

Promising Practices Rating System

OVERVIEW

- This is an observational tool designed to rate research-based, promising practices in after-school programs

SUBSCALES

- Supportive Relations with Adult
- Supportive Relations with Peers
- Level of Engagement
- Opportunities for Cognitive Growth
- Appropriate Structure
- Over-control
- Chaos
- Mastery Orientation

TARGET POPULATION

- Program staff, administrators

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- Observational tool
- Observers must follow the rubric described in the manual to make ratings of each practice. The tool also includes space where observers can take detailed notes before and after each activity.
- Multiple choice format measured on a 4-point scale: 1 (highly uncharacteristic – little or no evidence of the construct is observed) to 4 (highly characteristic – construct is highly evident)
- Average scores may be obtained by adding the score of each response and dividing by the number of responses. Higher scores indicate better implementation.
- Available in English

DEVELOPER

- Policy Studies Associates, Inc. Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2005

GOOD TO KNOW

- When relying on data from observations, it is a good idea to compare ratings from at least two observers. Data may be considered reliable when ratings between raters are consistent

PSYCHOMETRICS

- **Reliability**
 - Inter-rater reliability ($k = .63-.94$)
- **Validity**
 - Construct validity

LEARN MORE

- Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., Brown, B. B., Dandisman, K., Pierce, K. M., Lee, D., & Pechman, E. M. (2005, March). The Study of Promising After School Programs: Examination of intermediate outcomes in year 2. Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

STUDY OF PROMISING AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Promising Practices Rating System

Observation Manual



Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., Brown, B. B., Dadisman, K., Pierce, K. M., Lee, D., & Pechman, E. M. (2005, March). *The Study of Promising After-School Programs: Examination of intermediate outcomes in year 2*. Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The Promising Practices Rating System (PPRS) was developed for use in the Study of Promising After-School Programs, a national study of high-quality programs serving disadvantaged children and youth. It is used by observers to make qualitative ratings of research-based promising practices in after-school programs.

Multiple activities (at least six) are observed across one or two afternoons, depending on the time needed to observe a range of activities. To the extent possible, the observations should capture the range of program activities that youth in the targeted grades typically experience (sports, academic, homework, arts, etc.) as participants in the after-school program. Each activity should be observed for 15 minutes in order to get a good sense of the practices as they are implemented during the activity.

Four forms are completed for the PPRS:

1. Activity Context Coding: One form for each activity observed; see Appendix A
2. Activity Descriptions: One description for each activity observed; see Appendix B
3. Activity Promising Practices Rating Form: For rating the practices seen in each individual activity observation; see Appendix C
4. Program Promising Practices Ratings & Overall Program Quality: For rating the promising practices as observed in the program as a whole; see Appendix D

Activity Context Coding (Appendix A)

The Activity Context Coding form is the cover sheet for each 15-minute observation period. For each observed activity, observers capture information about the type of activity, the knowledge and skill areas addressed, space and materials used, numbers of adults and youth participants, and grade levels of activity participants.

As the activity observation begins, the observer should complete all the information requested at the top of the form:

- **Program Name & ID:** the ID number designated for the program being observed
- **Observation Date:** the date that the observation is conducted
- **Activity #:** the number of the particular observation being coded. The first activity observed at a given program is #1; the second activity observed at that program is #2; and so on, through #6. If activities are observed on the second day of the program, the observation should follow the first day's activity numbers consecutively; that is, do not start numbering with 1 on the second day. Also, if there are two observers, observers should simply assign numbers consecutively as they begin their observations (e.g., Observer #1 conducts observation 1, 2, 3 and Observer #2 conducts observation #4, 5, 6).
- **Total Minutes Observed**
- **Observer Initials & ID:** the site visitor's initials and his/her assigned ID number

When the observation begins, record the **Start time**. At this point, the observer can begin to code items on the Activity Context Coding form. Some indicators may be coded immediately, whereas others likely cannot be coded until later in the 15-minute period or at its conclusion. The general rule is that indicators will be coded when the information that is needed to understand the

context becomes clear to the observer. At the conclusion of the activity, record the **End time** and the **Total Minutes Observed**.

