschool community well, after several years of implementation, stakeholders began to consider the possibilities of expanding the usefulness of the QT, the potential need to revise and update the QT, and the accuracy of self-reported QT responses. To address these concerns, the UEPC partnered with the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), Utah Afterschool Network (UAN), and a group of afterschool program providers to conduct two studies. The first study presented in the report, the *Quality Study*, provided an opportunity to pilot test a continuous improvement model that incorporated the QT and additional sources of evidence to inform program improvement strategies. We used another study, the *Validity Study*, to assess the extent to which self-reported QT results reflected actual program practices. These two companion studies provide a basis for decision-making regarding the role of the QT and how practitioners, funders, and technical assistance providers might use it within an integrated model of program quality improvement. Following a brief introduction, we begin with methods and results from the quality study.

Quality Study

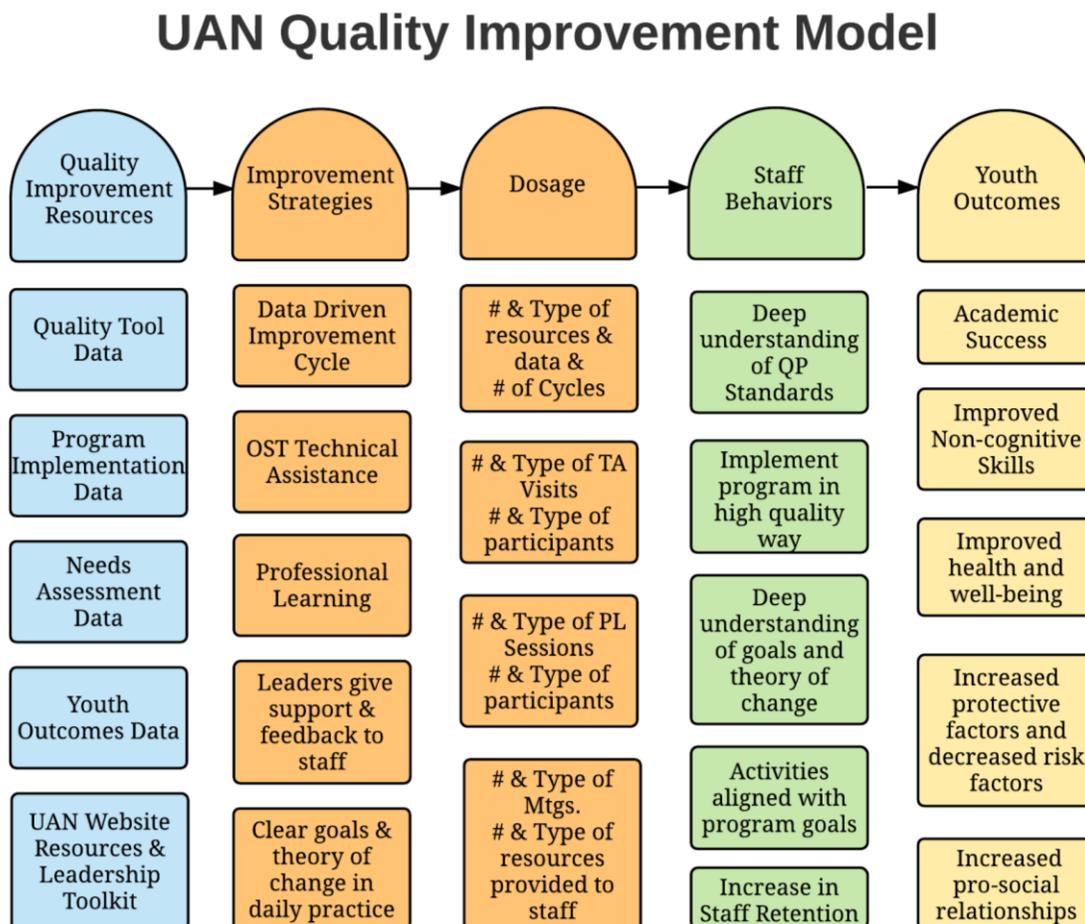
This study explored the application of a collaboratively designed, quality improvement model (QIM) for afterschool programs (see Figure 1). The purpose of the QIM was to have a positive influence on staff behaviors. We prioritized staff behaviors as the most proximal outcome of the QIM because researchers have emphasized the critical role of afterschool program staff in achieving youth outcomes (Oh, Osgood, & Smith, 2015). For example, Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell (2010) considered afterschool program staff to be the “single most important characteristic of program success” (p 9). Similarly, Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazeovski, & Akiva (2010) argued that staff practices are the principal program feature. Vance (2010) concluded that staff members are a critical factor in achieving youth outcomes and having well-trained staff should be the focus of program quality efforts. As noted previously, this has also emerged in reviews of afterschool program quality measures as authors have recognized that nearly every tool includes a focus on the interpersonal relationships and daily interactions of staff and students (Smith et al., 2014; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010).

Given the importance of staff behaviors, this study and the QIM views the point of service between program staff and student participants as a key leverage point for maximizing program quality. The goal of the QIM is to support or change staff behaviors that will promote positive youth outcomes. This approach is based on current research and aligned with authors who have emphasized the importance of the point of service in afterschool programming (Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazeovski, & Akiva, 2010).

Quality Improvement Model

The QIM includes four primary components (see Figure 1). The QIM suggests that program providers should use *Quality Improvement Resources* (first component) such as data and other available resources to make evidence-based decisions to plan and implement *Improvement Strategies* (second component) that will positively influence *Staff Behaviors* (third component) and ultimately improve *Youth Outcomes* (fourth component). The QIM adds value to the QT by placing it within an evidence-based continuous improvement cycle as one of several sources of evidence. Improvement strategies include interventions such as facilitating professional development sessions, coaching, and providing feedback to staff. As the outcome of interest, staff behaviors should reflect deep understanding of high quality program standards, as well as a working knowledge of program goals and theory of change. The youth outcomes included in the QIM were derived from a stakeholder meeting that was held in the summer of 2016. It is a fundamental assumption of the QIM that intentional program design and implementation are basic standards of high quality program practice.

Figure 1. UAN Quality Improvement Model



Quality Study Methods

This study was designed and implemented as a research-practice partnership among a team of funders, researchers, and technical assistance providers who collaborated with afterschool program providers to conduct design-based research (DBR). The team of funders, researchers, TA providers, and program providers worked together closely to implement the QIM, understand how it could be improved, and to explore the feasibility of adopting the QIM on a broader scale. Table 1 presents five key characteristics of DBR (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) and explains how they were present in this study.

Table 1. *Designed-based Research and Study Features*

Five characteristics of DBR	Study Features
Situated in an education context	Afterschool context; Education researchers worked closely with technical assistance providers
Focused on design and testing of an intervention	Afterschool program quality improvement model; professional development for technical assistance providers; worked closely with programs to implement
Iterative process to identify the best intervention	Years of QT development and use, input from stakeholders, series of meeting throughout the year, mid-year implementation report and feedback from technical assistance providers
Typically mixed methods	Data sources included staff surveys, focus groups, implementation logs, and observations
Involves collaborative partnerships	Partners include the UAN, UEPC, USBE, five afterschool organizations, and 10 afterschool program sites; collaborative design and implementation

Implementation of the Quality Improvement Model

The study team invited five organizations to each select two of their established afterschool program sites to participate in the study. These organizations included city and county government agencies, non-profit youth programs, and a local school district. Based on the recommendations of the organizations, we assigned five sites to serve as *Traditional Technical Assistance* sites and five sites to serve as *Quality Improvement (QI) Technical Assistance* sites. The five traditional technical assistance sites received the same annual support from the UAN that they typically receive. This included administration of the QT, support for completing the QT, at least one site visit, and additional support as needed⁴. In contrast, the five QI technical assistance sites were invited to work closely with UAN personnel to implement three cycles of the QIM.

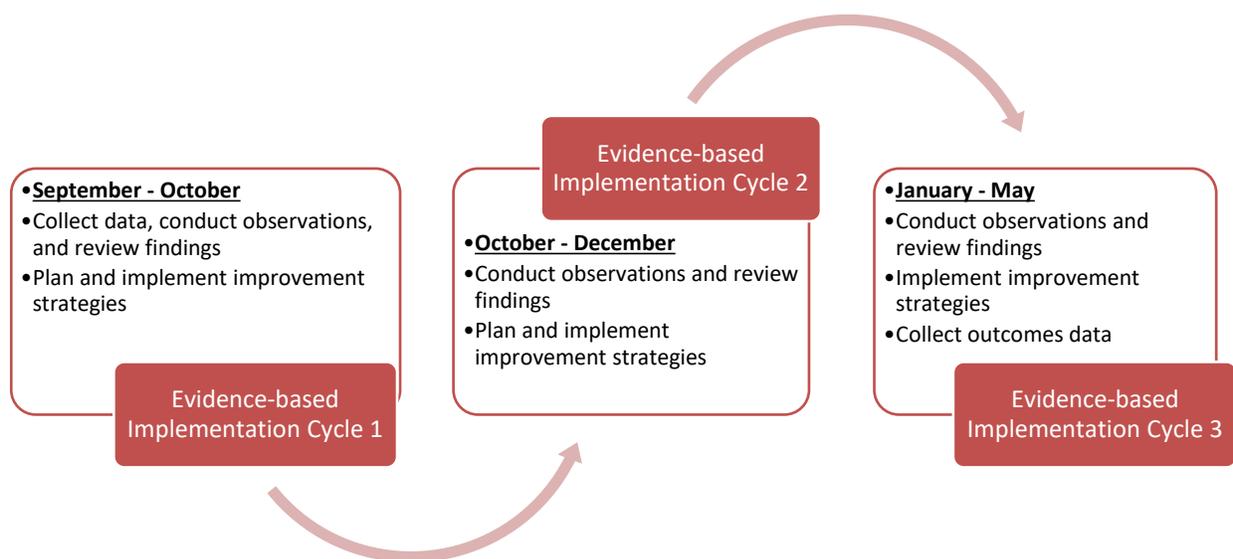
The QIM was implemented as a technical assistance (TA) model. Rather than providing program administrators with the QIM and a set of directions, we utilized the existing infrastructure of support provided through the UAN. Implementation of the QIM was completely dependent on the work of UAN specialists, who serve funded afterschool programs by working directly with site coordinators to improve program quality and maximize student outcomes.

⁴ The UAN also provides resources in the form of regular emails and newsletters. Additional support might include training and coaching according to individual program needs.

Four UAN specialists provided QI site coordinators with the training and support needed to implement the QIM. They worked closely with them throughout the academic year, providing technical assistance as prescribed by the QIM. This meant collaborating with site coordinators to identify and use evidence to plan and implement improvement strategies for staff members, coaching site coordinators through the implementation process, and occasionally providing professional development (PD) opportunities for staff members.

Beginning with an initial meeting to introduce QI site coordinators to the Quality Improvement Model, explain the study, and begin gathering evidence, specialists completed at least three cycles of QIM implementation (Figure 2). One continuous improvement cycle included meeting with site coordinators to review evidence, implementing improvement strategies with staff members, and conducting observations. According to this framework, specialists facilitated three iterations or cycles of QIM implementation. Figure 2 shows the suggested schedule and expectations for three cycles of model implementation.

Figure 2. Continuous Improvement Cycle of Model Implementation



Quality Study Data Sources

Data sources included implementation logs, staff surveys, QT self-reports and observations, and focus groups. The UEPC designed data collection tools to reflect the features of the QIM. The UEPC created separate implementation logs for quality improvement sites, traditional TA sites, and UAN Specialists.

Quality Improvement Sites and Traditional TA Site Implementation Logs

The QI site logs asked site coordinators to document specific aspects of program quality they worked on each month, the evidence they used to plan program improvements, and the actions they took to improve program quality such as providing PD and meeting with staff members. In addition to serving as a data collection tool, the QI logs were designed to prompt site coordinators to implement the QIM by listing data sources and specific program quality topics. In contrast, the traditional TA site implementation logs provided no such lists or specificity and consisted primarily of open-ended

questions about regular program practices and staff behaviors. Both logs also included items that asked about progress toward staff behavior outcomes and ongoing relationships with UAN Specialists.

We asked site coordinators to complete the implementation log seven times between October 2016 and May 2017 (approximately monthly). Quality improvement site coordinators submitted 32 logs (see Table 2). Traditional TA site coordinators submitted 33 logs (see Table 2).

Table 2. Quality Improvement and Traditional TA Site Log Submission Totals

Quality Improvement Sites	Number of Logs Submitted	Traditional TA Sites	Number of Logs Submitted
Program A	6	Program F	7
Program B	7	Program G	7
Program C	6	Program H	7
Program D	7	Program I	5
Program E	6	Program J	7
Total	32	Total	33

Data Sources: QI site logs and traditional TA site logs

UAN Specialist Implementation Logs

UAN Specialists completed implementation logs each time they provided TA (see Table 3). They indicated the types of technical assistance they provided by selecting among options that included meetings, professional development, coaching, observation, and/or phone conversations. Like QI site implementation logs, specialists identified specific aspects of program quality for which they provided TA, the types of evidence they used to plan, aspects of the program that were functioning well and that needed additional support, and areas of program quality that they encouraged site coordinators to focus on. Similar to the QI site implementation logs, the specialist logs were designed to prompt specialists to implement the QIM by listing specific data sources, aspects of quality, and features of the QIM. Specialists submitted 93 implementation logs.⁵

Table 3. Specialist Implementation Log Responses

Quality Improvement Sites	Number of TA Occurrences	Traditional TA Sites	Number of TA Occurrences
Program A	13	Program F	5
Program B	16	Program G	2
Program C	19	Program H	3
Program D	19	Program I	5
Program E	6	Program J	5
Total	73	Total	20

Data Source: Specialist implementation logs

⁵ One UAN specialist did not submit any implementation log entries from March to May and another did not enter two accounts of observations that were conducted.

Staff Surveys

The primary purpose of the staff surveys was to measure outcomes using scaled items and open-ended questions. The survey content focused on staff knowledge and behaviors identified in the QIM such as understanding and implementation of program goals, program practices, and student outcomes. With the exception of frequency items, most scaled questions asked respondents about the extent to which they disagreed or agreed on a four-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree). Some items included an *I don't know* or *not applicable for my role in this program* option as well.

The UEPC administered the staff survey as a pretest in Fall 2016 and as a posttest in Spring 2017. Site coordinators provided contact lists and email addresses of their staff members and the UEPC emailed the survey directly to staff members. Table 4 shows staff survey response rates.

Table 4. Staff Survey Response Rates

Survey Administration	Number of Surveys Administered	Number of Responses	Response Rate
Pretest	70	58	83%
Posttest	65	42	65%

Quality Tool Self-Reports and Observations

The purpose of collecting self-reported DMR QT data was to provide baseline perspectives about program quality from the site coordinators. The data also provided an opportunity for specialists to facilitate conversations with site coordinators about potential differences between self-reports and observations.

The main purpose of the observations was to measure staff behavior outcomes. However, we also intended observation data to serve as a data source within the QIM implementation cycles. Observation data included documentation of the activities observed, quantitative scores for each DMR indicator, and qualitative field notes. The study coordinator asked specialists to complete a minimum of three observations. Specialists submitted data for 19 QI site observations and 15 traditional TA site observations. Most observations lasted about one hour.

Focus Groups and Interviews

The UEPC study team conducted a total of 14 focus groups and interviews with a variety of participants. We conducted focus groups with TA specialists midway through the study and at the end of the study. The purposes of these two focus groups were to learn about fidelity to the validity study procedures, implementation of the quality improvement model, and how implementing the QIM influenced their ongoing work as TA providers. The end-of-year focus group focused heavily on QIM implementation and specialists' perceptions of outcomes.

As part of the end of year data collection, we also conducted one focus group with QI site coordinators, one focus group with traditional TA site coordinators, and ten focus groups (one at each site) with staff members. The *site coordinator focus group protocols* included questions designed to provide an in depth look at both implementation and outcomes. These two focus groups are important data sources for understanding site coordinator perspectives about the value of the QIM as a quality improvement

resource, as well as how it might be improved. The *program staff focus group protocol* was designed to reflect the staff behavior outcomes identified in the QIM. As such, the ten staff member focus groups are a key data source for understanding outcomes. Table 5 shows the number of participants in each focus group and interview.

Table 5. Focus Group Participation

Focus Groups and Interviews	Number of Participants
TA Specialists Mid-year	5
TA Specialists End-of-year	4
Program A staff	5
Program B staff	8
Program C staff	4
Program D staff	6
Program E staff	2
Program F staff	7
Program G staff	1
Program H staff	3
Program I staff	5
Program J staff	7
QI Site Coordinators	4*
Traditional TA Site Coordinators	4*
Total	65

*Program C and Program I site coordinators did not participate.

