

# **CALIFORNIA SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**Supporting Continuous Program Improvement**

**for**

**Quality After School Programs**

Prepared by:

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**CALIFORNIA AFTER SCHOOL SELF- ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**ASSESSMENT PERIOD:** FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

**Grantee Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Grant Number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Funding Source:**

After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program:  Yes  No

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Program:  Yes  No

**Program Site(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Program Director:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Completed By:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## CALIFORNIA AFTER SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

### OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The California Self-Assessment Tool has been developed as an instrument for after school programs in California as they strive to achieve and maintain quality programs and meet the statutory requirements (program, fiscal, monitoring and evaluation) that are unique to the state. To develop this tool, the After School Programs Office (ASPO) of the California Department of Education (CDE) reviewed current, relevant research on criteria for quality after school programs and collected samples of after school self-assessment tools developed by other states and by private vendors.

Current research indicates that quality after school programs are intentionally designed with clearly defined and measurable goals and with program activities and content that are specifically implemented to achieve the goals. Quality after school program design includes a commitment to regularly conduct data-based program reviews and assessments of program progress and program components to ensure ongoing program improvement.

Quality after school programs conduct both **process evaluations** and **outcome evaluations** that use strong research designs to determine the extent to which they have achieved their goals and objectives and to determine overall program effectiveness.

**Outcome evaluations** provide the data that measure the actual program results for students.

**Process evaluations** include program self-assessments, staff evaluations, training evaluations, and feedback from students, families, community members and other stakeholders. Effective self-assessment supports grantees in identifying mid-cycle program design, content and professional development needs and adjustments, and related technical support needs.

**Such process evaluations as self-assessments and other qualitative measures may inform and enhance outcome evaluations but cannot be viewed as the sole evaluation measure of program success.** Regularly conducted self-assessments and other informal evaluations combined with outcome data will best support program review and refinement to ensure improved program quality. This self-assessment tool is a critical part of a data-driven, continuous program improvement process. It facilitates self-review and self-analysis of the degree to which program design is being effectively implemented.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL**

The instrument is organized in nine core program content areas, which were identified through review of current after school literature and research on program quality:

1. Program Design
2. Program Environment
3. Program Leadership/Management
4. Alignment and Linkages with the Regular School Day
5. Staff Development
6. Youth Development
7. Community Partnerships, Collaboration, and Family Involvement
8. Program Finance
9. Accountability, Evaluation, and Research

Each program content area lists quality indicators that reflect current after school literature and research; the CDE's collaboration with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in the development of the California After School Demonstration Program; and indicators that will support programs in meeting statutory, fiscal, and audit program requirements. The indicators in each content area will guide practitioners on a course of continuous improvement for quality after school programming.

**It is important to note that this self-assessment tool is an evolving document** that will be informed by input from the California After School Advisory Committee; the California After School Network; the implementation and development of the SEDL/CDE California After School Demonstration Program; ASPO observations and experiences during the Categorical Program Monitoring (CPM) review of after school programs; and after school programs, after school stakeholders, and the public.

## **PERFORMANCE LEVELS**

A four-point scaled rating system is given for each indicator. Programs using the self-assessment tool will use the rating system to assess the level of implementation or the degree to which the quality indicator is evident in the program.

At present the rating system is seen as addressing four levels of mastery:

**Advanced:** There is strong evidence that the practice is effectively in place.

**Adequate:** There is evidence that the practice is in place.

**Minimal:** There is some evidence that the indicator is being addressed.  
The program needs assistance.

**Inadequate:** There is little or no evidence that the indicator is addressed.  
The program needs significant support.

At minimum, after school programs using this tool should seek to meet the "Adequate" level for each of the indicators in the core program areas.

## **USING THE TOOL FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

It is recommended that this internal self-assessment tool be used by after school grantees **a minimum of twice per planning/operational program year.**

The format of the tool allows programs to prioritize needed improvements and to establish timeframes for achieving those improvements. The Improvement Plan levels are:

**Right Now:** Action in this area is needed immediately (within three months).

**This Year:** Action in this area is needed within this operational cycle/year.

**Next Year:** Action in this area may be deferred for evaluation during planning for the next year.

After school programs using this tool need to remember that the objective of this self-assessment tool is to support programs in their self-analysis of program performance as they look to improve program quality. The tool is not merely a checklist nor should its use be oppressive. The regular internal self-assessments should be viewed as another tool to inform both short-term and long-term planning to address program needs and identify training and technical support needs.

This tool provides space in each core program content area for programs to begin developing needed action plans identified during the self-review.

## **TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

The CDE will ensure that after school program grantees statewide are trained on how to effectively use the self-assessment tool.

More important, however, is that when after school programs use this self-assessment tool effectively to identify their immediate, mid-cycle, and long-term professional development and technical support needs, the information gained will inform the development and provision of targeted technical support at both the regional and state levels. Such targeted technical support and assistance will best support after school grantees as they strive to achieve and maintain quality after school programs.







