



UTAH
Afterschool
Network



In partnership with

**WORKFORCE
SERVICES**
CHILD CARE

The Utah Afterschool Incentive and Credential

Writing Samples

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Self-Rating

IDENTIFY

3

A. Is aware of the science of learning and development and basic benchmarks for growth and development.

4

B. Recognizes that all children and youth have individual needs, temperaments, characteristics, abilities and develop at an individual rate.

3

C. Understands differences in individual development.

4

D. Recognizes that children and youth learn and develop through experience and active participation.

2

E. Understands current youth culture in the context of child and youth development and experiences.

3

F. Identifies physical, cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, and creative development benchmarks.

3

G. Identifies individual personalities, temperaments, development, learning styles, and culture.

Self-Rating

APPLY

3

A. Uses services and resources to promote growth and development.

2

B. Uses current child and youth development theories and research.

3

C. Communicates about physical, cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, cultural and creative differences among children and youth.

3

D. Collaborates with others to promote growth and development.

2

E. Explains the multiple influences on development and learning.

4

F. Names assets of all children, youth, and colleagues — including and especially those who are neuro-diverse.

2

G. Articulates, evaluates and applies current SOLD theories, research, and policy.

Self-Rating

AMPLIFY

2

A. Designs and delivers professional learning experiences for other staff and stakeholders on child and youth growth and development.

2

Supports others to use a critical equity lens when applying child and youth growth and development principles, encouraging culturally appropriate and antiracist assumptions and practices.

1

C. Recommends and promotes equitable program and organizational policies, PD, and practices rooted in child and youth growth and development theories and research.

1

D. Advocates for equitable public and philanthropic policies, practices, and funding practices supported by child and youth growth and development theories and research.

Content Area 1

Examples, notes & evidence:

I frequently adjust programming to accommodate individual learning styles, ensuring each child can engage meaningfully. For example, I incorporate visual aids for visual learners, interactive group projects for social learners, and hands-on experiments for kinesthetic learners. During a recent art activity, I offered both guided instructions and an open-ended option, allowing youth to choose the approach that best suited them. This flexibility has led to improved participation and higher levels of engagement among a diverse group of children.

I recently completed a workshop on neurodiversity in afterschool settings, which deepened my understanding of how to support youth with various cognitive and developmental needs. The training emphasized strengths-based approaches and practical tools like sensory breaks, clear visual routines, and flexible expectations. As a result, I have implemented quiet zones and visual timetables in our space to better support children with sensory processing differences. The workshop also inspired me to initiate conversations with colleagues about incorporating inclusive practices into our daily programming.

I collaborated with school staff to support a child with ADHD who was struggling with transitions and focus during our program. We developed a structured choice board that allowed the child to pick from pre-approved activities, giving them a sense of autonomy while maintaining clear boundaries. I also implemented a visual schedule and verbal countdowns before transitions, which significantly reduced their anxiety and improved their participation. This collaboration helped align our supports across settings, creating consistency that benefited the child's overall development.

REFLECTION & PROFESSIONAL PLAN

Review your self-assessment ratings. Consider your results as you think about your areas of strength and your areas of opportunity. Reflect on your daily work as you answer the following questions and set priorities.

STRENGTHS:

On which competencies did you score the highest? Why?

My highest self-assessment scores were in identifying individual needs (Identify B, D) and recognizing the unique strengths of all children (Apply F). I believe these strengths stem from my background in inclusive recreation, where I learned to design activities that meet a broad range of needs and abilities. I also spend a great deal of time observing youth behavior and engaging in one-on-one interactions to better understand their preferences and challenges. This hands-on experience has helped me become responsive and empathetic to individual differences.

What opportunities do you have or could you create to demonstrate leadership or support others with developing these competencies?

I see opportunities to lead short peer workshops or reflective discussion groups focused on adapting programming for neurodiverse learners. For instance, I could share strategies like using sensory tools, offering multiple modes of expression, and designing inclusive group dynamics. I can also support new staff during onboarding by helping them recognize and respond to different learning styles in daily activities. By modeling inclusive practices and providing practical resources, I can contribute to a more supportive and adaptive team culture.

OPPORTUNITIES:

On which competencies did you score the lowest? Why? What makes these challenging for you?

My lowest scores were in the Amplify section (C, D) and Apply (E, G), particularly around articulating current SOLD (Science of Learning and Development) theories and advocating at policy levels. I find it challenging to translate research and theory into practice, especially when it comes to influencing broader systems or policies. My training has mostly focused on direct service rather than academic frameworks or systemic change, which limits my confidence in these areas. I want to deepen my knowledge and find ways to bridge theory with practical action in my program.

From your answer above, pick two competencies that could be most impactful in your work. List these competencies as goals.

Goal 1:

In 3 months, I will deepen my understanding of current child and youth development theories by completing at least one evidence-based training or reading a minimum of three peer-reviewed articles. I will apply this knowledge by integrating at least two evidence-based strategies into my program planning and documenting how I explain these strategies in two stakeholder communications (e.g., presentations, reports, or emails). This will increase my confidence in using research to inform decisions and communicate effectively with partners.

Goal 2:

In 6 months, I will build my confidence and skills to advocate for equitable practices in OST settings by participating in at least one advocacy workshop or training and reviewing two case studies or policy briefs on inclusive practices. I will practice these skills by drafting one recommendation for an inclusive policy or systemic support relevant to my program and presenting it to a supervisor or peer group for feedback. This will help me effectively speak up for changes that benefit all children, particularly those from marginalized communities.

ACTION PLAN

Complete the following professional development action plan to meet the identified goals.

ASK YOURSELF	GOAL 1	GOAL 2
What materials and/or resources will I need to meet this goal?	Access to academic articles, professional development videos, and NAA resource guides.	Policy briefs, equity frameworks, and examples of inclusive OST policies.
What professional development will I need to meet this goal? What topics/content will be the most helpful?	Training in foundational youth development theories and current research on learning science.	Advocacy and leadership training specific to OST, with a focus on equity and inclusion.
What form of professional development would be the most effective in helping me meet this goal (workshop, college course, research, study group, coaching, etc.)?	Online webinar series or workshops with reflection components.	Coaching or mentoring from experienced OST leaders or participation in an equity-focused study group.
How and where will I find the professional development that I need?	Explore offerings from the National Afterschool Association (NAA), local OST networks, and online platforms like Youth.gov.	Request support from my program director and seek opportunities through community organizations or professional networks.
How will I find the time and money to take trainings, etc.?	Use weekly planning periods (1 hour/week) and apply my program's PD stipend.	Utilize monthly staff PD time and request budget support or reimbursements as needed.
What type of support might I need in my program in order to help me implement my new skills or apply my new knowledge?	Encouragement from supervisors to share takeaways with the team and time to apply new practices in planning.	Join or help create an internal equity committee and receive feedback on advocacy efforts.
How will I know if I am making progress? How will my practice change?	I will be able to reference relevant theories when designing programs and explain the rationale behind my strategies.	I will draft a proposal for a policy or practice improvement and feel more confident participating in decision-making conversations.
What are the first two actions I will take to meet each goal?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sign up for a youth development theory webinar. 2. Read one research summary per week. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schedule a mentoring session with a director. Review current 2. organizational policies through an equity lens.
When will I complete each of these steps?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This week 2. Ongoing for 2 months 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within 2 weeks 2. By the Next Staff Meeting

For more OST resources and professional development information please visit

WWW.NAAWEB.ORG

Understanding Youth Development for Effective Afterschool Programming (WC: 499)

In afterschool settings, understanding the developmental domains of youth is essential for creating engaging, supportive, and growth-oriented environments. The five key areas of youth development—physical, behavioral, language, social-emotional, and cognitive—each play a role in how children learn and grow. By recognizing the typical progression of these domains, I design both the environment and daily activities to meet youth where they are developmentally.

For example, children ages 8–12 are refining gross and fine motor skills. They enjoy physical challenges like sports, crafts, and dance. I set up designated active zones and provide materials that support movement and coordination, such as building kits, sports equipment, and art supplies. These areas promote physical development while encouraging teamwork and creative expression.

Behaviorally, this age group is learning self-regulation and decision-making. I support this by creating structured routines with clear expectations. Visual timers, posted schedules, and consistent transitions help youth manage time and behavior. I involve them in setting group norms and offer meaningful choices within activities. This gives them ownership over their behavior and strengthens accountability.

Language development is marked by expanded vocabulary and the ability to express more complex ideas. I create space for discussion through community circles and journaling. The room includes quiet writing corners and prompts that encourage peer dialogue. I incorporate storytelling, debates, and small-group projects to support both expressive and receptive language development.

Social-emotionally, youth are building empathy, friendships, and self-identity. They often seek peer approval and may struggle with inclusion. I design activities that foster collaboration, such as team challenges, mentorship opportunities, and reflective check-ins. The environment includes a calm corner with sensory tools and emotion charts to support self-regulation. I model empathy and coach youth through conflicts, reinforcing emotional safety and a sense of belonging.

Cognitively, youth are transitioning from concrete to more abstract thinking. They enjoy solving problems and exploring cause-and-effect relationships. I incorporate STEM projects, critical thinking games, and inquiry-based learning with flexible outcomes to accommodate varying abilities. The space includes brainstorming tools, research stations, and display boards for youth to share their thinking.

Each element of the environment—from flexible seating and accessible materials to visual supports and youth-led planning—is created with these developmental areas in mind. For example, I include both quiet and active zones, ensuring youth can choose spaces that match their energy and focus levels. I use signage, cues, and layout design to promote autonomy and clarity.

By understanding the interconnectedness of these developmental domains, I create holistic afterschool experiences that support the whole child. My goal is not just to fill time, but to cultivate spaces where youth grow physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially in ways that are intentional, age-appropriate, and meaningful.

Understanding School-Age Development to Inform Practice (WC: 494)

Understanding the developmental milestones of school-age children (ages 6–12) is essential in my role as an afterschool professional. Children in this age group experience rapid growth across physical, behavioral, cognitive, and social-emotional domains. I regularly reference a developmental chart to help me recognize typical progressions, anticipate challenges, and design programming that supports youth at every stage.

Physically, children gain better motor control, strength, and coordination. I use this information to plan activities that challenge both gross and fine motor skills. For example, I organize relay races and team sports to support agility and endurance. I also offer art projects and building challenges that require focus and dexterity, allowing youth to refine their fine motor abilities in fun, creative ways.

Behaviorally, I know that youth in this age range are developing self-regulation, understanding rules, and seeking both boundaries and approval. I use this knowledge to establish clear expectations and consistent routines that help children feel secure. I intentionally model respectful behavior and use positive reinforcement to guide choices. When youth struggle with self-control or conflict, I take time to coach them through appropriate responses and help them reflect on their actions.

Cognitively, school-age children are expanding their problem-solving, memory, and reasoning abilities. I design my program to include critical thinking games, STEM challenges, and project-based learning to nurture these skills. For instance, I recently guided a group through a week-long bridge-building project where they tested, revised, and improved their designs. I also build in opportunities for reflection and discussion to help youth think about how they learn and make decisions.

Social-emotionally, children are forming strong peer connections, building empathy, and becoming more self-aware. I prioritize this in my planning by creating opportunities for cooperative play, group projects, and peer mentorship. I also facilitate daily social-emotional learning (SEL) check-ins that help youth build empathy, self-expression, and problem-solving skills. When peer conflict arises, I guide youth in navigating emotions and resolving issues with respect and fairness.

Because I understand how development varies by age, I adjust expectations and strategies to meet each child where they are. I don't expect an 8-year-old to manage the same level of responsibility as a 12-year-old, but I do provide scaffolding and encouragement to help them grow. I also stay aware of how critical peer approval becomes at this stage, so I make group dynamics and inclusivity a central part of my program design.

I don't view developmental charts as rigid checklists. Instead, I use them as dynamic tools that guide how I plan activities, set up environments, and interact with youth. By grounding my practice in child development, I can create a space where youth feel seen, supported, and challenged—socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

CKSC 1 - Option 2: Create or Locate Development Charts

Development Chart: School-Age Youth (Ages 6–12).

Developmental Area - Typical Characteristics Sample Chart

Physical		Improved coordination and motor control; increased stamina; rapid growth during later years; better balance and agility.
Behavioral		Developing self-regulation; increasing independence; understanding and following rules; may test limits and authority.
Cognitive		Expanding attention span; improving memory and reasoning; enjoys problem-solving and strategy games; beginning abstract thinking.
Social- Emotional		Forms strong peer relationships; increasing empathy and fairness; self-esteem influenced by peer acceptance; seeks group belonging.

***Examples can be in the form of graphs or charts. However you feel you can relate the information to you your narrative.**

Applying the Science of Learning and Development in Afterschool Programming **(WC: 495)**

The Science of Learning and Development (SOLD) identifies core principles that shape how young people grow and learn. Two key findings—relationships and malleability—resonate deeply with my experience in afterschool programming. When I understand and apply these concepts intentionally, I can transform my program into a space where youth not only feel safe but also thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

I believe that relationships are foundational to learning and development. According to SOLD, positive, consistent relationships with caring adults help build trust, foster resilience, and support healthy brain development. I prioritize relationship-building from the moment a child walks in. I greet each youth by name, check in with them throughout the day, and ensure that group leaders stay consistent so that strong, trusting bonds can form. When youth know that I see, value, and support them, they become more confident taking academic risks, expressing themselves, and resolving conflicts constructively.

One way I intentionally foster connection is through our “Mentor Moments” initiative. Each week, I set aside 5–10 minutes to spend one-on-one time with a different youth. Whether we’re having a casual conversation, playing a short game, or talking about their interests, I use this time to build trust and learn more about each child. These insights help me coach behavior more effectively, personalize encouragement, and celebrate growth in ways that truly matter to them.

The second principle, malleability, has changed how I view youth development. I now understand that all children have the capacity to grow and change, especially when supported by the right environment, consistent guidance, and meaningful experiences. Development isn’t fixed, and I remind myself of this when I encounter challenging behaviors. Rather than seeing behavior as a problem, I look at it as communication, which is often a sign of unmet needs or underdeveloped skills.

