SCHOOL-AGE PQA

Form A Program Offerings
School-Age – Grades K-6

Full School-Age PQA available for download at http://cypq.org/downloadPQA

SAMPLE ITEMS

the **forum**
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

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CONDUCTING A PROGRAM SELF ASSESSMENT

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

Throughout the process, keep in mind these three aspects of a constructive program self assessment process:
- work as a team
- base scores on observational evidence
- focus on conversations about quality

1. SELECT AND TRAIN A SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM

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

2. PREPARE FOR DATA COLLECTION

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

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

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

3. OBSERVE AND TAKE NOTES

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

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

Your notes should be:
- Factual and objective (rather than judgmental, evaluative or impressionistic)
- Specific and detailed (rather than general)
- Accessible (language should make sense six months from now)
- Chronological (include time markers)

Your notes should include:
- Anecdotal descriptions of interactions
- Quotes of what children and/or staff say when interacting
- Actions and language of the children involved
- Materials lists
- Sequences of daily events and routines

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

4. HOLD A TEAM-BASED SCORING MEETING

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

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

5. Enter Scores

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

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

CONDUCTING AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

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

1. ATTEND AN EXTERNAL ASSESSOR RELIABILITY TRAINING

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

2. PREPARE FOR DATA COLLECTION

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

3. OBSERVE AND TAKE NOTES

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

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

Notes should be:
- Factual and objective (rather than judgmental, evaluative or impressionistic)
- Specific and detailed (rather than general)
- Accessible (language should make sense six months from now)
- Chronological (include time markers)

Notes should include:
- Anecdotal descriptions of interactions
- Quotes of what children and/or staff say when interacting
- Actions and language of the children involved
- Materials lists
- Sequences of daily events and routines

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

4. SCORING THE PQA

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

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

5. ENTER SCORES

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

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

EMOTIONAL SAFETY | Psychological and emotional safety is promoted.

ITEMS				SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1.	**1** The emotional climate of the session is predominantly negative (e.g., disrespectful, tense, exclusive, even angry or hostile); negative behaviors, such as rudeness, bragging, insults, "trash talking," negative gestures or other such actions are not mediated by either children or staff.	**3** The emotional climate of the session is neutral or charac-terized by both positive and negative behaviors.	**5** The emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, supportive; characterized by teamwork, camaraderie, inclusiveness, and an absence of negative behaviors). Any playful negative behaviors (not considered offen-sive by parties involved) are mediated (countered, curtailed, defused) by staff or children. ☐	
2.	**1** Comments or slurs intended to hurt someone who is present explicitly indicate religious, ethnic, class, gender, ability, appearance or sexual orientation bias(es).	**3** There is evidence (e.g., comments or slurs) of religious, ethnic, class, gender, ability, appearance or sexual orientation bias, but comments are not directed at anyone present.	**5** There is no evidence of bias; rather, there is mutual respect for and inclusion of others of a different religion, ethnicity, class, gender, ability, appearance or sexual orientation. ☐	

ENCOURAGEMENT | Staff supports children with encouragement.

Note: Open-ended questions do not have predetermined, correct answers; they seek the opinions, thoughts and ideas of children.

ITEMS				SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1.	**1** Staff does not support contributions or accomplishments of children in either of the ways described for a score of 3 or 5, or simply doesn't support children at all.	**3** Staff supports contributions or accomplishments of children but uses subjective or evaluative comments, such as "Good job!", "I like it!" or "You're so smart!"	**5** Staff supports at least some contributions or accomplishments of children by acknowledging what they've said or done with specific, non-evaluative language (e.g., "Yes, the cleanup project you suggested is a way to give back to the community," "It looks like you put a lot of time into choosing the colors for your painting"). ☐	
2.	**1** Staff rarely or never asks open-ended questions.	**3** Staff makes limited use of open-ended questions (e.g., only uses them during certain parts of the activity or repeats the same questions).	**5** Staff makes frequent use of open-ended questions (e.g., staff asks open-ended questions throughout the activity and questions are related to the context; most children have opportunities to answer questions that seek opinions or require thoughtful answers). ☐	

II. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT SUPPLEMENT
CHILD-CENTERED SPACE | The physical environment is flexible and child-centered.

