QUALITY PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

Quality Programming

The expression, "this house has good bones" is true for a high quality expanded learning program as well. The "bones" are the program components and schedule, and intentionally weaving together a program with harmonic balance.

Educational Services for After School
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CONSULT 4 KIDS

7850 White Lane
Suite E-150
Bakersfield, CA
93309

www.consultfourkids.com

(661) 665-8270

What Is Quality Programming

<u>**Key Points**</u>

When you complete this e-Book you will have an understanding of the components of quality programming and how to ensure that your program is continually improving and strengthening its program for youth.

Terms/Glossary

Accountability: Term that refers to setting clear expectations, monitoring the results and holding staff for getting the results that they have agreed to achieve.

Alignment: Refers to programs that are in synch with the school day; program which are supportive but not copying.

Calendars: A year-long look at what will happen during your program. It is similar to the "scope" of a school day program.

Component: Component is the word used to describe each "bite-sized" chunk of your program day so you can organize your work around each component in a prioritized way.

Double Loop: A term that defines a cycle of review and reflection that includes looking at underlying causes rather than just the visible evidence. This allows you to look at policies, procedures, and other structures and systems.

Elite 8: Quality Program Checklist that looks at 8 separate components of program. It differs from the Super 7 in that there is a section on specific academic support for the school day in the four cores.

Ownership: Term that refers to the buy-in of student and staff to ensuring high quality programming.

Quality Program: Term that refers to the excellence and value-add of the afterschool program as it relates to the experience of youth, school day staff, program, staff, parents/caregivers, funders, others

Rubrics: Blueprints or roadmaps to program quality looking at individual components and demonstrable evidence at each stage of development

Schedules: Daily, weekly, or monthly looks at the program. Most similar to the school day sequence which lines out the order that activities and units are presented.

Single Loop: A term that defines a cycle of review and reflection that includes observing your current program, determining what's working and what's not, making plans to correct as needed and then implementing the changes.

Super 7: Quality Program Checklist that looks at 7 separate components of program. It differs from the Elite 8 in that there is NOT a section on specific academic support for the school day in the four cores.

SWOT Analysis: An analysis of data that identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (things that are preventing your program from improving)

Prior Knowledge

What are the measures of quality? If we think about diamonds the quality is determined by the "scores" or "ratings" an individual diamond receives on the 4 C's—color, clarity, cut, and carat weight. There are established standards and the diamond is compared to that standard to determine its quality. Afterschool program quality is no different. The standard can be found in the Elite 8 and Super 7 Quality Program Checklists and the ability to consistently compare is developed over time.

Brain Power

Author Peter Senge, in his book Fifth Discipline shares the importance of asking the 5 Whys. When we are looking at program quality the one thing we want to avoid doing is "jumping to the point of view" that the challenge is because of the people. When we do this we place blame instead of really looking at what is happening during program. Once you've worked through all of the program possibilities, including policies and procedures, schedules, and training protocols, there is always time to go back and look at the people piece. In Senge's example he states that there is oil on the floor underneath a motorcycle in the show room. Needless to say if you go the "people blame" route, the oil is because the custodian didn't clean it up because the manager didn't walk the floor because the supervisor wasn't monitoring the manager and on and on. However, if you want to look deeper the scenario might go like this: Why is there oil on the floor? Because the gasket doesn't fit tightly enough. Why doesn't the

gasket fit tightly enough? Because it didn't meet the specifications we sent out. Why did we buy a gasket that didn't meet all of our specifications? Because company policy dictates that we always take the lowest bid. As you can see, one gets to the "policy cause" that will continue to plague the showroom floor with oil. Once you are at the root of the problem, the fix can be accomplished in a preventative manner rather than as an intervention.

Introduction

While we certainly have an overall understanding if an entire program is of high quality, it is easier to work with a program in bite-sized chunks. This is more manageable for most site staff and allows you to approach strengthening your program systematically. The components of your program will in part be determined by your funder who will have certain expectations about programming. Additionally, your organizational mission will influence your choices. For example, if your mission is to support the physical and emotional health of youth, then you will offer different things in your program to promote that mission. One of the biggest questions you will need to answer if you work with a school day partner is how you will support the core academics of the school day. If your mission focuses on academics and improving overall student academic performance, then you will want to be sure you have enough time in your program to support academics. Your overall program quality will be determined by what you call out as important to your organization and to you.

