

NSACA Program Observation Tool

Based on the

National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA)
Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care

The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care were:

- Developed by NSACA and the National Institute for Out-of-School Time
- Based on the ASQ (Assessing School-Age Child Care Quality) Program Observation Instrument and Questions for the Director by Susan O'Connor, Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer, and Kathryn A. Wheeler

Note: Words and phrases underlined in this Observation Tool are defined in *NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care*.

Observer's Name _____

Group Observed _____

Date _____ Time Observed, from: _____ to: _____

Suggestions for Observing a Program

1. Schedule the observation on a day when the children will be engaged in routine activities. Do not observe on a day when a special event like a field trip or a carnival is planned.
2. Allow enough time to see the whole range of activities offered, if possible. In an after-school program, it is best to see arrival and departure, indoor and outdoor activities, snack, and transitions.
3. To be well prepared for the observation:
 - Read through the Program Observation to familiarize yourself with the standards.
 - Arrive early enough to get a short tour from the Director so you can meet the staff, go over the schedule, and see all the areas the program uses.
4. While observing:
 - Use the full range of the rating scale. Do not be afraid to use the zero if the standard is not being met. Even the best programs have areas for improvement.
 - Be specific. Write down exactly what you see and hear to support your rating.
5. When you have finished observing:
 - To get more information when you can't rate one of the standards, ask the staff to "tell me more about ..." or "what do you do about ...?" Avoid "yes" or "no" questions like "Do you ...?"
 - Be sure to thank the Director and staff for having you observe.
 - Finish making your ratings within 24 hours, while the observation is fresh in your memory.
 - Add up the number of points for each key and put the total in the box at the bottom.

16. The safety and security of children and youth are protected.

Guiding Questions: Do families, children, and staff generally feel that this is a safe and healthy environment? Have parents, children, or staff expressed concern about a potential safety hazard? Do we review and discuss future prevention strategies?

- a. There are no observable safety hazards in the program space.
- All of the following are covered and secured: electrical cords, heating pipes, sharp-edged objects.
 - All stairs and climbing structures have railings.
 - The cubbies, shelves, and dividers are secured so that they cannot tip over on children.

Key

Standard

Examples

You will choose a rating for every standard.

- 0 = no evidence, the standard is not met
- 1 = little evidence, the standard is somewhat met
- 2 = more evidence, the standard is substantially met
- 3 = consistent evidence, the standard is fully met

You might not be able to see enough to make a rating. Ask the staff questions about things you didn't see.

When you don't directly observe something, you'll have to use your judgment to make the rating based on what the Director and staff say and how consistent it sounds with all of the other things you've observed.

There is a space at the bottom of the page for the total of all your ratings for that page. Fill it in AFTER you have completed your whole observation and talked with staff.

Make specific notes of what you observe. In discussing your observations, describe body language, facial expressions, and exact words people used.

For example:

Good comments— Specific and objective	Poor comments— General and judgmental
<i>"Mary said to the boy, 'Like, I should be excited about that?' when he showed her his new baseball shirt."</i>	<i>"One staff person was sarcastic."</i>
<i>"Two staff stood leaning against the fence talking to each other for ten minutes on the playground."</i>	<i>"Staff wasn't involved with the children."</i>
<i>"No one on staff spoke to five of the parents who came to pick up their kids."</i>	<i>"Staff wasn't friendly to parents."</i>

Human Relationships

1. Staff relate to all children and youth in positive ways.

Guiding Questions: How do we greet children? Are they happy to be with us? Do we feel we have enough time to talk with individual and small groups of children every day? What else can we do to help children in our program feel welcome?

	Comments	Rating
a. Staff treat children with respect and listen to what they say.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff do not belittle children. • They take children's comments seriously. • Staff do not intrude or interrupt children. • Staff use supportive language. • They make statements like "Keep trying; you can do it!" 		
b. Staff make children feel welcome and comfortable.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff project a tone of welcome in their voices and gestures. • Staff acknowledge children when they arrive and depart. • They respond appropriately when children show affection. • Staff stay calm in all situations. • They handle conflicts in a way that reduces fear or disruption. 		
c. Staff respond to children with acceptance and appreciation.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are kind and fair to all children. • They include all interested children in activities and events. Games and sports are open to all, regardless of their athletic skill. • Staff do not separate children by gender. • They do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, <u>family</u> structure, appearance, disability, etc. 		
d. Staff are engaged with children.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff talk and play with the children. • They show interest in what the children say and do. • Staff participate in many activities with children. • Staff sit with children at snack time. • Staff show that they enjoy children. • Staff seem cheerful rather than bored, tired, or distant. • Staff spend little time on tasks that do not involve the children. 		