To reflect this mindset, I use restorative circles instead of defaulting to traditional discipline. When conflict arises, I guide conversations where youth can express their feelings, reflect on their actions, and explore how to repair relationships. These conversations promote accountability and personal growth. I’ve seen youth who once struggled with emotional regulation begin to use language from our circles to self-advocate, ask for support, and resolve conflicts more independently. Witnessing this change reinforces my belief in their capacity for growth.

By grounding my work in the principles of relationships and malleability, I’ve helped create a culture rooted in trust, empathy, and growth. SOLD reminds me that every young person has incredible potential and it’s my responsibility to create the conditions where that potential can truly emerge.

CKSC 2 - Requirement: 3 Lesson Plans

1. STEM: Race the Rubber Band Car

- Subject/Topic: STEM – Engineering & Physics
- Activity Name: Race the Rubber Band Car
- Goal/Learning Objective: Youth will explore physics principles such as potential and kinetic energy by building and testing a rubber band-powered car.
- Total Activity Time: 60–70 minutes

- Scaffolding Techniques:
 - Demonstration and visuals
 - Peer-to-peer assistance
 - Templates for younger youth

- Supplies Needed (per youth or small group):
 - 2 plastic bottle caps
 - 1 cardboard rectangle (car body)
 - 2 skewers or straws
 - 1 rubber band
 - Tape, scissors, paperclip
 - Hot glue gun (used by staff)

Steps & Time Estimates:

1. Introduction & Energy Discussion – 10 minutes
 - Ask: “What happens when you stretch a rubber band?”
 - Watch or demonstrate a simple rubber band car.
2. Design and Build the Car – 30 minutes
 - Punch holes, insert axles, attach wheels.
 - Tape/glue components securely.
 - Wrap rubber band for propulsion.
3. Test and Adjust – 10–15 minutes
 - Wind the rubber band and race cars.
 - Encourage retesting with adjustments (wheel alignment, weight, etc.).
4. Group Reflection and Wrap-Up – 10–15 minutes
 - What worked well?
 - What would you redesign?
 - Quick group share or journaling.

CKSC 2 - Requirement: 3 Lesson Plans

2. Literacy: Story Map Detective

- Subject/Topic: Literacy – Reading Comprehension
- Activity Name: Story Map Detective
- Goal/Learning Objective: Youth will identify and summarize key story elements to boost comprehension.
- Total Activity Time: 60 minutes

- Scaffolding Techniques:
 - Read aloud with visuals
 - Story map templates with sentence starters
 - Pair sharing for younger participants

- Supplies Needed:
 - Short story or picture book
 - Story map worksheet
 - Markers/crayons
 - Anchor chart

Steps:

1. Story Introduction & Read Aloud – 15–20 minutes
 - Read the story with pauses for discussion.
 - Ask guiding questions: “Who is the main character?” “Where is the story happening?”
2. Model Story Mapping – 5 minutes
 - Fill in one section of the story map as an example.
3. Independent or Partner Work – 20 minutes
 - Youth complete the rest of the story map worksheet.
 - Optional: Draw a scene from the story.
4. Group Sharing & Wrap-Up – 10–15 minutes
 - Volunteers share maps or drawings.
 - Discuss how understanding story elements helps readers.

CKSC 2 - Requirement: 3 Lesson Plans

3. Health & Wellness: MyPlate Relay

- Subject/Topic: Health & Wellness – Nutrition
- Activity Name: MyPlate Relay
- Goal/Learning Objective: Youth will learn about the five food groups and how to build balanced meals using the USDA MyPlate model.
- Total Activity Time: 55–65 minutes

- Scaffolding Techniques:
 - Picture-based cards
 - Team roles (to support different activity levels)
 - Visual food group chart

- Supplies Needed:
 - Large MyPlate diagram (poster or printed mat)
 - Laminated food cards (representing each food group)
 - Cones or markers to define relay course
 - Timer or stopwatch

Steps:

1. Nutrition Warm-Up & MyPlate Review – 10–15 minutes
 - Show the MyPlate diagram.
 - Review food groups and examples.
2. Relay Instructions & Team Formation – 5–10 minutes
 - Explain how the relay works.
 - Assign roles (runner, selector, plate organizer).
3. MyPlate Relay Game – 20–25 minutes
 - Youth take turns retrieving food cards and sorting them into the correct food group.
 - Repeat until all cards are placed.
4. Debrief & Wrap-Up Discussion – 10–15 minutes
 - Review team plates together.
 - Ask: “What food groups are you eating more or less of at home?”
 - Encourage setting a simple nutrition goal.

Maximizing Shared Space to Support Youth Development (WC: 450)

Our afterschool program operates in a shared-use cafeteria, with occasional access to classrooms and the gym. Because we do not have permanent ownership of any one space, our environment must be set up and taken down daily. This presents a challenge—but also an opportunity—to design intentionally flexible, inclusive, and engaging environments that meet the needs of all youth.

Each day, we “zone” the cafeteria into learning spaces: a reading and quiet zone, an art/writing zone, a group game zone, and a STEM or hands-on activity zone. Colored tablecloths, rolling carts, portable signage, and soft materials like floor cushions and a foldable rug help visually and physically define each area, even in an open layout. These simple, mobile tools allow us to turn an institutional space into a welcoming, youth-centered learning environment in under 15 minutes.

Creating a welcoming space despite mobility limitations starts with predictability and ownership. We use consistent setup routines, and youth help lead the transformation of the space each day. By assigning setup and cleanup roles, youth develop responsibility and feel a sense of pride in their space. We also display youth artwork on rolling tri-fold boards and use affirming language throughout the room (e.g., “All are welcome here” signage, identity-affirming visuals). These strategies create a sense of belonging, even in a space that is not physically ours.

Sensory needs are also considered. We avoid fluorescent overhead lighting when possible and use battery-operated lanterns and lamps to soften the environment. A scent-free policy ensures inclusivity for all sensitivities. Floor cushions and clipboards provide comfortable alternatives to sitting at tables, supporting a range of physical needs and learning preferences.

Our current materials support multiple domains of youth development. Labeled bins help youth practice independence and executive functioning through self-directed setup and cleanup. Rolling carts allow for choice-based programming without visual clutter or confusion. Activities like building kits, art supplies, and literacy tools are grouped and clearly labeled to promote decision-making, creativity, and cross-age collaboration.

While our current system works well, there is still room to improve efficiency and engagement. Proposed additions include collapsible cubby storage for youth personal items, a multi-tier rolling art cart for greater supply access and mobility, and stackable floor cushions for use in reading or mindfulness activities. These items would further enhance our flexibility, maximize limited space, and offer youth more comfort and autonomy in how they participate.

In short, even a shared cafeteria can become a welcoming, developmentally supportive environment with the right tools, consistent routines, and youth voice embedded in the daily setup and flow.

Inventory, Improvements, and Solutions

Primary Activity Zones (set up daily in cafeteria):

- Reading & Quiet Area: Foldable rug, stackable floor cushions, portable bookshelf
- Art/Writing Zone: 2 folding tables, one rolling cart with labeled art bins
- Group Activities Zone: 4 collapsible tables for games, projects, or discussions
- STEM/Maker Zone: 1 tall cart with wheels, labeled containers for STEM tools

Storage & Setup Tools:

- 3 rolling carts (organized by activity type: Art/Writing, STEM, Games)
- 6 labeled bins (markers, scissors, blocks, cards, manipulatives)
- Tri-fold community board for program norms, youth work, and daily updates
- Clipboards, lap desks, and portable lights
- Stackable chairs, folding tables (School Provided)
- 1 foldable rug

Proposed Material Improvements

1. Collapsible Cubby Shelf

- a. Purpose: A designated place for youth to store backpacks, jackets, or personal folders.
- b. Impact: Reduces clutter, increases personal space ownership, and makes transition time smoother.

2. Multi-Tier Rolling Art Cart

- a. Purpose: Separate cart specifically for art supplies, with visible and accessible storage tiers.
- b. Impact: Encourages youth creativity by giving easier access to materials, and speeds up setup/cleanup.

3. Stackable Floor Cushions with Bin Storage

- a. Purpose: Adds flexibility and comfort for reading, mindfulness, and partner work.
- b. Impact: Supports a calm, choice-based learning space that's easily adaptable and inclusive.

Creative Solutions to Maintain Engagement and Functionality

- Visual Zoning with Color Coding: Colored tablecloths and signs quickly distinguish zones. This helps youth know what's happening where—especially those with executive functioning or attention challenges.
- Youth Setup Crews: Youth rotate in roles like “rug roller,” “cart runner,” or “table lead,” giving them ownership and responsibility over the space.
- Rolling Community Board: Serves as a mobile identity anchor. We post youth artwork, program expectations, and inclusive messages. It gives the space a “home base” feel even in a borrowed setting.
- Quiet Kit Bin: A small, rotating set of calming activities (books, putty, drawing sheets, headphones) stored in a labeled bin that's always available for self-regulation.

These improvements and creative strategies ensure that every space—no matter how temporary—supports both engagement and equity. With the right materials and routines, youth can thrive in environments that respond flexibly to their needs and offer consistent emotional and physical safety.

CKSC 2 - Option 2 Example

CKSC 2 - Option 3: Youth Survey and Smart Goal

Youth Program Feedback Survey (Blank Copy).

Please answer honestly. Your feedback helps us improve the program for you!

Part 1: Program Space

1. I like the way our program space is set up. ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No
2. There are enough activity areas (art, games, reading, etc.) for me to choose from.
☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No
3. I have the materials I need to do fun and creative activities. ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No

Part 2: Safety

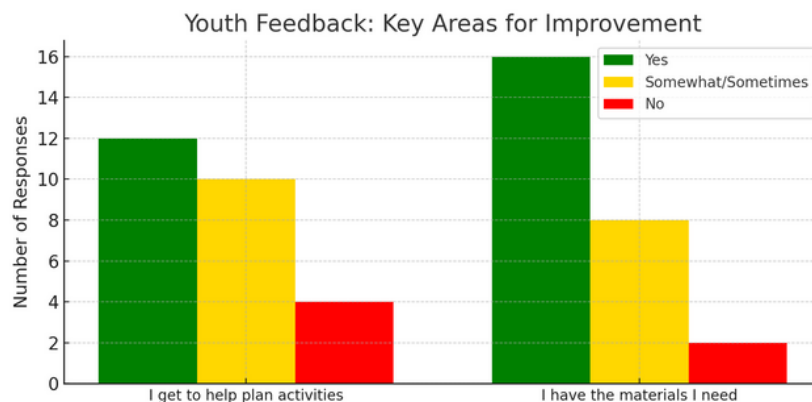
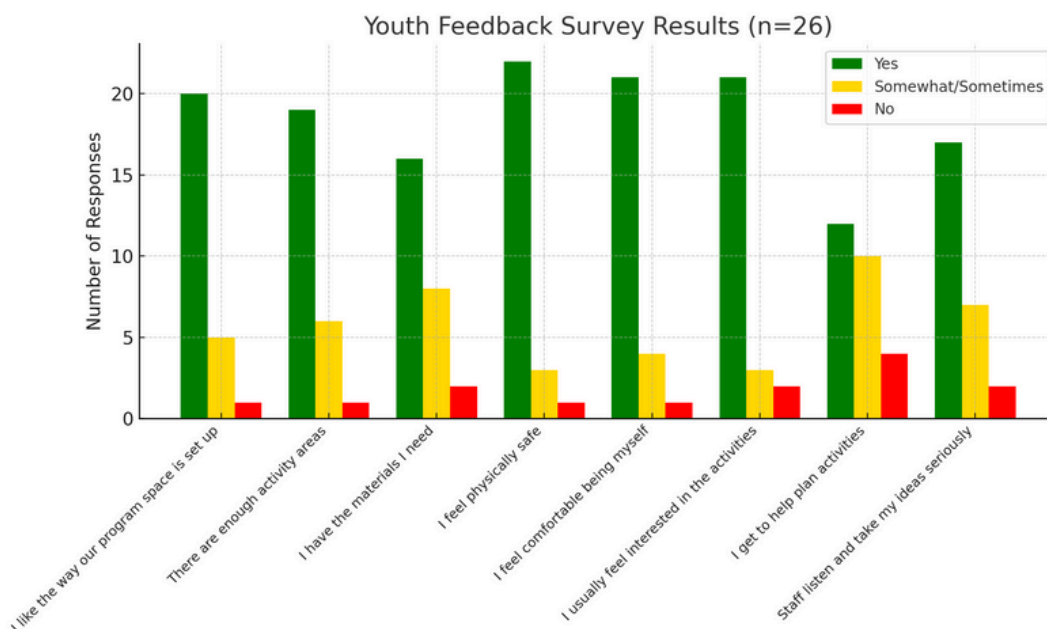
1. I feel physically safe at the program. ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No
2. I feel comfortable being myself at the program. ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

Part 3: Engagement

1. I usually feel interested in the activities we do. ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No
2. I get to help choose or help plan activities sometimes. ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No
3. Staff listen to me and take my ideas seriously. ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

Part 4: Suggestions

1. What is one thing you really enjoy about the program?
2. What is one thing you would change about the program?



CKSC 2 - Option 2: Youth Survey and Smart Goal

Youth Survey Summary (WC: 147).

A total of 26 youth (ages 7–12) completed the survey. Most youth (85%) reported feeling physically safe, and 80% indicated they feel emotionally safe. The majority (77%) enjoy the current setup of the program space, though 38% felt that some interest areas are missing materials they would like to use. While 81% said they enjoy the activities, only 46% felt they have opportunities to help plan them.

Free responses revealed a desire for more dramatic play props, better art supplies, and more say in daily activity choices. The data suggests strengths in safety and general satisfaction, but highlights two improvement areas:

- 1) increased youth voice in planning
- 2) enhancing under-resourced activity areas

SMART Goals Based on Feedback

Goal 1: Increase youth involvement in activity planning by 50% by the end of next semester.