## California After School Self-Assessment Tool

### **PROGRAM AREA: ALIGNMENT AND LINKAGES WITH THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY**

A quality program establishes effective working linkages with the regular school day to ensure that the academic and enrichment activities of the after school program are aligned with standards and curricula of the regular school day. Doing so ensures that the after school environment allows students to access the content and standards targeted during the regular day through complementary research-based or evidence-based after school activities.

### **QUALITY INDICATORS**

#### **A quality program:**

1. Establishes regularly scheduled contacts with regular school day teachers and administration to ensure alignment of the after school program activities to the students' regular day curricula and state standards
2. Maintains regularly scheduled communication with school administration to ensure ongoing collaboration, commitment of school resources for the after school program, and access to those resources.
3. Ensures that program activities integrate with and complement school day activities
4. Communicates regularly with school day staff to monitor the academic and behavioral progress of students
5. Secures regular input from regular school day teachers and administration on the impact the after school programming has on students
6. Ensures that the after school program is represented on the school site council, included in planning processes, and included in the Single School Plan for Student Achievement
7. Ensures that the after school program goals reflect the school goals for student academic achievement
8. Consults regularly with regular school day staff to ensure that the needs of individual students are being met

Performance Level				Improvement Plan		
Advanced	Adequate	Minimum	Inadequate	Now	This Year	Next Year

<b>Technical Assistance/Training Needed</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>



## California After School Self-Assessment Tool

### **PROGRAM AREA: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

A quality program employs research-based youth development strategies that reflect a complementary, holistic approach, not limited to risk prevention and repairing deficits, and are built on youths' strengths and capacity.

### **QUALITY INDICATORS**

#### **A quality program:**

1. Has a clearly stated goal that staff motivate, engage, and encourage students to learn
2. Clearly defines how staff will relate to all students in a positive way
3. Has a program schedule that addresses the needs of students and provides a variety of engaging activities
4. Provides relevant and in-depth professional development to ensure that staff understand students' personal and academic needs and have high expectations, socially and academically, for all students
5. Provides active and consistent opportunities for student participants to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions
6. Ensures that program activities enable students to develop life skills, resiliency, and self-esteem
7. Has students participate in program development and review processes and provide input and recommendations for program content and youth involvement
8. Has students participate in the evaluation of the program and gives them representation on decision making committees and groups

Performance Level				Plan to Improve		
Advanced	Adequate	Minimum	Inadequate	Now	This Year	Next Year

<b>Technical Assistance/Training Needed</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>

**California After School Self-Assessment Tool**

**PROGRAM AREA: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION, AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

A quality program has developed, maintained, and strengthened school-community collaborations that engage diverse community members, school administrations, parents, business leaders, and community-based organizations in the development, implementation, and support of after school programs.

**QUALITY INDICATORS**

**A quality program:**

1. Provides clear evidence of multiple active collaborative partners that include community/neighborhood support, school administrations, businesses, and community organizations
2. Has clearly defined roles and expectations for collaborative partners and provides regular opportunities for participation and feedback
3. Has policies and procedures that provide clear governance and regular meetings to ensure strong involvement of collaborative partners
4. Implements regular program outreach and information-sharing activities to engage and recruit new collaborative partners
5. Regularly provides families, community partners, and key stakeholders with program information (e.g., program progress and program evaluation reports; information about program events) in a variety of formats and in multiple languages, if necessary
6. Provides well-defined interactive activities for families that encourage parents' support of after school programs and support of their children's development and academic achievement
7. Ensures that program activities are scheduled regularly at times that are convenient for families to attend

Performance Level				Improvement Plan		
Advanced	Adequate	Minimum	Inadequate	Now	This Year	Next Year

<b>Technical Assistance/Training Needed</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>

## California After School Self-Assessment Tool

### **PROGRAM AREA: PROGRAM FINANCE**

A quality after school program demonstrates sound fiscal planning and management, oversight and coordination of fiscal management, and accounting procedures across multiple program sites. Program financing operations should meet all statutory fiscal, accounting, record-keeping, and audit requirements. A quality program should demonstrate the ability to manage and account for multiple funding streams. It should also demonstrate effective planning that ensures fiscal support to meet the full costs of program operations and ensures program sustainability.

### **QUALITY INDICATORS**

#### **A quality program:**

1. Has clearly defined procedures and processes to ensure sound fiscal planning and management
2. Clearly demonstrates and documents adherence to local, state, and federal fiscal, accounting, record-keeping, and audit requirements
3. Has clearly defined fiscal policies to ensure that 85 percent of after school funding from the CDE is spent on direct services to students  
*(Note: This does not apply to 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC high school after school programs)*
4. Provides strong evidence that the program is well funded from a variety of sources (in-kind and/or direct funding from a variety of collaborative partners and stakeholders) to supplement funding from the CDE
5. Has a well-developed plan for ongoing fiscal sustainability
6. Conducts thorough reviews of invoices, purchase orders, and program budgets and submits all required expenditure reports to the CDE in a timely manner
7. Has effective policies and procedures to ensure that staff management and staff training are provided to support quality fiscal management practices

Performance Level				Improvement Plan		
Advanced	Adequate	Minimum	Inadequate	Now	This Year	Next Year

<b>Technical Assistance/Training Needed</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>