Program components that C4K believes are important include the Openings (what happens when you first arrive at program, when your staff arrives and when youth arrive), homework, rotations, enrichment, healthy living, closing and academic support. Indicators and demonstrable evidence for each of these components can be found in the C4K Super 7 and Elite 8 Quality Programming Checklists. Blueprints of how to move your program along toward quality programming can be found in C4K-created program rubrics. All of the checklists and rubrics are available to end-users in the Tools sections of our Online Instruction section.

Debrief

Based on what you've read so far, what is important about quality programming? How might you use this information to strengthen the program you offer? What tools are available to help you gage the quality of your program? What strategies will you implement to strengthen the quality of your program?

Knowledge and Information

A quality program has a number of components that can be looked at holistically and also in bite-sized chunks. Those program components with descriptions are listed below.
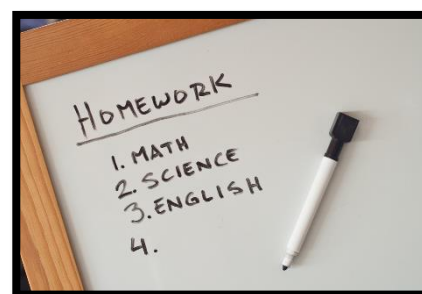
<u>**Components**</u>

The Openings

Pre-Pre-Opening: This is the part of the day in which a site coordinator is working and no other staff member is on campus, and no students are in his/her care. This is the time that the site coordinator can plan, do paper work, return phone calls, go shopping for supplies, check in with the school day, and meet with the principal and his/her supervisor.

Pre-Opening: This is the part of the day in which the site coordinator is joined by frontline staff. It is usually only a short period of time but it can be a critical 10-15 minutes. Not only is this the time for staff to get ready for the day, it is the time to check in with one another and build relationships and a sense of team, discuss the focus of the week, month, or year, discuss challenges and ask for help finding solutions, and of course, sharing information that is pertinent about individual students.

Opening: This is the actual beginning of program. Youth are arriving and checking in with the frontline staff. This can be a time for snacks, team building activities, networking, chilling out and recharging for the program that is planned. It is important during opening that youth are acknowledged, birthdays celebrated, and youth leadership seen. The opening will set the tone for the remainder of your program day. The opening is also a very public face because youth not in the program are on campus, parents are picking up other students, school day staff is milling around, and generally, program is in a very public space.

Homework: This component of the program can be done any time during the program. Some programs schedule homework so youth can "finish" up on schoolwork before moving into the enrichment and healthy living part of the program. Others schedule homework toward the end of program for one of two reasons. Either youth need a break before reengaging with school work or parents will tend to leave students in a program to get support with homework. Homework is supported by asking questions and helping youth work through "how" to do something rather than strictly focusing on correct answers. If youth have more homework to complete than can be done in the allocated time, focus should be on how to do the homework rather than completing it so youth can do the homework on his/her own.

Rotations: Rotations are the blocks of time that you fit program components into. Rotations are part of the scheduling process. A rotation is an opportunity to provide youth with a variety of activities including clubs, time on the computer, homework, sports, enrichment, service learning, opening, homework and any other thing you would like to put into the schedule. Remember that a schedule can be for more than one week and the more different enrichment, computer, sports or other activities you want to offer, the comprehensive the schedule.

Enrichment: Enrichment are activities meant to focus on student interest and talent, broaden horizons, and engage youth in activities they would not be able to do without your afterschool program. Enrichment can include service learning, the visual and performing arts, science experiments, college and career education, building a model skate board park, or traditional, competitive sports. The content of the enrichment will be determined by student interest and staff talent and skills.

Healthy Living: Healthy Living is a component of your program that covers four broad areas—physical activity, nutrition education, conflict resolution and character education. During Healthy Living you could also conduct an Anti-Bullying Campaign, teach youth about "I messages", collect the steps your youth walk to see if you can Walk Around the World, and share foods from Harvest of the Month. The intent of Healthy Living is to promote physical, social, and emotional wellness of students.

Closing: Closing is the end of the program day. This is also the time during which youth need to be engaged until they leave. If you require parents to sign the youth out of your program it will happen during closing. Ensure that your staff greets every parent and whenever possible provide positive feedback about the youth to the parent. This important transition is setting youth up for their evening at home.

Academic Support: Academic support is different from homework. During homework you are supporting the school day by helping youth demonstrate understanding of the current topics of discussion. During this Academic Support time you are actually promoting literacy, numeracy, science, history/social studies by intentionally planning and implementing activities that will promote these core academic areas.

