

**EXEMPLARY PRACTICES IN
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT**

Rubrics for Tracking Internal Progress

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for Youth Development**

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EXEMPLARY PRACTICES: BASELINE ASSESSMENTS

The knowledge gained from participation in the Learning Community, combined with mentorship support in facilitating the translation of principles into practice, is designed to accelerate the movement of programs along a continuum from promising to exemplary, defined as having a preponderance of the practices listed below. Programs will be positioned to become Regional Learning Centers when they are able to demonstrate a high level of achievement in all of these areas.

Directions: Please complete this initial baseline assessment to determine where your program stands at this time in terms of exemplary practices. Each of these practices is described in greater detail in the accompanying templates to provide you with guidelines for evaluating your program’s movement from promising to exemplary. Progress will be tracked and documented in quarterly and annual reports. Additional assessments will be provided by the Partnership’s support team and others through ongoing dialogues with senior program and site staff, stakeholders, partners, students and parents, and site-based program observations.

Assessment Key for Program Indicators

1. Our program is just beginning to work in this area, has an urgent need to address this practice, and needs significant support to move to the next level.
2. Our program has done some work in this area, and will need targeted support.
3. Our program has made significant progress in this area, and needs additional support to reach the next level.
4. Our program has achieved a high level of proficiency, and additional work is needed before our staff and partners are fully prepared to work with other programs in this area.
5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice		1	2	3	4	5
1	Vision: Our vision clarifies our purpose ignites passion. Our staff and stakeholders have a clear understanding and ownership of a shared vision that is observable in practice at all program-related levels.					
2	Leadership, Mentorship and Management: We successfully integrate leadership, mentorship, coaching and management principles and practices that build the competence, capacity, and self-confidence of staff and students to succeed.					
3	Staff Development: Our staff development and training are ongoing. It includes a combination of workshops, training, mentoring and coaching that results in personal and professional growth.					

Exemplary Practice		1	2	3	4	5
4	Youth Development: Our program activities are directly linked to youth development outcomes. In our program, children and young people learn to successfully navigate through different settings, situations and challenges, develop life skills and make healthy choices.					
5	Academic Alignment: Our academic approaches are clearly aligned with the school day, resulting in an increased enthusiasm for learning and improvement in academic achievement.					
6	Diversity, Access, Inclusion and Equity: We embrace and value diversity, access, inclusion and equity. Our staff reflects and promotes the racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender and other diversities of our student population.					
7	Physical and Emotional Safety: Our program consistently promotes a sense of physical and emotional safety. Students know that they can depend on safe interactions among peers and with adults and are secure in knowing that program expectations will be upheld with fairness and consistency.					
8	Supportive Relationships: The program is intentionally structured to build positive and supportive relationships based on mutual caring and respect among young people as well as between children and adults. Adults are knowledgeable about program participants, and children and young people feel secure in seeking guidance and support from staff.					
9	Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences: We provide challenging and relevant learning experiences that engage young people as active learners and provide opportunities for them to learn new skills that are aligned with their personal interests.					
10	Youth Participation: Our program promotes the sense of belonging and meaningful participation of students by providing opportunities for input on program design, group decision-making and the learning and practice of leadership skills.					
11	Neighborhood and Community Connections: Our program promotes strong connections between our students and the surrounding neighborhood and community and works to engage the larger community in support of our program.					
12	Attendance: Student attendance in our program is consistently high. Waiting lists attest to the quality of our program and the positive experiences children and young people have as participants.					
13	Measuring and Managing Outcomes: We systematically measure and manage outcomes to assess what is working well and what needs to be addressed, resulting in continuous quality improvement.					
14	Sustainability: We have secured ongoing, balanced and diversified funding resulting in financial sustainability.					

Exemplary Practice #1: A Vision that Clarifies Purpose and Ignites Passion

Our vision clarifies our purpose ignites passion. Our staff and stakeholders have a clear understanding and ownership of a shared vision that is observable in practice at all program-related levels.

A common denominator across *all* successful programs is the existence of a powerful vision and meaningful purpose. Program visions are compelling in real life, not just on paper. They enable staff and stakeholders to go beyond doing something to being a driving force in the way things are done. They give meaning and purpose to what programs do and keep staff focused on the accomplishment of their goals. Powerful visions bring people together and motivate them to do their best work. They capture people’s hearts as well as their minds. They are achievable, rooted in reality and inspiring.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of the form.