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a-d: _____

2. Staff respond appropriately to the individual needs of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: Are we aware of the many interests, abilities, and talents of our children? How do we respond to their different cultures and languages? In what other ways can we help each child grow and learn?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff know that each child has special interests and talents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are able to spend time with individual children. • Staff bring in materials related to children’s interests: pets, music, sports, computers, chess, etc. • Specialists are used for certain activities. • Staff are eager to hear about events in children’s lives outside the program. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff recognize the range of children’s abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff vary their responses to match children’s ages and abilities. • Staff help children become focused and engaged. • Staff help children pursue their interests and improve their skills. • Staff offer enrichment activities. • Staff help children with their homework. • Staff substitute equipment as needed, such as using a large beach ball instead of a volleyball for outdoor games. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff can relate to a child’s <u>culture</u> and home <u>language</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff provide resources that show different cultural perspectives. • They help children use books, music, and tapes in different languages. • Visual displays show a variety of cultures. • Signs include the home languages of the children in the program. • Children have an opportunity to speak their home language with peers and staff. • Guests from various cultural traditions are invited to speak at the program and share their experiences. • Staff also serve as coaches, mentors, and friends. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff respond to the range of children’s feelings and <u>temperaments</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff try to understand the different ways children express their feelings (e.g., different cultural styles to show respect for authority, express hurt or anger or warmth). • Staff try to assess children’s feelings before attempting to solve a problem. • Staff find suitable ways to include all children. • Staff accept a child’s desire to be alone. • Staff remain calm and patient with an angry child. • Staff comfort a child who appears hurt, upset, or disappointed. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a–d:

3. Staff encourage children and youth to make choices and to become more responsible.

Guiding Questions: What kinds of choices can children in the program make? How often do we let them choose what they are going to do, and with whom? Are we helping them to take initiative and assume leadership roles? Do we include children when we plan activities?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff offer assistance in a way that supports a child's initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff help children find ways to pursue their own interests. • Staff say "yes" to children's reasonable requests and ideas for activities. • Staff help children plan projects and gather resources. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff assist children without taking control, and they encourage children to take leadership roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff give clear directions so that children can proceed independently. • When asked, staff step in to help children. • Staff encourage children to proceed on their own. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff give children many chances to choose what they will do, how they will do it, and with whom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have frequent opportunities to choose their companions. • Children help prepare and/or serve their own food. • Children set up activities and/or clean up afterwards. • Older children may choose to set up their own clubhouse. When field trips are planned, some children may choose to stay at the program. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff help children make informed and responsible choices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff remind children to think about how their actions may affect others in the program. • Staff ask questions that guide children to make good decisions. • Staff help children understand the impact of their decisions on others. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d:

4. Staff interact with children and youth to help them learn.

Guiding Questions: What kinds of questions do we ask children to encourage creative thinking? How do we respond to children's curiosity? What approaches do we use to answer their questions? How do we help children reflect on what they are learning? Are we able to work with individual children who need our help and support throughout the day?