Calendars and Schedules

In the Rotations e-Book special attentions is paid to schedules and calendars. In this overview it is enough to say that the calendar is an overview of the year. Calendars have to be prepared before schedules so you will know how many days your program will operate and what special events you will want to include and so on. A calendar can certainly be changed however, the more comprehensive the calendar in the beginning the more likely people are to plan around calendared events that affect them

A schedule is a more detailed calendar in which you identify how many rotations or periods each day is going to be divided into (remembering to schedule both transitions and time for debriefing). There will be time attached to the scheduling blocks to ensure effective use of time. A schedule can and should be flexible, allowing you to take advantage of serendipities. It is suggested that you consider 30-45 minutes time blocks which will allow you more rotations during your day. Samples of schedules are included in the e-Book entitled Rotations. Since all programs do not last the same amount of time each day, a variety of scheduling options are includes.

The Elite 8 and the Super 7 Quality Program Checklists and Rubrics

The Super 7 and the Elite 8 Quality Program Checklists are tools that have created to help you assess program quality. The Elite 8 has the academic component included in it which the Super 7 does not. All

other aspects of the tool are the same. The Super 7 and the Elite 8 are designed in a particular format, a sample of which you can see below. In # 1 the component of the program is identified. In #2 the focus of that particular component is identified. In #3 (you will notice that there are 2 of them) the goal(s) are identified. Underneath each of the goals are objectives, each identified with a bullet point. The first objective has to do with building relationships with the school day. This objective is placed on the checklist and is labeled #4. Underneath the objective, #5, there is an indicator that would support the meeting of the objective. In this example, and indicator of building relationships with the school day would be that you meet regularly with the school day principal, you meet with classroom teachers, and you regularly communicate with school day staff. You could go one step further and determine what demonstrable evidence you will show to demonstrate that you are indeed, meeting those criteria. For example, you might have an agenda from a meeting, a copy of a memo that you sent to staff and a cheery "hello" from everyone when you walk into a room.

In an outline format it would look something like this:

    Component
      →Focus
        →Goal
          →Objective
            →Indicator
              →Demonstrable evidence

1. Pre-Pre Opening
    2. Focus of the Pre-Pre Opening:
        3. Alignment to the school day and other stakeholders
- Relationship With the School Day—The Big 3—Building-Formal Communication-Acknowledgement) followed by Promotional Persistence—celebrating afterschool success
- Supportive of the school day program and staff without compromising integrity of your program and your commitment to excellence

- Building / Maintaining ADA
- Identifying all stakeholders (school day staff, parents, community members, etc.)

3. Preparing for the day
- Program Preparation—Logistics
- Program Content—Lesson Plan Design and Creation
- Program Performance—Coaching Plan for the Group-Individuals

Objective	0-3	4-6	7-10	Comment
#4 Relationship with School Day				
#5 Meet regularly with the principal or designee				
#5 Meet with classroom teachers (individually, grade level meetings)				
#5 Communicate with school day staff (custodian, food services)				

It is possible that a program can meet an objective in a way not identified on the Checklist. This is perfectly all right. While these indicators are ones that are seen regularly, they are not the only indicators and program can make adjustments as necessary.

Each Checklist is supported by a rubric which helps you to map the steps you want to take to move the program forward. In the sample of the rubric below the columns indicate the amount of time that the program has been in operation with the existing leadership staff. Beginning means that the site is new, perhaps less than several months old or newly migrated to this system of accountability. Emerging begins to be seen when programs have moved past beginning and in general program quality is on someone's radar. Applying programs are utilizing the tools and strategies they've been given while integrated program can only run in the integrate manner that has become second nature to them.

Pre-Pre-Opening Rubric			
Beginning	**Emerging**	**Applying**	**Integrating**
➤ Contributes to the positive feeling tone at the school by demonstrating a positive attitude and a smile ➤ Absence list from school day used in student safety plan ➤ Calendar, schedule, lesson plans in place	➤ Meet with principal or designee regularly (at least 1 time per month) ➤ Regular communication with school day staff (custodians, food services)	➤ Meetings with classroom teachers individually and in groups ➤ Program aligned to Scope and Sequence of the school day	➤ Attend SST's and other meetings to ensure children's needs are met ➤ Stakeholders acknowledged ➤ Individual and Group Coaching plans evident

It is suggested that you utilize the Quality Program Checklists three times each year—beginning, middle and end. These can all be self-assessments, peer assessments or outside assessments. The assessment is the beginning of the work. You and your team review all of the data collected on the Checklist and create a SWOT analysis:

S	W
List the strengths of the program here—consider the data from the checklist	List the weaknesses of the program—the things you needed to work on and fix
O Opportunity to become more embedded in the school day and to meet the needs of the school principal	Threats Issues that must be addressed now and quickly because they will ultimately hurt your program.