Quality Study Data Analysis

The goal of the analyses was to determine if the QIM offered a promising framework for afterschool program quality improvement. Embedded within this goal were opportunities to study the technical assistance provided by specialists and opportunities to further explore the best application of the QT. Given the range of data sources, the diversity of program sites studied, the iterative process of implementation, and the design-based research framework, we approached data analysis in multiple ways.

We took two overarching approaches to the analysis. In one approach, we utilized the QIM as a framework for studying implementation and outcomes. Since the instruments were designed based on the QIM, this approach helped us understand the QIM’s viability, scalability, and how it could be improved. In another approach, we focused less on the prescribed activities of the QIM and instead analyzed data through open exploration and looked for salient themes to inform our understanding of how to promote and achieve high quality afterschool programming. This dual approach was consistent with the design-based research methodology, which involved simultaneously designing and testing the viability of the QIM, and was well suited to the mixed methods approach (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Bell, 2004).

Although sites were not randomly assigned between the traditional TA and QI sites, it was our intention to look for differences between these groups. However, once the study was underway, we learned that most traditional TA sites were already well-developed, and in some cases high functioning,

while on the other hand, QI sites were perceived to be in need of additional support. In the analyses of the QIM implementation, we focus on QI sites, but we analyzed outcomes data from all ten sites together. This allowed us to gain insights from both groups and further inform our understanding of program quality improvement.

All four data sources (observations, implementation logs, focus groups, and staff surveys) included both quantitative and qualitative data. To analyze quantitative data, we used descriptive statistics. Small sample sizes limited meaningful statistical comparisons. For staff survey data we compared pretest and posttest results. We used unmatched data in this comparison.⁶ In the case of observation data, we present mean scores for self-reports, mean scores from the beginning-of-year observations, and mean scores from the end-of-year observations. Finally, we compared descriptive statistics across data sources to look for alignment between reports of TA provided by specialists and site coordinators' reports of program improvement efforts.

To analyze qualitative data, we used Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method and Miles and Huberman's (1994) cross-case method. We used the constant comparative method to explore and examine the overall phenomena of implementing the quality improvement model. This process required researchers to first carefully examine responses in each data source by breaking them down into their smallest essential form, which resulted in lists of codes that represented all of the concepts and ideas present in the data. Researchers then used the codes to look for larger themes, to link those themes across respondent groups, and to consider those themes in relationship to the QIM.

We used a cross-case method to study all 10 QI and traditional TA afterschool program sites, which allowed us to examine individual cases and compare them to one another so we could better understand prevailing relationships of themes across sites (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This method allowed us to take a more structured look at differences and similarities among the study sites. Through the cross-case method, the study team was able to more deeply understand the nuances of implementing the QIM in a given context, while also exploring the degree of alignment across data sources and roles (specialist, coordinator, and staff). Appendix A offers a more detailed description of the qualitative analysis.

Limitations

Noteworthy limitations include a lack of random assignment, inconsistencies in model implementation, uneven participation in data collection activities, and using the QT as an observation instrument. The afterschool programs enrolled in this study were not randomly chosen or randomly assigned to conditions. We invited afterschool organizations to choose QI and traditional TA sites and that may have limited our ability to examine differences between the two groups.

Throughout this report you will find noted inconsistencies in QIM implementation. Of particular interest are the results presented on pages 32 through 34, which provide evidence of the extent to which the QIM was implemented with fidelity.

⁶ Twenty-six staff members matched across the pretest and posttest. With 58 pretest and 42 posttest staff survey responses, using only matched data would result in 48 deleted staff survey responses. Therefore, to include as many staff survey responses as possible, we used unmatched pretest and posttest comparisons.

Uneven participation in data collection activities was evident across all three respondent groups (specialists, site coordinators, and program staff). In some cases specialists failed to submit complete implementation logs for each time they provided technical assistance. As the school year progressed, some staff members left their jobs and new staff members entered the study. It would have been ideal to collect more robust staff survey data and to match pre and post staff survey responses. The perspectives of site coordinators was limited as only eight of ten coordinators participated in end-of-year focus groups.

The most common source of evidence used by specialists was observation data they collected using the DMR section of the QT. However, they expressed in focus groups the QT was not an ideal observation instrument. For example, one specialist stated plainly, “the quality tool is not an observation tool and it showed doing this.” Another specialist suggested that there was a disconnect between the way programs used the tool to evaluate their whole program and the way specialists used the tool to observe one-hour blocks of programming (see Appendix B for additional quotes).

Quality Study Results

The results are organized by the four sections of the QIM. We present results from all available data sources to describe implementation and outcomes. The implementation sections are descriptions of the evidence used and the improvement strategies that specialists and site coordinators implemented. The outcomes sections address staff behaviors and youth outcomes. In some cases, we offer additional perspective by disaggregating by QI sites and traditional TA sites, respondent groups, and time.

Quality Improvement Resources: Evidence Used to Plan Program Improvements

Quality Improvement Resources

Quality Tool Data

Program Implementation Data

Needs Assessment Data

Youth Outcomes Data

UAN Website Resources & Leadership Toolkit

High quality afterschool programs are designed and implemented with purpose and intentionality (Duerden & Gillard, 2011). Being intentional about achieving program outcomes is realized through evidence-based practices, which is a cornerstone of the QIM. In this section, we describe the evidence that UAN specialists and site coordinators reported using to plan strategies and that staff members reported using to make programmatic decisions. We also consider the alignment of each respondent group’s use of evidence.

Evidence Used by UAN Specialists

Each cycle of QIM implementation began with UAN specialists working closely with site coordinators to utilize evidence to plan improvement strategies. Table 6 displays reports of evidence used by specialists. The difference in the number of times specialists cited using evidence at QI and traditional TA sites highlights the additional support received at QI sites. Specialists cited using data from observations, the QT, staff surveys, and research literature most frequently.

Table 6. Evidence Used by UAN Specialists to Plan Program Improvement Strategies

Evidence Used	Number of Times Specialists used Evidence at QI Sites	Number of Times Specialists used Evidence at Traditional TA Sites	Total
Observation data	35	6	41
Quality Tool	21	8	29
Staff survey results	21	0	21
Research literature	21	2	23
Other*	17	4	21
Needs assessment data	5	0	5
UAN web resources or Toolkit	4	0	4
None	4	5	9
Family survey data	2	0	2
Participation records	1	0	1
Youth outcomes data	0	0	0

Data Source: Specialist Implementation Log. *Specialists identified action plan goals, previous program improvement plans, feedback program personnel, and the Utah common core website as *other* evidence they used to plan strategies.

In addition to the implementation logs, focus groups provided an opportunity for UAN specialists to discuss the evidence they used. Similar to their implementation log results shown in Table 6, they reported using observation data and staff survey data most frequently.

The main evidence we've been using...is observation data and the staff surveys. That has given us the most information. With the staff surveys, once we got these back, we realized they had no idea what the goals of the program were. (Specialist Mid-Year Focus Group)

My favorite thing was the staff survey...going into that and using that for programs...for the site coordinator to look at that herself and be like, "Oh this is what my staff really want. (Specialists, End-of-Year Focus Group)

[After the] first observation...[I told them] "This is what I'm not seeing. These are the examples that I saw that are indicating staff are not sharing responsibilities and talking with one another. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

The quotes above provide specific examples of how specialists reported using evidence in practical ways. They expressed that they found value and utility in accessing and utilizing specific quality improvement resources, especially observation and staff survey data.

Evidence Used by Site Coordinators

Site coordinators also documented their use of evidence. The implementation logs for QI site coordinators and specialists included the same list of evidence used, which allowed us to compare their responses. (See Table 6 and Table 7). The QI site coordinator implementation logs asked specifically about the types of evidence prescribed by the QIM. In contrast, the traditional TA site implementation logs included open-ended questions and did not offer a list of sources to choose from. Specifically, traditional TA site implementation logs asked, "if you used evidence to plan or implement program improvements during this past month, what evidence did you use?"

Table 7. Evidence Used by QI Site Coordinators to Plan Improvement Strategies

Evidence Used	Number of Times QI Site Coordinators Used Evidence
Observation data	25
UAN Quality Tool	24
Staff survey results	11
Youth outcomes data	7
Participation records	7
Research literature	7
UAN web resources or Toolkit	5
Needs assessment data	4
Family survey data	3
Other	3
None	1

Data Source: QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log

The most frequently used data sources reported by QI site coordinators included observation data, QT data, and staff survey data. Traditional TA site coordinators noted a wide variety of evidence, including

academic and survey data (Table 8). Reported differences in the evidence used at QI and traditional TA sites may be an artifact of the format in which the implementation logs requested this information.

Table 8. Evidence Used by Traditional TA Site Coordinators to Plan Program Improvements

Traditional TA Sites	Evidence Used*
Program F	Survey (3); Academic Data (5); Research Literature (5); Behavior Tracker (1); Student Feedback (1); Staff Feedback (1)
Program G	Academic Data (1); DIBELs Scores (1); Student Discussion (2); Knowledge Tests (2)
Program H	Behavior Tracking Data (2)
Program I	Planning Calendar (1); Staff Behavior (2); HW Data (1); Student Survey (1)
Program J	Family Night Attendance (2); QT Meeting (1); Planning Calendar (1); Interventions Data (1)

Data Source: Traditional TA Site Coordinator Implementation Log. *Numbers in parentheses represented the number of times each site coordinator recorded each sources of evidence.

In addition to implementation logs, focus groups and specialists’ observation notes added to our understanding of evidence used by site coordinators. Comments by coordinators and specialists rounded out implementation log data by noting the use of parent surveys and informal sources of evidence such as getting feedback from staff members and students.

So we ask the students [about the] kind of things they’re interested in for our club activities and things like that, and then we’ll pretty much use the things that they like and incorporate it into our clubs as well. Then the thing with the survey for the parents kind of use both to put it into the program. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

I talked a lot with my staff. I talked a lot with the kids, and then we also did get surveys from the kids, and at the end of school year also, we surveyed the parents to find out what it is they feel like they need or would like more of or would like to see. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Program has parent surveys and is looking to increase family engagement next year with the parent nights. (Specialist, Observation Notes)

Although QI site implementation log data highlighted the use of observations and staff surveys, these quotes show that site coordinators also considered parent surveys, student surveys, and informal student input to be noteworthy sources of evidence.

Patterns of evidence used over time throughout the year at QI sites were largely a reflection of the QIM implementation. Specialists started the year by using the quality tool, used staff survey data as it became available, and utilized observation data periodically throughout the year. Similarly, QI site coordinators reported using the QT and observation data throughout the year (see Figure 2).

Evidence Used by Staff Members

We asked specialists and site coordinators about the evidence they used to plan interventions. For staff members, we asked about the evidence they used to make programmatic decisions. Understanding the extent to which staff members used evidence, and the type of evidence they used, provides insight regarding the extent to which they were engaged in intentional programming and evidence-based program practices.

When asked to explain their use of evidence to make informed decisions about the activities, interventions, and/or services they provided, staff members indicated that they made decisions in response to informal student feedback and personal experience working with students.

Yeah, for me...I asked the kids. I have them vote so they can input on what they want to play. So I'm not like, "We're playing this." So I have them vote, but with arts and crafts, it's mainly me making the decision. And I try to see what things they like. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

I remember one of my favorite ones [activities] so far was the crystal club... It was a lot of fun because I really had to incorporate all of these things I had learned about rocks through high school and all that into the activity. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

And they do like to move around a lot. They've got a lot of energy to burn off. So, usually I like to go outside. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

Overall, staff members stated that they mainly relied on student reaction and preference as evidence to guide the activities they planned. Other staff members drew from their own interests, experience, or student input to be a useful source of evidence.

Alignment of Evidence Used by Specialists and Site Coordinators

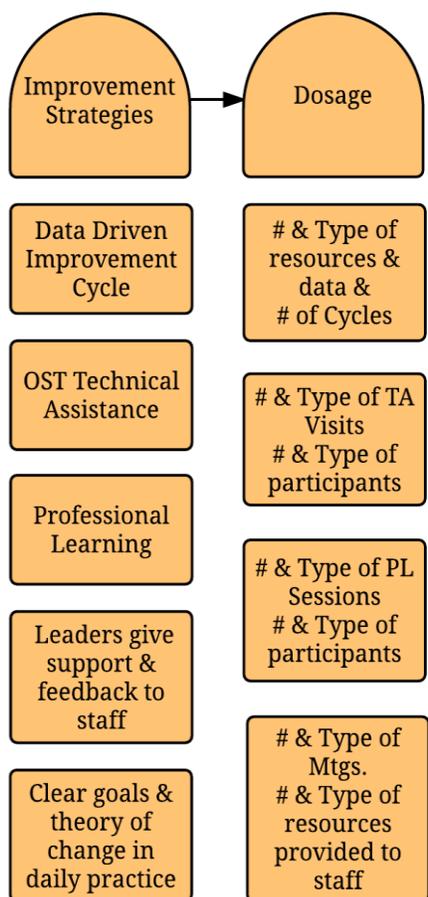
There was noteworthy alignment between specialists and site coordinators regarding the use of observation data, QT data, and staff survey results. There was less alignment regarding the use of all other formal data sources. For example, site coordinators reported that they used youth outcomes data as a source of evidence, but specialists did not report the same. This may be indicative of adherence to federal and state laws that protect student privacy, but may also suggest that specialists are under-utilizing youth outcomes data when planning program improvements. Specialists also cited only one occurrence of using program participation records, but several QI site coordinators utilized program participation as a source of evidence. Family survey data was not a popular data source in specialists' and site coordinators' implementation logs, but was recognized as a data source in focus groups.

Specialists, site coordinators, and staff members acknowledged their reliance on informal data sources. In fact, staff members described responding to ongoing feedback they received from students and noted daily interpersonal exchanges with students as a key source of evidence. Where specialists and site coordinators cited their use of both formal and informal sources of evidence, staff members did not acknowledge using formal data sources, such as survey results or academic data, and instead focused solely on their reliance on previous experience and informal student feedback.

Key Findings: Quality Improvement Resources

- Observation data, QT data, staff survey results, and research literature were the most frequently cited sources of evidence used by specialists to plan program improvement efforts.
- When planning and implementing program improvements, site coordinators cited using observation data and QT data most frequently. They also reported using parent survey results and informal sources of evidence, such as feedback from staff members and students.
- Reports of the evidence used by staff members suggested that they primarily relied on informal evidence, such as student feedback and previous experience to plan and implement program improvements.
- There was noteworthy alignment between specialists and site coordinators regarding the use of observation data, QT data, and staff survey results. There was less alignment regarding the use of all other formal data sources.

Improvement Strategies and Dosage



In this section, we describe reports of the technical assistance (TA) provided by specialists and reports of program improvement strategies implemented by site coordinators. Reports of TA are organized by the improvement strategies identified in the QIM. This includes professional development, meetings, support for staff members, and coaching, as well as an examination of the extent to which the strategies were intentionally designed based on the use of evidence presented in the previous section. We also consider the alignment of program improvement efforts as reported by specialists, site coordinators, and in some cases staff members, which leads to an overview of the extent to which the QIM was implemented with fidelity.

Technical Assistance and Program Improvement Efforts

Specialists reported 93 occurrences of providing technical assistance, 73 occurrences of TA for QI sites, and 20 for traditional TA sites. In implementation logs, specialists reported the type of TA they provided for each site (Table 9). The average time specialists spent preparing to provide TA for QI sites ranged from 43 to 99 minutes per site, with an overall average of 64 minutes. The average time specialists spent delivering TA to QI sites ranged from 47 to 95 per site, with an average of 71 minutes.

Table 9. Number and Type of TA provided by Specialists

Quality Study Program Sites	Number and Type of TA Supports Reported by Specialists					
	PD	Meetings	Observations	Coaching	Phone or email	Total
Traditional TA Sites						
Program F	0	1	3	0	1	5
Program G	0	1	1*	0	0	2
Program H	0	0	3	0	0	3
Program I	0	2	4	0	1	7
Program J	0	1	3	0	1	5
Traditional TA Sites Total	0	5	14	0	3	22
QI Sites						
Program A	2	7	1**	3	0	13
Program B	1	4	4	0	7	16
Program C	2	10	6	4	2	24
Program D	3	7	4	1	4	19
Program E	0	4	1*	2	0	7
QI Sites Total	8	32	16	10	13	79
Total	8	37	30	10	16	101[^]

Data source: Specialist Implementation Log. *The citation of a single observation in the specialist log is the outcome of one specialist who did not complete the implementation log for March through May. Although only one observation was noted in the log, the specialist conducted three observations and submitted observation data. **The specialist submitted data for three observations, but did not log two of the observations in the implementation log. ^This number is higher than the total number (93) of specialist implementation logs submitted because they could report multiple types of TA for each entry.

