



Quality afterschool programming in a nutshell

Quality afterschool programs can take many forms. Developing high quality programs requires that you know the needs of your community and youth and articulate program goals that are specific to both the intended recipients and intended program outcomes.

Quality programs have identified indicators associated with intended outcomes and have developed structures to support goals.

Such programs are well administered, have a measuring plan for indicators and outcomes and a clear understanding of funding sources and challenges.

The report summary and related resources will soon be available at the Nebraska Community Learning Center Network website:

www.NebraskaCLCNetwork.org

Characteristics of successful afterschool programs

In 2008, the Nebraska Community Learning Center Network, working in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, asked the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools to undertake a study of national research literature in order to identify commonly-cited elements of quality in afterschool programs. The study reviewed approximately 150 sources, primarily from peer-reviewed journals, to determine characteristics of quality program design and implementation.

The study identified ten programmatic and administrative characteristics as common elements of quality programs. These elements of quality programs are summarized below:

Programmatic Characteristics

1 Instructional Activities

Sequential, active, explicit instructional activities are offered. They focus on specific goals and include attention to both academic and pro-social behaviors.

2 Recreational Activities

Small and large group activities provide opportunities for physical, mental and creative recreation.

3 Program Development

Quality programs include a positive program environment, including intentional program design and high-quality staff that are supported as professionals.

4 Family Involvement and Accessibility

Quality programs encourage family participation through family-friendly hours and include families in planning program activities.

5 Community Partnerships & Mentorship

Community partners assist in providing program opportunities, including mentorship and intergenerational mentorship opportunities for youth.

6 Health Awareness and Opportunity

Quality programs provide healthy food choices and opportunities for physical exercise as well as education regarding the effects of risk-taking behavior.

7 Active Participation

Quality programs encourage a structured environment of developmentally-appropriate choices and encourage youth participation in all phases of program activities.

Administrative Characteristics

8 Reflective

Quality programs contain a reflective element that allows program administrators an opportunity for continuous program improvement.

9 Well Administered

Quality programs have a well thought through administrative structure that ensures programs are well run and adaptable to changing conditions.

10 Safe

Quality programs meet and/or exceed all relevant safety and health requirements and provide a safe, comfortable environment supportive of youth development.



Five Key Quality Program Outcomes

- 1 Academic Performance
- 2 Positive School Behaviors
- 3 Social Behaviors
- 4 Emotional Well Being
- 5 Health & Wellness

More information on these program outcomes can be found in the full report.

About the report

Elements of Quality in After-School Programs: A Review of the Research Literature was developed for the Nebraska Community Learning Center Network by the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools, College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The final report, when completed, will be available on both the Network and University of Nebraska-Lincoln website.