- Specific: Add a “Youth Idea Box” and host biweekly planning meetings.
- Measurable: Track submissions and participation in planning.
- Achievable: Staff will facilitate and guide input while aligning with program goals.
- Relevant: Youth want more choice and say in activities.
- Time-bound: Implement by the start of next semester; review participation after 3 months.

Goal 2: Improve supplies in the Art and Dramatic Play areas by acquiring 5 new materials for each by the end of the current term.

- Specific: Inventory missing items and prioritize based on youth suggestions.
- Measurable: Purchase at least 10 new materials total.
- Achievable: Use budget and/or donations to source materials.
- Relevant: Youth identified these areas as needing improvement.
- Time-bound: Complete updates by the final program week of this term.

Program Analysis (WC: 493)

Last month, I invited a colleague to conduct a structured walkthrough of our afterschool program using a quality standards checklist adapted from the Utah Afterschool Network Quality Standards. Our focus was on four key areas: environment, safety, inclusion, and engagement, with specific attention to accessibility, youth ownership, and safe transitions. We completed the walkthrough during our busiest afternoon block to observe the space in full use.

One of the first things my peer noticed was the strong visual organization of our zones. She commented that “it’s immediately clear what’s happening where—there’s structure without it feeling rigid. Youth seem to know the flow.” This affirmed our intentional use of visual cues, such as tablecloth colors, signage, and mobile carts, to create distinct spaces for activities like STEM, reading, and art within a shared cafeteria. My colleague also highlighted the sense of youth ownership present throughout the environment. From posted program norms written in youth voices to youth-led routines like daily setup and cleanup, she noted, “it’s powerful to see youth leading cleanup and explaining the expectations to one another.”

However, the walkthrough also identified areas where we can grow. One key observation centered around the transition from snack to activity time, which can often become chaotic. My peer observed that “there’s a five-minute period where staff seem overwhelmed and youth are confused about when to switch gears.” We currently rely on verbal announcements alone, which are not always effective in a loud, open space. She also noticed that while many youth were actively engaged, a small group of quieter participants appeared to be on the margins—physically present but not participating. “There’s a group of youth sitting off to the side not disruptive, but also not interacting—I wonder if they know where they belong in this setup,” she remarked.

From this walkthrough, we identified several program strengths: clear visual structure, youth ownership of space and routines, and generally smooth transitions at arrival and departure. Areas for growth include making our transitions more predictable and inclusive, and ensuring all youth feel actively invited to participate—especially those who are less vocal or more reserved.

Our top priority for improvement is the snack-to-activity transition. To address this, we plan to implement a visual countdown timer, designate a rotating youth “transition leader” to make announcements, and introduce a consistent transition signal such as music or a light change. We will gather staff and youth feedback over the next two weeks to assess the effectiveness of these changes and adjust accordingly.

Participating in this walkthrough reminded me how easy it is to overlook everyday routines when you’re immersed in them. Viewing our space through another professional’s eyes brought fresh perspective and highlighted how the learning environment, even in a temporary shared setting, deeply impacts youth behavior, focus, and sense of belonging.

CKSC 3 - Requirement: Observation and Assessment

Child Observation Portfolio

Observer: Janine Smith

Youth Identifier: "J.T." (age 13, 7th grade)

Observation 1: Running Record (Week 1 – Example of Relational Observation)

Date: April 10

Time: 3:20–3:40 PM

Setting: Snack and hangout time in common area

J.T. entered the space quietly, immediately gravitating toward a corner table. He sat alone and did not initiate or respond to greetings. When approached by a peer, he gave short answers, avoided eye contact, and continued drawing in a sketchpad. A group of peers invited him to join a game, but he declined with a shrug. Staff did not intervene, but he appeared neutral rather than distressed.

Observation 2: Anecdotal Record (Week 2 – Example of Engagement Observation)

Date: April 17

Time: 4:00–4:30 PM

Setting: Art Area during structured activity

During the "build your own zine" project, J.T. chose to participate voluntarily. He remained focused and quietly created several pages of expressive art, including symbolic imagery and stylized lettering. When praised for his work, he smiled slightly and nodded. Although he remained quiet, he stayed the entire activity, asked for extra supplies, and placed his zine on the group display table when finished.

Observation 3: Checklist (Week 4 – Example of Social Interaction and Physical Cues)

Date: May 1

Time: 3:15–3:45 PM

Setting: Gym free play and transition to snack

Behavior Observed (Yes/No)

1. Initiated social interaction ☐ YES ☒ NO
2. Responded when spoken to ☒ YES ☐ NO
3. Displayed signs of physical discomfort or withdrawal ☒ YES ☐ NO
4. Participated in a group activity ☐ YES ☒ NO
5. Engaged in passive activity (watching others) ☒ YES ☐ NO

***Be consistent with whatever type of observation you choose to do over the three week period. This is simply to show you what the different kinds could look like.**

CKSC 3 - Requirement: Observation and Assessment

Summary of Findings (2–3 Sentences)

J.T. is a quiet, observant youth who tends to withdraw socially but shows strong focus and creativity when engaged in independent art projects. His participation increases when expectations are clear and he is offered space for individual expression without pressure to socialize.

Support Plan (WC: 268)

To support J.T.'s development, we will create structured opportunities that blend personal expression with low-pressure social interaction. J.T. appears most engaged during creative projects, so we will offer more frequent art-based activities with optional peer collaboration. For example, we will launch a “Creative Corner” where youth can work on independent or partner zines, comics, or sketch journals during free time. Staff will encourage J.T. to display or share his work in ways that feel comfortable, such as anonymous group galleries or digital slideshows.

To support his social growth, we will introduce gentle “opt-in” interactions—such as peer art critique cards or collaborative story building—where J.T. can contribute ideas without being put on the spot. We will also create calmer, sensory-aware seating in high-traffic spaces to help J.T. feel more comfortable and supported during transitions and social times like snack or free play. Staff will increase intentional, casual check-ins to build rapport and create an emotionally safe environment where J.T. feels seen without being overwhelmed.

By building on J.T.'s strengths and creating more choice-driven, inclusive experiences, we can help him thrive both creatively and socially while maintaining emotional safety and autonomy.

CKSC 4 - Requirement: Quality Tool

Indicator of Quality	Rating	How are you implementing or working to implement this practice?
Staff promote a respectful and welcoming environment for all youth.	5	All staff greet youth by name, maintain open body language, and engage in daily informal conversations during arrival and transitions.
Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.	3	Staff regularly circulate and supervise but are working on increasing active participation in games, art, and collaborative projects.
Staff promote and demonstrate respect for all cultural backgrounds and ability levels.	5	We conduct monthly equity trainings and incorporate multicultural programming; staff also model inclusive language and affirm diverse identities.
Staff respect, listen to, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.	5	Staff use eye-level conversations, check-ins, and encourage questions. Concerns are addressed respectfully and confidentially.
Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.	4	Staff collaborate and model conflict resolution, though we are refining communication routines to ensure consistency across staff.
Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs.	4	Staff use a shared clipboard for notes and verbal check-ins at transitions. We are working on implementing a digital communication log.
Staff encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.	3	Staff guide basic peer conflict resolution but plan to introduce more structured restorative practices and youth-led solutions.

Narrative Summary of Scoring (WC: 233)

The team scored highest in practices related to respect, listening, and inclusivity (Indicators 1, 3, and 4), reflecting strong foundational relationships and culturally responsive interactions. Staff consistently model welcoming behaviors and provide safe emotional spaces where youth feel heard and valued. However, areas needing improvement include more active staff participation in programming (Indicator 2), enhanced staff communication (Indicator 6), and building stronger youth-led conflict resolution strategies (Indicator 7).

These findings suggest that while staff are supportive and professional, there's a need for more intentional engagement during program activities and better internal coordination. Staff occasionally default to supervisory roles rather than being full participants, which can limit relationship-building opportunities. Additionally, while staff communication exists, introducing more systematic and accessible tools (like shared digital logs or brief team huddles) will improve responsiveness and cohesion. Finally, implementing restorative practices such as peer mediators or conflict reflection sheets will help youth become more independent in managing interpersonal challenges.

By focusing on these areas, we aim to move from “working to implement” (score of 3) to “in place” (score of 5) across the remaining indicators, ensuring a stronger foundation for youth development and staff collaboration.

CKSC 4 - Option 1: Behavior Management

Horizon Afterschool Program: Behavior Policy and Procedures

Core Expectations

At Horizon Afterschool Program, all youth and staff are expected to uphold the core values of respect, responsibility, and safety. These values guide behavior and foster a supportive, inclusive environment where all youth can thrive.

Behavioral Guidelines

- Treat yourself, others, and the environment with respect.
- Follow staff directions the first time.
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Use kind words and appropriate language.
- Participate safely and appropriately in all activities.

Behavior Support Procedures

We utilize a proactive, restorative approach to behavior guidance. Staff are trained to build relationships with youth and model positive interactions. When behavioral issues arise, the following tiered procedures are followed:

1. Verbal Reminder/Redirection – Staff give a clear, calm reminder of the behavior expectation.
2. Reflective Conversation – Youth are guided through a short conversation to reflect on choices, identify emotions, and explore better options.
3. Break/Calm Space – Youth may take a short, staff-monitored break to self-regulate.
4. Parent Communication – If behavior persists, families are contacted to collaborate on a support plan.
5. Behavior Support Plan – For repeated or severe behaviors, staff work with the youth, family, and school (as needed) to create a plan for success.
6. Behaviors involving aggression, threats, or unsafe actions result in immediate removal from the group and involvement of site leadership.

CKSC 4 - Option 1: Behavior Management (Continued)

Behavior Guidance Strategies: Reflection and Recommendations (WC: 483)

Our program uses a combination of positive behavior reinforcement, restorative practices, and relationship-based strategies to guide youth behavior. One of the core systems we use is the “Reflect and Restore” method. When a child engages in inappropriate behavior, rather than issuing immediate consequences, we offer space and time for reflection. This may include a quiet area with calming tools, followed by a guided conversation using open-ended questions like, “What were you feeling?” and “How can we make this right?”

Advantages of this system include its emphasis on emotional regulation and youth voice. It promotes accountability without shame and strengthens the adult-youth relationship. It also aligns with trauma-informed practices and supports social-emotional learning. Additionally, by involving families in the process after repeated incidents, we build a consistent support system between home and program.

However, challenges arise when staff are inconsistent in implementation. For example, some staff may skip the reflection step during busy transitions or fail to follow up with documentation. Additionally, some youth with higher behavioral needs may require more individualized interventions beyond our standard approach.

To improve the system, I recommend:

1. Implementing a behavior tracking tool (digital or paper) to monitor trends and ensure staff accountability.
2. Offering monthly behavior strategy trainings to build confidence and consistency among staff.
3. Introducing a peer support role or youth leadership council to help reinforce positive behaviors and model conflict resolution.
4. Expanding our sensory break options for youth who need more support regulating their emotions.

Overall, our behavior system promotes growth, dignity, and skill-building. With more consistency, staff training, and individualized options, we can better meet the diverse needs of all youth in our care.

CKSC 4 – Option 2 Example

Youth Relationship Inventory & Strategy Plan

Program Name: Horizon Afterschool Program

Compiled By: Jane Smith

Date: 5/24/25

Youth Relationship Inventory

<u>Identifier</u>	<u>Known Information (Favorites, Strengths, Family Dynamics, etc.)</u>
J.T. (13)	Loves art and drawing, quiet, lives with older sister, strong visual-spatial skills.
M.K. (12)	Social and energetic, enjoys drama games, single-parent household, struggles with transitions.
S.A. (11)	Very bright, advanced reader, shy with peers, speaks Spanish at home.
L.D. (9)	Loves sports, especially basketball, raised by grandparents, very active and expressive.
R.F. (10)	Enjoys building projects, speaks little during group time, unknown family details.
T.H. (12)	New to program, hasn't joined activities willingly yet, seems unsure of peers and staff.
E.V. (8)	Very enthusiastic, enjoys group games and music, lives with both parents, confident and friendly.
C.N. (9)	Loves puzzles and strategy games, quiet leader, no known behavioral challenges.
B.J. (11)	Appears withdrawn, no participation in free play, little known about family or interests.
N.G. (10)	Loves animals, always brings a drawing of a new creature, lives in foster care.

Identified Youth for Relationship Building

1. T.H. (12)

T.H. is new to the program and has not yet engaged in many activities or built strong relationships with peers or staff. To support T.H.'s integration, I will begin with daily one-on-one check-ins using simple, low-pressure prompts such as "What's something you enjoyed today?" to open a dialogue and build familiarity. I will also assign T.H. to help with a predictable, low-stress task like handing out supplies or setting up games. This builds a sense of belonging and purpose without requiring social risk. I will observe their body language across activities to identify interest areas—particularly quieter stations like art or reading where T.H. may feel less overwhelmed. Once an area of interest is identified, I will gently invite participation through individual encouragement and offer choices to maintain autonomy. I will also ask a trusted peer to act as a partner during group tasks to foster gentle, organic social connections. The goal is to create safe entry points for T.H. to build comfort and confidence in the program environment.

Identified Youth for Relationship Building

2. R.F. (10)

R.F. is often quiet during group time but shows strong interest in building and design activities. To deepen our connection, I will create a weekly hands-on STEM challenge designed around structures, circuits, or design thinking. During these activities, I will engage R.F. with open-ended questions (“What inspired this build?” or “What would you add next?”) to encourage verbal expression without pressure. I’ll also invite R.F. to share his creations in a small group setting, reinforcing confidence and communication. To strengthen peer relationships, I will partner R.F. with another youth who has similar interests and social temperament, fostering collaboration in a comfortable dynamic. Outside of structured time, I will initiate short, positive interactions—acknowledging effort and creativity, even if verbal exchange is minimal. If appropriate, I may introduce an optional personal journal or sketchpad where R.F. can express ideas nonverbally, creating another path for connection. These steps aim to build trust, affirm strengths, and create consistent opportunities for social-emotional growth.