If an activity concludes before the end of the observation period, stop the observation, record the end time and the total minutes observed, along with any other outstanding information such as number of staff and students at the end, and proceed to the next activity.

The definitions that are to be used in scoring the items on this form are provided in Appendix E, the **Activity Context Coding Definitions**.

Activity Descriptions (Appendix B)

Observers should complete a brief description of each activity on the Activity Descriptions form. This description will supplement the Activity Context Coding with a richer explanation of what is occurring in each observed activity. Complete the identifying information at the top of the page, including the Site ID, site visitor initials and ID code, and, observation date. Begin each activity description with a brief description and the Activity Type, as recorded on the Activity Context Coding form. In each description, address the following themes:

- What are youth doing?
- What kinds of materials are used?
- What kinds of instructional processes are used?
- What, if any, special skills does the activity's leader(s) have that supports the instruction involved in the activity h/she is conducting?
- What is the overall affective tone?
- To what extent are youth engaged?
- Describe observed promising practices as appropriate and raise concerns about quality, if there are any.

Record any concerns that might arise about the quality of the implementation here, and register concerns about activity quality in the Activity Promising Practices Ratings (Appendix C).

Promising Practices Ratings (Appendices C & D)

Several research-based promising practices in after-school programs are rated for the PPRS. These practices include:

- supportive relations with adults
- supportive relations with peers
- student engagement in activities
- opportunities for cognitive growth
- mastery orientation
- appropriate program structure
- setting chaos

- staff overcontrol

Observers should take running notes during each observed activity and, immediately after each activity observation, record promising practices ratings for the activity on the Activity Promising Practices Rating Form, Appendix C. Rate the practices observed on a 4-point scale, using the rating guidelines shown below and in Appendix F.

4 = **highly characteristic**. The construct is highly evident. Exemplars are observed more than one time, and for more than one student. The program is viewed as “the very definition of” the construct.

3 = **somewhat characteristic**. There is good evidence that the construct is present, but it is not pervasive.

2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic**. The construct was not characteristic of the program; exemplars were observed infrequently or with only one staff or student.

1 = **highly uncharacteristic**. Little or no evidence of the construct is observed.

Combined activity ratings will then comprise the data for completing the final **Program Promising Practices Ratings & Overall Program Quality**, Appendix D.

Appendix F, **promising Practices Exemplars**, provides definitions of the ratings and exemplars of the promising practices. Observers should use these definitions, combined with clinical judgment, when rating each promising practice and the overall program. Ratings may incorporate both what was and what **was not** observed. The absence of exemplars within an observation may push a rating from a 3 to a 2, for example.

After all of the program activity observations are completed, observers should use their notes and ratings to create an **integrated** rating of observed (1) *promising practices* and (2) *overall program quality*, using the **Program Promising Practices Ratings & Overall Program Quality** form (Appendix D). Using the data recorded on the three previous observations forms (Appendices A, B, and C), give the program an overall rating for each of the promising practices of interest.

After the ratings of the promising practices have been made, the overall quality of the program should be rated on a 3-point scale:

1 = **Low Program Quality**: Based on observed activities and interactions, program quality is low.

2 = **Moderate Program Quality**: Based on observed activities and interactions, the quality of the program is uneven and can best be described as of moderate quality.

3 = **High Program Quality**: Based on observed activities and interactions, the program incorporates the promising practices measured by the PPRS and, overall, most activities and interactions were of high quality.