In addition to specialists' accounts of the TA they provided, QI site coordinators reported their program improvement efforts monthly.

Table 10. Monthly Program Improvement Efforts of QI Site Coordinators

QI Sites	Conducted PD for staff or made time for staff to participate in PD provided by others	Held one or more group meetings with program staff	Met one-to-one with one or more program staff	Other	Total
Program A	5	6	3	0	14
Program B	6	7	7	1*	21
Program C	2	6	0	0	8
Program D	5	7	3	0	15
Program E	3	6	3	0	12
Total	21	32	16	1	70

Data source: QI Site Implementation Log *Asked staff members to complete self-evaluations, the DMR section of the QT, and online trainings.

In the following sections, as we take a much closer look into the implementation of the QIM, we focus heavily on QI sites because that is where implementation of the QIM occurred.

Professional Development

Specialists reported conducting eight professional development sessions for QI sites (Table 9). According to specialist implementation logs, a total 67 staff members, seven site coordinators, two other program administrators, and one school day employee received PD through those eight sessions. Specialists reported that PD sessions focused on topics such as building relationships with students, behavior management, and positive youth development. They described the PD they planned and delivered throughout the year as beneficial for participants and they reported working with site coordinators to implement PD sessions and plan future sessions.

We come up with a plan... "This is what I'm going to do and this is what you're going to do." We come up with that plan and it's up to them to implement, like I'm just giving them resources. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

[I] worked with staff a lot. We took a combined approach when we did our goals,...one goal that I would really have a lot of hand in doing, so maybe a major one, and then there would be some smaller ones that I would provide support for [the site coordinator] so she could take more ownership for her program... so that was part of my coaching with her, to give her more ownership there. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

[following a PD] They were sharing with me that there were less behavior reports that they were having to write, and a lot of that was the staff starting to communicate with one another. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

Specialists explained that they implemented PD directly with staff members and that they provided support for site coordinators to implement PD. However, there was a lack of alignment in the counts of PD reported by specialists (n=8) (see Table 9) and QI site coordinators, who logged that specialists conducted 16 PD sessions (see Table 11). This suggests underreporting on the part of specialists or over reporting by site coordinators. Table 11 provides additional detail of the monthly program improvement efforts reported by QI site coordinators.

Table 11. Professional Development at QI Sites

Type of Professional Development	Number of Sessions	Number of Participants
On-site PD conducted by site coordinator	30	144
Completed online modules	26	23
On-site PD conducted by UAN specialist	16	78
Attended a conference(s)	14	44
On-site PD conducted by other	9	46
Attended an institute or workshop	5	16
Participated in leadership cohort(s)	0	0
Digital badging	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	100	351

Data source: QI Site Implementation Log

QI site coordinators logged the objectives of the professional development they offered. Objectives included topics such as behavior management, homework help, program operations, working with parents, working with youth, and opportunities for staff to choose topics through online trainings or attending statewide conferences. The implementation logs also asked about the action steps that QI site coordinators implemented after PD as follow up procedures. These action steps generally aligned with

PD objectives and included new responsibilities for staff members and tasks such as opportunities to practice and apply new content.

Site coordinators reported in focus groups that PD was conducted by themselves, by their afterschool organization, and at times by the specialists. Overall, they described a year of robust PD offerings. QI site coordinators expressed that implementing the QIM increased their appreciation for the contributions of specialists to the PD offered through the year.

I'll say this year was different. We had plenty more trainings, and then our UAN representative was amazing... (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

...In our organization, we do a lot of organization wide training...we're going to start doing I think even possibly monthly trainings with all our staff. But I think the one thing that was different this year was working with [our specialist] and having him/her come in and do coaching. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

And we made professional development goals, areas of improvements, and things that are going well, and I reviewed those quarterly. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

...this year, it was really nice because I think hearing it from a UAN specialist was nice in that it was someone other than me because I gave a good portion of the professional development trainings. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

The quotes above suggest that QI site coordinators appreciated the focus on improving program quality and the support of specialists.

Staff members also offered their views of staff trainings. Some focused on the training they received through their own afterschool organizations, while others emphasized the value of Jumpstart and Recharge (statewide afterschool conferences hosted by UAN).

And it's really helpful...that [organization name] always has a lot of... different trainings and stuff like that. Like, bullying and suicide and just training us on how to behavior with kids, how to connect with kids (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

When we went to Jumpstart...and they would give us advice on how to deal with kids or some activities we could do with the kids. And I know we did that a couple times, which helped a lot. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

We also had an all-day training with youth services. The classes that I participated in were excellent. It's just kind of nice to have those ideas in the back of your head to pull from when you need to. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

I went to one of the UAN trainings in February. I think it's the recharge one ...And one of the ones that they did there was Play Works came and did taught us a couple games to play that I've played with the kids...The Play Works games are really awesome because they're all games with a purpose, which have been really helpful here. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

Staff members focused less on in-house trainings conducted by specialists or coordinators and more on off-site trainings or trainings from other leaders. They described trainings as valuable and helpful for their ongoing, day-to-day work with students, especially in the areas learning new activities, serving specific populations of students, and behavior management.

Technical Assistance (TA) Meetings

Specialists reported conducting 32 meetings for QI sites (see Table 9). According to specialist implementation logs, a total of 35 program staff members, 30 site coordinators, four other program administrators, four school day personnel, three external partners, and four *others* participated in meetings. According to specialist implementation logs, the purposes of these meetings included discussing the quality study, using data, planning strategies, setting and reviewing goals, discussing program improvements, and scheduling.

Collectively, QI site coordinators reported conducting 103 group meetings with their program staff teams (Table 12). They reported using these meeting to discuss future events, conduct staff training, discuss goals, plan programming improvement efforts, provide administrative updates, and share ideas.

Table 12. QI Site Coordinator Meetings with Staff Members

QI Site	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Totals
Program A	5	0	0	4	5	4	4	3	25
Program B	8	4	0	4	4	2	4	3	29
Program C	1	0	2	1	1	2	1	0*	8
Program D	2	3	0	4	4	3	2	2	20
Program E	2	3	0	3	4	5	4	0*	21
Totals	18	10	2	16	18	16	15	8	103

Data source: QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log * Sites did not submit implementation log data for these months.

Support and feedback for staff members

In addition to documenting group meetings, site coordinators also documented conducting one-to-one meetings with their staff members. The frequency of these meetings ranged among the five QI sites, with one site reporting no one-to-one staff meetings and another reporting monthly one-to-one meetings. We provided traditional TA site coordinators with an open-ended question that asked, “Why did you meet one-to-one with staff members?” Their responses generally aligned with the topics presented in Table 13.

Staff member had some difficult time meeting program expectations (Coordinator, Traditional TA Site Implementation Log)

Discuss how things are going and to see if they needed help with any programs. We lost one staffed and hired a new one so met to update on how we run programs and discussed their responsibilities and what paper work they need to complete. (Coordinator, Traditional TA Site Implementation Log)

To discuss goals and how to better their enrichment activities and academic hour (Coordinator, Traditional TA Site Implementation Log)

Table 13. Purposes of One-to-One Meetings with Staff Members

QI Sites	Number of months in which site coordinators conducted one-to-one meetings	Purpose of One-to-one Meetings				
		Provide specific feedback	Provide one-to-one training or PD	Offer one-to-one support	Resolve personnel issues	Other
Program A	3	1	1	2	1	0
Program B	7	39	24	29	13	0
Program C	0	0	0	0	0	0
Program D	3	24	8	24	0	16
Program E	3	8	3	5	2	0
Totals	16	72	36	60	16	16

Data Source: QI Site Implementation Log

QI site coordinators noted the action steps that would follow the one-to-one meetings. In most cases, these action steps involved following up with staff members regarding goals they set during the meetings.

Data from implementation logs, focus groups, and observations suggested that site coordinators were suppliers of resources for program needs and were important sources of support for staff members. For example, site coordinators reported that they provided staff with resources to improve the quality of activities, manage student behavior, and plan lessons. Respondents also reported frequent staff feedback and gave examples of site coordinators promoting positive, collaborative, and communicative work environments.

...we do yearly [performance reviews], but I'd still like to try and give them input as much as I can every month to let them know how much I appreciate them and what they're doing. If they have questions, ...they can talk to me whenever. (Coordinator, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

[Providing resources to staff such as]: *activity resources, behavior management support, and lesson planning.* (Coordinators, QI Site Implementation Log)

Staff are led by [site coordinator] very well and they all communicate well throughout the program, and that the site coordinator comes by room to check in on programming. (Specialist, Observation Notes)

Similarly, staff members identified coordinators as resources for obtaining supplies, managing student behavior, and planning lessons. Staff members expressed that they appreciated the leadership and support offered by site coordinators.

[The site coordinator] is really good at coming in and ... hav[ing] a really meaningful conversation with [students] about why that's not how we treat people at the club or in life in general. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

As far as supplies, our program directors have been amazing. If they can't get what we ask for the projects we're planning, they will find an alternative project that's almost identical that we can do with the supplies that they can get. But they really went out of their way to help us make things work. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

Then there are folders in there that help you that you can pull out and get ideas that Our coordinator made...for us. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

When she's in her office her door's always open, like in every way. So sometimes I'll like pop my head in the doorway and just like say whatever is on my mind or whatever. And she's always willing to listen. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

Taken together, the implementation log findings and the quotes above suggest that site coordinators were an important source of support and feedback for staff members.

Coaching

Specialists reported conducting 10 coaching sessions for QI sites (see Table 9). They reported that a total of 21 program staff members and 5 site coordinators participated in the coaching sessions (table not shown). The purposes of coaching sessions included efforts to help staff with topics such as behavior management, engaging parents, and program operations. Specialists reported that the coaching sessions were beneficial for participants, cited the value of modeling for staff members, and noted that staff members gave positive feedback about the coaching they received. Action steps included additional observations, the creation of new materials, additional training, and general plans to follow in the future. Site coordinator logs did not include coaching.

Program Goals and Theory of Change: Intentional Programming

All afterschool programs should have clearly identified goals and a well-articulated theory of change that is implemented in daily program practice (Duerden & Gillard, 2011). For some quality study sites, addressing program goals was a frequently cited activity (see Table 14). Specialists documented working with QI site coordinators to develop or revise program goals in 21 of 73 (29%) technical assistance occurrences. QI site coordinators documented that they worked with specialists to develop or revise program goals in 18 of 32 (56%) implementation logs.

Site coordinators discussed their engagement with program goals during focus groups and reported using the quality tool, needs assessment results, survey results, perceptions of program performance, and collaborations with staff as resources to create program goals. They also emphasized engaging staff members in the process.

We use the quality tool...I'll take what the staff said and that part of the tool, and then just my general observations, and a couple months later, I'd gotten the results about the PD stuff [staff survey results] you guys had sent out from the survey. And so I used that in addition to talking to staff just about what they were interested in, getting PD. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

We'd do our weekly meetings and talk about group goals. I would meet quarterly with the staff teams [of two]...then I'd meet with staff individually. And we made professional development goals, areas of improvements, and things that are going well, and I reviewed those quarterly. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

So in order to decide that [program goals], I talked a lot with my staff. I talked a lot with the kids, and then we also did get surveys from the kids, and at the end of school year also, we surveyed the parents to find out what it is they feel like they need or would like more of or would like to see. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

We had a goal around creating high quality academic and enrichment lesson plans utilizing the Utah core standards. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Site coordinators had specific program improvement goals that they worked toward during the year and those goals varied across sites in response to each unique context. They included things like behavior management, facilitating activities, and academic outcomes for students. In addition to

overall program goals, some site coordinators also described goal setting in terms of something they did for, or with, staff members. In some cases, they described program goals along with staff members' professional development goals. We do not know how directly those staff centric goals were tied directly to larger program goals, but in the implementation logs, QI site coordinators agreed or strongly agreed 31 out of 32 times that staff members had a deep understanding of program goals. Similarly, in 29 of 32 implementation log entries they agreed or strongly agreed that that their staff members were facilitating activities that were well-aligned with program goals.

It was the task of UAN specialists to work with site coordinators to develop, refine, and achieve evidence-based program improvement goals. Specialists explained the dynamic nature of dealing with program goals and provided examples of how they adjusted goals and TA to changing circumstances and the unique context of each program. Given the quality improvement model's emphasis on intentional programming, we were interested in the alignment of program improvement efforts with specific program goals. Specialists suggested that resources and interventions for program improvement became more aligned with program goals as the year progressed.

... We'd set a particular goal for the program I work with for my QI site. And then we finish this implementation cycle, and we went back in and we talked about it. It just was too much, and it was an unrealistic goal, so we changed it and we got a smaller, more manageable goal that her staff feels like they can do and still feel that they have accomplished. (Specialist, Mid-Year Focus Group)

[I] worked with staff a lot. We took a combined approach when we did our goals,...one goal that I would really have a lot of hand in in doing so maybe a major one, and then there would be some smaller ones that I would provide support for [the site coordinator] so she could take more ownership for her program... (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

I would say for my site that I worked with that they aligned with the goals that the program decided and needed for themselves, ... So I think ... into the second cycle after seeing the evidence of an observation and realizing what areas the program needed to better themselves, that they aligned, that the strategies and resources that were provided were aligned. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

Specialists recounted how they supported site coordinators to use evidence to modify and achieve program goals. They noted the dynamic exchange of give and take that transpired as they worked to facilitate buy-in and implementation of evidence-based program improvement goals.

In addition to having program goals, the QIM prescribed that specialists would work closely with QI site coordinators to make sure they had specific explanations of desired outcomes and how they expected to achieve those outcomes. Here we present specialist and site coordinator reports of program intentionality; we present the perspective of staff members regarding this topic in the staff behaviors section of this report.

Specialists observed that site coordinators' understanding of their own leadership roles, use of evidence, and understanding of intentional programming improved. However, they also expressed that site coordinators did not readily adopt the language of intentional programming.

... I definitely think the amount [the site coordinator] progressed in this last year was really incredible to watch, and so definitely she is at a place that if you were to put evidence in front of her she's like, "Yeah, I know what to do with this and how we can make changes to our program with it." (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

I would say for my site that I worked with that they aligned with the goals that the program decided and needed for themselves, ... So I think ... into the second cycle after seeing the evidence of an observation and realizing what areas the program needed to better themselves, that they aligned, that the strategies and resources that were provided were aligned. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

And so I think it's probably one of the highest things that we need to try and get that language across, of intentionality [intentional programming]. Whether they understand that language is questionable. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

I think it's still a work in progress. It's better than how it was before, but I think like, at least for [program site name], they are starting to think intentionally now... (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

And so I guess maybe for me sometimes like I wasn't moving the needle, just because we're starting from literally ground zero, applied, "All right, this is what a logic model is. Do you guys know the mission of your program?" Like it was just kind of crazy. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

While they acknowledged growth, specialists also expressed that getting site coordinators to adopt systematic, intentional program design and implementation was a process. There was limited evidence that QI sites had written theories of change, relied on specific logic models, or that they had fully adopted such language to express plans for program improvement.

Coordinators noted the importance of intentional programming. However, while coordinators stated that their decisions and goals were often based on evidence, they did not articulate how the use of evidence translated into a larger theory of program change.

I also tell my staff that there's not this magical aura where if a kid walks into our club, they are receiving guidance. Even if you really love and care about that kid, that doesn't translate into guidance unless you're really purposeful about it... So making sure the activities we're running are developing some kind of a skill, even if that skill is just how to make and keep a friend. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Emphasizing what your intention is in the program [can improve program quality]. And I didn't know at the very beginning because I didn't receive any training. ... I think if every program honestly and genuinely focused on what their intentions were and trained their staff to focus on those and touch base, no matter what they are, I think it will be accomplished. I think that will really help. (Coordinators, QI Site Focus Group)

We have three areas of impact, so everything we do should be in one of those three areas. So it's academic success, healthy relationships, good character or healthy relationships and like physical education stuff, and then good character and citizenship. (Coordinator, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

So our program, we do lesson planning. Staff have to turn in their lesson plans for the next month like the month before midway through.... I think that's what made our programming intentional was using those plans. On every one, they had to like write the core standard they were targeting. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Although site coordinator did not use the language of intentional programming, such as expressing their theories of change or explaining their logic models, in some instances they provided examples of implementing program practices to achieve specific youth outcomes. A few coordinators expressed that they felt the concept of a theory of change or using logic models was too difficult for their staff members to grasp.

We didn't use one [theory of change or logic model]. I also had the same kind of trouble with staff kind of – it was a difficult concept to teach I think. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

We did create one [theory of change or logic model] this year, and it was just really hard to teach a brand new concept. Because I get it, and then I can simplify it and really just define it the way they would [understand], and then things get done. But as far as trying to do it the other way and teach them what a logic model is and all these different definitions, that was kind of hard, and I think it was – it just kind of went over their heads. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Overall, evidence for intentional programming was mixed. While there were reports of progress throughout the year and while many coordinators described their approaches to working with staff to implement intentional programs, their remains an opportunity to further educate site coordinators and staff teams about intentional programming.