	Comments	Rating
a. Staff ask questions that encourage children to think for themselves.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff pursue children's ideas. • Staff start discussions by asking open-ended questions (e.g., "what if?" or "how can we ...?"). • Staff encourage children to use journal writing, art projects and group discussions as a way to express their ideas. • Staff take time to think about children's questions. 		
b. Staff share skills and resources to help children gain information and solve problems.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff show children how and where to find answers to questions. • Staff show children how complex skills can be broken into smaller steps. • Staff encourage children to practice basic life skills. • When children face problems they cannot solve themselves, staff offer suggestions. 		
c. Staff vary the approaches they use to help children learn.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff teach children a new task or game by showing the steps as well as telling about them. • Staff write down instructions for activities so that children can remember what to do. • Staff pay attention to culture and gender variations in learning styles. • They recognize non-verbal as well as verbal responses. • They encourage children to try new activities. • They help children move beyond gender stereotypes in their choices. • Staff use pictures and visual aids to reach out to non-readers and speakers of other languages. • Staff modify activities as needed so that all children, including those with disabilities, can participate. 		
d. Staff help children use <u>language</u> skills through frequent conversations.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff speak to children on a level children seem to understand. • They listen patiently as all children try to express themselves. • Staff take extra time with children who speak another home language or have difficulty listening or speaking. • Staff try to find effective ways to communicate with all children. • Staff sometimes use non-verbal signals to help children understand. 		

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Total, a–d:

5. Staff use positive techniques to guide the behavior of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: How do we model caring, cooperation, and respect? Can we identify a pattern for the types of conflict that occur most often? Are there times when conflicts are most likely to occur? Are there simple changes we can make to prevent these conflicts from occurring? What methods do we use to help children resolve their conflicts?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff give attention to children when they cooperate, share, care for materials, or join in activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff often show appreciation and encouragement. • They avoid using insincere praise and threats to control children's behavior. • Staff teach children how to communicate and cooperate. • Staff celebrate children's efforts and progress. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff set appropriate limits for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff set limits to prevent children from hurting each other physically or verbally. • If children tease, scapegoat, threaten, or exclude others, staff step in. • Staff avoid setting unrealistic limits, such as expecting children to be quiet most of the day. • Staff take steps to ensure that each child understands the limits that are set. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff use no harsh discipline methods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff do not shame, yell, hit, or withhold food. • The whole group is not scolded or punished when one child breaks a rule. • Staff avoid correcting children publicly. • Staff do not force children to explain their behavior or apologize. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff encourage children to resolve their own conflicts. Staff step in only if needed to discuss the issues and work out a solution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff listen and observe carefully. • Staff use negotiation, reasoning, and redirection to help children find alternatives. • Staff do not impose their solutions on children. • Staff rarely lecture children. • Staff help children express their feelings. • Staff help children understand how their behavior affects others. • Staff teach children specific skills to work through conflicts (e.g., circle time, peace table, or conflict-resolution skills). 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d: _____

6. Children and youth generally interact with one another in positive ways.

Guiding Questions: Do children seem to enjoy spending time together? Do they talk about friends at the program? Do they tend to include others from different backgrounds, or with different abilities in their play?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Children appear relaxed and involved with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group sounds are pleasant most of the time. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Children show respect for each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teasing, belittling, or picking on particular children is uncommon. • Children show sympathy for each other and help each other. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Children usually cooperate and work well together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children willingly share materials and space. • They suggest activities, negotiate roles, and jointly work out the rules. • Children include others with developmental, physical, or language differences in their play. • Children often help each other. • There is a strong sense of community. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. When problems occur, children often try to discuss their differences and work out a solution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children listen to each other's point of view and try to compromise (e.g., if two children want to use the same equipment, they may decide to take turns as a solution). • Children know how to solve problems. • Their solutions are usually reasonable and fair. • They do not try to solve disagreements by bullying or acting aggressively. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d:

7. Staff and families interact with each other in positive ways.

Guiding Questions: How do we help our families feel welcome and comfortable? Do we know enough about our families? Do families from all backgrounds seem to be involved and connected?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff make families feel welcome and comfortable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and family members greet one another by name. • Staff use friendly voices, expressions, and gestures. • They are relaxed and not abrupt with each other. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff and families treat each other with respect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and family members show interest in each other's lives. • Respect is shown to all without bias. • Staff communicate with families in a variety of ways. • Staff recognize that some cultures like direct communication, while others prefer indirect. • Staff do not talk about confidential matters in front of the children or other adults. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff share the <u>languages</u> and <u>cultures</u> of the families they serve, and the communities they live in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program's diverse staff reflect the cultures and languages of the children in the program. • Whenever possible, staff speak with families in their home language. • Staff ask translators to help communicate with families during individual and large-group meetings. • Staff avoid using children as translators if possible. • Staff provide information written in the family's home language. • Displays and signs reflect the diversity in the <u>community</u>. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff and families work together to make arrivals and departures between home and child care go smoothly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members can easily find their children and their children's possessions. • Conversations with family members do not take attention away from children or their activities. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d:

8. Staff work well together to meet the needs of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: How do we support each other in meeting the needs of children? Do we set examples of positive adult relationships? Do we set time aside to review our plans? Do we find chances to share our ideas?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff communicate with each other while the program is in session to ensure that the program flows smoothly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff check with each other to make sure all areas are supervised. • Conversations about personal matters are brief and do not interfere with transitions and activities. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff are cooperative with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are flexible about their roles. • They pitch in to help each other with the children as needed. • Work appears to be shared fairly. • When problems occur, staff discuss their differences and work toward fair solutions. • Long or complicated discussions are saved for times when children are not present. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff are respectful of each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect is shown to all. • Staff communicate their needs in a way that promotes cooperation. • Staff are aware of how their tone and demeanor convey respect. • They manage tense situations in a way that shows respect for other staff members. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff provide role models of positive adult relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff check in with each other and stay in touch throughout the day. • Staff model positive adult interaction through cooperation, caring, and effective communication. • Staff notice and respond supportively to non-verbal cues and gestures. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a–d:

Indoor Environment

9. The program's indoor space meets the needs of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: Do we use all of the space available to us throughout the program day? How do children make use of the indoor space? Are there certain areas they avoid? Do other areas seem overcrowded? How do we maximize the use of shared space?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. There is enough room for all program activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can work and play without crowding. • There is enough space so that indoor activities do not interfere with each other. • There is indoor space for active play during bad weather. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. The space is arranged well for a range of activities: physical games and sports, creative arts, dramatic play, quiet games, enrichment offerings, eating, and socializing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messy play takes place near the sink or by a floor that is easy to wash. • Materials are sorted and well organized. • Running water is conveniently located. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. The space is arranged so that various activities can go on at the same time without much disruption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active play does not disrupt quiet play (e.g., loud music does not distract children doing homework). • Pathways allow children to move from one place to another without disturbing ongoing activities. • Sharing the space with other groups (e.g., schools or churches) does not restrict the children's activities or noise level. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. There is adequate and convenient storage space for equipment, materials, and personal possessions of children and staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a place for children and staff to store personal belongings. • Materials used frequently and works-in-progress are accessible to children. • There are other places to store bulk materials and things not currently in use. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d: _____

10. The indoor space allows children and youth to take initiative and explore their interests.

Guiding Questions: Are the program's resources accessible to children? Do children have enough of a chance to explore their own interests? How are their interests and work visible throughout the indoor space?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Children can get materials out and put them away by themselves with ease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials that see frequent use are kept on low and open shelves. • Materials and supplies are equally accessible to all children. • If supply cabinets are locked, they can be opened for use while children are at the program. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Children can arrange materials and equipment to suit their activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can choose tables and desks that are at the right height for their size and activity. • Children can sit comfortably without being cramped (e.g., with feet on the floor and arms on the table). • Children can move furniture easily to make more room or to define an area. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. The indoor space reflects the work and interests of the children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays feature children's artwork and other pictures of interest to them. • Children are free to personalize the space and redefine some areas for their purposes (e.g., to build "forts" or clubhouses). • The decor portrays people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds engaged in a variety of roles. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Some areas have soft, comfortable furniture on which children can relax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can use couches, cushions, beanbag chairs, or rugs. • There are some spaces that suit children who want to rest or be alone. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d:

Outdoor Environment

11. The outdoor play area meets the needs of children and youth, and the equipment allows them to be independent and creative.

Guiding Questions: When we set the outdoor schedule, do we follow the interests of the staff or the children? Have we explored ways to offer more opportunities for outdoor play? Do we have convenient storage for outdoor equipment?