Appendix A Activity Context Coding

Program I.D.:	Date:	Activity #:	Start time:	Total Minutes Observed:	Observer Initials & ID:				
			End time:						
A. ACTIVITY TYPE			B. KNOWLEDGE/SKILL AREAS		E. TOTAL ADULTS/STAFF		# Start	# End	
1. Homework assistance			1. Interpersonal		1. Number of adults				
2. Tutoring			2. Physical/athletic		2. Number of teens				
3. Study skills/test preparation			3. Artistic						
4. Reading/language arts enrichment			4. Math/numeracy						
5. Math/science enrichment			5. Reading/language arts		F. GRADE LEVELS				
6. Recreational reading/ listening to story/book			6. Problem-solving/ decision-making		K	1	2		
7. Computer skill-building			7. Other Academic		3	4	5		
8. Computer games			8. Other		6	7	8		
9. Sports: competitive and non-competitive games; tournaments			9. None						
10. Sports: practice/drills/skill-building			C. TYPE OF SPACE		Other:				
11. Fitness/exercise class (including martial arts)			1. Classroom		G. NUMBER OF YOUTH		# Start	# End	
12. Arts and/or crafts			2. Specialized studio/lab		1. Total number of youth				
13. Performing arts rehearsal/ instruction			3. Games/club room		2. Number of boys				
14. Cultural awareness clubs/projects			4. Gym		3. Number of girls				
15. Board/table/card games or puzzles			5. Auditorium						
16. Health/well-being			6. Cafeteria						
17. Service/civic (in community or program)			7. Library						
18. Snack			8. Computer room						
19. Arrival/dismissal			9. Outside playground/field						
20. Other			10. Other						
			D. MATERIALS USED						
			1. Computers		7. Musical instruments				
			2. Art supplies		8. Games				
			3. Sports equipment		9. Electronic media				
			4. Trade, reference, research books		10. Other				
			5. Text books and workbooks		11. None				
			6. Writing materials						

Appendix B Activity Descriptions

- What are youth doing?
- What kinds of materials are used?
- What kinds of instructional processes are used?
- Who is leading the activity? What, if any special skills to lead the activity do they have?
- What is the overall affective tone?
- To what extent are youth engaged?
- Describe observed promising practices as appropriate and raise concerns about quality, if there are any.

Activity 1: _____

Activity Type (from the Coding Context form): _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity Type (from the Coding Context form): _____

Activity 3: _____

Activity Type (from the Coding Context form): _____

Activity Descriptions (continued)

Activity 4: _____
Activity Type (from the Coding Context form): _____

Activity 5: _____
Activity Type (from the Coding Context form): _____

Activity 6: _____
Activity Type (from the Coding Context form): _____

Appendix C Activity Promising Practices Rating Form

OBSERVER ID						
PROGRAM ID						
DATE						
PROMISING PRACTICES	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	Activity 5	Activity 6
Supportive Relations with Adult						
Supportive Relations with Peers						
Level of Engagement						
Opportunities for Cognitive Growth						
Appropriate Structure						
Over-control						
Chaos						
Mastery Orientation						

Appendix D Program Promising Practices Ratings & Overall Program Quality

**Overall Program
Quality Rating**

OBSERVER ID		
PROGRAM ID		
DATE		
PROMISING PRACTICES	Rating	JUSTIFICATION/NOTES
Supportive Relations with Adult		
Supportive Relations with Peers		
Level of Engagement		
Opportunities for Cognitive Growth		
Appropriate Structure		
Over-control		
Chaos		
Mastery Orientation		

Appendix E

ACTIVITY CONTEXT CODING DEFINITIONS

FOCUS	
ACTIVITY TYPE: Mark <u>all</u> relevant activity types that occur during the observation period.	
Homework help	Youth work on homework assignments. If youth participate in academic activities that are not homework, <u>do not</u> mark this category.
Test preparation/study skills	Instruction and activities designed expressly to prepare students for standardized achievement tests or to teach them study skills. Activities may include practicing different types of test questions, or taking practice tests.
Tutoring	Youth work individually or in small groups with a tutor, who helps them work on a particular skill such as reading, math, or English language skills.
Reading/language arts enrichment	Enriched supplementary instructional content in either reading/language arts or math/science that goes beyond homework, develops broad-based conceptual/cognitive learning. It may or may not be directly related to school content/assignments, but is not a homework assignment.
Math/science enrichment	
Recreational reading/listening to story/book	Reading or listening to a story or book not assigned for homework; reading to accomplish a goal (e.g. functional literacy skills, reading a play for pleasure/practice, etc.)
Computer skill-building	This category refers to activities involving <u>learning to use the computer</u> , NOT to the use of the computer to complete home work, to build academic skills, or to search the web (unless instruction focuses on <i>teaching</i> youth to use the web).
Computer games	Youth play games on the computer. They are not learning to use the computer, or using the computer to complete homework, practice test-taking skills, practice academic skills, or for an academic enrichment activity.
Sports—competitive or non-competitive games; tournaments	Supervised or non-supervised games using athletic skill, indoors or outdoors.
Sports—practice/drills/skill-building	Preparation and training in a sport.
Fitness/exercise class (including martial arts)	Activities targeting general physical fitness/strength, including aerobics, martial arts, weight lifting, yoga.
Arts and/or crafts	Visual arts-based activities (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, videography) and crafts (knitting, pottery).