Program Quality Topics and Resources

For each account of TA they provided, specialists documented the program quality topics they addressed with site coordinators. Site coordinators also selected from an almost identical list of program quality topics to report the focus of their program quality interventions for each month. Table 14 offers a comparison of specialist and QI site coordinator accounts of the total number of times they reported addressing each program quality topic. Differences in specialists and site coordinators reports of the topics they addressed reveals a potential lack of alignment between the two groups. It raises questions of model implementation fidelity because the TA-based model depended on close collaborations between specialists and site coordinators. Alternatively, some of the most frequently addressed program quality topics, such as feedback for staff members, improving staff-student relationships, and using data are three important components prescribed by the QIM.

Table 14. Program Quality Topics Addressed at QI Sites by Specialists and Site Coordinators

Program Quality Topics	QI Site Specialists (N)	QI Site Coordinators (N)
Giving feedback to staff members	41	27
Improving staff-student relationships	38	20
Data driven improvement planning	29	18
Planning activities to achieve specific student outcomes	23	18
Developing or revising program goals	21	18
Discussing, reviewing, or revising the QIM	21	N/A
Planning or implementing PD	21	24
Improving school partnerships	14	21
Improving family engagement	13	17
Developing or revising program theory of change or logic model	10	10
Other	8	3
Improving external partnerships	5	13
QT section: administration	3	9
QT section: safety	2	8
QT section: learn new skills	2	12
None	N/A	4
Totals	251	222

Data sources: Specialist Implementation Log and QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log

In addition to addressing program quality topics, specialists provided resources to site coordinators. According to specialist implementation logs, these resources included things such as data from staff surveys, the QT, and observations, the QIM, the QT, information on professional development trainings, and academic lesson planning resources. Specialists also provided a wide variety of materials on a range of topics such as building relationships, behavior management, program planning, leadership, and engaging stakeholders. Site coordinators' reports of the value of these resources were mixed, with many appreciating and utilizing the resources, while others felt the resources did not always align with their programs' needs or were not delivered in a timely way.

I think they've always been willing to help us in any way we needed, but it's been nice because [our specialist has] been around more often. ...So I appreciate it because ... they see what we're really doing, and ...they give us ideas or give us resources. I know [our specialist has] come to do some of trainings for us. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

So when my staff were asking for PD. I can always Google things if I don't know and I can make up my own presentation, but it's very time consuming, and so what would have been helpful would be if I ...got somebody to come and do some PD as opposed to just some links from online or beyond the bell. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

In March, I just got the feedback [from] January and November, so it was difficult to use any of that information in my goal planning or any of that... (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

[The specialist would] know about the resources that I didn't know about that I was able to use and let my parents know.... To get extra food or extra clothes or anything like that... it was amazing. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Well with me, [the specialist] was amazing. She was always there every time I had any questions or if I saw things we started to lack on. I would e-mail her about it, and she was – within the next week, she'll be like, "Yeah, I'll be there next week after training." She also things she noticed in the program, like I mentioned earlier, she put it into our trainings as well. She was just always available for me. She was just a great resource to have. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

In most cases, coordinators reported that specialists provided useful resources, but in other instances, coordinators wanted specialists to provide more timely resources or resources that were better aligned with their needs. While not every site coordinator was completely satisfied with the resources they received from specialists, there was an overall sense that coordinators appreciated the additional support.

Data Driven Improvement Cycle and QIM Fidelity

The study design called for specialists and QI site coordinators to complete three data-driven improvement cycles (see Figure 2). Conducting observations was a cornerstone of each cycle. The first observations were conducted later than expected at four of the five QI sites. However, all five sites received the recommended minimum of three observations (see Table 15). On reflection, specialists felt that 90 day data-driven improvement cycles were suitable and recommended that the three cycle structure be maintained. Some coordinators reported that the observations and feedback with specialists were not timely.

Table 15. Dates of QI Site Program Observations SY 2016-17

Site	Observation				
	1	2	3	4	5
Program A	Jan 3	Mar 6	Apr 22		
Program B	Dec 6	Feb 9	Apr 24	May 8	
Program C	Oct 26	Nov 4	Jan 23	Jan 24	Apr 5
Program D	Nov 7	Dec 15	Feb 15	May 3	
Program E	Dec 7	Mar 9	?*		

My observations were scheduled very strangely... and the feedback was not given in a timely manner from the observations.

(Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Data Source: QI Site Observations. *Specialist did not log the date of the observation.

All specialists conducted initial meetings with site coordinators. Some specialists noted in implementation logs that they used meetings to systematically review data with site coordinators and to plan and implement improvement strategies. In contrast, QI site coordinators described the content of meetings with specialists as focused on reviewing goals, communicating administrative information, and providing professional development.

To support specialists' efforts to implement three data drive improvement cycles and to support fidelity of QIM's implementation, the UEPC conducted over 20 hours of meetings with specialists. Initial meetings focused on collaborative planning and TA for implementing the QIM. In the mid-year focus groups, some specialists suggested that the team spent more than enough time preparing to implement the QIM, while others expressed that they could have used more support. As specialists were completing the first cycle, the UEPC met with them one-to-one. As of late December, only one site was implementing the QIM with fidelity.

Following the December meetings, the UEPC reviewed implementation data and provided a mid-year report of activities that occurred through February. The UAN Director of Operations used the report to hold additional one-to-one meetings with specialists. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss model implementation and plan for responding to the recommendations in the mid-year report.

The mid-year report found alignment of program quality improvement efforts for only one QI site. Among the other four QI sites, one site lacked specific improvement efforts, another reported misalignment between the observed areas for growth and the technical assistance provided, and two sites had not received the appropriate amount of technical assistance prescribed as part of the quality study. In some cases, specialists and coordinators reported working on too many things at once rather than focusing on specific, evidence-based areas for improvement.

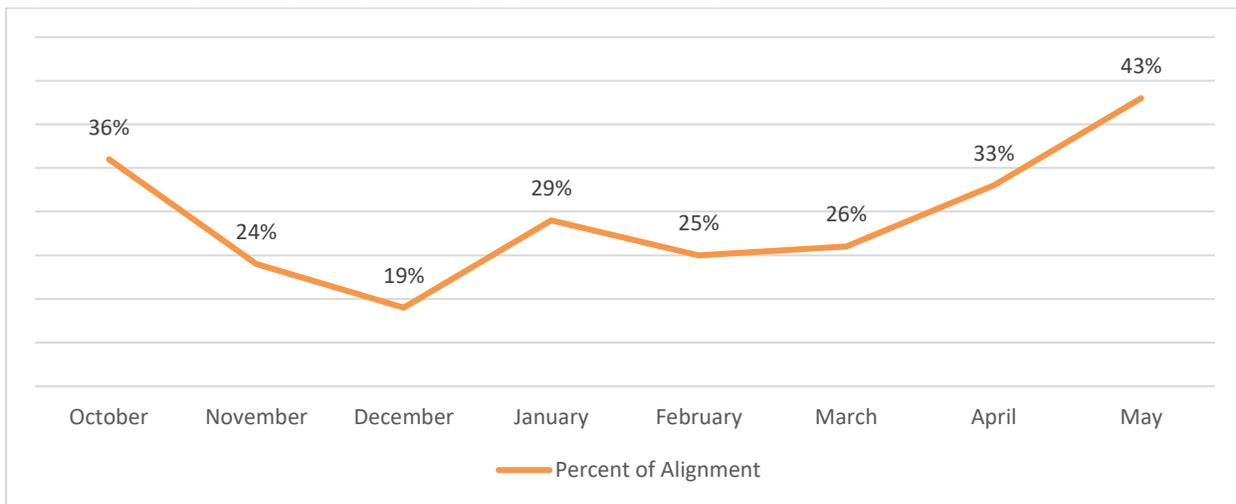
The mid-year report provided two noteworthy recommendations related to aligning technical assistance efforts:

- Use data! Carefully review data from multiple sources often. Look for alignment across data sources. Look to see if specialists and coordinators are reporting that they are working on the same program improvement efforts. Look to see if implementation log data aligns with observation data and make sure program efforts are well informed. Look across multiple observations to see if staff members are improving. Make sure TA was chosen and conducted based on data.

- Be careful to focus on specific program improvement efforts. Trying to address every possible need is likely to be less effective than working on a few specific, high value aspects of program improvement.

By the end of the year, we found an increase in alignment of specialist and site coordinator reports of program improvement efforts (Figure 3). This may be due in part to the mid-year interventions of the study team. It also speaks to the potential value of the research-based design methodology as a collaborative tool. Appendix C includes a table that shows the percent of alignment for each topic by each month. Figure 3 provides a summary. Although monthly alignment between specialists and QI site coordinators was notably low, especially at mid-year, it did improve as the year progressed.

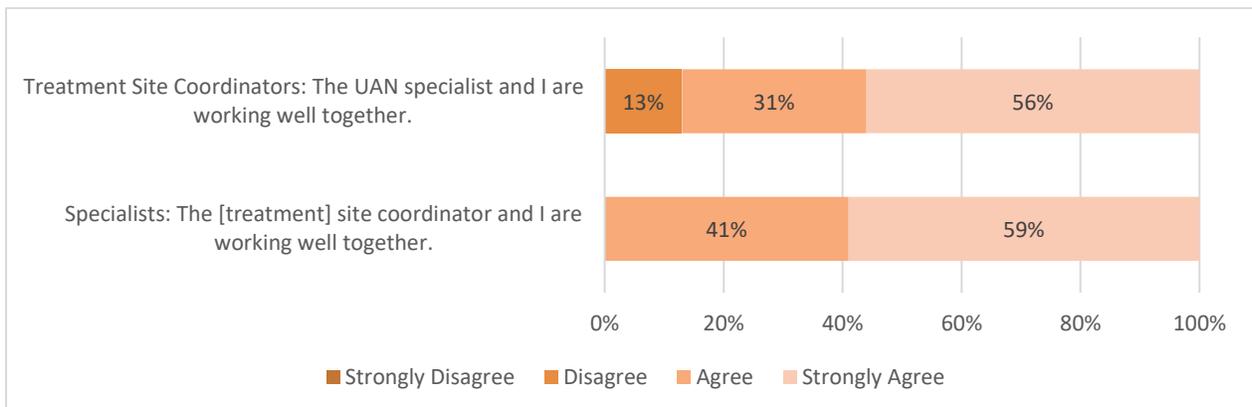
Figure 3. Percent of TA Alignment for Monthly Efforts to Address Program Quality Topics



Data Sources: Specialist Implementation Log and QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log

In order for the technical assistance driven model to be effective, it was important for specialists and site coordinators to work together well. Implementation log results suggested that in most cases, site coordinators and specialists agreed that they worked well together.

Figure 4. QI Site Coordinators and Specialists Working Together



Data Sources: Specialist Implementation Log and QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log

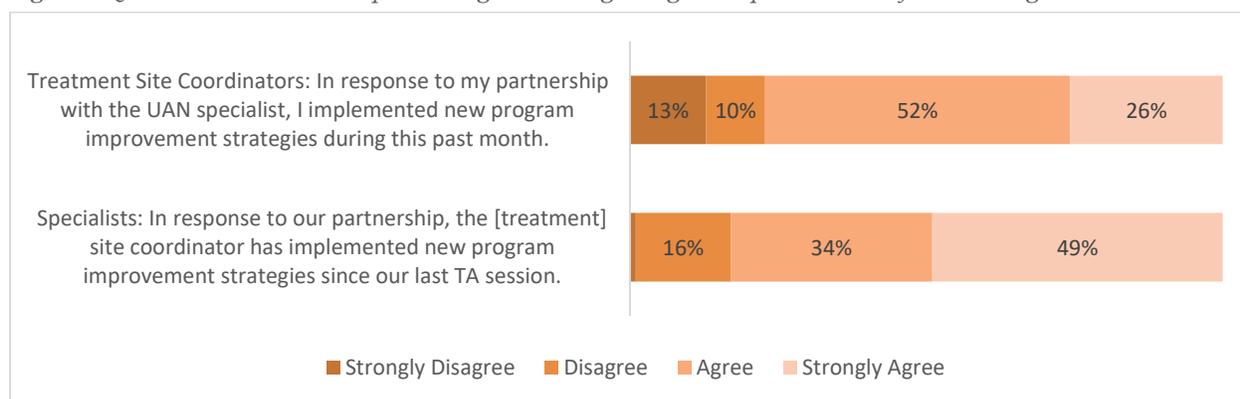
Most QI site coordinators and specialists agreed that, as a result of working through the QIM together, they implemented new program improvement strategies (Figure 5). This finding from the implementation logs aligned with specialists’ focus group comments regarding the potential usefulness of the QIM.

I think it [the QIM] made a huge difference. I mean I can just look at the results from the first time I observed, [to] the last time I observed... they were performing at such a higher level in everything. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

I think it [the QIM] gave me a really defined map of effective steps that I knew I could trust when I'm working on change within a program... I will, regardless of if we do this model at all, there's a lot of this that I'll just continue implementing in the TA that I offer... (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)

Specialists emphasized the value and usefulness of the QIM and suggested that implementing the QIM supported program improvement efforts and provided structure to their daily practice.

Figure 5. QI Site Coordinator and Specialist Agreement Regarding the Implementation of New Strategies



Data Sources: Specialist Implementation Log and QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log

In designing the QIM, we viewed professional development, meetings, and coaching as specific types of technical assistance, but provided little guidance in specifying how these acts of TA were alike and different. Confusion around these topics was evident in implementation log and focus group data and emerged as a noteworthy limitation related to understanding the reports of improvement strategies and dosage. For example, specialists and QI site coordinators may not have recognized how to distinguish between meetings and professional development, may have held varied ideas about these concepts, and therefore may have reported them differently.

Site coordinators often reported that the purpose of their meetings with QI site staff members was training or professional development. It was difficult to distinguish whether coordinators also reported such meetings (36 occurrences) as professional development. Specialists logged 10 instances of coaching and eight professional development sessions. The purpose and action steps they identified for coaching and PD made it difficult to discern how they viewed differences between these two types of TA. One site coordinator remarked in a focus group that, “training is ambiguous in some instances and could mean coaching, meeting, or PD.” We address this limitation by offering definitions for these types of TA, along with proposed model improvements, in the considerations section of the report.

Key Findings: Improvement Strategies and Dosage

- Specialist implementation log data was incomplete. Six observations were unrecorded and there were discrepancies between specialist and site coordinator accounts of the number of PD sessions provided by specialists.
- Specialists reported conducting 32 meetings for QI sites and 10 coaching sessions for QI sites.
- QI site coordinators reported conducting a total of 30 on-site PD sessions and 103 group meetings with their program staff teams.
- Four of five QI site coordinators reported conducting periodic one-to-one meetings with staff members. These meetings were relatively infrequent, but provided important opportunities for providing feedback and support to staff members.
- In 21 of 73 (29%) technical assistance occurrences, specialists reported that they worked with QI site coordinators to develop or revise program goals.
- Evidence for intentional programming was mixed. While there were reports of progress throughout the year, understandings and implementations of intentional programming were not robust.
- The most common topics of program quality addressed by specialists and QI site coordinators included giving feedback to staff members, improving staff-student relationships, and data driven improvement planning. This was well-aligned with expectations for model implementation.
- In most cases, coordinators reported that specialists provided useful resources, but in other instances, coordinators wanted specialists to provide more timely resources or resources that were better aligned with their needs. While not every site coordinator was completely satisfied with the resources they received from specialists, there was an overall sense that coordinators appreciated the additional support of UAN specialists.
- The first program observations were conducted later than expected at four of the five QI sites. A mid-year report found that, for all but one QI site, the QIM had been implemented with minimal fidelity. While fidelity improved as the year progressed, and all QI sites received the recommended minimum of three observations, there was limited alignment between specialist and site coordinator reports regarding the topics of monthly program improvement efforts.
- In most cases, specialists and site coordinators reported working well together.
- There was a need to define technical assistance, professional development, and coaching as specific capacity building efforts within the QIM.

Staff Behaviors

Staff Behaviors

Deep understanding of QP Standards

Implement program in high quality way

Deep understanding of goals and theory of change

Activities aligned with program goals

Increase in Staff Retention

This section is organized by the four staff behavior outcomes identified in the QIM⁸. It uses staff survey results, observation results, and qualitative data from multiple sources to reach conclusions about outcomes of model implementation as it relates to staff members' understanding, knowledge, and behavior.