3. B.J. (11)

B.J. appears withdrawn, does not participate in group play, and has remained on the periphery of most activities. To connect with B.J., I will introduce individual, quiet-centered activities like puzzles or solo art projects and sit nearby to engage subtly—starting with comments on shared tasks before progressing to gentle conversation. I’ll create a personal check-in journal where B.J. can communicate thoughts or questions through writing or drawing, and respond respectfully to build trust over time. I also plan to schedule intentional one-on-one time with B.J. during slower program transitions, offering space to express themselves with minimal peer pressure. Staff will collaborate to identify moments of progress or emotional triggers, using that insight to adjust support. Additionally, I will reach out to B.J.’s caregiver to better understand background context—home life, interests, or needs—that may help inform our approach. By creating consistent, low-pressure points of engagement, we aim to build a secure foundation that encourages B.J.’s participation and personal growth.

Culturally Responsive Book List for Afterschool Program (Ages 8–13)

Compiled by: Jane Smith

Word Count: 147

Our afterschool program serves 34 youth between the ages of 6 and 12. The group is highly diverse, both culturally and socioeconomically. Approximately 45% of youth identify as Hispanic or Latino, 30% as white, 15% as Black or African American, and 10% as Pacific Islander or multiracial. About 65% of our families qualify for free or reduced lunch, and several children live with grandparents or in blended families. We also support youth who are English Language Learners (ELL) and youth with diagnosed developmental conditions such as ADHD, sensory processing disorders, and autism spectrum disorders.

This wide range of backgrounds and lived experiences enriches our program but also calls for careful selection of culturally responsive and inclusive materials. To foster empathy, self-identity, and social understanding, we intentionally select books that reflect our youth's realities and open windows into others'. The list below includes titles that promote emotional regulation, honor diverse cultures and languages, and offer representation across family structures and developmental experiences.

Book List

1. New Kid by Jerry Craft (2019)

Topics: Race, class, identity, middle school transitions

Summary: New Kid is a graphic novel that follows Jordan Banks, a Black seventh grader who begins attending a private school where he is one of the only students of color. Jordan is passionate about drawing, but he struggles with being seen and understood in a new environment that feels foreign and disconnected from his neighborhood. Through humor, awkward interactions, and real moments of vulnerability, the story dives deep into the challenges of code-switching, microaggressions, and trying to belong in multiple worlds at once.

How It Supports Youth: This book offers both a mirror and a window. It helps youth of color, especially those navigating predominantly white academic spaces, feel seen, validated, and encouraged. For others, it opens up conversations around privilege, implicit bias, and inclusion. In our program, where students come from varying racial and economic backgrounds, New Kid promotes empathy and allows students to express their identity without shame or the pressure to assimilate.

2. Merci Suárez Changes Gears by Meg Medina (2018).

Topics: Latinx identity, caregiving, aging, school transitions

Summary: This novel centers on Merci Suárez, a Cuban-American sixth grader navigating the typical ups and downs of middle school, including friendships, popularity, and fitting in. Merci lives in a multigenerational home and often helps care for her grandfather, while also trying to keep up with school demands. The book handles tough themes with heart and humor, highlighting how kids carry invisible burdens while still trying to grow and find joy.

How It Supports Youth: Many youth in our program come from multigenerational households or are responsible for younger siblings or family caregiving tasks. Merci Suárez Changes Gears offers them recognition and respect. It also helps peers develop greater understanding of those who may seem distracted, stressed, or different in how they engage with school or afterschool activities. The book encourages compassion and connection while affirming Latinx cultural values and family roles.

3. Rain Reign by Ann M. Martin (2014).

Topics: Autism, neurodivergence, foster care, empathy

Summary: Rain Reign tells the story of Rose, a young girl on the autism spectrum who lives with her single father. Rose is obsessed with homonyms, rules, and routines—her way of bringing order to a confusing world. When her dog, Rain, goes missing during a hurricane, Rose must make difficult decisions that push her outside her comfort zone. The book is written from Rose’s point of view, offering readers a sensitive and realistic window into how a neurodivergent child processes the world. The story is emotional, honest, and filled with opportunities for deep discussion about difference, loyalty, and personal growth.

How It Supports Youth: This book is essential for both neurodivergent youth and their peers. It helps children with autism feel seen and respected, especially when their need for routine and language patterns might otherwise be misunderstood. For other youth, it builds empathy and teaches patience and compassion. In a setting like ours where some students receive special education support or have sensory processing differences, Rain Reign is a powerful tool for encouraging understanding and inclusion.

4. When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson & Omar Mohamed (2020)

Topics: Refugees, sibling caregiving, hope

Summary: This graphic novel, based on the true story of Omar Mohamed's life, follows Omar and his younger brother Hassan as they grow up in a Kenyan refugee camp. Their parents are missing, and Omar becomes both sibling and caretaker. This story brings to light the realities of refugee life without becoming overwhelming, making it both accessible and deeply moving for young readers.

How It Supports Youth: In our program, some youth have experienced homelessness, instability, or family separations. When Stars Are Scattered offers representation for those children and builds awareness among their peers. It emphasizes that strength doesn't always look loud or bold, sometimes it's the quiet resilience of simply showing up each day. It's also an excellent way to introduce global citizenship and conversations about justice, family, and perseverance.

5. Indian No More by Charlene Willing McManis (2019)

Topics: Indigenous identity, cultural loss, racism

Summary: This historical fiction novel tells the story of Regina, a Umpqua girl whose tribe loses federal recognition under the U.S. Termination Policy in the 1950s. Her family is forced to relocate from their reservation in Oregon to Los Angeles, where Regina must navigate a world where her identity is questioned and invisible. Regina's journey is filled with both painful realizations and hopeful moments of self-discovery.

How It Supports Youth: This book gives Indigenous youth in our program visibility and validates the ongoing effects of colonization and cultural erasure. It also educates non-Native peers about Native history beyond stereotypes. Including Indian No More in our reading library helps create space to celebrate Native voices and opens up critical conversations about identity, resilience, and justice.

6. Ghost by Jason Reynolds (2016)

Topics: Poverty, trauma, sports, mentorship

Summary: Ghost is the story of Castle Cranshaw, nicknamed "Ghost," a boy who's been running from his past since a traumatic incident with his father. When he stumbles upon a track team, he's offered a chance at something more. But Ghost isn't used to structure or trust, and his journey is filled with mistakes and hard lessons.

How It Supports Youth: Many of our youth thrive when offered structure, safe outlets, and trusted adult mentors, exactly what Ghost receives through his coach. This book models how mistakes don't define a person, and how support systems can redirect a life. It also mirrors the emotional realities of children dealing with poverty, trauma, or unpredictable home environments, offering both comfort and hope.

7. El Deafo by Cece Bell (2014).

Topics: Hearing loss, self-acceptance, friendship

Summary: This memoir-style graphic novel is based on Cece Bell's real childhood experience of becoming deaf after an illness. She uses a Phonic Ear, a powerful hearing device that makes her feel different from her peers. To cope, she creates a superhero alter ego, El Deafo, who helps her find confidence in navigating friendships, school, and her own identity. The story is touching, humorous, and very relatable, with a unique visual style that draws readers in and helps them see the world from Cece's perspective.

How It Supports Youth: El Deafo provides a voice for children with hearing loss or other physical differences. It teaches all youth that being different can be empowering, not isolating. In our program, we have students who use assistive devices, and this story normalizes those experiences while encouraging kindness and curiosity from others. It's a fun and meaningful way to build a more inclusive peer culture.

8. Hair Love by Matthew A. Cherry (2019).

Topics: Black hair, self-love, father-daughter relationships

Summary: This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the story of Zuri, a young Black girl with a big imagination and even bigger hair. On a special day, her dad steps in to help her style it, even though he's never done it before. The story is simple but powerful, it celebrates family, love, and confidence in one's appearance. Based on the Oscar-winning short film, Hair Love is both joyful and empowering.

How It Supports Youth: For our Black students, Hair Love validates and celebrates natural hair and cultural identity. It's also an excellent opportunity to teach all youth that beauty and confidence come in many forms. The supportive relationship between Zuri and her father promotes strong family connections, and the book can inspire art projects, discussions on self-love, or even self-care workshops within our afterschool space.

CKSC 5 - Requirement: Youth Voice And Choice

Youth Voice and Choice in Afterschool Programming (WC: 475)

Youth voice and choice means actively including young people in the decisions that shape their experiences in a program—from the types of activities offered to how rules are created and upheld. It goes beyond simply offering options; it involves listening to youth perspectives, empowering them to express their ideas, and giving them meaningful opportunities to lead. When youth have a say in what happens in their program, they feel a stronger sense of ownership, value, and belonging.

In our afterschool setting, youth voice and choice is essential. It supports social-emotional growth, fosters leadership, and builds confidence. Youth learn that their thoughts matter and that they have the power to influence their environment in positive ways. It also improves engagement—when students help plan an activity, they are more invested in its success. Additionally, incorporating youth input helps staff stay responsive to their evolving interests and needs, creating a more dynamic and relevant program.

In our current program, we implement youth voice and choice in several ways. Every Monday, we hold a brief community circle where youth can share activity ideas, vote on weekly clubs, or suggest improvements. We rotate leadership roles in group projects and include youth in choosing service learning themes or planning family events. For example, a recent community art showcase was entirely youth-led, from theme selection to setup and presentation. We also use feedback surveys and anonymous suggestion boxes to gather ideas and reflections on how activities are going.

Despite these successes, I recognize that not all youth are consistently engaged in decision-making. Often, the same few voices dominate discussions, while quieter or younger students participate less. To ensure a more inclusive and consistent approach to youth input, we are setting the following SMART goal:

SMART Goal:

By the end of the semester (12 weeks), all youth in the program will have at least one opportunity to participate in a structured decision-making activity—such as voting, brainstorming, or leading a project—through weekly small-group sessions facilitated by staff. We will track participation using a simple checklist to ensure that all voices are being heard.

This goal ensures equitable participation and gives staff a way to support and scaffold engagement for all students, not just the most outspoken. Over time, I believe this will strengthen our group cohesion and help every young person see themselves as a leader. Youth voice and choice are not just program strategies—they are a reflection of respect, trust, and the belief that young people are capable contributors. When we center their voices, we help them discover their potential.

CKSC 5 – Option 1 Example

Youth Program Feedback Survey

Program Name: Horizon Afterschool Program

Compiled By: Jane Smith

Survey Participants: 25 Youth (Ages 8–13)

Blank Youth Survey: Program Environment & Curriculum

Instructions: Please answer the following questions honestly. Your feedback helps us improve your program experience.

Section 1: Program Environment

1. I feel emotionally safe at this program. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
2. I feel physically safe at this program. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
3. Staff treat me with respect. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
4. The space is clean and comfortable. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
5. I feel like I belong here. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

Section 2: Curriculum and Activities

1. I like the activities we do here. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
2. I get to help choose activities or give suggestions. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
3. I learn new things at this program. ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
4. I would recommend this program to a friend. ☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
5. What's one thing you would change or add to the program?

Compiled Survey Data Summary

- Emotional Safety (Always): 76%
- Physical Safety (Always): 84%
- Staff Respect (Always): 88%
- Clean & Comfortable Space (Always): 64%
- Sense of Belonging (Always): 72%
- Enjoy Activities (Always): 60%
- Opportunity to Choose Activities (Always): 44%
- Learning New Things (Always): 68%
- Would Recommend Program: Yes – 80%, Maybe – 20%, No – 0%

Top Suggestions from Open-Ended Question:

- “More art projects”
- “More say in activities”
- “A quiet reading or chill zone”
- “Longer free time”

Reflection on Survey Results

Overall, the data reflects a strong sense of physical and emotional safety and positive relationships with staff. However, two key areas stand out for improvement: youth choice in activities and comfort of the physical environment. While youth enjoy activities, only 44% feel they regularly get to choose or influence them. Additionally, only 64% consistently feel the space is clean and comfortable, with requests for a designated quiet or reading area. This feedback shows that while the program is effective at building relationships, we must strengthen our responsiveness to youth input and environment needs.

SMART Goal: Increasing Youth Choice in Programming

Goal: Within the next 8 weeks, increase youth participation in activity planning by implementing a weekly “Youth Pick” session and suggestion box, resulting in at least five youth-led or requested activities being added to the calendar.

- Specific: Launch suggestion system and hold 1 youth-led activity per week.
- Measurable: Count number of youth submissions and implemented ideas.
- Achievable: Activity staff will review and coordinate feasible ideas.
- Relevant: Addresses youth desire for more choice.
- Time-bound: Complete within 8 weeks and review progress in week 9.

Word Reflection on SMART Goal Outcome (WC: 192)

After eight weeks, the “Youth Pick” initiative resulted in seven youth-requested activities being added to our programming calendar, including a DIY slime station, a student-run talent showcase, and a cultural trivia game. Youth engagement noticeably increased, with more students volunteering to lead, set up, or promote activities. Staff also observed a 20% increase in participation during “Youth Pick” days compared to typical structured activity blocks. The suggestion box proved especially effective for quieter students who may not speak up in group settings. This simple tool gave all youth a voice and helped staff recognize patterns in interests and needs.

The success of this SMART goal affirmed the importance of structured opportunities for choice and reinforced the value of youth leadership. Going forward, we plan to keep the “Youth Pick” system in place permanently and add a quarterly “Youth Planning Day” to further involve participants in shaping their experience. This goal not only improved engagement but also empowered our youth to see themselves as co-creators of their environment.

CKSC 5 – Option 2 Example

Service Learning in Action: A Community Kindness Project (WC: 497)

Service learning is an approach that allows youth to identify a need in their community, respond with action, and reflect on the impact of their work. It creates a powerful connection between learning and real-world experiences by centering the youth voice and encouraging them to contribute meaningfully to their environment.

Our program completed a service learning project this past semester titled “Kindness Bags for the Unhoused.” After noticing several unhoused individuals near our program site, youth brainstormed ways to help. They chose to create care kits with hygiene items, water, socks, snacks, and handwritten notes. We partnered with a local shelter to distribute the bags and invited a guest speaker to talk about homelessness in our city.