Performing arts rehearsal/instruction (including dance/music/drama)	Lessons, practices/rehearsals, recreational performances or performance arts that are for the purpose of self-expression. This area includes hip-hop, step, drill team. It does NOT include fitness-oriented types of movement.
Board/table/card games or puzzles	These may include games of luck, strategy games, jigsaw puzzles, puzzle games; board games (e.g., chess, Monopoly), table games (e.g., pool, air hockey), card games (e.g., Hearts, Crazy 8s).
Health/well-being	Health education, conflict resolution, life skills education activities.
Service/civic (in community or program)	Planning or assisting with projects that support the quality of community life or foster program-school or community-school linkages.
Snack	Eating or preparing for snack.
Arrival/dismissal	Youth are arriving/gathering at the beginning of the program for attendance; youth are gathering for dismissal/departure.
Cultural awareness clubs/projects	Activities/projects that develop cultural, religious, or ethnic awareness, understanding, or identity.
Other	Describe here content areas/activities observed that cannot be categorized or grouped above.

KNOWLEDGE/SKILL AREAS: Mark these knowledge/skill areas when instruction/skill development are intentional. This can include presentations/lectures on a substantive topic or practice of specific skills, but does not include informal “pick-up” activities initiated by youth for “fun.” These areas should be marked only when there is evidence that the knowledge/skill development is focused and intentional. Either students or staff may initiate/lead the activity.

NOTE: If a homework activity is observed, circulate to determine which subjects the students are working on, and be sure to indicate each subject in the Knowledge/Skills area of the form.

Interpersonal	Negotiation, conflict resolution, and/or other communication skills. <u>Do not</u> mark for purely social interactions.
Physical/athletic	Physical skills related to sports, fitness, or physical games (including martial arts, yoga, step, cheerleading, gymnastics, etc.)
Artistic	Artistic skills, working in any medium (visual, musical, dance, dramatic, photographic, video, etc.)
Math/numeracy	Mathematics learning, computational skill development/practice
Reading/language arts	Reading, writing, literacy skill development/practice
Problem-solving/decision making	Developing skills in making practical decisions or solving practical or conceptual problems. E.g., life-skills decision making around healthy choices; or planning a project or performance (deciding music, parts, actions).
Other Academic	Academic activities other than math or reading, such as science, social studies, geography, ecology, history skills development/practice
Other	Check this category AND DESCRIBE here specific other types of skills not listed above (e.g., research, critical thinking,).
None	Check if no discernable skill-building is occurring during the activity. Describe what is happening to support this conclusion.

Type of space	Classroom	Specialized studio/lab	Check the one location in this category that best applies to the setting in which the activity takes place. If “other” is marked, specify the type of space used.
	Games/club room	Gym	
	Auditorium		
	Cafeteria		
	Library		
	Computer lab		
	Outside playground/field		
	Other		
Materials used	Computers	Electronic media	Check all the types of technology used during each observation segment. More than one box may be checked in each observation.
	Art supplies	Text and work books	
	Sports equipment		
	Trade/reference/research books		
	Writing materials		
	Musical instruments		
	Games		
	Other	None	
Total adults/staff	Adults		At the start of the observation period and again at the end of the 15-minute observation, count and RECORD the NUMBER of adults and the number (if any) of teen staff in the room.
	Teen staff		
Grade levels observed (Check all that apply)	Circle all the grades that are represented in the classroom or activity space. More than one category can be checked, if appropriate. You may use prior knowledge about what grade levels are supposed to be in the room if it is difficult to determine on sight, or check with staff later and circle based on their response.		
Total number of youth (girls and boys)	At the start of the observation period and again at the end of the 15-minute observation, count the total number of youth, the number of girls, and the number of boys observed. If in doubt about gender, make an educated guess rather than disrupt the class. Check tally of boys and girls against total number of youth.		