There are several important limitations to consider when interpreting results from staff surveys and observations. For example, some sites are overrepresented and some are underrepresented in staff survey data (Table 16). Also, for purposes of comparison, we used aggregated pretest and posttest staff survey mean scores; respondents are unmatched from pretest to posttest. For these and other reasons (such as skewed data and low N sizes), we did not conduct t tests or non-parametric tests of change from pretest to posttest.

Table 16. Staff Survey Response Rates by Site

Site	Pretest N	Posttest N
Traditional TA Sites		
Program F	13	14
Program G	2	1
Program H	3	1
Program I	4	1
Program J	7	4
Totals	29	21
QI Sites		
Program A	8	3
Program B	8	8
Program C	4	0
Program D	6	8
Program E	3	2
Totals	29	21

To what extent did staff members understand afterschool program quality?

Staff members from both traditional TA and QI sites offered varied understandings of program quality. Some staff members focused on the importance of healthy relationships and clear communication amongst staff members, students, and school administration. Others emphasized the importance of offering diverse activities selected based on student preferences, providing a safe setting, or operating a well-structured program. QI site staff members also mentioned that a quality afterschool program should

⁸ This excludes a fifth outcome, staff retention, which could not be measured at the conclusion of one year.

be fun. The quotes below exemplify these points and provide additional insight into how staff members conceptualized program quality.

Ours has just, like, so many different opportunities. Like, whether you wanna do art after school, we offer that, or you wanna try a new sport. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

"Good relationships with the students. Knowing their names, being able to communicate with them really well. ... you're paying attention to them." (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

"Staff working as a team, desire to help, willing to be a team player, dedicated leadership willing to back you up when needed, contact and connections with classroom teachers." (Staff, QI Site Posttest Survey)

The focus on relationships was a particularly important finding. As a point of service model, interactions among staff members and students are believed to be particularly influential in promoting student outcomes.

Staff survey data suggested that, while most staff members seemed to have at least a basic understanding of program quality, this was not the case for all staff members. When asked to identify program quality goals in an open-ended staff survey question, some staff members identified goals that were consistent with key features of program quality. Others, however, identified goals that were more aligned with specific student outcomes than actual features of program quality. For example, they gave answers such as, "academic improvement."

The staff survey included four items about the programs' quality improvement goals. While these items provide limited insight into staff members' holistic understanding of program quality, the results show that most staff members reported they were aware of program quality goals and working to implement them. Also of interest, staff members at traditional TA sites rated their understanding of program quality higher on the pretest than did the staff members at QI sites.

Table 17. Staff Members' Understanding of Program Quality

Staff Survey Items about Program Quality	Traditional TA			QI		
	Pretest	Posttest	Dif	Pretest	Posttest	Dif
I know the specific quality improvement goals of this afterschool program.	3.21	3.29	0.08	2.96	3.43	0.47
I talk with other staff members about how to achieve our quality improvement goals.	3.25	3.38	0.13	3.11	3.52	0.41
I have received training that explained how we hope to achieve our program quality goals.	3.33	3.10	-0.23	3.11	3.43	0.32
I understand my role in helping to achieve our program quality goals.	3.37	3.15	-0.22	3.07	3.57	0.50

Data sources: Pretest staff survey; Posttest staff survey

Considered together, these findings suggest that staff members understanding of program quality was varied. Quantitative staff survey results suggested that staff members at QI sites started the year knowing less about their programs' quality improvement goals than did staff members at traditional TA sites, but concluded the year knowing more. Qualitative findings revealed mixed results regarding staff members understanding of program quality. While many staff members provided evidence of understanding aspects of program quality, other staff members' understanding appeared limited.

To what extent did staff members implement high quality program practices?

We used the DMR observation tool, staff survey results, and additional qualitative data to assess staff members’ implementation of quality program standards. In this section, we present qualitative traditional TA and QI site results together because staff members reported similar implementation and staff behaviors between sites. We do, however, offer traditional TA and QI site comparisons of first and final observations.

For five of seven indicators in the *staff and youth relationships* domain, observation results showed improvements between first and final observations (Table 18). For three of six indicators in the *program, family, school, and community relationships* domain, observation results showed a positive change in mean scores between first and final observations. This suggests improvements in program quality during the academic year. Self-report means were higher than both first and final observations, suggesting that self-reported QT results may be inflated.

Table 18. DMR Self-report and Observation Results for All Sites

Staff and Youth Relationships Domain			
Indicators for Standard A1: Staff and youth know, respect, and support each other	Self-Reports	Observations	
		First	Final
Staff promote a respectful and welcoming environment for all youth.	4.5	3.8	4.1
Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.	4.4	3.9	4.4
Staff promote and demonstrate respect for all cultural backgrounds and ability levels.	4.6	3.8	3.6
Staff respect, listen, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.	4.1	2.9	4.1
Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.	4.4	3.4	4.2
Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.	4.6	3.5	4.0
Staff encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.	3.7	2.8	2.7
Program, Family, School, and Community Relationships Domain*			
Indicators for Standard B1: Program communicates and collaborates with school and community	Self-Reports	Observations	
		First	Final
Program engages in school and community collaborations to plan and implement intentionally designed programs based on youth needs and interests.	4.1	3.3	3.8
Program builds relationships with arts, cultural, service learning and other organizations to expand and enhance program offerings.	3.8	3.3	3.8
Program develops and maintains positive working relationships with partners.	3.4	3.3	3.3
Indicators for Standard B2: Program fosters family engagement to support program goals	Self-Reports	Observations	
		First	Final
Program encourages family engagement and maintains ongoing outreach efforts with parents.	3.3	3.1	3.3
Program makes community resource information available to families.	4.3	4.1	4.1
Staff interact with parents/guardians on matters concerning the well-being of their youth.	4.2	3.9	3.9

Data Sources: Site Coordinator DMR Self-reports; Specialist DMR Observations *The first observation column in the program, family, and community relationships domain includes nine sites (Program C = missing data)

Table 19 offers a closer look at differences between traditional TA and QI site observations from the first to the final observations for the *staff and youth relationships* domain. The difference columns show that the change from first to final observations was higher from QI than traditional TA sites. Also of interest, specialists scored the traditional TA sites notably higher than QI sites on the first observations.

Table 19. Comparison of Traditional TA and QI Site Observation Means from First to Final Observations

Staff and Youth Relationships Domain	Traditional TA Sites			QI Sites		
	Observation		Difference	Observation		Difference
	First	Final		First	Final	
Indicators for standard A1: Staff and youth know, respect, and support each other						
Staff promote a respectful and welcoming environment for all youth.	4.10	3.90	-0.20	3.50	4.30	0.80
Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.	4.13	4.27	0.13	3.60	4.53	0.93
Staff promote and demonstrate respect for all cultural backgrounds and ability levels.	4.20	3.40	-0.80	3.30	3.70	0.40
Staff respect, listen, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.	3.33	4.07	0.73	2.47	4.07	1.60
Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.	3.73	4.00	0.27	3.00	4.40	1.40
Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.	3.67	3.33	-0.33	3.27	4.73	1.47
Staff encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.	3.13	2.00	-1.13	2.50	3.30	0.80

Data Sources: Specialist DMR Observations

Focus group data added additional insight into how both QI and traditional TA sites implemented high quality program practices. Site coordinators reported that working with staff and students to plan and implement academic supports for students and encouraged positive communication between staff and students. These efforts to implement high quality program practices are well aligned with the *learn new skills* and *develop meaningful relationships* sections of the QT. The following quotes represent intentional practices that QI site coordinators and staff members implemented to foster program quality.

And so this year, I went in with my staff and was just like, We have to see improvement this year. We have to have a structured academic program. ... each of them worked with different grades, and so as they were working with the grades, they saw the needs of their grades met. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Lately, [a staff member has] been doing, once we're done like reading or homework, [a] group thing [to] talk about feelings, or talk about books. Or kind of critical thinking as well... it's really helped the kids actually listen to one another, and like expand their thinking. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

So we put programs in place that where we got buy-in from the kids, like we started a grade track program, like what you're saying where they or what you said where they can bring their report cards in, and they can bring their homework in and get incentives. (Coordinator, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

Staff members described their quality improvement efforts in terms of building healthy student-to-student relationships. The quotes below represent staff member reflections of their program quality improvement efforts.

I think the kids know that they can come and talk to us when they're having a bad day. ... And I think that makes them feel safe. And I think a lot of the times they'll talk to us. They talk to us about personal things, things with their family, and I think that's a huge, huge thing. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

I felt like coming in I tried to...discipline them like all the time... And like I've realized that that was not the route to go at all. ... You kind of have to get down to their thought process ...I was...learning how to create a relationship with them, you know what I mean? And not just "No" all the time. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Staff Focus Group)

I learned their names and I got to know them better, they're able to tell me more about ... stuff they're doing outside of school and how their day's been or stuff that they're super excited for. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

The focus on building and maintain strong, healthy relationships was a consistent theme discussed by both site coordinators and staff members. This, along with the positive change in observation mean scores, suggests that the programs were working to implement program quality standards that are defined in the QT.

To what extent did staff members understand program goals and theory of change?

Staff surveys, implementation logs, and focus groups provided information about the extent to which staff members understood their programs' goals and theory of change. On the pretest, staff members at QI sites reported lower understanding of program goals and how to achieve those goals than traditional TA site staff members. However, the pretest to posttest differences in mean scores were greater for QI sites than traditional TA sites.

Table 20. Staff Members' Understanding of Program Goals and Theory of Change

Staff Survey Items	Traditional TA			QI		
	Pretest	Posttest	Dif	Pretest	Posttest	Dif
I know the specific student academic outcomes this program hopes to address.	3.29	3.43	0.14	3.04	3.29	0.25
I know the specific student developmental outcomes this program hopes to address.	3.21	3.24	0.03	2.89	3.24	0.35
I talk with other staff members about how to help students achieve specific outcomes.	3.25	3.43	0.18	3.15	3.52	0.37
We discuss how to help students achieve specific outcomes at staff meetings or staff trainings.	3.36	3.57	0.21	3.11	3.57	0.46
I have received training that explained how to help students achieve specific academic outcomes.	3.22	3.05	-0.17	2.85	3.24	0.39
I have received training that explained how to help students achieve specific developmental outcomes.	3.19	2.90	-0.29	2.93	3.29	0.36
I understand my role in helping students achieve specific academic outcomes.	3.41	3.25	-0.16	3.07	3.52	0.45
I understand my role in helping students achieve specific developmental outcomes.	3.37	3.30	-0.07	3.07	3.35	0.28
This program has identified both short-term and long-term student outcomes.	3.19	3.25	0.06	2.96	3.38	0.42

Data Sources: Pretest and Posttest Staff Surveys

Increasing positive outcomes for students is a common goal of all afterschool programs. However, program goals may include many other areas such as improving quality, expanding partnerships, and

increasing enrollment numbers. While staff members' accounts of their programs' goals were varied, they were most often related to program quality. For example, during the focus groups, staff members frequently mentioned building positive relationships between staff and students and creating safe spaces as program goals. QI site staff members also mentioned fostering healthy relationships among students as a program goal.

I know one of them [goal] was that we needed to learn every kids' name and to greet them every day to create that personal experience. That's like, the top one that I always remember 'cause I like that one. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

If we can make this time like a really positive time for them, and be good role models for them, and ... just be good examples for them, so they know somebody does have your back. ... We have your back. And we will do our best for you. And try to love and support you the best we can in the time that we have with them." (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

I think with the relationships everything else kind of just falls into place after that. 'Cause if you have a good relationship with them, then they're more willing to do their homework. And then grades improve. And then they're more willing to try different activities. And so I think relationships are the number one thing 'cause everything else just follows that. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

In addition to program quality goals, staff members also mentioned general academic development as an outcome-oriented program goal. When asked to describe the academic student outcomes their programs hoped to achieve, staff members mentioned homework completion, increased test scores, improved grades, and overall reading improvement.

I think the biggest other [goal], was probably just that our academic hour would become stronger. So, we went from having like, one giant, large group to separating them by grades, and then making sure that kids that needed definite help were working with teachers... (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

They hope to increase scores on the DIBELS testing by adding in a progress monitoring piece, and assist in math growth by creating a schedule to provide assistance with both in varying age groups. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

Better reading fluency and better homework habits. (Staff, QI Site Posttest Survey)

I want to see the kids excel more. Just trying their hardest and working on their homework when they have homework and just helping them if they don't understand something. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

Staff members provided varied reports of the developmental outcomes they hoped students would achieve. While some respondents named very general aspects of student growth, others mentioned specific goals such as conflict resolution, healthy relationships, appropriate school behavior, problem solving skills, and positive attitudes toward school. In addition, QI site staff survey and focus group responses included well-articulated goals about developing healthy student-to-student relationships. In some cases, staff members confused developmental and academic outcomes, mentioning a goal such as increasing DIBELS reading scores as developmental.

We want to help children grow and enhance their knowledge, [and] seeing a positive emotional change in the students (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

To improve student relationships and interactions among each other. (Staff, QI Site Posttest Survey)

Teaching kids healthier and more productive ways to deal with situations; positive and negative. Helping certain kids find ways to deescalate and to avoid negative outbursts. Promoting positive ideals and relationships. (Staff, QI Site Posttest Survey)

The quotes above provide additional examples of staff member perspectives of the type of student outcomes they hoped to address. While they were aware of the need to influence student outcomes positively, they did not offer consistent explanations of the connections between program activities and the specific outcomes that could be achieved through participating in daily activities.

The staff survey asked staff members if their afterschool program had a logic model or theory of change. Thirty-three percent of QI site staff members responded “yes” on the pretest compared to 60% on the posttest. While this does indicate some improvement, 40% of posttest respondents indicated that they did not recognize the terms logic model or theory of change. The following section provides deeper look at the extent to which staff members were engaged in intentional programming and operating based on their programs’ theory of change.

To what extent did staff members facilitate activities that were aligned with program goals?

Staff survey and focus group results provided descriptions of how well staff members facilitated activities that were aligned with academic and developmental program goals. Table 21 shows that quantitative pretest staff survey results were relatively similar among traditional TA and QI sites. Average posttest responses were slightly higher for QI sites than traditional TA sites and the pretest to posttest differences for QI sites were greater than those of traditional TA sites.

Table 21. Pre and Post Staff Survey Results for Traditional TA and QI Sites

Staff Survey Items	Traditional TA			QI		
	Pretest	Posttest	Dif	Pretest	Posttest	Dif
When I interact with students, I am trying to help them achieve specific academic outcomes.	3.44	3.30	-0.14	3.11	3.48	0.37
When I interact with students, I am trying to help them achieve specific developmental outcomes.	3.37	3.20	-0.17	3.15	3.38	0.23
I lead, or help lead, activities to help students achieve specific academic outcomes.	3.30	3.25	-0.05	3.59	3.67	0.08
I lead, or help lead, activities to help students achieve specific developmental outcomes.	3.26	3.35	0.09	3.56	3.57	0.01
We consider the specific needs of our students when we plan activities.	3.44	3.42	-0.02	3.56	3.65	0.09
We plan activities based on students' needs.	3.26	3.50	0.24	3.33	3.71	0.38
This program uses data to make decisions about the activities we do here.	3.22	3.05	-0.17	2.78	3.29	0.51
We adjust our afterschool teaching practice or activities based on data about student learning (e.g., test results, student work).	3.11	3.25	0.14	2.74	3.24	0.50

Data Sources: Pretest and Posttest Staff Surveys

Qualitative results provided a more thorough look into intentional program practices. Some staff members reported that they made programming decisions based on the desire to achieve academic

outcomes. This was evident in staff members' reports of providing academic supports such as help with homework and providing standards based lessons.

The activities I help staff plan and lead are aligned to the Utah common core. We use a resource from UEN for activity ideas aligned to the standard and have access to the [common] (sic) core website. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

During Power Hour (homework help) we help with making sure they are not only doing homework but also doing it correctly. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

We have added one on one reading practice to better their reading scores. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

When planning and organizing academic supports, staff members emphasized the importance of using program participation data and working to increase student engagement. They reported that they often chose activities based on how students responded in the past. QI site staff members described their decision-making and planning as experimental. Interventions would sometimes be altered in real-time to accommodate students' needs on a particular day. Other times, staff members would use information from past experiences to plan upcoming interventions. The following quotes exemplify how staff members utilized their experience with students to make programming decisions.