Before the project, some youth expressed nervousness or uncertainty, especially those unfamiliar with service work. During planning, they showed strong creativity—designing logos, slogans, and writing encouraging messages for the bags. During the assembly phase, they worked cooperatively, each taking ownership over parts of the process. We saw quieter youth stepping up and new leaders emerging. After the project, youth expressed pride, curiosity, and a stronger sense of empathy. Many said they wanted to do more and asked how they could help on their own time.

Youth Learn the Following from Service Learning:

- Empathy and compassion through understanding others’ needs
- Leadership by guiding projects and making decisions
- Civic awareness as they engage with real issues
- Collaboration through teamwork and problem-solving
- Reflection by thinking critically about their role in the community

This experience deepened our group’s sense of purpose. Youth not only learned about housing insecurity but saw how small actions can spark big changes. They felt empowered, not overwhelmed, by the issue.

Other Future Service Learning Project Ideas:

1. Community mural project on unity and inclusion
2. Letters of appreciation to healthcare and emergency workers
3. Habitat planting for local pollinators (butterflies and bees)
4. Cultural storytelling events with senior community centers
5. Buddy tutoring with younger students in reading and math

Service learning taps into youth potential in a way few other strategies do. By combining learning with action and reflection, it transforms not just the community—but the youth themselves.

[Include photos of youth packing bags, writing notes, and delivering them to the shelter]

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, VOICE, AND CHOICE

Self-Rating

IDENTIFY

4

A. Understands that young people's voices are valuable.

3

B. Is aware of youth culture within the larger community context where children, youth, and families live.

Self-Rating

APPLY

4

A. Encourages youth to express their ideas and feelings support healthy development, meaningful relationships, and program quality.

4

B. Develops relationships with children and youth while respecting boundaries, uniqueness in experiences, cultural backgrounds, and individual differences in participation style.

3

C. Works with young people to create an environment that offers various opportunities for youth leadership and input.

3

D. Promotes and supports child-initiated and youth-led planning and learning.

3

E. Develops the capacity for self-reflection, communication, empathy, and appreciation of the various cultures and diverse opinions of children and youth.

Self-Rating

AMPLIFY

3

A. Models for, teaches, mentors, and coaches others on how to engage youth effectively.

2

B. Recommends and promotes equitable program and organizational policies, PD, and practices that support the facilitation of youth engagement.

2

C. Advocates for equitable public and philanthropic policies, practices, and funding that support the facilitation of youth engagement.

Content Area 5:

Examples, notes & evidence:

I rated myself highest in encouraging youth to express their ideas (Apply A) and in building respectful relationships with diverse youth (Apply B). I consistently use check-ins, community circles, and suggestion boxes to gather youth input and validate their feelings. I also tailor my communication to individual needs and honor each child's background and culture, which builds trust and inclusion.

I scored a 3 in creating youth leadership opportunities (Apply C) and supporting youth-led learning (Apply D). While I encourage youth to lead games and initiated a youth-led art club, these opportunities are not yet consistent or structured. I plan to formalize a system that offers regular leadership and planning roles. I rated myself a 4 in fostering empathy and appreciation for differences (Apply E) based on the identity-based activities and peer recognition we regularly include.

In the Amplify section, I rated myself a 3 for modeling practices and recommending equitable changes (Amplify A & B), as I lead by example but haven't formalized training or policy input. I scored lowest, a 2, on advocating at the systems level (Amplify C), which I have not yet done but plan to explore through PD and networking.

REFLECTION & PROFESSIONAL PLAN

Review your self-assessment ratings. Consider your results as you think about your areas of strength and your areas of opportunity. Reflect on your daily work as you answer the following questions and set priorities.

STRENGTHS:

On which competencies did you score the highest? Why?

I rated myself highest (4) on two competencies: encouraging youth to express their ideas and feelings to support healthy development (Apply A), and developing respectful, culturally aware relationships with youth (Apply B). These have become strengths for me because I prioritize relationship-building as the foundation of everything we do. I greet every student by name, conduct regular check-ins, and ask for their feedback through informal conversations and structured surveys. I also make a conscious effort to learn about their cultures, family structures, and interests, which allows me to better understand their needs and perspectives.

Creating space for voice and emotional expression has made our program environment safer and more responsive. Youth feel heard, and their input is reflected in daily activities. I've also taken steps to integrate culturally relevant materials, honor home languages, and invite students to share parts of their identities through art and storytelling.

What opportunities do you have or could you create to demonstrate leadership or support others with developing these competencies?

Currently, I model these strengths daily by facilitating youth-centered group discussions, using open-ended questions, and encouraging team members to listen deeply to student feedback. I also co-lead community circle activities, where we focus on communication, empathy, and sharing student voice. One opportunity I can create to further demonstrate leadership is to develop a short professional development session or resource guide for new staff on building youth relationships and creating psychologically safe environments.

Additionally, I can offer to mentor or coach peers who are newer to the program or less confident in facilitating youth voice. During team meetings, I can share examples of how I've incorporated youth feedback into programming or highlight stories where student ideas led to strong outcomes. By leading reflective discussions on inclusion and communication practices, I can help raise the overall quality of our team's youth engagement. These leadership actions not only reinforce my strengths but also build a more cohesive, youth-centered culture across the program.

OPPORTUNITIES:

On which competencies did you score the lowest? Why? What makes these challenging for you?

The competencies where I rated myself lowest were under the Amplify section—specifically, advocating for equitable public and organizational policies that support youth engagement (Amplify C, rated 2). I also rated myself a 3 on supporting child-initiated and youth-led learning (Apply D), which I identified as an area needing more consistency. These areas are challenging for a few reasons. First, the advocacy work addressed in Amplify C involves stepping outside the day-to-day operations of my site and engaging with broader systems, such as district policy, community coalitions, or funding priorities. I have not yet had the training or opportunity to participate in these spaces, and I'm not entirely sure where to begin. It also feels intimidating to advocate at a systemic level when I'm still developing confidence in leading site-level practices.

As for youth-led learning, while I do invite youth ideas and feedback, I haven't developed a structured way for them to lead planning or take ownership of regular program components. Limited time, inconsistent attendance, and competing demands during program hours have made this hard to implement. I'd benefit from tools, templates, and real-world examples to guide more intentional youth leadership opportunities.

From your answer above, pick two competencies that could be most impactful in your work. List these competencies as goals.

Goal 1:

To increase youth leadership, I will form a planning group of 4–6 students who will meet twice a month to design and lead activities. Using a youth interest survey completed by at least 75% of participants, we will ensure the activities reflect their ideas. My goal is to have at least one youth-led activity each week for 10 weeks. At the end of the quarter, we will hold a reflection session to evaluate the experience. This goal supports youth voice, builds confidence, and encourages active participation.

Goal 2:

I will develop and propose a youth engagement policy that outlines how youth can regularly contribute to program planning and leadership. I'll gather input from at least 10 youth and 2–3 staff, attend one training on advocacy or youth engagement, and review sample policies. My goal is to have a draft ready by week 10 and submitted to leadership by week 12. This will help embed youth voice into the structure of our program long-term.

ACTION PLAN

Complete the following professional development action plan to meet the identified goals.

ASK YOURSELF	GOAL 1	GOAL 2
What materials and/or resources will I need to meet this goal?	Sample youth planning templates; case studies of youth-led OST programs	Access to policy guides, examples of youth councils
What professional development will I need to meet this goal? What topics/content will be the most helpful?	Youth Leadership structures, facilitation strategies	Community based advocacy, equity in OST leadership
What form of professional development would be the most effective in helping me meet this goal (workshop, college course, research, study group, coaching, etc.)?	Coaching or local workshop/conference	Webinars and conferences
How and where will I find the professional development that I need?	UAN, BOOST, You for Youth	NAA Resource hub, UAN
How will I find the time and money to take trainings, etc.?	Ask for dedicated PD time during work hours, free trainings	Apply for PD awards
What type of support might I need in my program in order to help me implement my new skills or apply my new knowledge?	Site director help to allow for more youth led sessions	Supervisor approval to join advocacy
How will I know if I am making progress? How will my practice change?	Youth co-lead activity a week	Participating in 1 advocacy effort, adding youth voice into a written policy
What are the first two actions I will take to meet each goal?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot youth -led activity group 2. Survey youth interests 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Join local OST advocacy meeting 2. Draft Youth Voice into a written policy
When will I complete each of these steps?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin week 2 of fall session 2. Survey complete by week 4 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Join meeting by end of quarter 2 2. Draft policy by month 3

CKSC 7 - Required

Reflection on Family Communication in Afterschool Programs (WC: 468)

Effective communication with families is essential in afterschool programming because it builds trust, strengthens relationships, and ensures consistent support for each child's development. Families are our partners in helping youth thrive. When communication is clear, timely, and two-way, families feel valued, included, and informed—not just about logistics, but about their child's growth and experiences. This connection is especially important in out-of-school time settings, where staff often have unique insights into a child's social-emotional development, peer interactions, and interests.

Our program currently uses a variety of communication methods to connect with families. These include:

- Monthly printed and emailed newsletters
- Remind text messaging app for quick updates or reminders
- Phone calls for more sensitive conversations or urgent issues
- Informal conversations during pickup and drop-off
- Family events such as game nights, open houses, and showcases
- Quarterly family surveys to gather input and feedback

Of these, the Remind app and informal conversations at pickup have been the most successful. The Remind app allows us to send reminders and short updates directly to parents' phones, which has increased event attendance and ensured better daily awareness. Informal conversations are also effective because they build rapport, offer real-time updates, and create space for relationship-building beyond scheduled meetings.

However, the least successful avenue has been our monthly newsletter, both digital and printed. While it includes important updates and highlights, we have received minimal engagement and few responses or follow-ups. Some families likely don't check their email regularly or may struggle with digital access. Additionally, newsletters often contain too much information, which may be overwhelming or difficult to engage with consistently.

As we reflect on communication effectiveness, it's clear that families appreciate timely, personal, and concise information. To better serve our community, we are exploring the following options:

- Adding visuals or short videos to accompany newsletters, making them more accessible and engaging
- Using short weekly text digests instead of long monthly newsletters
- Creating a private program Facebook or WhatsApp group, where families can receive quick updates, view photos, and engage with staff and each other
- Offering bilingual communications, especially for families whose primary language is not English
- Designating a "family liaison" staff member to check in regularly with caregivers and help build communication consistency

Ultimately, communication must be flexible and family-centered. We are committed to meeting families where they are, honoring their preferences, and continuing to refine our approach so that every caregiver feels included, informed, and empowered to partner in their child's afterschool experience.

CKSC 7 – Option 1 Example

Event Title: STEM Family Night – “Build It & Blast Off!”

Date: March 15

Time: 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Location: Horizon Elementary Cafeteria

Event Description

This STEM-themed family night invited families to work alongside their children to build catapults, paper rockets, and balloon-powered cars. Each station included a science explanation, a hands-on challenge, and a take-home experiment. The goal was to strengthen school-family connections, promote STEM learning, and showcase youth creativity.

Planning Steps & Materials

Task

Budget

Flyers & Promotion

Supplies

Volunteers/Staffing

Set-Up Timeline

Details

\$175 total; \$100 from program funds, \$75 in-kind donations (craft sticks, rubber bands, paper, balloons, tape, snacks).

Flyers sent home in English and Spanish. Event posted on Facebook and sent through Remind. RSVP requested.

STEM kits (pre-bagged materials), instruction signs, science posters, folding tables, decorations, sign-in table, snacks, raffle prizes (STEM kits and books).

6 staff members: 1 at check-in, 3 at STEM stations, 1 floater, 1 for cleanup. 2 student volunteers guided families.

4:00–5:00 PM: Room setup. 5:30 PM: Doors open. 6:30 PM: Raffle & closing. 7:00 PM: Cleanup.

Documentation

✓ Sign-in Sheet: [Attach scanned PDF or image]

✓ Photos of the Event:



Reflection on Event (WC: 284)

STEM Family Night was a major success, with 34 families (78 total attendees) participating in engaging, hands-on activities. One of the highlights was the energy and collaboration between family members. We saw caregivers and children laughing, problem-solving, and celebrating each other's creativity. Many commented that they enjoyed learning with their child in a fun, relaxed environment. The catapult station, in particular, was a crowd favorite, and families appreciated the take-home instructions to continue experimenting together.

One thing that went exceptionally well was the flow of the room—each station had clear signage, and pre-bagged kits reduced crowding and confusion. The student volunteers were enthusiastic and relatable, giving the night a youth-led energy that parents really appreciated.

For future improvements, we would better manage the RSVP system. While we had a strong turnout, about 10 additional families arrived without RSVPs, leaving us short on snacks and a few supplies. Next time, we'll prepare a buffer of 15–20 extra kits. We'd also consider incorporating a short live demo or a slideshow of youth projects to add more visibility to what they've been learning in program.

Overall, this event reinforced the power of shared learning to build stronger family-program connections.

CKSC 7 – Option 2 Example

Sample Completed Align for Success: OST Partnership Rubric

Program Name: Horizon Afterschool Program

School Partner: Assistant Principal Jones

Date Completed: March 5, 2025

Domain	Indicator	Rating (1–3)	Examples / Notes
1. Shared Goals	Program and school staff share a vision for student success.	3	Shared academic/social-emotional goals discussed during monthly leadership meetings.
	Goals are created collaboratively.	3	Input gathered from both OST and school teams in August planning session.
2. Communication	Regular, structured communication exists between program and school-day staff.	3	Monthly check-ins with AP and counselor; quick check-ins as needed.
	Families receive aligned messaging from both programs.	2	Working on bilingual joint newsletters; currently shared flyers and conference presence.
3. Alignment of Curriculum and Instruction	OST activities support and extend school-day learning.	3	Themed units (e.g., ecosystems) are tied into afterschool STEM and literacy activities.
	OST and school staff share academic and behavioral strategies.	2	Shared trauma-informed PD; working toward joint data tracking.
4. Shared Resources	OST has access to facilities, equipment, and materials.	3	Access to media lab, gym, and materials.
	OST and school staff collaborate on events and initiatives.	3	OST supported school literacy night and family conference snack station.
5. Professional Development	OST and school staff participate in joint PD opportunities.	2	OST joined 2 school PDs this year; planning more cross-training
	PD supports student academic and social-emotional success.	3	Topics include SEL, trauma-informed care, and positive behavior strategies.
6. Family and Community Engagement	OST and school collaborate on family engagement.	3	Jointly hosted family game night and open house.
	OST and school promote consistent family involvement.	2	OST staff attending more school-led events; working on shared feedback forms.

