## YOUTH AND SCHOOL-AGE ASSESSMENTS

The Youth and School-Age Program Quality Assessments are validated instruments designed to measure the quality of youth programs and to identify staff training needs. It has been used in community organizations, schools, camps, licensed child care centers, and other places where youth have fun, work, and learn with adults.

## BACKGROUND:

- Developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality in 2005.
- Used in 135 networks and systems across 43 states, including state quality rating systems for child care centers.
- Validated in multiple studies across a variety of program types.

## WHY EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS?

The Utah Afterschool Network conducts observations to provide content-specific feedback. We utilize research-based coaching strategies and establish professional relationships free of judgment. We aim to help you improve your program.

## QUALITY MEASURED IN 70 ITEMS ACROSS 19 SCALES AND 4 DOMAINS:

- Safe Environment (e.g., Emotional Safety, Accommodating Environment).
- Supportive Environment (e.g., Warm Welcome, Active Engagement)
- Interaction (e.g., Collaboration, Leadership)
- Engagement (e.g., Choice, Reflection)

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## SCORING:

- Items receive a score of 1, 3, 5 or x.
- 1 = practice is either not present or a negative instance of practice is observed
- 3 = practice is present and inconsistently applied or there are both positive and negative instances of practice observed
- 5 = practice is consistently present or all youth receive the appropriate intervention or offering
- x = item not scored and not used to compute observation scores. X is only allowed on specific items
- Items scoring a child's opportunity for something are based on whether the opportunity was present or explicitly offered.

# OBSERVATION PROCESS

UAN Specialists want to make sure you and your staff feel comfortable during the observation process and are fully informed. The PQA Observation helps provide a snapshot of your program and is meant to be used for your benefit. This assessment process will be a great way to see what is really happening in your program and to build professional competencies.

## OBSERVATION PREPARATION:

In preparation for your program site's observation, we encourage staff to familiarize themselves with the Youth and School-Age PQA observation tools and their scoring system. Your OST Specialist will schedule a date with you on when he or she will conduct your observation. Once a date is set, please email your specialist a copy of your program's activity schedule with a selected structured activity with specific start and end times (Example: Cool Kids, Fun Stuff: Water Cycle lesson from 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm). We strongly suggest that the structured activity has an intentional learning focus and that there is an appropriate amount of instruction time where staff are engaged and interacting directly with the youth. A typical observation lasts between 45 minutes and two hours.

## DURING OBSERVATIONS:

Before the observation begins, please make sure program staff are aware of our arrival and that an observation is taking place that day. Your specialist will arrive at your site 10-15 minutes early to set up and may ask a few questions about the environment, attendance numbers, and the activity facilitator's contact information. In order to capture the most accurate "snapshot" of your program, we will remain quiet and avoid interactions from youth and staff, unless we have a specific question. We do this because every interaction between you and your youth is valuable and will inform our scoring and next steps.

## AFTER OBSERVATION:

Once the observation is completed, your specialist will need time to review their notes, compile evidence, and score the observation to create an overall program quality profile. Once this process is completed, your specialist will set up a follow-up meeting to review the observation scores and discuss next steps to provide coaching, technical assistance, and action plan towards quality improvement.



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