	Comments	Rating
a. Each child has a chance to play outdoors for at least 30 minutes out of every three-hour block of time at the program.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When weather permits, children can go outdoors often. • In some situations, all children may go outdoors to play. • In others, outdoor play can be offered as an open-ended choice. • An indoor space is available for large-motor activities when the weather is bad (e.g., extreme cold, heat, or smog alert). 		
b. Children can use a variety of outdoor equipment and games for both active and quiet play.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage areas are kept open so that children may select play equipment. • Outdoor games and sports equipment are stored close to the play space. 		
c. Permanent playground equipment is suitable for the sizes and abilities of all children.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment offers various levels of challenge. • Older children have access to more challenging equipment. • Younger children can reach most of the climbing structures. • Equipment is accessible for use by children with disabilities. For example: There are enough ramps and paved areas for children in wheelchairs to be able to use the playground. 		
d. The outdoor space is suitable for a wide variety of activities.		0 1 2 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an open area where children can run, jump, and play. • There is a protected area for quiet play and socializing. • There is a large ball field area. • There is a hard surface for basketball, roller skating, and bike riding. 		

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Total, a-d: _____

Activities

12. The daily schedule is flexible, and it offers enough security, independence, and stimulation to meet the needs of all children and youth.

Guiding Questions: Does our system allow children to move at their own pace from one activity to another? When is it necessary for all the children to participate in the same activity? Is snack time handled in a relaxed and flexible way?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. The routine provides stability without being rigid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children seem to know the daily routine and to follow it without many reminders. • Large-<u>group</u> outdoor time is extended or shortened, depending on the weather and the interest of the children. • Time is set aside to discuss rules. • Staff and children work together to define rules that make sense to all. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Children meet their physical needs in a relaxed way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can get drinks and go to the bathroom without waiting for the group. • Children can have snack as an activity choice instead of eating together as a large group. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Individual children move smoothly from one activity to another, usually at their own pace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When children arrive at the program, they are given time to adjust. • Children need not wait a long time for an activity to start. • They are not rushed to finish an activity. • Children rarely move in a large group or in a line. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. When it is necessary for children to move as a group, the <u>transition</u> is smooth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff clearly explain how the transition will happen. • There is appropriate supervision during the transition to ensure that it will occur safely. • There is a clear reason for needing to move as a group. • Children are not forced to wait for a long time in silence. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a-d:

13. Children and youth can choose from a wide variety of activities.

Guiding Questions: Do we have special-interest groups or clubs for older children? Do activities help children learn new skills or explore interesting topics? Can children become involved in long-term projects and productions?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. There are regular opportunities for active, physical play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have time indoors and outdoors for physical activity (e.g., a chance to dance, run, jump, climb, play active games and sports, and explore the environment). 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. There are regular opportunities for creative arts and dramatic play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program has a wide variety of arts and crafts materials: clay, paint, markers, beads, yarn for weaving and knitting, etc. • There are costumes, puppets, and props on hand for dramatic play. • Children have access to musical instruments and audio tapes. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. There are regular opportunities for quiet activities and socializing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can choose to sit and talk with friends or staff. • They can choose to play quiet board games or help on a cooking project. • They may decide to study alone, or just sit back and daydream. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Children have a chance to join enrichment activities that promote basic skills and higher-level thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can work together on science projects. • There are math games and materials to explore. • Children can study the plants and animals that live in or around the building. • They can create a newspaper, write a play, do homework, or use computers. 		0 1 2 3

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Total, a–d:

14. Activities reflect the mission of the program and promote the development of all the children and youth in the program.

Guiding Questions: What is the mission of our program? Who defined the mission? How is it shared with families, children, and staff? How does the mission guide us in planning activities? How is our program different for 5–7-year-olds, 8–11-year-olds, and 11–14-year-olds?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Activities are in line with the styles, abilities and interests of the individuals in the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are permitted to work at their own pace. • Activities allow children to work alone, in pairs, or in large and small <u>groups</u>. • Special tools are available to children who need help with fine motor skills (e.g., special scissors, thick pencils and brushes). • Quiet activities, such as storytelling, are adapted to include children who are more active. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Activities are well suited to the age range of children in the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff adapt projects to suit different age and interest levels. • Projects for younger children can be completed within a week. • Projects for older children may last 8–10 weeks. • Physical games and sports offer varying levels of challenge to suit the players. • Staff encourage expert children to help beginners learn a new skill. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Activities reflect the <u>languages</u> and <u>cultures</u> of the <u>families</u> served.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff involve children, families, and <u>community</u> members in planning activities. • Food from a range of cultures is served for snack. • Games from different cultures are played inside and outside. • Folk tales and traditions from diverse groups provide the basis for plays, musical performances, art displays, and crafts projects. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Activities reflect and support the program’s mission. (See glossary in The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care for examples.)</p>		0 1 2 3