Total Ratings Overview:

- Shared Goals: Consistently in place
- Communication: Developing (room for improvement in family communication)
- Curriculum Alignment: Strong alignment through monthly planning
- Shared Resources: Fully established
- Professional Development: Developing; need for more joint trainings
- Family Engagement: Growing collaboration; bilingual and inclusive engagement strategies needed

Align for Success Reflection (WC: 489)

The Align for Success: Out-of-School Time (OST) Partnership Rubric has been a critical tool in fostering a deeper, more intentional collaboration between our afterschool program and the school-day team. By working through the rubric together with our assistant principal, we were able to evaluate our current practices, identify gaps, and establish actionable goals for more integrated support for our shared students. Using this structured approach has enhanced communication, strengthened consistency between school and afterschool expectations, and aligned academic and social-emotional goals across both settings.

One of the most valuable outcomes from using the rubric was improving communication structures. Through regular collaborative partnership meetings (monthly check-ins with our principal and school counselor), we now maintain an open loop of information regarding academic progress, behavior trends, and family needs. This has allowed us to identify students needing additional support more quickly and to align our intervention strategies. For example, when a student struggled with attendance and focus during the school day, we were able to reinforce routine and offer a mentorship connection in afterschool that supported their school-day goals.

The rubric also prompted us to strengthen our alignment of curriculum. We now build monthly themes around what students are learning during the school day. For example, when 4th graders were learning about ecosystems in science, our afterschool STEM projects included habitat-building challenges and nature scavenger hunts. This consistency not only reinforces learning but also boosts student confidence by allowing them to show what they know in a creative and lower-pressure environment.

Shared resources have also been a key area of growth. Our school has allowed us access to the media lab for afterschool projects, and we've provided classroom supplies, snacks, and staffing support for school events. During parent-teacher conferences, we hosted a collaborative "Homework & Snacks Station" to increase visibility and support family engagement across both programs.

Professional development is another area we've integrated. This year, OST staff joined the school's trauma-informed training and participated in a school-led workshop on culturally responsive classroom management. In return, we've shared social-emotional learning strategies and community resource contacts that benefit school-day staff. This mutual exchange has built respect and consistency in how adults across the building support students.

By utilizing the Align for Success rubric, we've built a partnership that feels genuinely collaborative and responsive. Both teams now see each other as part of a shared mission rather than separate programs. We're not only reinforcing academic success, but we're also creating a consistent, supportive community that bridges the gap between school and afterschool for students and their families.

CKSC 7 - Option 3 Example

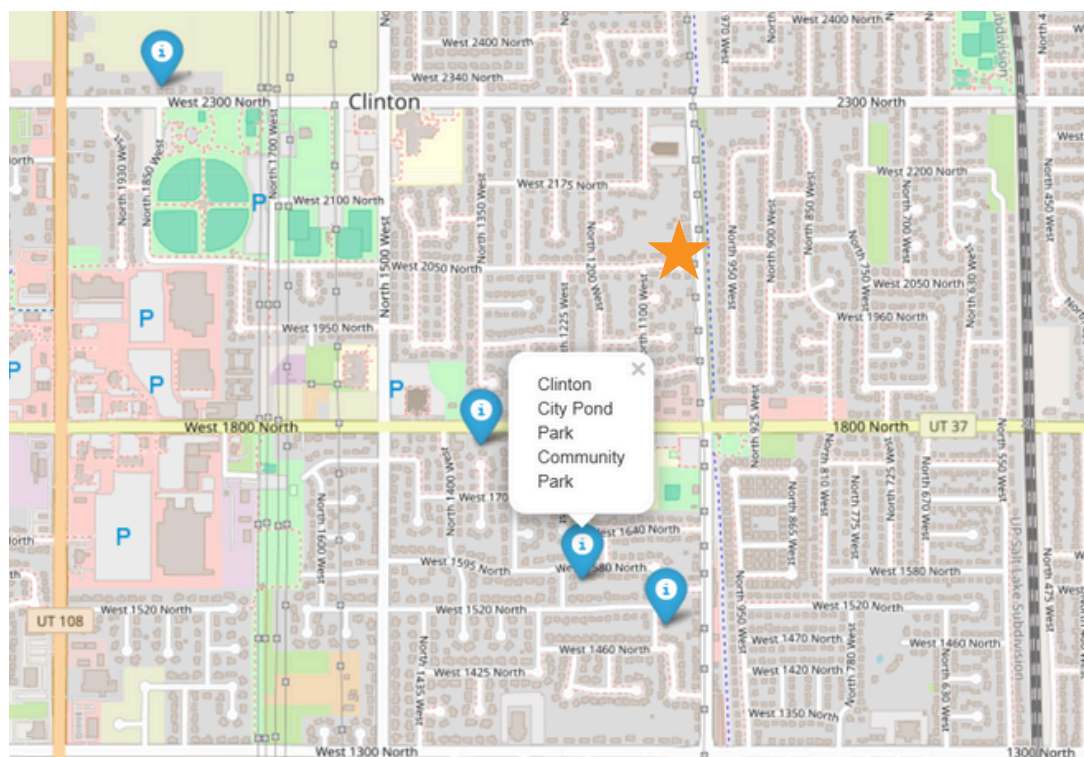
(Word Count: 225)

Based on publicly available data, Clinton, Utah is a growing, family-oriented city with a population of approximately 23,500. The community is predominantly White, with additional representation from Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Asian residents. The median household income is just over \$109,000, with a low poverty rate compared to national averages. The average household size is 3.5, reflecting the strong presence of families in the area.

English is overwhelmingly the primary language spoken at home, with very limited linguistic diversity reported. Education levels are relatively high, with most adults completing high school and some college. Local employment is concentrated in manufacturing, public administration, and retail. While the overall economic indicators suggest stability, there are still local families experiencing food insecurity or housing instability.

Understanding this data allows us to shape our program more intentionally. For example, event planning should include family-centered scheduling and outdoor activities. While communication can primarily be in English, we remain prepared to support multilingual needs. And by acknowledging both the visible affluence and hidden needs, we can ensure equitable resource access for all families.

Community Resource Map & Partners



★ Program location

Local Resources Identified:

1. Clinton City Library – Literacy programs, family events
2. Meadows Park – Recreation and youth sports fields
3. West Clinton Sports Park – Youth leagues and fitness spaces
4. Clinton City Pond Park – Outdoor community gathering space
5. Psychological Preventative Health – Local access to counseling services
6. Community Action Food Bank – Food assistance and family support
7. Clinton Community Corner (Facebook) – Local events and service connection

CKSC 7 – Option 3 Example

Target Partnership:

We aim to partner with the Community Action Food Bank to support food access for families in our program.

SMART Goal for Community Partnership

By Week 8 of the upcoming school year, I will develop a formal partnership with the Community Action Food Bank to host a monthly food distribution event at our site. I will seek leadership approval, coordinate logistics, and promote the event to families. Success will be measured by at least 30 families served per event and follow-up surveys to assess food access impact.

Reflection (WC: 129)

Exploring the data revealed that while Clinton is relatively affluent, there are still unmet needs—particularly around food access and mental health. I hadn't previously considered how economic diversity could be hidden within a community with such high median income. This insight will influence our event planning, making sure we provide welcoming, family-based events with built-in resource access. It also reinforced the value of forming intentional partnerships to address these gaps.

What excites me about this process is the opportunity to connect families with resources that go beyond our program's direct services. The biggest challenge will be coordinating logistics and ensuring consistent family engagement. Still, understanding the full context of our families allows us to serve them with deeper empathy and purpose.

Footnotes / Sources:

1. U.S. Census Bureau – Clinton, UT QuickFacts
2. City-Data – Clinton City Demographics
3. Data USA – Clinton, UT Community Profile
4. Davis School District Report Cards – School and Community Profiles
5. Clinton City Parks and Recreation – Park Locations
6. Community Action Services – Food Bank Programs
7. Facebook – Clinton Community Corner

CKSC 8 - Required

Program Safety Policies and Procedures

1. Supervision and Staffing

- Staff-to-child ratios follow state licensing guidelines (1:10 for ages 6–12).
- All staff are trained in CPR/First Aid and undergo background checks prior to hire.
- Staff conduct headcounts at all transitions (arrival, departure, activity changes).
- Youth must be within sight and sound of staff at all times.

2. Check-In and Check-Out Procedures

- Youth must be signed in by authorized school personnel or caregivers.
- Only individuals listed on the approved pick-up form may sign youth out.
- Staff check IDs for unfamiliar individuals and document all sign-outs.

3. Emergency Procedures

- Fire, earthquake, lockdown, and evacuation drills are conducted quarterly.
- Emergency exits are clearly marked and evacuation maps are posted.
- First aid kits are stocked and accessible in each activity area.
- An emergency binder includes family contact info, medical authorizations, and allergy alerts.

4. Health and Illness

- Youth exhibiting symptoms of illness will be isolated and caregivers contacted.
- Staff follow universal precautions when handling bodily fluids.
- Medications are stored in a locked box and administered per authorization forms only.

5. Behavior and Safety Expectations

- Staff use positive behavior supports and trauma-informed strategies.
- Physical aggression or unsafe behavior is addressed promptly with de-escalation techniques.
- Incident reports are completed and communicated to families the same day.

6. Mandated Reporting and Confidentiality

- All staff are mandated reporters and trained annually on child abuse reporting laws.
- Suspected abuse or neglect is reported immediately to the appropriate child welfare agency.
- Youth records are stored securely and shared only with authorized parties.

7. Environmental Safety

- Daily site safety checks are completed before program begins.
- All equipment is age-appropriate and maintained in safe working condition.
- Unsafe areas are blocked off and hazards are reported immediately to administration.

CKSC 8 - Required

Program Safety Policies and Procedures

8. Field Trip and Transportation Safety

- Signed permission slips are required for all off-site activities.
- Transportation is provided only by licensed and insured drivers.
- Emergency kits and first aid supplies are carried on all trips.
- Headcounts and buddy systems are enforced at all times.

9. Communication and Family Notification

- Families are notified immediately in the event of injury, emergency, or behavioral concern.
- A daily communication board displays updates, reminders, and any safety alerts.
- A parent handbook outlining safety protocols is provided upon enrollment.

10. Review and Training

- Safety policies are reviewed annually and updated as needed.
- All staff participate in pre-service and ongoing safety training.
- Youth are introduced to safety routines during program orientation and through monthly refreshers.

For questions or to review the full Emergency Plan, contact the Site Coordinator.

CKSC 8 - Required

Afterschool Snack Menu (Ages 6–12).

Week of: 3/10/25 - 3/14/25

Each snack includes two of the following: fluid milk, fruit/vegetable, grain, meat/meat alternate

<u>Day</u>	<u>Snack</u>	<u>Serving Sizes</u>
Monday	Apple slices + cheddar cheese cubes	½ cup fruit + 1 oz cheese
Tuesday	Whole grain crackers + carrot sticks	1 oz crackers + ½ cup vegetable
Wednesday	Yogurt + sliced bananas	½ cup yogurt + ½ banana
Thursday	Turkey & cheese sandwich squares	1 oz meat + ½ slice whole grain bread
Friday	Hummus + pita chips + cucumber slices	2 tbsp hummus + 1 oz pita + ½ cup veg

Note: All serving sizes follow USDA CACFP Snack Guidelines for children ages 6–12.

Attention: This facility is a tree-nut free zone.

Promoting Health and Wellness Through Afterschool Programming (WC: 487)

As rates of childhood obesity, diabetes, asthma, and mental health concerns rise nationwide, afterschool programs have a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to support the health and well-being of children. School-age programs serve as a bridge between school and home and are ideally positioned to create active, safe, and health-promoting environments. By aligning with the new National Afterschool Association (NAA) Standards for Physical Activity, we can intentionally design programs that help youth develop lifelong habits of movement, nutrition awareness, and self-care.

Our program integrates daily physical activity that exceeds the NAA minimum standard of 30–60 minutes per day for children in grades K–5. We use a combination of structured games, youth-led fitness activities, and free play to promote cardiovascular endurance, motor skills, and social cooperation. For example, every Wednesday, we host a “Choice Challenge” where youth rotate through stations such as relay races, dance workouts, jump rope, and yoga. This variety encourages engagement across interests and ability levels.

We also make inclusive adaptations for youth with asthma, sensory needs, or lower stamina. Visual cues, step-by-step instructions, and options for rest allow every child to participate meaningfully. Indoors, we prioritize movement-based games like indoor scavenger hunts, balloon volleyball, or Simon Says to keep energy levels up when weather restricts outdoor play.

In addition to physical activity, our snack program follows USDA guidelines and introduces healthy foods through taste tests and hands-on snack prep. By offering snacks like yogurt parfaits, fruit kabobs, or veggie dips, we normalize nutritious choices and foster curiosity around healthy eating. We also use food-free incentives to celebrate participation and progress, which supports youth with allergies or dietary restrictions.

Beyond physical health, we incorporate mindfulness and mental well-being into our routine. During “Wellness Circles,” youth reflect on emotions, practice breathing techniques, or set movement goals for the week. These brief sessions are designed to help youth recognize the link between physical and emotional well-being.

We also model active adult behavior. Staff participate in activities alongside youth, wearing appropriate clothing and showing enthusiasm for movement. This creates a culture where physical activity is not a chore, but a shared and joyful part of the day.