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

ITEMS				SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1. **(SA)**	**1** There are no interest areas in or accessible to the program space.	**3** There are interest areas in or accessible to the program space, but they are not well-defined.	**5** There are well-defined interest areas in or accessible to the program space (e.g., materials in areas match purpose; spaces are clearly marked and/or labeled). ☐	
2. **(SA)**	**1** There are no interest areas or none contain sufficient materials so that several children can work with the materials simultaneously.	**3** Some, but not all, interest areas contain sufficient materials so that several children can work with the materials simultaneously.	**5** Each interest area contains sufficient materials so that several children can work with the materials simultaneously. ☐	
3. **(SA)**	**1** Ready-made commercial items or adult-made items dominate the learning environment (bulletin boards and wall displays).	**3** Some children's work is on display in the classroom.	**5** Children's individual work and projects make up most of wall, bulletin board, and other displays. ☐	
4. **(SA)**	**1** Children do not participate in selecting items for display or deciding how to arrange them.	**3** Children participate in selecting some items for display and sometimes in deciding how to arrange them.	**5** Children frequently participate in selecting items for display or deciding how to arrange them. ☐	Who made and/or selected what is displayed on the walls?
5. **(SA)**	**1** Most materials lead to prescribed outcomes (e.g., art cutouts, lotto games, worksheets, coloring books, commercial toys).	**3** Some open-ended materials are available.	**5** Most of the available materials are open-ended (e.g., boxes, paper, beads, paints, blocks, books, sand, water, corks, scarves, paints, musical instruments, microscopes, dress-up clothes). ☐	
6. **(SA)**	**1** Learning materials cannot easily be reached by children or are typically brought out by staff.	**3** Some learning materials are accessible to children.	**5** Most learning materials are easily accessible to children (e.g., placed on low shelves, in easy-to-handle containers). ☐	
7. **(SA)**	**1** No time is provided for activities based on children's interests.	**3** Some time is provided for activities based on children's interests, but it is not regularly scheduled or it is less than thirty minutes.	**5** Thirty minutes or more are provided in a session for children to be involved in activities based on their interests. ☐	

SCHOOL-AGE LEADERSHIP | Children have opportunities to practice leadership skills.

ITEMS				SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1. (SA)	**1** Staff does not provide opportunities for children to practice group-process skills.	**3** Staff provides a limited opportunity for children to practice group-process skills (e.g., all children are paired off or grouped briefly to talk about a topic, but this is the only opportunity for group process skills).	**5** Staff provides multiple or extended opportunities for children to practice group-process skills (e.g., contribute ideas or actions to the group, do a task with others, take responsibility for a part).	☐
2. (SA)	**1** Staff does not provide opportunities for a child to help another child.	**3** Staff provides informal or child-initiated opportunities for a child to help another child by demonstrating or explaining a task or part of a task (e.g., without being asked by a staff member, a child explains to another how to do a homework assignment, play a game, do something on the computer).	**5** Staff provides one or more opportunities for a child to help another child by demonstrating or explaining a task or part of a task (e.g., each child explains to a partner how take over her role in a group project; every child gets to explain the rules to his favorite game).	☐
3. (SA)	**1** Staff does not provide opportunities for children to lead a group or exercise leadership.	**3** Staff provides opportunities for one or more children to informally or spontaneously exercise leadership (e.g., during free time a child organizes a group game; a child spontaneously volunteers to demonstrate something to whole group).	**5** Staff provides structured opportunities for one or more children to lead a group (e.g., facilitate a discussion, lead a song, project, event or other activity).	☐

REFLECTION | Children have opportunities to reflect.

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

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

SCHOOL-AGE PQA OBSERVATION GUIDE

Program Offerings Children – Grades K-6

Summary of Scales

I. **Safe Environment**
   Emotional Safety
   Healthy Environment
   Emergency Preparedness
   Accommodating Environment
   Nourishment

II. **Supportive Environment**
   Warm Welcome
   Session Flow
   Active Engagement
   Skill-Building
   Encouragement
   Child-Centered Space

III. **Interaction**
   Managing Feelings
   Belonging
   School-Age Leadership
   Interaction with Adults

IV. **Engagement**
   School-Age Planning
   School-Age Choice
   Reflection
   Responsibility