I try to design my classes to what they wanted to learn. So, that came in with getting to know the kids better and figuring out what they liked and trying to figure out what they wanted to learn. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

During homework time we have adjust to what the kids would not be bored with. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

I've noticed that like since they've done more like words, is it words of the day. I think just giving them more options. Because at first we were mainly just having them read, but then [our specialist] gave us like some other like ideas of things we could do that aren't like so straightforward academic. It was more of like critical thinking, and kind of sneaking the academic side into it. I think it's been helpful. (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

"Yeah. A lot of our ideas were kind of trial and error. Be like, Oh, what if we tried this this week?" And if it didn't work, then okay, why didn't this work? Can we see if something else might work instead? And so I think where we are now we've kind of found out what works with these kids in particular and kind of what works with us, as well." (Staff, QI Site Focus Group)

Qualitative data also indicated that certain interventions were planned with intentions to achieve specific developmental goals and student outcomes. For example, staff members purposely modeled healthy interactions and structured opportunities for students to practice problem solving skills in a team environment. Specific curriculums were also frequently mentioned as interventions used to achieve specific developmental outcomes. To promote school appropriate behavior, staff members focused on implementing positive behavior management systems that created incentives for students following afterschool rules.

I insist my students work together in groups to help the build social interactions and develop specific social skills (that includes following directions) and helps the assist their peers in areas they may also struggle. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Posttest Survey)

We've been trying to focus a lot on positive behavior and giving rewards to the good kids that are you know, for the good behavior. They're all good kids, but we're trying to reward the good behavior. And a lot of them respond really well to that. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

We've kind of grouped our kids into boys and girls, and ...we've created these like, really informal... like, sessions with these girls and we talk about like, issues of body shaming and girl bashing. 'Cause we surprisingly see a lot of it throughout the day. (Staff, Traditional TA Site Focus Group)

One of the activities we do is called "Too Good for Violence" which specifically talks about ways to prevent violence from happening like how to know when to "compete" or "cooperate" (Staff, QI Site Posttest Survey)

These quotes suggest that staff members were considering students' needs and, in some cases, using program practices to influence student outcomes. However, there was little evidence to conclude that staff members understood the need to systematically implement program practices in response to their programs' theory of change. In some cases, staff members seemed confused about differences between implementation and outcomes. For example, when asked about outcomes, responses included "make power-hour fun or "STEM, art, and other educational field trips." This suggests that staff members may not have possessed a complete understanding that these interventions are used to achieve outcomes and are not outcomes themselves.

Specialists and site coordinators also commented on staff members' understanding of program goals and intentional programming. Specialists felt that QI site staff members had a basic understanding of intentional programming, but were not purposefully aligning all behaviors and interventions to achieve specific goals. Though, some QI site coordinators reported that staff members designed lesson plans to reach short-term student outcomes such as academic and socioemotional development. QI site coordinators reported that staff members' understanding of program goals and how to achieve them improved from October to May. They also suggested that some staff members understood the concept of intentional programming, but that others struggled with the concept of using a logic model.

But as far as trying to do it the other way and teach them what a logic model is and all these different definitions, that was kind of hard, and ...it just kind of went over their heads. But I went back to ... Here is your role in this, here is how it's defined according to how you understand it and everything. (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

I would say that in terms of what their specific program goals are that they understand now... But I don't know if they still understand the intentionality of the program and [the] purpose of the after school program. (Specialists, End-of-Year Focus Group)

"So our program, we do lesson planning. Staff have to turn in their lesson plans for the next month like the month before midway through...." and " I think that's what made our programming intentional was using those plans. On every one, they had to like write the core standard they were targeting." (Coordinator, QI Site Focus Group)

Specialist and site coordinator perspectives helped to round-out evidence to support the conclusion that, overall, staff members had a developing understanding of how to implement their program's goals and theory of change. The results suggest that while staff members' comprehensive understanding of their programs' goals and theory of change was limited, many staff members expressed intent to positively impact student development and growth through the activities they provided.

Multiple data sources revealed a lack of clarity among staff members when differentiating between implementation and outcomes. Staff survey results showed relatively high values for planning activities

based on student needs. However, staff members had difficulty articulating connections among interventions and specific program goals, which seemed to indicate that staff survey responses may have been inflated. Information from staff surveys and focus groups indicated that staff members used student participation data, observations of students, and student feedback to plan activities that would allow them to achieve academic and developmental goals. Staff members also indicated that flexibility was key in their everyday interactions with students and they would adjust their activities based on changing student needs or preferences.

Staff Behaviors Key Findings

- Quantitative staff survey results suggested that staff members at QI sites started the year knowing less about their programs' quality improvement goals than staff members at traditional TA sites did, but concluded the year knowing more.
- Most staff members reported that they were aware of program quality goals and were working to implement them. When asked about program goals, staff members most frequently cited efforts to improve quality.
- Qualitative findings revealed mixed results regarding staff members understanding of program quality. While many staff members provided evidence of understanding key aspects of program quality, other staff members' understanding appeared limited.
- When expressing their understanding of program quality, staff members often focused on the importance of relationships with students. Some staff members focused on the importance of healthy relationships and clear communication amongst staff members, students, and school administrators. Others emphasized the importance of providing a safe setting, operating a well-structured program, or offering diverse activities that are selected based on student preferences.
- Evidence suggested that programs were working to implement program quality standards as defined in the QT. For five of seven indicators in the *staff and youth relationships* domain, observation results showed improvements between first and final observations for all sites combined. At QI sites, mean scores for final observations were higher than mean scores for the first observations for all seven indicators.
- There was very little evidence to conclude that staff members understood the need to systematically implement program practices in response to their programs' theory of change. However, qualitative data also indicated that certain interventions were planned to achieve specific developmental and academic goals and student outcomes.
- Staff members seemed to focus more on informal sources of evidence, such as ongoing feedback from students, rather than consistently choosing activities because they aligned with desired outcomes. When planning academic interventions, staff emphasized the importance of working to increase student engagement.

Youth Outcomes

Youth Outcomes

Academic Success

Improved Non-cognitive Skills

Improved health and well-being

Increased protective factors and decreased risk factors

Increased pro-social relationships

This study did not directly address the relationship of afterschool program quality and youth outcomes. However, existing research has demonstrated that program quality is positively related to student outcomes. Table 22 provides an overview of major studies examining these relationships.

The most commonly cited aspects of program quality in these studies were staff-youth interactions, program content, youth engagement, quality of staff, and program environment. Other features of program quality utilized in these studies included communication with families, exposure to new experiences, and coordination with school personnel. Some studies approached youth engagement as a feature of program quality while others considered it an outcome.

For ease of use, we categorized the youth outcomes addressed in these studies as academic, social-emotional, and youth engagement. These categories align with the *academic success*, *improved non-cognitive skills*, and *increased pro-social relationships* youth outcomes identified in the QIM. A check mark indicates that the study found a positive relationship between program quality and the category of youth outcomes.

Finally, we provide information about the size and scope of the studies in the study features column. These studies, some of which were relatively large in scope, provide noteworthy evidence of positive relationships among afterschool program quality and youth outcomes.

Table 22. Program Quality Features and Youth Outcomes

Publication	Program Quality Features	Youth Outcomes			Study Features
		Academic	Emotional	Social-Engagement	
Devaney, E., Naftzger, N., Liu, F., Sniegowski, S., Shields, J., & Booth, E. (2016)	Instructional practices, youth engagement, and alignment with enrichment experiences in 21 st CCLC Program	✓	✓		1 of 4 years 26 sites 400 youth
Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007)	Evidence based skills training for students that is sequential, active, focused, and explicit	✓	✓		73 programs
Greene, K.M., Lee, B., Constance, N., & Hynes, K. (2013)	Program content, staff quality			✓	30 sites 435 youth
Grossman, J., Campbell, M., & Raley, B. (2007)	Staff characteristics, instructional practices, youth feel respected			✓	402 youth 45 staff
Intercultural Center for Research in Education & National Institute on Out-of-School Time (2005)	Challenging and engaging activities, strong school connections, communication with families, staff quality		✓	✓	78 sites 4100 youth 675 staff
Leos-Urbel, J. (2015)	Supportive environment, opportunities for purposeful engagement, structured interactions	✓			2 years 29 sites 5,108 youth
Mahoney, J. L., Parente, M. E., & Lord, H. (2007)	Supportive relationships with peers, opportunities for cognitive growth		✓		2 years 141 youth
Paluta, L.M., Lower, L., Anderson-Butcher, D., Gibson, A., & Iachini, A.L. (2016)	Family engagement			✓	332 sites 3,388 adults
Pierce, K. M., Bolt, D. M., & Vandell, D. L. (2010)	Positive staff-student relationships, flexibility	✓	✓		2 years ~40 sites ~200 youth
Russell, C. A., Reisner, E. R., & Mielke, M. B. (2009)	Variety of activities, new and engaging experiences, opportunities to interact with peers and staff, quality staff, regular PD, communication between program and schools, family engagement	✓	✓	✓	3 years 133 sites 40-67,000 youth
Sheldon, J., Arbreton, A., Hopkins, L., & Grossman, J. B. (2010)	Program content, instructional delivery, continuous improvement strategies, staff training (PD), quality staff	✓			~20 sites ~350 youth
Shernoff, D. J. (2010)	Activities are skill-based, challenging, important to students, and engaging	✓	✓		196 youth
Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., & Pierce, K. M. (2007)	Supportive staff-student relationships, rich and varied academic support, diverse and enriching activities	✓	✓		2 years 3,000 youth
Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2002)	Safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts	n/a	n/a	n/a	Synthesis of research
Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom (2010)	Relationships, environment, engagement, social/behavioral norms, skill building, and routine or structure	n/a	n/a	n/a	Synthesis of literature
Oh, Osgood, & Smith (2015)	Supportive relationships with staff and peers, developmentally appropriate structure and supervision, and youth engagement	n/a	n/a	n/a	Synthesis of literature

Considerations

Despite limitations, this study provided a unique opportunity to test and refine a quality improvement model for afterschool programming in Utah. Staff surveys, observations, and focus group findings indicated that the QIM could be a useful framework for influencing staff behaviors. Utah Afterschool Network specialists agreed that the QIM added valuable structure and direction to their daily practices. We offer the following summary of findings along with considerations for program practices.

Quality Improvement Resources: Evidence Used to Plan Program Improvements

Findings	Considerations for Program Practice
Observation data, QT data, and informal sources of evidence, such as informal observations and getting feedback from staff members or students, were among the most popular sources of evidence used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop and expand access and use of data sources. Adopt and utilize new observation measures. Site coordinators can use available data sources while working with districts, schools, partners, and evaluators to increase the number and diversity of data sources they use to inform program decision making.
Staff members primarily used informal sources of evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to encourage staff members to use informal evidence, but make them aware of formal sources of evidence and teach them how to access and use data to inform program practices.

Improvement Strategies

Finding	Considerations for Program Practice
The most commonly addressed aspects of program quality included giving feedback to staff members, improving staff-student relationships, and data driven improvement planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to address these topics as they are well-aligned with the recommendations of the QIM. Consider the recommendations in the QT and additional sources of evidence to determine specific program quality topics to address at each program site.
In most cases, specialists and site coordinators reported working well together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to focus on developing and maintaining positive relationships between UAN specialists and site coordinators.
There was a lack of alignment between specialist and site coordinator reports regarding the topics of monthly program improvement efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the QIM with high fidelity. Specialists and site coordinators should review evidence to identify specific aspects of program quality they hope to improve. Specialists and site coordinators should clarify and review program improvement goals at the end of each meeting and ensure that they are both working toward the same goals.
The QIM was implemented with limited fidelity.	

Staff Behaviors

Finding	Considerations for Program Practice
<p>Staff members at QI sites started the year knowing less about their programs' quality improvement goals than staff members at traditional TA sites did, but concluded the year knowing more.</p> <p>When asked about general program goals, staff members at both QI and traditional TA sites most frequently cited efforts to improve quality. Most staff members reported that they were aware of program quality goals and working to implement them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be intentional about communicating program quality goals to staff members. Ensure that staff members know, understand, and work toward achieving program quality goals. Make this a recognizable aspect of staff training, discuss goals consistently at staff meetings, and monitor progress toward achieving program quality goals. • Distinguish among program goals to specify quality improvement goals and other goals such as attendance expectations and achieving youth outcomes.
<p>There were mixed results regarding staff members' understanding of program quality. While many staff members provided evidence of understanding key aspects of program quality, other staff members' understanding appeared limited.</p> <p>When expressing their understanding of program quality, staff members often focused on the importance of relationships with students. Some staff emphasized the importance of offering diverse activities selected based on student preferences, providing a safe setting, or operating a well-structured program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that staff members have a deep understanding of program quality and know the goals of their program. Integrate content from the QT into staff trainings and PD opportunities throughout the year. • Continue to expand the focus on evidence-based efforts to improve program quality at each site. • Continue to focus on developing and maintaining healthy and productive staff-student relationships and student-student relationships. Look for this during observations, discuss this frequently as a program priority, and integrate positive relationship building, mentoring, and student support into program culture. • Provide PD about healthy relationships and supporting student - student relationships.
<p>Programs were working to implement program quality standards as defined in the QT. At QI sites, mean scores for final DMR observations were higher than mean scores for the first observations for all seven indicators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use the QT as a primary source of program quality standards. • External observation may be a vital tool in improving program quality. Utilize observation tools that align with the content of the QT.
<p>Staff members did not demonstrate that they understood the need to systematically implement program practices in response to their programs' theory of change. However, some staff members explained that they provided interventions to achieve specific developmental and academic outcomes.</p> <p>When planning academic interventions, staff emphasized the importance of working to increase student engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that every program has a theory of change and that staff members are trained to implement it. A theory of change might be expressed as a logic model and/or in other statements about specific expectations for the type of programming that, when implemented with high quality, will most likely have a positive impact on youth outcomes. • Continue to focus on student engagement and making connections between program activities and desired youth outcomes.

Conducting the quality study as a research-practice partnership provided a unique opportunity to build on previous statewide efforts to support afterschool program quality. The QT has remained central to those efforts. In addition to the quality study, the UEPC and the UAN collaboratively designed and implemented a second study, the validity study, which focused on better understanding the QT and how it can be used to promote afterschool program quality. The next section presents methods and results from the validity study. Following that, we present comprehensive considerations for the network of afterschool program support in Utah.

Validity Study

The purpose of the validity study was to document the accuracy of the QT as a self-assessment measure. We did this by asking site coordinators to complete a section of the QT as a self-report measure and then we used the same section of the QT to conduct observations. Finally, we compared the results of self-reports and observations. The validity study methods provide additional detail about this process.

Validity Study Methods

For the academic year 2016-17, the UAN identified 130 afterschool program sites as priority sites to receive increased support. They chose priority sites based on previous QT results and other factors such as program funding history and experience level of site coordinators. Priority sites received increased support from UAN specialists in the form of site visits, professional development opportunities, goals clarification, and creating action plans. Five UAN Specialists each selected five of their priority sites as a sample for the validity study; a total of 25 validity study sites.

In the fall of 2016, we gave the Developing Meaningful Relationships⁹ (DMR) section of the QT to the 25 site coordinators and asked them to complete it with their staff teams as a self-report measure. We chose the DMR section because it focused primarily on staff and student interactions. Using more than one section of the QT was unrealistic due to time constraints and the need to narrow the scope of self-reports and observations.

The UEPC asked UAN specialist to conduct a minimum of two observations within the three weeks of site coordinators completing self-reports. Specialists explained to site coordinators that self-reports and observations were about ongoing efforts to improve the usefulness of the QT and not about accountability or monitoring. Appendix D shows a table of dates on which self-reports and observations occurred.

In order to have a self-report measure that aligned with an observation measure, researchers made minor changes to the DMR. The changes included specifying observable behaviors and modifying the response scale. The scale was changed from a measure of how well programs felt they met the standards

⁹ The DMR has two subsections. Section A presents standards that one can observe during daily program practices. Section B, however, includes standards that are not easily observed. To collect observation data for Section B, observers met with site coordinators to discuss each indicator and ask for evidence of implementation. Examples of evidence could include documents, websites, examples of implementation, emails, meeting agendas, and the like.

to a measure of frequency of occurrence and the extent to which the standards were met for all students (e.g., occurs some of the time for some students or occurs most of the time for most students).

Using the revised DMR, UAN specialists conducted hour-long observations at the beginning of the academic year. The UEPC asked specialists to observe a variety of activities and activity types, including those related to academic and developmental supports (see Appendix D for a table of activities observed). UAN observers also documented additional information about participants (numbers of participants, grade level, etc.) and the types of spaces in which activities occurred.

In order to improve interrater reliability, two UAN observers conducted a first set of observations together. In other words, each specialist conducted at least one observation with every other specialist. Observers compared scores, resolved potential scoring differences, and submitted one scoring sheet for each paired observation. Site coordinators uploaded 21 self-reports and specialists uploaded 48 observations. The final data set included 21 program sites with matched self-reports and observations.

Analysis

We averaged the scores from the two observations. We calculated mean scores for each DMR indicator and conducted t tests to look for statistically significant differences in self-reports and program site observations (see Table 23). A detailed description of methods and results is available in Appendix D. The results that follow answer the question:

To what extent do self-reported Quality Tool responses align with observer ratings?