To further support health equity, we aim to partner with local organizations like parks departments and health clinics to offer family fitness nights or parent workshops on movement and nutrition. These events extend our impact beyond the program hours and build strong, health-focused connections with families.

In sum, afterschool programs are more than just a place for homework and crafts—they’re a powerful setting for addressing today’s most urgent health challenges. By embedding movement, nutrition education, and emotional support into our daily routine, we play a vital role in promoting long-term well-being for every child we serve.

Evaluation of Emergency Preparedness Plan (WC: 264)

I reviewed the fire evacuation procedures section of our Emergency Preparedness Plan. While it clearly outlines evacuation routes and assembly points, I noticed several areas for improvement. First, the instructions lack sufficient visual aids, such as detailed maps with color-coded routes. Adding these would help younger children and those with limited reading proficiency understand the plan more effectively. Second, the roles and responsibilities for staff could be clarified. For example, it's unclear who ensures that attendance sheets and emergency contact lists are taken to the assembly point. Assigning these roles explicitly would reduce confusion during an actual evacuation.

Another gap is accessibility for youth with disabilities. The plan does not specify how to assist children with mobility challenges or sensory sensitivities during an evacuation. Including a list of accommodations, such as assigning a buddy to assist each child with disabilities, would ensure equitable safety measures. Finally, while the plan mentions regular fire drills, it doesn't require documenting staff performance or identifying areas for improvement after each drill. Instituting a post-drill debrief would allow the team to refine their response and address any gaps in execution.

Emergency Response Case Scenarios

Scenario 1: A child with a nut allergy eats something questionable and says their throat feels funny. Immediately, I would check if the child is carrying their prescribed epinephrine injector. If they are, I would administer it as instructed and call 911. Simultaneously, I would notify the site coordinator to contact the child's parent or guardian. After the child is stabilized, I would complete an incident report detailing what happened, how it was addressed, and any further actions needed.

Scenario 2: A parent not on the authorized pickup list insists on taking a child.

I would calmly explain that, per policy, only individuals listed on the child's authorization form are allowed to pick them up. I would ask the parent to wait while I contact the site coordinator and the child's legal guardian for clarification. If the situation escalates, I would notify the police and ensure the child remains safe and supervised until the issue is resolved. Documentation of the incident would include details of the interaction, people involved, and any steps taken.

Reflection (WC: 147)

This process highlighted that while our program has a solid foundation for emergency preparedness, some areas require refinement to improve clarity and inclusivity. Writing out responses to scenarios underscored the need for staff to practice handling high-stress situations calmly and systematically. For example, I recognized the importance of having updated contact lists readily accessible and ensuring every staff member is confident in using emergency supplies, such as epinephrine injectors.

To ensure readiness, I will recommend quarterly emergency drills that include diverse scenarios, such as medical crises and lockdowns. Each drill will be followed by a debrief to identify successes and areas for improvement. Additionally, I will advocate for visual aids, scenario-based training, and ongoing communication with staff and families to foster a culture of preparedness. Calm, informed staff create a safer environment for everyone.

CKSC 8 – Option 3 Example

Plan for Supporting Youth Mental and Emotional Well-Being (WC: 288)

Our afterschool program prioritizes emotional safety and mental wellness by integrating intentional, developmentally appropriate strategies into our daily structure. First, we begin each day with check-ins and feelings boards, allowing youth to express how they're feeling using words or visuals. This gives staff a clear picture of who may need extra support and helps youth build emotional vocabulary and self-awareness.

Second, we maintain a calm-down space—a quiet area with soft seating, sensory tools, and self-regulation materials. Youth can request to take a break here when overwhelmed. Staff are trained to offer the space without punishment, reinforcing that emotional regulation is a healthy skill, not a disciplinary issue.

Third, we regularly implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, such as role-playing scenarios, journaling prompts, or team-building games. These activities help youth develop empathy, self-awareness, and problem-solving skills, aligning with CASEL core competencies.

Fourth, we apply trauma-informed practices, such as giving youth choices, using predictable routines, and modeling co-regulation. These approaches reduce triggers and increase trust and consistency, especially for youth with adverse experiences.

Each of these strategies supports youth development by teaching self-regulation, empathy, and communication. More importantly, they help create an environment where youth feel safe to take emotional risks, knowing they will be supported, not judged.

Staff Training and Mental Health Support (WC: 245)

Staff in our program receive regular training in emotional and behavioral health support through workshops and ongoing coaching. At the beginning of each school year, staff complete a required session on trauma-informed care, which includes recognizing signs of stress, anxiety, and dysregulation. This helps them respond with compassion rather than punishment.

We also hold quarterly refresher sessions focused on SEL practices, de-escalation techniques, and conflict resolution. These trainings help staff feel confident addressing both individual needs and group dynamics. During weekly staff meetings, we include time to debrief on emotional or behavioral incidents, identify patterns, and plan consistent responses across the team.

When needed, we partner with the school counselor and local mental health agencies to support specific youth. For example, we've collaborated with a local nonprofit to offer art-based therapy sessions and social skills groups on-site. Staff also have access to a mental health consultant for support with high-needs cases or to help develop individualized behavior plans.

These systems help create a professional culture of shared responsibility and support. Staff know they don't have to manage emotional needs alone and are encouraged to approach every behavior with empathy, structure, and care. This builds a stronger team and a safer space for youth.

Reflection on Emotional Safety and Belonging (WC: 278)

Creating a space where youth feel seen, heard, and valued is a core principle of our program. We do this by ensuring youth have choice in their daily activities, opportunities to lead or contribute ideas, and time to connect with peers and trusted adults. We actively celebrate identity and self-expression, whether through art, storytelling, or simply listening to what matters most to each child.

To foster emotional safety, staff greet youth by name each day and check in about more than just behavior—asking how school went, what they're excited about, or how they're feeling. These small interactions build trust over time and help youth feel known and understood. When conflicts arise, we use restorative practices to help youth reflect on their actions, repair harm, and feel reconnected to the group, rather than excluded.

One example that stands out is when a student who struggled with peer conflict and emotional regulation asked for a leadership role in our group game. Staff supported him with clear steps and feedback, and he succeeded in leading the group respectfully and confidently. His behavior improved significantly afterward—not because we enforced stricter rules, but because we gave him a chance to be seen as capable and trusted.

Through relationships, consistency, and choice, we work daily to make sure every youth feels they matter. Emotional safety isn't a program feature—it's the foundation.

CKSC 9 - Required

1. Organization's Mission and Values

Mission Statement:

Horizon Afterschool Program is dedicated to creating inclusive, engaging, and safe spaces where children and youth can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Through hands-on learning, enrichment activities, and strong community partnerships, we empower students to explore their interests, build meaningful relationships, and develop lifelong skills.

Core Values:

- Equity: Every child deserves access to high-quality learning experiences.
- Empowerment: Youth voice and choice are essential to program success.
- Relationships: Trust and respect form the foundation of everything we do.
- Growth: We support continuous learning for both youth and staff.
- Community: Strong partnerships with families and schools enhance our impact.

2. Defining Our Ideal Culture (WC: 453)

The ideal workplace culture at Horizon is one of collaborative respect, shared purpose, and continuous support. In this culture, every staff member feels valued, connected to the mission, and empowered to contribute their strengths. Open communication, inclusive decision-making, and a shared commitment to youth success are central. This includes staff celebrating each other's wins, participating in joint planning, and having regular opportunities for feedback and professional growth.

Currently, our workplace culture shows strong alignment in terms of shared commitment to youth and collaboration during programming hours. Staff generally work well together and care deeply about their roles. However, there are gaps when it comes to communication clarity, cross-role collaboration, and staff well-being support. For example, part-time and full-time staff sometimes operate in silos due to scheduling, and feedback mechanisms can be inconsistent. This creates missed opportunities for team-building and sharing ideas that could benefit the program overall.

3. Gathering Employee Input

To assess our culture, we conducted an anonymous staff survey and hosted a "Team Talk" during our last professional development day. Staff shared that they appreciate the program's mission, the supportive relationships with students, and the flexibility they're given. However, they also expressed a desire for:

- More structured communication between shifts
- A clearer process for decision-making and conflict resolution
- More recognition for individual contributions
- Additional opportunities for team bonding outside of high-pressure hours

CKSC 9 - Required

4. Recommendations to Strengthen Culture

To align our workplace culture more closely with our mission and values, we recommend the following:

- Weekly Staff Check-Ins: A 15-minute huddle to share announcements, challenges, and celebrate small wins.
- Cross-Role Mentoring: Pair part-time and full-time staff to encourage communication and professional support.
- Recognition Board & “Shout Outs”: Highlight staff efforts weekly in our break room and internal messages.
- Shared Planning Time: Allocate monthly time for staff to collaboratively plan events or activities.
- Feedback Loops: Implement a digital suggestion box and regular anonymous surveys.

By listening to our team and committing to transparency, inclusion, and professional respect, we can foster a culture where everyone feels empowered, supported, and united in our mission to serve youth.

CKSC 9 – Option 1 Example

Program Name: Horizon Afterschool Program

Assessment Tool Used: Internal Observation Rubric – Spring Cycle 2025

{Attach Assessment form}

Assessment Summary (WC: 497)

Our most recent internal observation was conducted using a tool modeled after the School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SA-PQA). The assessment evaluated four domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. Overall, our program scored highest in safety and supportive relationships with youth, while areas for growth were identified in staff-child interaction consistency, youth choice and voice, and materials/resources to support engagement.

1. Staffing

Current State: The program currently operates with one site coordinator, one lead group facilitator, and three part-time youth support staff. Staff are passionate and experienced, but recent feedback and observation data highlighted uneven levels of youth engagement between staff. Some staff need additional support to lead intentional, youth-centered activities.

Improvement Plan:

- Provide quarterly training in youth development, trauma-informed care, and facilitation techniques.
- Establish peer observations where staff observe and learn from each other's strengths.
- Hire one additional part-time support staff to reduce adult-to-youth ratios during peak hours.
- Create individualized professional development plans using self-assessment and supervisor feedback.

2. Resources

Current State: Observation noted a lack of engaging, age-appropriate materials in key activity areas such as STEM and literacy. Additionally, the arts & crafts area is under-resourced, limiting youth creativity.

Improvement Plan:

- Conduct a resource audit to inventory existing supplies and identify gaps.
- Apply for mini-grants through local education foundations.
- Partner with school leadership and community organizations to share materials and reduce duplicate spending.
- Create a "wish list" board to encourage family and community donations for high-impact items (books, building materials, cultural craft kits).

3. Services

Current State: Youth consistently report enjoying program activities, but surveys and assessment results reveal limited opportunities for choice, leadership, and community service. The scope of enrichment activities has been constrained due to staffing and supply limitations.

Improvement Plan:

- Launch a “Youth Leadership Committee” to co-plan one activity or event per month.
- Introduce interest-based activity stations twice weekly, giving youth more voice in their participation.
- Reintroduce service learning opportunities, such as kindness kits or campus clean-up projects.
- Develop at least one partnership with a local enrichment provider (music, robotics, or art) by the next session.

Alignment with Mission & Vision

These improvement strategies align directly with our mission to provide an inclusive, empowering, and enriching afterschool experience. By investing in staff development, expanding resources, and broadening service offerings, we create a nurturing and dynamic environment where all youth can thrive.

CKSC 9 – Option 2 Example

Program Name: Horizon Afterschool Program

Observation Date: March 12, 2025

Observer: Internal Trained Staff Observer

Assessment Tool: SA-PQA Form A **{Attach SA-PQA}**

Reflection on Program Strengths and Opportunities for Growth (WC: 486)

Our most recent SA-PQA observation provided valuable insight into both the strong foundations and the areas where we can continue to grow as a program. The observation focused on four key domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. We are proud to report high scores in Safe Environment and Supportive Environment, which reflects our staff's commitment to fostering a welcoming, respectful, and physically secure space for youth.

One of our greatest strengths observed was in staff-youth relationships. Staff were consistently seen greeting youth by name, engaging in conversations, and using positive language. Youth appeared comfortable approaching staff, and many interactions were warm and affirming. Additionally, youth had access to a clean, organized space with a calm behavior management approach rooted in restorative practices. These outcomes align with our mission to create emotionally safe environments where students are both supported and empowered.

However, the observation revealed clear opportunities for growth in the Engagement and Interaction domains. Specifically, we scored lower in areas related to youth choice and leadership, including indicators like offering youth meaningful roles, involving them in planning activities, and giving them time to reflect on their learning experiences. While we offer multiple activity choices each day, those choices are almost entirely pre-determined by staff. Similarly, while some youth offer informal input, there are no consistent or structured opportunities for youth to shape programming or reflect on their experiences.

This gap highlights an important area for development. Research—and our own observations—show that when youth have ownership over their environment and experiences, engagement, behavior, and confidence improve. Elevating youth voice aligns with our program's values of equity, empowerment, and growth.

SMART Goal for Growth

Goal: By the end of the current program cycle (8 weeks), our program will implement two new systems for youth voice and leadership: (1) a Youth Planning Board that meets biweekly to provide input on programming and activities, and (2) a Reflection Wall where youth can share feedback, ideas, or insights after activities.

I will achieve this by make sure youth will have consistent, structured opportunities to contribute to the planning process and reflect on their learning. At least 10 youth will participate in the Planning Board, and at least 25 youth entries will be posted on the Reflection Wall within the cycle. I will have the staff guide and facilitate meetings and reflection prompts using existing time and space. This should build on SA-PQA Engagement indicators and strengthens alignment with our mission. I hope to have this fully implemented and reviewed by the end of the 8-week session. This SMART goal will not only address the identified area of growth but also deepen youth engagement, ownership, and leadership in meaningful ways.