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Total, a–d:

15. There are sufficient materials to support program activities.

Guiding Questions: Are children able to find what they need to explore their interests and take part in activities? Are some unable to participate because there aren't enough materials?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Materials are complete and in good repair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wooden equipment is free of splinters and rough edges. • Hardware is not rusty or protruding. • Board games and puzzles are in sturdy containers and have all their pieces. • Balls are fully inflated. • There is a wide variety of books in good condition. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. There are enough materials for the number of children in the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children rarely have to wait a long time to use materials, supplies, and equipment. • A system is in place to help children share items in high demand (e.g., computers, pottery wheels, or new games). • There are enough materials so that several activities can go on at the same time. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Materials are <u>developmentally appropriate</u> for the age range of the children in the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are books for every reading ability. • There are simple and more complex puzzles and board games (e.g., Candyland, Othello, Mancala, checkers and chess). • There are computer games for young children as well as older youth. • There are flexible materials that can be used in many ways (e.g., markers, stencils, paint, and clay). • Many of the materials are adaptable for use by children with differing abilities. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Materials promote the program's <u>mission</u>. (See glossary in The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care for examples.)</p>		0 1 2 3

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a-d:

Safety, Health, & Nutrition

16. The safety and security of children and youth are protected.

Guiding Questions: Do families, children, and staff generally feel that this is a safe and healthy environment? Have parents, children, or staff expressed concern about a potential safety hazard? Do we review and discuss future prevention strategies?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. There are no observable safety hazards in the <u>program space</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the following are covered and secured: electrical cords, heating pipes, sharp-edged objects. • All stairs and climbing structures have railings. • The cubbies, shelves, and dividers are secured so that they cannot tip over on children. • Tables are stored in a safe manner so they will not fall on anyone. • The floor is free from dangerous clutter and spills. • The area is free from glass and other unsafe litter. • The outdoor play space is protected from traffic by fences or by other means. • Program entrance and exit areas are also sheltered from traffic. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Systems are in place to protect the children from harm, especially when they move from one place to another or use the rest room.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is appropriate supervision at all times. • Children know how to get help in situations where adults are not directly supervising. • A system is in place for monitoring the location and arrival time of children who participate in outside activities such as clubs, music lessons and sports. • Devices such as intercoms, two way radios and cordless phones are used to make communication possible among different areas within the program. • A system is in place for staff to know which children are in the bathroom and how long they've been there. For example, children may put a clothespin by their name and set an egg timer. • Access is monitored and staff respond when strangers enter the program. For example, staff install a lock or buzzer on all doors. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Equipment for active play is safe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large equipment is bolted down. • Swings are placed out of the way of passing children. • All playground equipment is on a resilient surface (e.g., fine, loose sand, wood chips, or wood mulch about 9 inches deep, or on rubber mats manufactured for such use). • Children wear appropriate protective gear (e.g., helmets for biking, and helmets, wrist and knee guards for in-line skating). 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. A system is in place to keep unauthorized people from taking children from the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff know who is authorized to pick up each child. • Staff know what to do if an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child. 		0 1 2 3

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a-d:

17. The program provides an environment that protects and enhances the health of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: Do staff, children, or families comment on the cleanliness of the facility? Have they reported concerns about potential health hazards? How have we responded to these concerns?