Appendix F: PROMISING PRACTICES EXEMPLARS

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS WITH ADULTS	
High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff communicate high expectations and positive norms for student behavior and mastery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledge students’ efforts, accomplishments, and progress ○ Notice when students are having difficulty-- provide encouragement and alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff do not acknowledge students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not acknowledge accomplishments, progress, or effort ○ Ignore youth who are bored, wandering, or inactive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff use positive behavior management techniques to resolve behavior problems (or no evidence of behavior issues) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Set age-appropriate limits for students ○ Communicate expectations and intervene constructively and calmly to address disruptive behavior by redirecting students and/or explaining why the behavior is unacceptable ○ Aware of, and address, teasing, bullying, or other conflicts between students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff do not use positive behavior management techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evidence of yelling, shaming, or disparagement of youth ○ Correct students publicly in a way that embarrasses or belittles them ○ Ignore behavior issues of conflicts ○ Use harsh or rough punishment ○ Are sarcastic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff respond to children in a warm, supportive manner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use a positive tone of voice—and offer encouragement such as “You’re doing great” or “That’s great” ○ Offer specific suggestions to youth for improving skills and performance, providing examples of what they like about the work in progress ○ Offer encouragement to students who are frustrated ○ Are relaxed and cheerful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff are flat or negative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appear bored, tired, or distant ○ Show disrespect for students ○ Disapprove or criticize ○ Use negative voice when speaking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff-child conversations are frequent and reciprocal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Respond to students’ initiation of dialogue, comments or questions by showing interest and extending conversation, asking questions ○ Initiate conversations with students ○ Look at students when they are speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff –student interactions are infrequent or one-sided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not converse or interact with students ○ Do not assist students ○ Are directive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff are engaged with children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pay attention and show interest in what youth are doing or how they are working together ○ Participate in activities without being intrusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff are not engaged with children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not engaged with students ○ Intrusive, impose own agenda
Rating indicators:	
1 = negative exemplars are evident – where staff are intrusive, bored or distant, yell at or embarrass students 2 = negative exemplars are not evident but neither are the majority of positive exemplars 3 = some indicators of supportive relationships with adults 4 = evidence of many positive indicators, students are clearly comfortable initiating interactions with staff	

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS WITH PEERS

High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Peer interactions have a positive affective tone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tones of voice and body language are friendly and positive ○ Have conversations that are either social or task-oriented ○ Listen to each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Peer interactions are negative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pick on, or belittle, each other ○ Harass, intimidate, or threaten each other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students interact well together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Play or work well together ○ Share materials and space ○ Help, and accept help, from one another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students do not work well together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Argue over materials ○ Exclude one another from activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students appear relaxed and involved with each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students speak to one another respectfully ○ Try to make each other feel welcome (e.g., smile at each other) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students seem withdrawn or fearful ○ Show disrespect for each other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students negotiate solutions in conflict situations with peers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make compromises with each other ○ Jointly work out how to approach an activity or situation 	
<p>Rating indicators:</p> <p>1 = students do not work well together; may harass, intimidate or threaten each other</p> <p>2 = students are not negative with each other or do not hassle each other, but have few positive interactions</p> <p>3 = some indicators of supportive peer relations</p> <p>4 = evidence of many positive indicators, no evidence of negative indicators</p>	

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT (in intended experiences)	
High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students appear engaged, focused, and interested in their activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engaged in the focal activity and/or using free time appropriately ○ Appear to be interested in the activity ○ Follow staff directions in an agreeable manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students appear bored or distracted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ignore staff who are talking to them ○ ‘Pretend’ to listen ○ Wander aimlessly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Markers of engagement are appropriate to activity (e.g., intense concentration witnessed during computer activity, high levels of affect during sports activities; can be in solitary or group activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Markers of engagement inappropriate to activity (e.g., picking flowers while playing a sporting activity)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students contribute to discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discuss back and forth and offer comments ○ Ask ‘on-task’ questions ○ Are comfortable initiating conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not participate in discussions ○ Do not ask questions
Rating indicators:	
<p>1 = most students are not engaged appropriately, may appear bored</p> <p>2 = students are participating in activities but do not appear to be concentrating or affectively involved</p> <p>3 = students are focused on activities with some evidence of affect involvement or sustained concentration</p> <p>4 = students are concentrating on activities, focused, interacting pleasantly when appropriate, and are affectively involved in the activity</p>	

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COGNITIVE GROWTH (development of cognitive skills including memory and planning skills) NOTE: Homework “counts” only if staff are actively assisting or teaching students.

