

Youth Program Quality Pro-Tips: INTERACTION

What is The YPQA (Youth Program Quality Assessment?)

The [Youth Program Quality Assessment](#) is a nationally recognized, research-based assessment tool developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. After School Matters uses the YPQA to assess program quality over time, offer supports and resources, and guide coaching. Assessments may be conducted by your Program Specialist or by an External Assessor. All assessors are trained as reliable raters, to ensure that they use the assessment tool objectively and accurately. You can view the full tool [here](#). After School Matters uses this Assessment as part of the Youth Program Quality Improvement process: to assess, plan together, and implement improvement supports and goals in programs to ensure positive outcomes for young people.

What do we mean when we talk about “Interaction?”

There are four domains in the Youth Program Quality Assessment: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. You can read more about the other three domains [here](#).

The interaction domain measures the following opportunities for youth development:

Belonging: Youth have structured opportunities to get to know one another (like check in, check out, or icebreaker activities), do not exclude one another, identify with the program, and have their successes recognized.

Collaboration: Youth have the opportunity to work in groups, and have goals and roles in their groups.

Leadership: Youth lead group activities and have an opportunity to mentor another participant.

Adult Partners: Staff shares control of the session with youth, and gives reasons for rules and expectations.

Pro-Tips: Interaction



Belonging: Community building matters!

- Lead Daily, structured community building activities like a check-in, icebreaker, reflection or energizer! You can find some instructor favorites [here](#).
- Help set the culture in the room. Do youth feel like they belong? Are they proud of and excited about the program?
- Celebrate your teen’s achievements in and out of program. Shout them out when they do something exceptional, and encourage teens to do the same.

Collaboration: Group work skills are life skills!

- Include at least one group activity each program day, even if that group activity is a check in, check out, or icebreaker activity.
- Include at least one group project in the course of your program session. Vital group process skills like collaboration and group facilitation will be useful for your youth in college, careers, and life.



Leadership: Young people are powerful: create opportunities for them to lead and mentor!

- Let youth lead and make decisions within group work and program activities. Leading an opening or closing activity is a great place to start for newer leaders!
- Have your advanced youth pair up with and mentor a newer participant.
- Challenge yourself to create leadership opportunities for **all** your teens, not just returning teens and teens who tend to volunteer to lead. A great starting place for a shy teen might be leading a check in or check out activity or a leadership role in a small group activity.
- Identify and rotate your **Teen Ambassador**. Teen ambassadors should warmly welcome any visitors, share information about the program, and answer any questions visitors have.

Adult Partners: “Share the mic” and give a reason for expectations!

- Let youth lead and make decisions within program activities.
- Always try to give a “why” for requests and expectations. For example: “Can you please put your phone away? Your group members need your input.” “One mic: when two people talk at once, we can’t hear the great ideas people are sharing.”

Ask an Instructor...

Gloria Hafer, Culinary instructor, East Side



How do you create Mentorship opportunities?

“When a new skill is taught in the class, I have the older kids who already know the skill take the new kids and teach it to them. They become mini instructors. I briefly go over it, then the advanced people teach the new people.”

Why Do you create Mentorship opportunities?

“They learn from each other a lot easier: they hear from adults all the time and they are more receptive when it comes from their peers. The new kids are opening themselves up even more, and the older kids are taking on more leadership.”

--Gloria Hafer, After School Matters culinary instructor

Do you have additional Questions about the YPQA, or a pro-tip to share?

Contact emily.nott@afterschoolmatters.org! Let’s talk.

This document is for training purposes only.