Once the SWOT analysis is complete, then it is appropriate to identify what area you will work on, review the rubric and create a Work Plan so you will know what your plan is to move the program toward higher quality.

Youth Development Approach

Youth Development is a mindset and an approach to programming. It is grounded in the work of Karen Pittman and the other early pioneers who realized that working with youth from a deficit model or mindset only made the challenges worse. These leaders looked at resiliency and why some youth prospered while other failed. Today, authors like Paul Tough are taking a look at the "softer skills" and calling for grit—which youth development folks have long known is important.

All afterschool programming to be of high quality must be grounded in a youth development approach. There is no such thing as youth development curriculum, but there are tools to help guide our work. One of the most outstanding is the SEARCH Institutes 40 Developmental Assets divided into 20 external assets (coming from outside the youth) and 20 internal assets (20 assets that each individual youth must develop.) This mindset will empower youth and youth leaders to be positive role models and mentors for youth.

With this mindset you will also include in your program components a space for youth leadership, skill development, community service, promoting physical and emotional safety, and active engagement. All of our work in a high quality afterschool program will prepare youth to be young adults who are economically self-sufficient, have positive relationships with family, friends and colleagues, and understand the

importance of giving back to the community. When we orchestrate the program to meet these needs we are indeed meeting the Best Interest of the Child or Youth. We will change the trajectory of lives and the destinies of families.

Alignment

We probably have all experienced the rough ride that happens when our tires are out of alignment. The tires will not wear evenly, the car will drift right or left instead of staying on track, and as the driver of the car, you are "fighting" the car for control. This is exactly what happens to an afterschool program when it is not aligned with itself to its mission, with the school day to its goals, and the youth to their purpose. When thinking about quality programming it is essential that you get regular input and feedback from the stakeholders in and to your program and then work to align your work with them. It is essential that you understand how to get to a win-win place where synergy will replace disagreement and the resiliency and development of youth will trump any other agenda. Alignment is not about replication and duplication or repeating, it is about moving in the same direction with the same purpose and playing to your strengths while your partners play to theirs and yet together you braid your work together in the Best Interest of Youth.

Bullet Points

- Program components should be considered holistically and in bite-sized chunks
- Program components include the openings, homework, rotations, healthy living, enrichment, academic support, and closing
- Calendars and schedules help in program planning and planning for quality
- Intentionality is key to having a high-quality program
- Assess your program using C4K's Super 7 or Elite 8 Quality Program Checklists and Rubrics
- A SWOT analysis allows you to determine strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats to program quality.
- Youth development is an approach that views youth as assets to be developed not problems to be fixed.
- Alignment will create a stronger program for youth

C4K Minute—Making It Real

Think about your program's schedule. What could you do to make it more focused on providing youth with a broad based of choice? How could you engage your staff, the youth, and the parents/caregivers in providing insight and feedback so you can continually work to strengthen your program? What key areas do you believe need the most work? How would you prioritize them? Once you begin looking at your

schedule and calendar you will realize that there are many intentional choices that you can make to strengthen your program.

Debrief

What have you learned about running a high quality program? How will you put this knowledge to work in your program in the next 72 hours?

We're running a high-quality, youth-centered, out-of-school time program.

Review

Tricks of the Trade

Create a schedule for larger blocks of time than one week. Consider asking yourself how many times during a month or six week period that you want youth to have the chance to participate in a particular learning opportunity. When you schedule in large blocks of time you are finding harmonic balance for your program rather than equality—each aspect of your program done the same number of times. Looking at a larger block of time can be very liberating.

Gem of the Day

Publish the weekly and monthly schedules for your program routinely. This will help school day, parents/caregivers, and the community stakeholders to understand the breadth of your program. When they look at all of the different things you do they will understand ways in which they can support your program.