	Comments	Rating
a. The indoor and outdoor facilities are clean. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floors, walls, and sinks are clean. • Bad odors do not linger. • Bathrooms are cleaned daily. • Food service areas are disinfected after each use. 		0 1 2 3
b. There are no observable health hazards in the indoor or outdoor space. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children do not have unsupervised access to medicine, poisons, or cleaning agents such as bleach. • Air quality in and around the facility is acceptable. • Tap water is safe for drinking. • Windows are secured. 		0 1 2 3
c. There are adequate supplies and facilities for hand washing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs or pictures are posted at each sink to show proper hand-washing techniques. • Soap dispensers are filled regularly. • Towels are not shared. 		0 1 2 3
d. The heat, ventilation, noise level, and light in the indoor space are comfortable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floor or table lamps are used when needed. • The temperature can be turned up or down. • Rugs and ceiling tiles are used to help absorb noise. 		0 1 2 3

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a-d:

18. The program staff try to protect and enhance the health of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: Do we wash our hands frequently? Why, or why not? Do we make sure children wash their hands with soap and water? Do we have a plan in place to care for a child who has become ill at the program? How do we keep all staff informed of special health needs, such as allergies or asthma?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff are responsive to the individual health needs of the children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are aware of the health needs of individual children. • These needs may include dietary restrictions, allergies, and medication. • Staff respect the confidentiality of children’s health needs. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff protect children from communicable disease by separating children who become ill during the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a designated area to care for ill children. • Staff follow the program’s written policy when they respond to children who become ill. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff protect children from potential hazards such as the following: caustic or toxic art materials and cleaning agents, medications, and hot liquids; overexposure to heat or cold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic substances are kept in a locked cabinet, out of the reach of children. • There is a sign-out form for any medication to be given to children. • Directions for dosage are clearly marked and understood by staff. • Staff closely supervise any activities that use hot liquids or heat-producing tools (e.g., boiling water, an iron or stove). • There is a supply of extra coats, gloves, and boots for winter. • In summer, there is a shady <u>outdoor space</u> and access to water. • Students stay <u>indoors</u> when the weather is bad. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff and children wash hands frequently, especially after using the toilet or before preparing food.</p>		0 1 2 3

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a–d:

19. Children and youth are carefully supervised to maintain safety.

Guiding Questions: How do we monitor arrivals and departures? Do we take attendance immediately and try to find out where absent children are? Does our system enable us to know where children are at all times? Do we know which activities will need extra supervision? Are there high-risk situations that we should try to avoid?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. Staff note when children arrive, when they leave, and with whom they leave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff use a checklist or other system to make note of absentees and late arrivals. • A system is in place to inform staff that a child is leaving. • Staff will permit only authorized people to pick up a child at the program. • Staff are watchful of traffic risks during drop-off and pick-up times. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Staff know where the children are and what they are doing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff move around an area so they can see all the children they are supervising. • Staff position themselves in a way that allows them to watch as many children as possible. • Staff know where children are during transitions (e.g., moving from outdoors to indoors, room to room, and using rest rooms). • If children have permission to be out of sight, staff know where they are and will check on them at regular intervals. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. Staff supervise children appropriately according to children’s ages, abilities, and needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff give verbal and non-verbal signals to set clear limits for safety and behavior. • Staff vary the level of supervision to match the needs of individuals and groups. • Staff take children’s temperaments and developmental stages into account in setting the level of supervision. • Staff respect older children’s need for independence. 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Staff closely supervise activities that are potentially harmful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff work with small, manageable groups when activities involve dangerous equipment (e.g., using carpentry tools, cooking, leather working). • Staff closely watch children who are on climbing equipment. • Staff watch out for traffic hazards when children are outdoors. 		0 1 2 3

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a–d:

20. The program serves foods and drinks that meet the needs of children and youth.

Guiding Questions: Do children enjoy eating the snacks we serve? Do we involve them in planning or preparing snacks? How do we respond to their requests for different snack foods? Do we inform children and families about healthy nutrition?