High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activities promote thinking and understanding at higher levels of complexity, integration or meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engaged in writing a story, poem, or piece of non-fiction ○ Reading a book, magazine, poem or newspaper (or are being read to by someone else) ○ Practicing or learning math skills ○ Opportunities for student involvement through inquiry, experimentation, problem-solving and discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students are not engaged in activities that promote skill development or higher-level thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No expansion of topic through use of experimentation, analysis, or synthesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff ask students “why, how, what if” questions that require complex answers (not factual, rote, or yes/no) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask thought-provoking questions, add complexity to tasks ○ Ask youth questions that require extended responses ○ Ask youth to explain their answers, respond to counter arguments and attempt to answer their own questions ○ Engage in reciprocal discussion in which they take students’ ideas seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff do not question students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not ask questions that require complex answers ○ Do not challenge students to explain answers or position ○ Staff only want/expect brief, correct response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff provide instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review information, explain how to do something ○ Youth listen attentively to instruction (or instructional video) ○ Instruction may include a series of simple question-answer exchanges with youth involving brief factual answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No instructional conversation between staff and students ◆ Staff give incomplete, confusing or incorrect answers to youth questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, in homework or activity assistance they provide the wrong answer or misleading information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activity requires students to identify and solve problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gather and/or synthesize information in order to complete a task or make a decision ○ The information gathering and processing should have a purpose defined by either the youth or the staff (e.g., internet searches to advance, plan a project or trip) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students do not participate in problem-solving activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activities require short answers or involve not problem-solving ◆ All information needed to complete a task or activity is provided by the staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activity requires students to plan, synthesize ideas, or use information to accomplish a goal or make a decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The activity requires youth to develop a plan or think ahead several steps and anticipate others’ responses (e.g., chess) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students do not participate in planning or decision making

Rating indicators:

1 = little or no opportunity for cognitive growth
 2 = opportunities occur primarily in the context of homework; use of other activities for cognitive growth is limited; staff ask few or no questions requiring complex answers; few or no problem-solving activities
 3 = some opportunities within some activities
 4 = variety of opportunities and staff are highly effective in facilitating students’ learning experiences; many opportunities for planning, synthesis, problem solving

APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE (activities are implemented effectively)

High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Transitions are orderly and efficient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transition times are minimal, students do not need to wait a long time for an activity to start ○ Activity area is prepared and ready when youth arrive ○ Materials are accessible and efficiently dispersed to youth ○ Materials are in a condition that allows them to be used as required (e.g., sports equipment is functional, games have all required pieces, computers work) ○ There are enough materials to allow youth to participate simultaneously in activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Transitions are chaotic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Long waits between activities ○ Materials are not functional or not available in necessary quantities ○ Staff are not prepared for the activity ○ Students may not know where they are supposed to go or be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Instructions for activities are clear and appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff understand and are prepared to support students in the activity ○ Explain reasons for rules and structure of the activity ○ Instructions are easily understandable and easy to follow ○ Students understand and follow instructions ○ Students understand their responsibilities ○ Students know what is expected of them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instructions are unclear and not easily followed ○ Students may not know what they are supposed to be doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff members support each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff members work at cross-purposes or give conflicting information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There are no obvious safety hazards (e.g., the area is not too cluttered, there are no dangerous or broken materials around) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activity area is cluttered and materials are broken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ External distractions are minimized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Distractions outside the observed activity interfere with students' participation/experience
<p>Rating indicators:</p> <p>1 = staff are unprepared; poor materials; long transitions; environment is unsafe</p> <p>2 = a few indicators of appropriate structure</p> <p>3 = some indicators of appropriate structure</p> <p>4 = staff support each other; activities run smoothly; staff are well prepared; students have a clear understanding of rules; transitions are smooth</p>	