Important Take-Aways

Intentionality is essential when you are supporting the strengthening of each component in your afterschool program. Intentionality requires you to reflect and consider many options. It is essential that you then work closely with your team (this should include school day, parents/caregivers, and students) to create a plan that you can all work toward. This will ensure your success and your ability to demonstrate and maintain high quality programming.
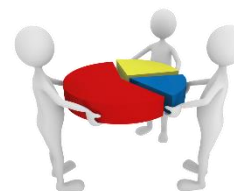
Troubleshooting

How do I determine which part of my program I should work on first?

A SWOT analysis will help you do this. The first priority is always something that you view as a threat at a foundational level to program quality. For example, if you believe that part of the challenge is that you are understaffed, then this is a threat and must be addressed immediately. Once threats have been addressed, then the best place to work is where opportunity and weakness meet. For example, your supervisor is interested in showcasing students for the community and you have not been implementing project-based learning and have determined that this is a weakness. This is a perfect pairing because project-based learning ends with a culminating event which could be planned to showcase youth. A SWOT helps to ground you so you understand what is happening in your program and what you need to work on to ensure program quality.

Best Practices

- Assessing your program three times per year and then writing a Work Plan to strengthen the work you do will lead to a stronger program.
- Engage youth and other stakeholders in developing your calendar and schedule.
- Create calendars first, followed by scheduled and last the lesson or activity plans.

FAQ's

It is hard to keep all of the "plates spinning." I need to know how to prioritize based on a standard rather than based on what I would like to do.

When prioritizing there are several things to consider. Ask yourself about the work. Does it fit into any of the following "buckets"?

- Effects someone else's work
- Onesie that cannot reschedule
- Pressing concern (negative effects: observable, BIC)
- Foundational—most "bang for the buck" for creating overall change
- "Fire in your face" (be careful of the fire coming at you over the hill)

When you go through this thought process and check into this list, it will make it easier to prioritize.

Universal

Harmonic balance is important for all of us whether or not we work in an afterschool program. Trying to make everything equal is not only crazy-making it is not helpful to others as well.

Afterschool

90 extra days of school to support youth can create a huge impact on the lives of students and their families. Understand how to make every minute count by offering youth a high quality program.

Positional

As an afterschool leader you influence what goes on during program and the tone of the program as well as what content is delivered. Be intentional about setting up you whole team for success.

Review

In your journal, write about the information that you are taking away from this

content. Highlight your key learnings

Key Learning

Since you have reviewed the material, ask yourself how you can translate the information into a learning for you, and then how will you practice that learning by implementing it or executing on a specific action. Think in terms of your personal and professional life. For example:

Personal: I have learned that quality programming is up to me and I must be vested in strengthening the program we offer.

Professional: I want to remember that quality programming requires staff to work together as a team and utilize one another's strengths and talents.

Journal Entry

I did this well and celebrated by _____-.

I did not do so well at _____, and I will strengthen my performance in the future by doing _____.

Walk Through the Day

The Openings

Pre-Pre-Opening:

This is the part of the day when you are coming to work and transition from what you do in your personal life to your professional life. Thinking about your program and its schedule will help you to focus your energy.

Practical Application:

On your way to work think through each of the transitions that you will lead. Ask yourself how you can have meaningful transitions and still remain within the program schedule. Then practice what you thought of.

Pre-Opening:

During this time of the day you and your fellow staff members are gathering at work. You will be preparing for the afternoon ahead. You will be putting on an attitude of positive and exchange best practices with your colleagues so you can have a strong program.

Practical Application:

At the next pre-opening, begin by asking others on your team how they do something that you are struggling with. Ask for explicit directions and then try it and get additional feedback on what you did.

Opening:

During opening you are distributing a healthy snack, taking roll to be sure everyone is safe, and participating in celebrations and recognitions of youth and staff. You are setting a stage for quality programming when you do this.

Practical Application:

Create a DJ Club to make the announcements, distribute the snacks and engage in a celebration. Youth will appreciate the responsibility and it will give you time to truly watch them develop leadership skills.

Rotations:

You have a number of rotations in your program. Select one of them and focus on it. Determine its strengths and its weaknesses and then create a Work Plan to guide your work.

Practical Application:

Use the C4K Quality Program Checklist to assess that particular aspect of the program that you have identified as an area of interest. Go through the process of scoring each indicator and then complete a SWOT analysis and a work plan so you can get busy strengthening your program.

Closing:

This is the end of the day and youth will be going home. Continue to be a role model until the last students has signed out.

Practical Application:

Engage with youth who are not the first to go home from your program. Perhaps you will want to play a game or just sit and talk comfortably. Be sure to greet each parent as they arrive and tell them something positive about the youth they are picking up.