	Comments	Rating
<p>a. The program serves healthy foods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foods high in fats, salts, and sugars are limited. • Staff serve fruit juice and milk instead of fruit drinks and soda. • A balance of fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins is served. • Snacks include healthy foods from various <u>cultures</u>. 		0 1 2 3
<p>b. Drinking water is readily available at all times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water from sinks and bubblers has been tested for quality. • Filtered water is available at sites where the water quality is poor. • Drinking water is carried along on off-site visits and field trips. • Staff allow more time for children to drink water in hot weather. 		0 1 2 3
<p>c. The amount and type of food offered is appropriate for the ages and sizes of children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program offers serving sizes appropriate for children's ages and sizes. • The program offers food to children who forget or bring only "junk food" from home. • Staff support children's need to self-regulate the amount they eat. • Most of the food put out at snack time gets eaten. • Children do not complain a lot about disliking the food. • They don't claim to be tired of having the same foods all the time. • Options are provided for children with special dietary concerns (e.g., Kosher, vegetarian, and diabetic children). 		0 1 2 3
<p>d. Snacks and meals are timed appropriately for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snacks are available for children when they arrive at the program. • Children have enough time to eat without rushing. • The timing is flexible enough to meet the needs of individuals. • All children are notified before snacks are put away. 		0 1 2 3

0 = not at all 1 = sometimes 2 = most of the time 3 = all of the time

Total, a-d: _____

Directions for Completing the Program Observation Tally Sheet

The ASQ Team leader will collect the observation forms, and clerical staff or a volunteer will:

1. Fill out the Tally Sheet for Program Observations.

- List each person who observed the program, the group they observed, and the date of the observation.
- List their ratings on the chart under the letter for each observer.
- You may want to use a separate tally sheet for each separate group observed so that you can clearly see the ratings for each group. For example, if the younger children stay in the cafeteria and the older children are in the library, you may want to do separate tallies and discussions so you can identify distinct areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

Note: You will need to come to overall ratings for your whole program if you are preparing for accreditation. During self-study you can rate different program components separately.

2. Determine an average rating for each standard.

- This will be an easy task for many of the standards. Use a simple average when observers are within 1 point of each other. For example, if 5 people observed, and there are 3 “2’s” and 2 “3’s” the average rating will be 2.4.
- When there is *substantial disagreement* among observers, you can still do a simple average, but CIRCLE that standard so you can note the disagreement in the self-study summary. This will alert the ASQ Team to discuss their disagreement when they are reviewing the self-study summary. There is substantial disagreement when ASQ Team members have a 2–3 point spread in the way they have rated the standard.
- You may also want to circle any standards that are in the range of 0–1, so those low ratings can also be discussed during Step #4.
- Check the comments sections. Summarize comments that are frequent, or particularly strong in opinion.

3. Determine the rating for the key.

- Simply add the average ratings for the standards to determine the key.
- Let’s say that 1a = 2.4, 1b = 0.6, 1c = 3.0, 1d = 2.0. Then key 1 = 8.0. However, it will be important to circle standard 1b because it’s rating is 0–1, and is also substantially lower than the other standards in that key. The ASQ Team will need to discuss this as it is reviewing the self-study summary, and most likely, include that standard as an item that will need to be listed on the action plan.

Tally Sheet for Program Observations

Program Name: _____

Observers:

A. _____ Group observed: _____ Date: _____

B. _____ Group observed: _____ Date: _____

C. _____ Group observed: _____ Date: _____

D. _____ Group observed: _____ Date: _____

E. _____ Group observed: _____ Date: _____

Key	Observers					Average Rating	Comments
	A	B	C	D	E		
1							Comment here on any standard rated 0 or 1.
a							
b							
c							
d							
2							
a							
b							
c							
d							
3							
a							
b							
c							
d							
4							
a							
b							
c							
d							

Key	Observers					Average Rating	Comments
	A	B	C	D	E		
5							Comment here on any standard rated 0 or 1.
a							
b							
c							
d							
6							
a							
b							
c							
d							
7							
a							
b							
c							
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8							
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c							
d							
9							
a							
b							
c							
d							
10							
a							
b							
c							
d							

Key	Observers					Average Rating	Comments
	A	B	C	D	E		
11							Comment here on any standard rated 0 or 1.
a							
b							
c							
d							
12							
a							
b							
c							
d							
13							
a							
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15							
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d							
16							
a							
b							
c							
d							

Key	Observers					Average Rating	Comments
	A	B	C	D	E		
17							
a							
b							
c							
d							
18							
a							
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19							
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