



North Carolina
Center for Afterschool Programs

Established Standards of Excellence Self-Assessment Tool: K-12



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North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs Established Standards of Excellence

One of the first steps for the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) has been to examine how programs best support children and youth. Representing the diversity of North Carolina afterschool programs, the NC CAP advisory board has considered the thinking and experience of providers, researchers, and other professionals, in North Carolina and across the country, to determine what high quality programs have in common. In response, the center endorses seven quality indicators:

1. Active Engagement of Participants in Learning
2. Balance of Academics and Enrichment
3. Consistent Participant Attendance
4. Dynamic, Qualified, and Caring Staff
5. Positive Participant and Staff Interaction
6. Orderly, Safe and Healthy Environment
7. Active Family, Community, and School Partnership

Understanding that improving quality is an on-going process that includes careful self-assessment, NC CAP hopes to offer a useful tool that can help programs chart their progress in each of these areas. NC CAP encourages the use of parallel ways for programs to demonstrate they meet the Standards of Excellence, including:

1. National AfterSchool Association (Formerly the National School Age Care Alliance) Accreditation
National AfterSchool Association Standards for Quality Afterschool Accreditation Guideline
2. N.C. Department of Child Development Licensure — 4- or 5-Star Levels
3. School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale Assessment
4. National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP):
“Afterschool Programs and the K-8 Principal: Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care”

NC CAP will continue to look for and share helpful guides. The guidelines are designed to help programs, whether new or experienced, plan and appraise their progress toward providing the best programs possible for the children and families they serve. Your input is welcome for future revisions to make this tool as useful as possible.

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Active Engagement of Participants in Learning

Participants in a high-quality afterschool program are actively engaged in the learning process.

A quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Creates a stimulating and inviting climate that engages participants in their academic and personal growth.			
2. Includes interactive, project-based activities that encourage creativity and self-expression.			
3. Involves participants in making choices and developing responsibility.			
4. Develops lifeskills, confidence, and resilience through activities such as field trips, community service, internships, mentoring and other leadership opportunities.			
5. Promotes teamwork.			

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Balance of Academics and Enrichment

Participants in a high-quality afterschool program are provided with a balance of activities and opportunities that support their academic, cognitive, social and physical growth and development.

A high-quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Offers activities appropriate to the ages and skill levels of participants.			
2. Provides a variety of activities that reflect program mission and address the cognitive and affective needs of the participants.			
3. Incorporates programming that is aligned with the North Carolina Course of Study and that supports and complements school-day activities and services.			
4. Collaborates with school-day personnel.			
5. Allows sufficient time for needed academic support, such as tutoring and homework assistance.			
6. Offers academic, arts, technology, and health enrichment.			
7. Includes activities that take into account the language and culture of participants.			
8. Showcases participants' work in a variety of ways.			

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Consistent Participant Attendance

Participants in a high-quality program have regular, frequent attendance.

A quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Establishes clear attendance policies.			
2. Collects, records, and monitors attendance.			
3. Has attendance rates of at least 90% in a program offered on a daily basis for 3 hours a day.			

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Dynamic, Qualified, and Caring Staff

A high-quality afterschool program recruits, hires, and trains diverse and qualified staff members who value and nurture all participants.

A quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Has a program director who values and engages in continuing professional development.			
2. Encourages staff to show mutual respect and model positive relationships.			
3. Hires passionate, competent, and diverse program staff who are representative of the community.			
4. Assesses training needs of staff and provides relevant training and support.			
5. Treats staff as professionals, encourages career development plans and creates opportunities for advancement.			
6. Maintains recommended staff/participant ratio.			
7. Maintains all required documents (health certificate, insurance, security clearance, etc).			
8. Adheres to current employee handbook that describes program policies and procedures.			
9. Keeps accurate registration documents for all participants.			
10. Creates an appropriate staff salary structure.			
11. Has regular staff meetings.			
12. Establishes and uses a system for regular communication between schools and community-based organizations.			
13. Reviews budget monthly, tracks expenses, and adjusts approved budget as indicated.			

(Continue planning next page.)

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Participant and Staff Interactions

A high-quality afterschool program develops, nurtures, and maintains positive relationships and interactions between participants and staff.

A quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Respects, listens and responds to all participants.			
2. Accommodates cultural and language differences of participants.			
3. Helps participants interact in a positive way.			
4. Involves participants in setting clear expectations for performance and behavior and systematically monitors related data.			
5. Encourages former participants to serve as volunteers or staff.			

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Orderly, Safe, and Healthy Environment

Participants in a high-quality afterschool program are provided a safe, healthy, orderly, and nurturing environment, supported by written policies and procedures.

A quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Promotes the health and safety of participants.			
2. Uses safe, clean and suitably equipped space for activities.			
3. Follows a regular schedule that has been clearly communicated to all staff, parents, and participants.			
4. Uses approved safety procedures that have been shared with parents.			
5. Creates a secure environment and conducts background checks on all staff.			
6. Provides nutritious snacks and/or meals.			
7. Records and informs staff regarding special health needs of participants.			
8. Sees that emergency information is accurate and easily available.			
9. Plans safe transportation to and from the program and program-sponsored field trips.			
10. Employs effective arrival, dismissal, and transportation procedures.			
11. Records participants' arrival, departure, and on-site location.			
12. Conducts required fire and safety drills.			
13. Employs appropriate, consistent benefits and consequences for participant behavior.			

(Continue planning next page.)

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

Self-Assessment and Planning for Quality

Active Family, Community, and School Partnership

A high-quality after-school program establishes and maintains strong partnerships with families, schools, businesses and communities.

A quality program:	Standard Met or Exceeded	Progress Toward Standard	Standard Not Addressed
1. Works with a parent/community advisory committee to oversee and guide the program.			
2. Develops and implements a plan for parent involvement and regular reviews and updates the plan for effectiveness.			
3. Creates a comfortable, inviting climate for parents and provides sensitivity training for staff when appropriate.			
4. Provides families information about community resources to meet their needs and assists them in connecting with these resources.			
5. Provides educational experiences for the families of participants.			
6. Engages in community collaborations that enhance program activities and/or sustainability.			
7. Collects formal and informal feedback from all stakeholders.			

Strategies	Responsibilities	Timeline	Resources	Assistance Needed

This instrument was built on a draft of the NY State Afterschool Network's "Program Quality Self-Assessment Planning and Appraisal Tool" and modified for North Carolina practitioners according to the input from providers attending summits across the state.