Validity Study Results

Self-report means were higher than observation means for all 13 DMR indicators. Results from t tests show that five of the seven *Staff and Youth Relationships* indicator means were significantly higher for self-reports than observations. None of the six *Program, Family, School, and Community Relationships* indicators means were significantly different between self-reports and observations. The fact that the ratings of the indicators in Section B were determined through discussions with site coordinators and the evidence they provided rather than direct observations might account for differences in results between the two sections.

Table 23. Comparison of Self-report and Observation Means

Staff and Youth Relationships		Self-report		Observation		Difference	
Indicators for standard A1: Staff and youth know, respect, and support each other		N	Mean	N	Mean	Dif	p
1) Staff promote a respectful and welcoming environment for all youth.		21	4.33	21	3.95	0.38	0.04
2) Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.		21	4.21	21	3.93	0.28	0.13
3) Staff promote and demonstrate respect for all cultural backgrounds and ability levels.		21	4.36	21	3.56	0.80	0.00
4) Staff respect, listen, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.		21	4.08	21	3.30	0.78	0.00
5) Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.		21	4.32	21	3.72	0.60	0.00
6) Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.		21	4.32	21	3.81	0.51	0.05
7) Staff encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.		19	3.84	19	2.50	1.34	0.01
Indicators for standard B1: Program communicates and collaborates with school and community		N	Mean	N	Mean	Dif	p
1) Program engages in school and community collaborations to plan and implement intentionally designed programs based on youth needs and interests.		21	3.36	21	3.25	0.11	0.64
2) Program builds relationships with arts, cultural, service learning and other organizations to expand and enhance program offerings.		21	3.38	21	3.24	0.14	0.60
3) Program develops and maintains positive working relationships with partners.		21	3.29	21	2.74	0.55	0.06
Indicators for standard B2: Program fosters family engagement to support program goals		N	Mean	N	Mean	Dif	p
1) Program encourages family engagement and maintains ongoing outreach efforts with parents.		21	2.88	21	2.47	0.41	0.11
2) Program makes community resource information available to families.		21	3.14	21	2.74	0.40	0.07
3) Staff interact with parents/guardians on matters concerning the well-being of their youth.		21	3.83	21	3.45	0.38	0.17

Data Sources: DMR self-reports and UAN specialists' observations

Validity Study Key Findings

- Self-reported responses to the DMR section of the QT did not align with observer ratings.
- The means comparison of self-reports and observations suggests that QT self-reports were inflated, at least for some indicators.

Discussion of Findings and Opportunities for Utah’s Afterschool Network

This discussion builds on the collective findings from the quality study and the validity study. The quality study found support for a new continuous improvement model of afterschool program quality. The validity study concluded that self-reported QT results may be inflated. The following three sections discuss overall findings and considerations related to the QT, the features of high quality programs, and a revised continuous improvement model.

UAN Quality Assessment Tool

The UAN Quality Assessment Tool played a central role in both the quality study and the validity study. The QT is an important tool for addressing program quality; we recommend using the QT as one feature of an integrated continuous improvement model. In order to maximize the potential of the QT, we suggest that funders and technical assistance providers promote it as one source of evidence, among many, that site coordinators can use to improve program quality and maximize youth outcomes.

Results from the validity study suggested that respondents were inflating self-reports of program quality. Although the quality study did not follow the same methodology as the validity study, patterns of inflated self-reports were similar in both studies. We suggest that technical assistance providers conceptualize the QT as a set of standards. Despite the noted inflation, both specialists and site coordinators have attested to the usefulness of the QT in providing critical guidelines for program improvement. While the QT does not appear to function well as an objective measure of program quality, this does not diminish the value of the QT as an important source of information about program quality standards. It is good practice to ask program providers to consider their daily practices in relationship to the QT and to use QT scale responses to understand their perceptions.

Utilizing an observation tool(s) could provide a more objective measure of program quality. Adopting an observation tool could also provide important third-party evidence for making program improvement decisions. Specialists reported that using a structured observation tool provided important context and structure for discussing program improvement strategies with site coordinators. However, consensus among specialists was that the QT was not created or intended to be used as an observation tool and functioned marginally in that capacity. The use of an observation tool was a valuable component of the quality study and is an important aspect of the revised QIM. In order to more accurately and objectively measure program quality, technical assistance providers could use the QT standards to create a new observation tool, or choose a preexisting tool that has already been validated and that aligns with and extends the content of the UAN QT. Appendix E provides an overview of program quality standards for all 50 states and offers a list of observations tools for consideration.

Features of High Quality Programs

We reviewed empirical studies, evaluation reports, and syntheses of research that identified features of high quality afterschool programs. We found some consensus around broad program quality features, but no evidence that the field has adopted specific measurement tools to assess program quality. However, there are themes within the literature and there are several measurement tools available. Table 22 offers a summary of program quality features and Appendix E includes a list of available observation tools that could be used to measure program quality.

Many program quality features identified in the literature are well-aligned with the content of the QT. Much of the content identified in Table 22 is evident in the UAN QT. Specifically, the *Develop Meaningful Relationships* section focuses on developing and maintaining relationships and working with school, family, and external partners. The *Learn New Skills* section focuses on engaging students in meaningful activities, providing academic support, and providing enriching developmental activities. The *Be Safe* section addresses many aspects of staff quality and maintaining a safe environment for students. Similarly, the *Administration* section also addresses issues of operating with a quality staff team, having policies and procedures in place, and purposefully planning to improve quality.

Revised Program Quality Improvement Model

The revised QIM (Figure 6) is the result of exploring lessons learned from the quality study and the validity study. One goal in revising the original QIM was to improve its usability and accessibility for site coordinators. We removed the dosage column from the revised model. Other substantive changes include replacing the column heading *Improvement Strategies* with the heading *Data Driven Improvement Cycle* and adding *youth engagement* as a link between staff behaviors and youth outcomes.

We designed the original QIM as a technical assistance model; to be implemented properly, it relied on the work of UAN specialists. Given what we learned through the quality study, technical assistance is indeed an important resource for using the QIM. However, there may be room to offer the QIM for site coordinators to implement on their own, or with minimal TA. Doing so will require the creation of a technical assistance guide that explains, in detail, each aspect of the QIM and how to use it.

For the past several years, the UAN has asked site coordinators to use QT results to create annual action plans for program improvement. We suggest that these action plans be modified to align with the revised QIM. In other words, revised action plans would call for utilizing multiple data sources in addition to the QT, using evidence to plan strategies, and implementing those evidence-based strategies to positively influence staff behaviors.

Once basic program structures are in place with regards to administrative practices and safety standards, program quality improvement strategies should focus heavily on staff-student and student-student interactions. Well-trained staff teams that create positive learning environments, build relationships, and provide engaging opportunities for students are key features of program quality. These three features appeared as themes throughout the literature and also emerged in the findings of the quality study. Like the original QIM, the revised version suggests a focus on interactions with staff and students as the key leverage point for improving program quality.

In the revised QIM, we added youth engagement as an intermediate step between staff behaviors and youth outcomes. The revised model builds on the QT standards by further emphasizing the importance of student engagement. The importance of student engagement emerged in quality study results, as well as in the literature. Like many authors, we believe that youth engagement is a key mediator between staff behavior and youth outcomes (Berkel, Mauricio, Schoenfelder, & Sandler, 2011¹⁰, Greene et al., 2012, Grossman et al., 2007). We represent this as a critical link between staff and youth outcomes.

¹⁰ Berkel, et al., (2011) conceptualized engagement as a broader concept that they referred to as student responsiveness. They included program attendance, active participation, home practice, and satisfaction in the operational definition of responsiveness.

The quality study included several tools that could be adapted to the new QIM. Revised implementation logs may be useful to track progress, improve alignment of efforts between specialists and coordinators, and improve focus on specific improvement efforts. Similarly, we designed the staff survey to reflect the staff behaviors identified in the QIM. Future use of the QIM may find the staff survey helpful as a needs assessment tool or for documenting changes in staff understanding and implementation of program practices. We recommend careful consideration and adoption of an observation tool(s) that focuses on positive learning environments (including the quality, diversity, and implementation of activities), building relationships, and providing engaging opportunities for students.

We learned through the quality study that specialists and site coordinators had varied understandings of technical assistance, professional development, and coaching. In order to accurately use the tools created for the quality study, specialists will need to provide technical assistance, professional development, and coaching as specific capacity building efforts. *Technical assistance* is a broad term used in education, business, and government, to describe services that provide capacity-building opportunities for staff members and ongoing support for implementation. The overarching purpose for technical assistance is to support changes and improvements in the workplace. Examples of technical assistance include *professional development* sessions or trainings designed to increase staff members' knowledge, skills, and dispositions about their role in the workplace. Technical assistance also includes coaching or mentoring and reflective meetings as part of ongoing support for implementation of new practices learned in training sessions. *Coaching* occurs after new skills are introduced in professional development sessions, when the technical assistance provider works with staff members to practice and improve job tasks. Research by Joyce and Showers (2002) demonstrated the significance of coaching as a follow-up to training to obtain desired outcomes. Reflective meetings support conversations about what worked and what did not work to get desired results.

Specialists may find the following six strategies helpful to support changes and improvements in the programs they serve (Bradley, Munger, & Hord, 2015; Hord & Roussin, 2013). These strategies can be paired with the QIM and offer additional structure to providing technical assistance.

1. Develop and communicate a shared vision
2. Plan and provide resources
3. Invest in professional learning
4. Check progress
5. Continue to give support
6. Create an atmosphere for change

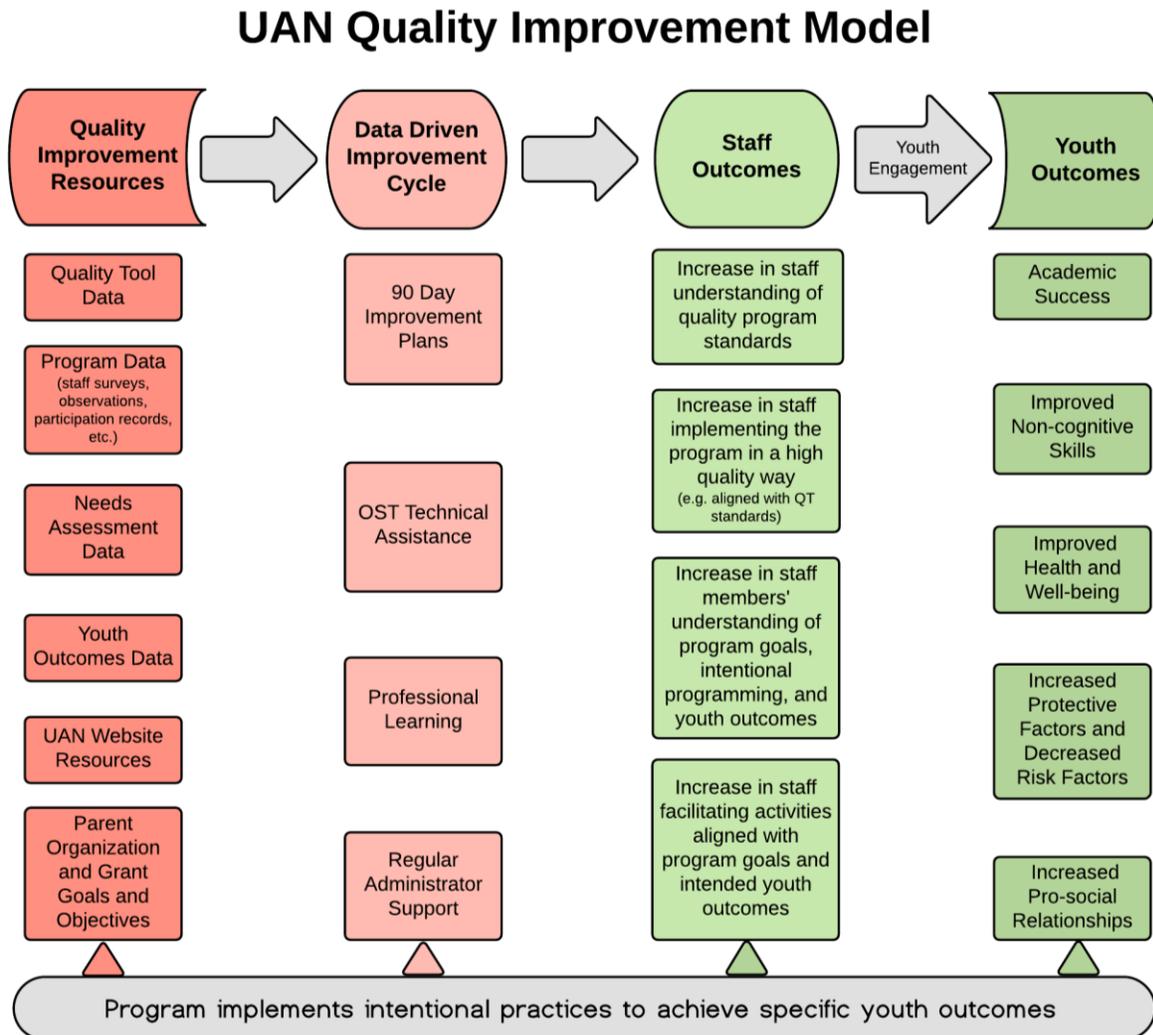
Intentional programming is an essential aspect of program quality. As discussed in the introduction to this report, intentional programming is reflected in definitions of program quality (see page 6). Further, authors have emphasized its importance (Duerden & Gillard, 2011; Little, 2014). We agree that programs should be very specific about the youth outcomes they hope to achieve and how they expect to achieve them. Such intentional programming is usually expressed through logic models and theory of change statements. We recommend that programs use such resources as guidelines for programming. Staff members throughout the organization, from directors to program staff, should be well-versed in understanding and implementing their program's logic model. The grey bar across the bottom of the revised QIM presents intentional programming as a concept that unifies each section.

Considerations and Next Steps for Implementing the QIM

The following table summarizes key considerations from the discussion and offers specific next steps for implementing the QIM. We encourage all stakeholders in Utah’s network of afterschool programs to continue their trajectory of growth and development. Improving afterschool program quality is an ongoing and iterative process. As such, programs should continuously engage in quality improvement efforts to maximize program effectiveness.

Considerations for Implementing the QIM	Next Steps for Implementing the QIM
Use the QT as one feature of an integrated continuous improvement model and promote the QT as a set of standards rather than a measure of program quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the QT as one source of evidence, among many, that site coordinators can use to improve program quality and maximize outcomes. • Adopt and utilize an observation tool(s) to provide a more objective measure of program quality. Ensure that the observation tool aligns with QT standards.
Create a technical assistance guide that explains, in detail, each aspect of the QIM and how to use it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the technical assistance guide to train specialists on using the QIM. • Make the technical assistance guide available to site coordinators and ask for feedback from them to determine if they find it helpful as a standalone resource with limited TA.
Use the QIM to create annual program improvement plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify the current program improvement framework so that it is based on the QIM rather than only on the QT.
Include intentional programming in annual program improvement efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance, training, and support for programs to create logic models. • Integrate intentional program design into annual program improvement plans.
Make staff-student and student-student interactions a primary focus of program improvement efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train specialists on strategies for supporting staff-student and student-student relationships. • Offer additional trainings on these topics at statewide and regional afterschool conferences.
Focus on youth engagement as a critical step between staff behaviors and youth outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an observation tool that includes youth engagement. • Train specialists on strategies for promoting youth engagement. • Offer additional trainings on youth engagement at statewide and regional afterschool conferences.
Utilize implementation logs and staff surveys for future implementations of the QIM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine and improve these instruments. • Standardize how these instruments should be used within 90-day program improvement cycles. Include this information in the TA guide.

Figure 6. Revised UAN Quality Improvement Model



Conclusion

Conducting this study provided unique opportunities to better understand the program quality improvement efforts of 10 afterschool programs. While the results from this study are not universally generalizable, they do provide compelling evidence for the value of Utah’s QT standards and the integration of those standards into a more comprehensive model of program quality improvement.

In most cases, the content of the QT is well-aligned with key aspects of program quality referenced in the literature. As the research regarding afterschool program quality continues to develop, the content of the QT should be revisited periodically to look for alignment of content in the QT with current research recommendations. We recommend that the QT be viewed as a living document that will continue to develop over time. We offer the revised afterschool program quality improvement model as a conclusion to this study. We also offer the QIM as the next chapter in Utah’s efforts to support students and families through high quality afterschool programming.