CKSC 9 – Option 3 Example

Step 1: Resource and Material Inventory – Horizon Afterschool Program

Location: Main Program Room (Shared School Cafeteria & Gym)

Art Supplies

- Crayons, colored pencils, markers
- Watercolor and tempera paint
- Construction and drawing paper
- Scissors (kid-safe), glue sticks, liquid glue
- Pipe cleaners, beads, yarn, tissue paper
- Paint brushes, smocks, drying rack

STEM Materials

- Legos, magnetic tiles, KEVA planks
- Measuring tape, rulers, balance scales
- Snap circuits, batteries, mini motors
- Popsicle sticks, rubber bands, straws
- Magnifying glasses, tweezers, stopwatch timers

Literacy Supplies

- Book sets (levels 2–6), graphic novels
- Flashcards, magnetic letters
- Writing journals, dry erase boards/markers
- Story dice and prompts
- Reading nook cushions and beanbags

Games & Activities

- Board games (Uno, Jenga, Connect 4)
- Card games, puzzles, dominoes
- Cooperative games (Team Juggle, Hula Hoop Pass)
- Floor mats for group games

Physical Activity Equipment

- Jump ropes, cones, basketballs, hula hoops
- Parachute, beanbags, soccer balls
- Stopwatches, obstacle course equipment

Snack Supplies & Misc.

- Reusable cups, napkins, cleaning wipes
- Storage bins, clipboards, labels
- First aid kit, paper towels, hand sanitizer

Steps 2 & 3: Resource Management Reflection and Plan (WC: 489)

After completing our resource inventory, we conducted a 4-week internal audit of how time and materials were being used at the program site. Weekly staff check-ins were held each Friday to reflect on the effectiveness of materials, time management, and supply accessibility. Each check-in lasted 15–20 minutes and included a brief form where staff recorded underused, overused, or missing items in their assigned interest areas. These sessions helped identify two recurring issues: 1) high-demand materials (like art supplies and certain STEM kits) were often depleted or misplaced, and 2) staff were spending valuable time searching for or improvising around missing resources.

One example came from the art area: although smocks and brushes were stocked, they were often buried beneath unrelated materials, leading to delays and a reluctance from younger youth to engage in painting activities. Similarly, the dry erase boards for literacy games were frequently out of markers, causing activity changes mid-program.

To address these issues, we introduced the following strategies:

- **Digital Resource Tracker:** We created a shared Google Sheet where staff can log material usage and note when items are low. This real-time tracker includes checkboxes for replenishment and tags for specific interest areas. Staff access this tool via tablet during cleanup and reflection time.
- **Color-Coded Bins and Labels:** We reorganized storage using color-coded bins for each program zone (e.g., green for STEM, red for Art). This visual cue system helps both staff and youth locate and return materials quickly.
- **Quarterly Inventory and Budget Alignment:** We scheduled formal quarterly inventories and tied supply requests to our purchasing calendar. A “wishlist” tab in the tracker allows staff to suggest new materials or replacements for broken items.
- **Time-Management Training:** As part of our monthly staff meeting, we introduced time-saving strategies like prepping materials the day prior, assigning setup roles, and using “quick start” cards—simple activities with minimal prep—for transitions or supply shortages.

These changes have already improved staff efficiency and youth engagement. The digital tracker helped us catch and restock items proactively, while the labeled bins decreased search time by 30%. Additionally, staff report feeling more confident knowing they have reliable tools and systems.

Moving forward, we plan to explore low-cost inventory apps and pilot a youth-led “supply manager” role to further embed ownership and responsibility. These strategies align with our mission to provide high-quality, well-organized learning environments that empower both youth and staff to succeed.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

III. Leadership and Advocacy

Self-Rating

3

IDENTIFY

- A. Recognizes the importance of leadership skills, self-advocacy, and being a voice to support children, youth, and families.
- B. Understands the characteristics and qualities of leadership.

3

Self-Rating

5

APPLY

- A. Seeks out informal and formal leadership and advocacy opportunities within the broader community, field, or profession.
- B. Displays leadership skills.
- C. Advocates for self and others.
- D. Seeks out informal and formal leadership and advocacy opportunities within a program or organization.

3

2

2

Self-Rating

3

AMPLIFY

- A. Models for and teaches, mentors, and/or coaches others on leadership development.
- B. Models for and teaches, mentors, and/or coaches others on advocacy for self and others.
- C. Recommends and promotes organizational and program policies, practices, PD, and funding that facilitates leadership, power-sharing across job titles, and advocacy.
- D. Advocates for public and philanthropic policies, practices, and funding that supports leadership development, power-sharing across job titles, and advocacy.

2

4

4

I. Responsibility and Commitment

Examples, notes & evidence:

Since stepping into my new role as a lead afterschool professional, I've embraced opportunities to support and advocate for my team. One example of this is when a staff member expressed concern about the structure of our daily transitions. I listened, helped them brainstorm solutions, and brought their ideas to our site coordinator. As a result, we implemented a new visual schedule that has made transitions smoother for both staff and youth. I've found that I'm naturally comfortable speaking up on behalf of others and helping team members feel heard and supported, especially during team meetings and problem-solving discussions.

While I'm still building confidence in advocating for myself, I've made professional growth a priority. I've attended local afterschool conferences and enrolled in online leadership trainings to strengthen my communication and supervisory skills. One small but meaningful change I made was introducing weekly team huddles where we share wins, challenges, and upcoming goals. These meetings have created more consistent communication and built trust across our team. I know leadership is a skill that takes time to grow, and I'm committed to learning how to lead both with empathy and with confidence in my own voice.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

II. Ongoing Professional Growth

Self-Rating

IDENTIFY

3

A. Understand professional development requirements of the field and regulating bodies and is aware of necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies.

4

B. Values ongoing self-reflection, self-assessment, and problem-solving strategies to promote professional growth.

3

C. Is informed by current news, data trends, and emerging research that impact children and youth and their families.

Self-Rating

APPLY

3

A. Builds professional network, skills, and competencies by accessing various services, resources, and opportunities.

3

B. Develops and implements a professional development plan.

4

C. Participates in activities, projects, and events within their organization.

4

D. Engages in continuous, collaborative professional development for the benefit of self and others.

2

E. Integrates knowledge of historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of child/youth development into planning and decision making.

1

F. Participates actively in professional associations and/or informal networks with others in youth development and related fields.

Self-Rating

AMPLIFY

2

A. Participates in activities, projects, and events with the broader field.

3

B. Models for, teaches, mentors, and coaches other's professional growth.

3

C. Supports others development and implementation of professional development plans

3

D. Recommends and promotes organizational and program policies, practices, PD, and funding that support the facilitation of professional growth.

1

E. Advocates for public and philanthropic policies, practices, and funding that support the facilitation of professional growth.

II. Ongoing Professional Growth

Examples, notes & evidence:

As I reflect on my journey into leadership, I recognize that I've grown a lot in terms of initiative, communication, and supporting others within my organization. I've taken a proactive role in identifying professional development opportunities, not only for myself, but for my team as well. Whether it's forwarding upcoming trainings, helping coworkers prepare for observations, or leading informal check-ins, I've found that I enjoy being a resource others can rely on. Many colleagues come to me with questions about daily operations or program expectations, and I take pride in being someone they trust to find solutions or offer guidance.

That said, I know there are still areas where I want to grow. While I've developed strong internal relationships, I haven't yet built a network beyond my organization. I haven't participated in local or statewide afterschool events or committees, and I realize that's a missed opportunity to expand my perspective and strengthen my ability to advocate, not just for my site, but for the field as a whole. In the future, I'd like to be more intentional about attending professional meetups, applying to local advisory groups, or even presenting at a conference. Building those connections could help me grow as a leader and give me more tools to support others.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

III. Leadership and Advocacy

Self-Rating

IDENTIFY

5

A. Recognizes the importance of leadership skills, self-advocacy, and being a voice to support children, youth, and families.

4

B. Understands the characteristics and qualities of leadership.

Self-Rating

APPLY

2

A. Seeks out informal and formal leadership and advocacy opportunities within the broader community, field, or profession.

4

B. Displays leadership skills.

3

C. Advocates for self and others.

4

D. Seeks out informal and formal leadership and advocacy opportunities within a program or organization.

Self-Rating

AMPLIFY

4

A. Models for and teaches, mentors, and/or coaches others on leadership development.

3

B. Models for and teaches, mentors, and/or coaches others on advocacy for self and others.

3

C. Recommends and promotes organizational and program policies, practices, PD, and funding that facilitates leadership, power-sharing across job titles, and advocacy.

3

D. Advocates for public and philanthropic policies, practices, and funding that supports leadership development, power-sharing across job titles, and advocacy.

III. Leadership and Advocacy

Examples, notes & evidence:

As a lead afterschool professional, I believe leadership should be shared and encouraged at every level. I actively look for ways to help my team step into leadership roles, whether that means inviting them to take the lead on planning an activity, encouraging them to speak up during staff meetings, or helping them identify professional development opportunities that align with their interests. I've had several conversations with team members about setting personal goals and advocating for themselves, and I try to model that by being open about my own learning journey. I want everyone on our team to see themselves as capable leaders, no matter their title or experience level.

At the same time, I know that growing as a leader also means expanding my understanding of the field beyond my immediate environment. I've realized that I need to spend more time learning about national trends, best practices, and policy changes that impact afterschool programs. I'm also working to deepen my knowledge of child development, especially as it relates to the social and emotional needs of school-age youth. I see these as essential areas of growth that will make me a stronger advocate, not just for my team, but for the youth and families we serve.

REFLECTION & PROFESSIONAL PLAN

Review your self-assessment ratings. Consider your results as you think about your areas of strength and your areas of opportunity. Reflect on your daily work as you answer the following questions and set priorities.

STRENGTHS:

On which competencies did you score the highest? Why?

In my new leadership role, I believe my greatest strengths are my reliability, my ability to support and advocate for others, and my commitment to continuous growth. I've become someone my team can depend on for guidance, follow-through, and encouragement, which has helped build a strong, supportive environment within our program. I take initiative in sharing professional development opportunities and helping others step into leadership roles of their own. Even though I'm still finding my voice when it comes to self-advocacy and external networking, I've shown that I am proactive, reflective, and dedicated to learning. These strengths, combined with my willingness to grow, are helping me build a leadership style that is collaborative, inclusive, and grounded in the values of afterschool.

What opportunities do you have or could you create to demonstrate leadership or support others with developing these competencies?

Looking ahead, I see several opportunities to continue growing as a leader while also helping others do the same. Within my organization, I can create more intentional moments for staff to lead, such as rotating team leads for planning sessions, encouraging peer-led training discussions, or spotlighting staff strengths during meetings. I also want to create space for open dialogue around professional goals, helping team members learn to advocate for themselves the way I've been learning to do. Beyond my site, I recognize that expanding my network and becoming more involved in the broader afterschool community, through conferences, state-level initiatives, or online learning communities, could not only strengthen my leadership but also allow me to bring back valuable tools and perspectives to share with my team. These efforts would help foster a culture of shared growth, where leadership is something we all have a stake in.

OPPORTUNITIES:

On which competencies did you score the lowest? Why? What makes these challenging for you?

One area I recognize as a current weakness is networking and advocacy beyond my own program. While I feel confident supporting my team internally, I haven't yet taken steps to connect with professionals outside of my organization or get involved in the larger afterschool community. I believe this is partly because I'm still new to leadership and not entirely sure where to begin. The idea of advocating at a broader level feels a little intimidating, especially when I'm still building confidence in advocating for myself. However, I know that expanding my network and engaging with others in the field is an important part of growing as a leader, and I'm open to exploring opportunities that will help me take those first steps.

From your answer above, pick two competencies that could be most impactful in your work. List these competencies as goals.

Goal 1:

One of my current goals is to build a stronger professional network outside of my own organization. To achieve this, I will connect with at least three afterschool professionals in the next three months. I plan to do this by attending one local event, joining an online community like the NAA or UAN, and introducing myself to peers during an upcoming training or conference. These small, intentional steps will help me expand my understanding of the field and learn from others' experiences. By completing one new connection each month, I'll be able to track my progress and slowly build confidence in external networking.

Goal 2:

Another area I want to focus on is advocating for my own professional development. While I've been proactive in sharing opportunities with others, I haven't always taken the time to speak up about what I need. My goal is to identify one leadership-focused professional development opportunity, such as a webinar, workshop, or conference, and formally request support or approval to attend. I plan to research options this month and submit a request to my supervisor by the end of the month, including a short explanation of how the opportunity supports my leadership growth. By completing this goal within the next two months, I'll gain both the experience and confidence I need to take more initiative in advocating for myself moving forward.

ACTION PLAN

Complete the following professional development action plan to meet the identified goals.

ASK YOURSELF	GOAL 1	GOAL 2
What materials and/or resources will I need to meet this goal?	Internet access, conference/ event calendar, list of afterschool networks or groups, professional email template	PD event flyers, calendar, goal statement, request template or email
What professional development will I need to meet this goal? What topics/ content will be the most helpful?	Networking strategies, building professional relationships, communication skills	Leadership development, self-advocacy, communication/confidence building
What form of professional development would be the most effective in helping me meet this goal (workshop, college course, research, study group, coaching, etc.)?	Online webinars, attending conferences, joining online professional learning communities	Online workshops, coaching, virtual leadership courses
How and where will I find the professional development that I need?	Search NAA/UAN sites, ask supervisor or colleagues, look into Eventbrite or OST newsletters	Search through NAA/UAN sites, Learning Lab, PD newsletters, peer recommendations
How will I find the time and money to take trainings, etc.?	Use professional development time allotted by employer; choose free or local options when possible	Request funding from my supervisor; prioritize 1–2 short trainings during slower weeks
What type of support might I need in my program in order to help me implement my new skills or apply my new knowledge?	Encouragement from supervisor, approval to attend events, time off to participate	Supervisor approval, time off for training, a mentor or someone to debrief with
How will I know if I am making progress? How will my practice change?	I'll make at least 3 new connections and start applying insights to improve communication and program visibility	I'll complete a leadership training, submit a PD request confidently, and begin modeling self-advocacy for my team
What are the first two actions I will take to meet each goal?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find a local event or training to attend 2. Introduce myself to at least one new professional 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a leadership training to attend 2. Write and submit a request to my supervisor
When will I complete each of these steps?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By the end of this month 2. By the end of next month 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within 2 weeks 2. By the end of the month

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