OVER-CONTROL

High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff are highly over-controlling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Little or no student talk or involvement ○ Spontaneity and creativity are not encouraged ○ Activities are staff-directed ○ Little time for free choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activities and interactions structured in such a way that levels of staff control are appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff respond to youth who ask for assistance ○ Students are not over-controlled ○ Staff demonstrate respect for students' autonomy and responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students do not have opportunities for making choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not select own activities ○ Do not have choices within activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students have opportunities for making choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help to determine the direction of activities ○ Have choices within the activity ○ Make suggestions about how to carry out activities or tasks ◆ Have some choice about who they work with
◆ Staff impose solutions to interpersonal problems/conflicts	◆ Staff help youth develop their own solutions and compromises
Rating indicators:	
1 = level of staff control is appropriate to the activity; students are free to make choices 2 = level of staff control is appropriate to the activity; students may have some opportunities for choice, but not many; most activities are staff-directed 3 = staff are somewhat controlling 4 = staff are highly controlling; activities are staff-directed, students do not have opportunities for choice	

CHAOS

High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students are engaged in inappropriate, and often disruptive or rude behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are out of control during transitions, activities, or free time ○ Students misbehave ○ Students ignore the sanctioned activity ○ Students misuse materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students are engaged in a productive level of functional talk and movement that are part of the activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is no evidence of disorder, students out of control, or extreme disorganization ○ Moderate levels of noise, talking, and movement ○ Talking, noise, and movement not disruptive or distracting to other students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Moderate or heavy amounts of ineffectual control tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff allow situation to get out of hand before intervening ○ Staff control techniques are unsuccessful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff control techniques are effective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aware of all situations in the room ○ Distracted youth are redirected or refocused ○ Intervene when appropriate and necessary
<p>Rating indicators:</p> <p>1= no evidence of disorder or chaos</p> <p>2 = students are engaged in productive level of talk; may be some brief instances of disruptive noise or talking; staff control techniques are effective</p> <p>3 = some evidence of chaos</p> <p>4 = students are out of control throughout observation; youth are not redirected; staff control techniques are ineffective</p>	

MASTERY ORIENTATION

NOTE: The program offers sustained activities and opportunities for practice and skill development. In these activities, the students work toward a culminating project or event. This encourages goal setting, reflection and self-evaluation.

High	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students work on skill-building projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engaged in activity that builds to a product or event designed to showcase their work/skills (art show, drama production, recital, service project) ○ Activity may not build to specific event, but a new skill is learned and built upon (e.g., karate, dance class, music lessons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activities do not build skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not require perseverance and sustained attention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activities challenge students intellectually, creatively, and/or physically in developmentally appropriate ways, without being so difficult that they discourage participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involve a graded progression of skills, accommodating multiple skill levels, and allowing students to successfully participate at their own level ○ Appropriate for students' skill levels—not so difficult that they have trouble participating successfully and not so easy that students master skills quickly and become bored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activities do not challenge students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activities are not set up to meet individual skill levels ○ Activities are too easy or too difficult
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff encourage students to try new activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage completion and mastery of activities and tasks by providing assistance and encouragement ○ Clearly focused on instruction/helping kids learn something new or a new skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff do not encourage students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not provide assistance when needed ○ Do not encourage students to challenge themselves ○ Do not encourage students to try new activities ○ Criticize youth work without offering appropriate guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff demonstrate or model concepts or skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain, provide information, coach, direct instruction necessary for students' progress ○ Explain specific steps to follow in completing activity/tasks, beyond giving simple instructions to actually showing how to do something (demonstrating a dance step, drawing technique, working through a problem) or giving examples in response to questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff do not offer appropriate instruction and feedback

Rating indicators:

- 1 = no evidence of skill building or mastery orientation
- 2 = a few activities focus on skill building or mastery, although not in an optimal way; staff may demonstrate some concepts or skills; activities may offer challenge to some, but not all, students
- 3 = some activities encourage skill building or mastery
- 4 = many activities encourage skill building or mastery; staff demonstrate and explain techniques, directions, etc.; staff encourage students to try new activities, skills