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Appendix A. Qualitative Analysis

We used Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method and Miles and Huberman's (1994) cross-case method as the framework for qualitative data analysis. The constant comparative method accommodated our need to test the usefulness of the QIM, while also providing opportunities for inductive inquiry about how the QIM could be improved. We began with an initial round of in vivo coding (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), during which we developed codes from the phrases of interviewees. These phrases became themes or *parent codes*. Next, using axial coding, we looked for sub-themes, or *child codes*, related to larger concepts reflected by the parent codes. To establish codes and standardize units of texts, the team focused on reconciling two types of reliability through accuracy with which a code was developed (intercoder agreement), and reproducibility across coders (intercoder reliability) (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman & Pedersen, 2013). This process of addressing reliability allowed the coders to discuss and reconcile discrepancies for the same units of text without sacrificing meaning through the simplification of codes (Campbell et al., 2013). Additionally, this discussion improved the problem of unitization by labeling certain blocks of text as appropriate for a particular child code within a parent code or as representative of a new and unique child code (Campbell et al., 2013; Krippendorff, 1995).

In the constant comparative analysis, frequencies were utilized to code meaningful units based on responses per question, per respondent. These frequencies facilitated the emergence of themes to be presented via matrices. In order to identify themes and patterns within the focus groups across multiple respondents, researchers compiled in vivo codes in matrices by question and speaker for each case (afterschool program) (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Blending the constant comparative analysis with a cross-case method, we utilized matrices to cross-analyze themes and patterns across respondent groups and programs.

The research team used a cross-case method to study the afterschool programs as individual cases and compare them to one another to better understand themes and their relationships within and across sites (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This provided two primary benefits to the study: 1) a more structured look at differences and similarities among the programs; and 2) a deeper understanding of the nuances of implementing the QIM within the context of a specific program (Miles, et al., 2014; Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). The structured program comparisons led the team to combine the traditional TA and QI sites in the analyses because they were more similar than they were different. Understanding the nuances of the program sites illuminated the degree of alignment across data sources and roles (specialist, coordinator, and staff).

The cross-case analysis began with the study team independently examining one QI and one traditional TA case across qualitative sources for emergent patterns via in vivo coding, then collaboratively examining the cases to identify similarities and differences (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al, 2014). The study team presented the standardized variables in matrices by case and theme, with emphasis upon standard variables common across cases (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Miles et al, 2014; Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). Last, the standard variables emergent from focus groups with specialists, coordinators and staff, were utilized to guide the generation of additional standard variables in the analysis of the qualitative data collected through specialist observations, specialist implementation logs, and staff surveys. These data are presented and synthesized using meta-matrices

that stack standard variables across cases to allow for both a rich overall explanation and detailed examples (Mills et al., 2010).

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Appendix B. Specialists' Comments about Using the QT as an Observation Tool

Quality Tool as an Observation Tool	Specialists' Comments
<p>Specialists stated that the QT is not an ideal observation tool.</p>	<p><i>I think there's some issues with the tool itself, that some of the rating –Because we're trying to keep consistent rating throughout the whole tool, isn't necessarily applicable or make sense if a program were using it. For instance, when we're... observing staff to staff interaction, but the scale is with most students most of the time, some students some of the time, and it's not a staff to student or student to student tool. (Specialist, Mid-Year Focus Group)</i></p> <p><i>The quality tool is not an observation tool, and it showed in doing this. There are not set standard[s] as to what each level of rating is. So what I was looking for, what does it mean when it happens some of the time with some of the students? Where is the cutoff for that? What does it mean when, you know, it rarely happens?...So that's what I think the problem with this is...it's doable as an observation tool, as we used it, but it's not reliable as an observation tool...(Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)</i></p> <p><i>I found my experience with going with someone varied wildly depending on who I went with. I had some experiences where we sat down and we talked about the different evidences that we saw and we came to a consensus, and I had experience where it was, "Just put whatever you want down and that's good with me." (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)</i></p> <p><i>I think there's going to be a disconnect because the program is using the tool to evaluate their whole program, and we're using the tool to evaluate one activity. So we might not be seeing what the program is seeing or might not be capturing what they think it's capturing when we go in and do an observation. (Specialist, End-of-Year Focus Group)</i></p>

Data Sources: Specialist Mid-year and End-of-Year Focus Groups

Appendix C. Alignment of Program Quality Topics Addressed

Table 24. Alignment of Specific Program Quality Topics¹¹

Program Quality Topic	Percent of Alignment Reported by Specialists and QI Site Coordinators							
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Data driven improvement planning	60	33	50	60	20	0	0	50
Giving feedback to staff members	75	20	0	80	100	100	75	66
Developing or revising program goals	33	33	0	50	50	33	66	0
Developing or revising our theory of change or logic model	33	0		33	0		100	0
Planning or implementing professional development	20	25	0	60	25	50	50	50
Planning activities to achieve specific student outcomes	0	75	100	33	60	66	0	0
Improving school partnerships	33	100	0	0	0	25	0	100
Improving external partnerships	0	0		0	0	0	0	100
Improving family engagement	33	0		33	0	33	50	50
Improving staff-student relationships	40	50	0	50	50	33	33	100
QT section: Administration	50	0		0	0	0	0	0
QT section: Safety	33	0		0	0			
QT section: Learn new skills	100	0		0	0	0	50	0
Other	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	
None						0		
Average Alignment	36%	24%	19%	29%	25%	26%	33%	43%

Data Sources: Specialist Implementation Log and QI Site Coordinator Implementation Log. Note: Empty cells indicate the program quality topic was not addressed in that month; zeros indicate no alignment.

¹¹ To calculate percent of alignment between respondent groups, we counted the number of times a program quality topic was reported as a focus in a particular month. This value acted as the denominator. The number of times that same aspect was reported by both a specialist and site coordinator acted as the numerator. For example, in October, the program quality aspect *giving feedback to staff members* was reported as a focus of technical assistance for four of the five QI sites (n=4). Both the specialist and site coordinator reported this aspect for three of these four sites (n=3). The percent alignment was therefore calculated as 75% (3/4).

Appendix D. Validity Study Procedures, Methods, and Results

Table 25 provides detailed information about the dates of self-reports and observations for each afterschool program site.

Table 25. Dates of Site Coordinator Self-reports and Dates and Lengths of UAN Specialist Observations

Afterschool Program Site	Site Coordinator Self-report Date	Observation 1		Observation 2	
		Date	Length (min)	Date	Length (min)
Validity study site 1	10/31/16	11/14/16	60	12/2/16	90
Validity study site 2	1/13/17	1/18/17	60	1/24/17	45
Validity study site 3		12/27/16		2/16/17	60
Validity study site 4	2/16/17	12/27/16	60	2/21/17	60
Validity study site 5		1/25/17	90	2/13/17	60
Validity study site 6	1/9/17	1/5/17	60	1/24/17	60
Validity study site 7	10/28/16	11/10/16	30	11/21/16	30
Validity study site 8	10/16/16	1/6/17	45	1/18/17	60
Validity study site 9	2/1/17	1/27/17		2/10/17	60
Validity study site 10	12/5/16	12/12/16	75	12/14/16	45
Validity study site 11	1/26/17	1/26/17	55	2/7/17	75
Validity study site 12	11/14/16	11/14/16	60	11/18/16	60
Validity study site 13	1/12/17	1/11/17	105	1/31/17	60
Validity study site 14	11/18/16	12/9/16	60	1/6/17	70
Validity study site 15	1/12/17	1/20/17	45	1/23/17	65
Validity study site 16	3/9/17	2/23/17	100	2/24/17	90
Validity study site 17	11/15/16	11/30/16	30	12/5/16	30
Validity study site 18	10/31/16	11/1/16	120	11/3/16	60
Validity study site 19	10/18/16	10/25/16	60	10/27/16	60
Validity study site 20	10/27/16	11/1/16	60	11/16/16	75
Validity study site 21	11/10/16	1/11/17	35	1/17/17	35
Validity study site 22	12/2/16	12/6/16	60	12/21/16	90
Validity study site 23	11/1/16	2/2/17	45	2/8/17	80
Validity study site 24		1/13/17	75	1/23/17	65
Validity study site 25	12/9/16	12/15/16	30	12/20/16	15

¹Rows highlighted in gray indicate sites not included due to lack of data or at request of UAN. Items left blank indicate lack of data.

Table 26 shows the types of activities that were happening at the time the observations occurred.

Table 26. Types of Activities Observed by UAN Specialist by Number and Percent

Type of Activity Observed	Number of Times Activity Type was Observed	% of Total Observations
Academic Support and Skillbuilding: homework help (19), tutoring (8), computer skills building (5)	32	31.7%
Academic Enrichment: science (9), ELA (6), social studies (3), math (2)	20	19.8%
Fine Arts: crafts (9), visual arts enrich (4), drama (2), dance (1)	16	15.8%
Open, unstructured time	8	7.9%
Athletics: fitness/exercise class (4), sports-specific skills (1), sports-games (1)	6	5.9%
Community service/civic engagement	5	5.0%
Health/well-being	5	5.0%
Other: cooking (3), agricultural activities (1)	4	4.0%
Cultural awareness projects/clubs	2	2.0%
Games and Puzzles	2	2.0%
College/career development	1	1.0%
Total	101	100.0%

Table 27 shows results from the statistical means comparison.

Table 27. Self-report and Observation Means Comparison

Staff and Youth Relationships	Self-report		Observation		df	t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Standard A1: Staff and youth know, respect, and support each other						
1) Staff promote a respectful and welcoming environment for all youth.	4.33	0.71	3.95	0.78	20	2.16*
2) Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.	4.21	0.70	3.93	0.82	20	1.56
3) Staff promote and demonstrate respect for all cultural backgrounds and ability levels.	4.36	0.71	3.56	0.95	20	3.44*
4) Staff respect, listen, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.	4.08	0.74	3.30	0.93	20	4.27*
5) Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.	4.32	0.72	3.72	0.94	20	3.48*
6) Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.	4.32	0.70	3.81	1.23	20	2.08
7) Staff encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.	3.84	1.01	2.50	1.37	18	3.21*
Standard B1: Program communicates and collaborates with school and community						
1) Program engages in school and community collaborations to plan and implement intentionally designed programs based on youth needs and interests.	3.36	1.05	3.25	0.82	20	0.48
2) Program builds relationships with arts, cultural, service learning and other organizations to expand and enhance program offerings.	3.38	1.28	3.24	1.41	20	0.53
3) Program develops and maintains positive working relationships with partners.	3.29	0.98	2.74	1.17	20	2.00
Standard B2: Program fosters family engagement to support program goals						
1) Program encourages family engagement and maintains ongoing outreach efforts with parents.	2.88	0.83	2.47	0.72	20	1.67
2) Program makes community resource information available to families.	3.14	1.11	2.74	1.11	20	1.91
3) Staff interact with parents/guardians on matters concerning the well-being of their youth.	3.83	0.73	3.45	1.04	20	1.43

*Indicates significant difference in self-report and observation mean scores.

Appendix E. Features of Statewide Afterschool Programs

Table 28 presents each state's approach to measuring program quality. States are listed by name in the first column, followed by a column indicating whether evidence of a statewide network is available online. Additional features of program quality (Standards, Standardized Measurement Tool, and Quality Improvement Cycle) are also listed. Checkmarks (✓) indicate the presence of a feature. Cells left blank signify lack of evidence of a feature. The features, as referred to in this table, are defined as follows:

Standards: a list of benchmarks that guide high-quality afterschool programs

Standardized Measurement Tool: a formal evaluation method, aligned with standards, that assesses program quality. Results are used to inform program change.

Quality Improvement Cycle: a method of quality development based on recurring steps of implementation, assessment, and improvement.

Thirty-two (32) statewide networks have evidence of standards on their website. Of these, 25 networks recommend the use of a specific standardized measurement tool. Four states, Arkansas, Maryland, Missouri, and Oklahoma, use the Weikart Youth Program Quality Assessment. Other tools used by states are listed below. Evidence of a quality improvement cycle in which programs are meant to be implemented, assessed, and improved systematically is part of the evaluation frameworks of 20 statewide networks.

- Arizona Quality Standards Assessment Tool
- California Afterschool Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool
- Connecticut After School Self-Assessment Tool
- Florida Afterschool Network Quality Self-Assessment and Improvement Guide
- Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Assessment Tool
- Indiana Quality Program Self-assessment
- Kansas Afterschool Program Quality Self-Assessment Tools
- Assessment of Program Practices Tool and School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (MA)
- MOST Standards of Quality Self-Assessment Checklist (MI)
- New Jersey Quality Standards for Afterschool Assessment Tool
- Quality Self-Assessment Tool (NY)
- North Carolina Center for Afterschool Program Self-Assessment
- Ohio Quality Self-Assessment Tool
- The Oregon Quality Framework for Afterschool and Summer Programs
- PSAYDN Quality Self-Assessment Tool (PA)
- Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment Tool
- National AfterSchool Association's Core Knowledge & Competencies Self-Assessments (SD)
- TX Standards for High Quality Afterschool, Summer & Expanded Learning Programs Assessment Tool
- Utah Afterschool Program Quality Assessment and Improvement Tool
- Washington Assessment for Youth Programs
- A Program Assessment System (WY)

This research is limited to the information made available online by each network and the ease of navigation of each website. As networks scale up afterschool programming quality, information made public on program websites may be inaccurate.

Table 28. Features of Afterschool Program Networks by State

State	Statewide Network	Standards	Standardized Measurement Tool	Quality Improvement Cycle
Alabama	✓			
Alaska	✓			
Arizona	✓	✓	✓	
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓	✓
California	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorado	✓			
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓	
Delaware				
Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawaii	✓	✓		
Idaho	✓			
Illinois	✓	✓		✓
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	✓
Iowa	✓	✓		
Kansas	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kentucky	✓			
Louisiana	✓			
Maine	✓			
Maryland	✓	✓	✓	✓
Massachusetts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Michigan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minnesota	✓			
Mississippi		✓		✓
Missouri	✓		✓	
Montana	✓			
Nebraska	✓	✓		
Nevada	✓	✓		
New Hampshire	✓			
New Jersey	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Mexico	✓			
New York	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Dakota	✓			
Ohio	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oklahoma	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oregon	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pennsylvania	✓	✓	✓	✓

Rhode Island	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Carolina	✓			
South Dakota	✓	✓	✓	
Tennessee	✓			
Texas	✓	✓	✓	
Utah	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vermont	✓			
Virginia	✓	✓		
Washington	✓	✓	✓	
West Virginia	✓	✓		
Wisconsin	✓			
Wyoming	✓	✓	✓	

Table 29. Available Afterschool Program Quality Observations Tools

Afterschool Program Quality Observation Tool	Description
Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT) <i>National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education</i>	Grade level: K-8 Fee: Yes Quality features assessed: program climate, relationships, approaches and programming, partnerships, and youth participation.
Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Observation Tool (CORAL) <i>Public/Private Ventures and James Irvine Foundation</i>	Grade level: 1-5 Fee: No Quality features assessed: adult-youth relations, effective instruction, peer cooperation, behavior management, and literacy instruction
Out-of-School Time Observation Tool (OST) <i>Policy Studies Associates, Inc.</i>	Grade level: K-12 Fee: No Quality features assessed: structural and institutional features and instructional activities related to youth outcomes
Program Observation Tool (POT) <i>National AfterSchool Association (NAA)</i>	Grade level: K-8 Fee: Yes Quality features assessed: indoor and outdoor environment, activities, safety, health and nutrition, and administration
Promising Practices Rating Scale (PPRS) <i>Charles Stewart Mott Foundation</i>	Grade level: K-8 Fee: No Quality features assessed: supportive relations with adults, supportive relations with peers, level of engagement, opportunities for cognitive growth, appropriate structure, over-traditional TA, chaos, and mastery orientation.

Afterschool Program Quality Observation Tool	Description
Program Quality Observation Scale (PQO) <i>Deborah Lowe Vandell and Kim Pierce</i>	Grade level: 1-5 Fee: No Quality features assessed: qualitative ratings of environment and staff and time samples of child's activities and interactions
Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) <i>New York State Afterschool Network</i>	Grade level: K-12 Fee: No Quality features assessed: environment/climate, administration/organization, relationships, staffing/professional development, programming/activities, linkages between day and after school, youth participation/engagement, parent/family/community partnerships, program sustainability/growth, and measuring outcomes/evaluation
Quality Assurance System (QAS) <i>Foundations, Inc.</i>	Grade level: K-12 Fee: Yes Quality features assessed: program planning and improvement, leadership, facility and program space, health and safety, staffing, family and community connections, and social climate.
School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) <i>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</i>	Grade level: K-6 Fee: Yes Quality features assessed: space and furnishings, health and safety, activities, interactions, program structure, and staff development
Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) <i>Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality</i>	Grade level: K-6 Fee: Yes Quality features assessed: safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, engagement, youth-centered policies and practices, high expectations for youth and staff, and access

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