Assessment Key for Program Indicators:

1. Our program is just beginning to work in this area, has an urgent need to address this practice, and needs significant support to move to the next level.
2. Our program has done some work in this area, and will need targeted support.
3. Our program has made significant progress in this area, and needs additional support to reach the next level.
4. Our program has achieved a high level of proficiency, and additional work is needed before our staff and partners are fully prepared to work with other programs in this area.
5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our vision is powerful, easily understood and embraced by stakeholders and staff members (principals, site coordinators, program leaders, certificated teachers, classified staff, community partners, parents, students and funders).					
2	Our staff and stakeholders are able to explain and give examples of how and why our vision drives the principles, practices and goals of our program.					
3	Our vision captivates our hearts as well as our minds and ignites our passion.					
4	Our vision keeps us on track by clarifying our direction and instilling a sense of common purpose.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
5	Our vision clearly describes what our partnership and program should strive to become and acts as a living reminder of what is important and what can be achieved.					
6	Our vision contributes to the building of an inclusive and equitable society that is founded on the strengths of diversity.					
7	Our vision is achievable, focused on the future and grounded in reality, enabling us to measure progress toward the achievement of our goals.					
8	Our vision clearly reflects and responds to the core values and principles of the groups we serve and is evident in our practices.					
9	Our vision creates a sense of urgency that compels us to act.					
10	Our stakeholders, partners and staff are excited by our vision and work hard to bring it into reality.					
11	Our vision continually reminds us of what is really important and what can be achieved.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #2: Integrating Leadership, Mentorship, Coaching and Management

We successfully integrate leadership, mentorship, coaching and management principles and practices that build the competence, capacity, and self-confidence of staff and students to succeed.

Highly successful programs intentionally integrate leadership, mentorship and management practices into a strategic approach that enables their organizations to stay focused on achieving worthwhile goals, bringing a meaningful vision into reality, measuring and managing progress and inspiring and motivating people to do their best work. Without clear, strong and sustained leadership, supportive and effective mentorship and positive management skills and approaches, programs will flounder. Organizations must view their work in terms of strengthening functions that are essential to their success or failure in achieving their core purposes in an ever more diverse society.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. If your program has multiple sites, please respond to the areas indicated from the perspective of the Program Director, Program Manager and/or senior staff. If you have a single-site program, please respond from the position of the person holding the position of Director/Manager/Coordinator. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of this form.

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Exemplary Practice Indicators: Leadership		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our leadership team consciously connects our actions to our vision and goals.					
2	We inspire confidence and motivate others to do their best work.					
3	We maintain a positive, solution-based approach when dealing with challenges.					
4	We continually think strategically and focus our efforts on high leverage points.					

Exemplary Practice Indicators: Leadership		1	2	3	4	5
5	We are seen as real champions for our organization/ partnership/staff/cause.					
6	We stay focused on the big picture by continually aligning our priorities with our vision and our goals.					
7	We embrace change and take risks.					
8	We create and sustain enthusiasm and excitement about the value of everyone's work.					
9	We get things done – not just <i>any</i> things but the <i>right</i> things, and we continually check our progress.					
10	We have clarified the diversity, inclusion and equity issues that are most relevant to realizing the vision we have for the children, youth, their families and the communities we serve.					
11	We ensure that program strategies address the inclusion issues and dynamics that reflect our desired outcomes.					
12	We invest in the personal and professional development work needed to model proactive, constructive and effective leadership.					
13	We are relentless champions for our staff, our organization, our stakeholders and the children and youth in our programs.					
14	We make a point of recognizing and celebrating individual and organizational successes.					
15	We continually seek new and better ways to do things and are more intrigued by what could be than by what is.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice Indicators: Mentorship and Coaching		1	2	3	4	5
1	We recognize that building the capacity of our staff to succeed is our responsibility and consistently ensure that this happens.					
2	We take time to know our staff as people as well as employees.					
3	We know that all staff in all positions must be successful in what they do for our program to achieve its goals and work conscientiously to support this happening.					
4	We are willing to risk open communication between all staff and stakeholders to build positive, authentic relationships.					
5	We continually invest in our own growth and development as well as the growth and development of others.					

Exemplary Practice Indicators: Mentorship and Coaching		1	2	3	4	5
6	We meet individual staff members where they are and support them as guides-by-the-side.					
7	We are attentive to the emotional impact of the words we choose and the language we use and think before we speak.					
8	We invest in building the capacity of our staff to understand and respond to demographic, economic and political shifts that impact our children, youth, families and communities and we provide ongoing opportunities for this to occur.					
9	We create opportunities for our stakeholders and staff to strategically discuss the diversity, inclusion and equity issues that most affect our primary constituencies and our organization and partnership.					
10	We motivate people to do their best work. Members of our staff admire, respect and trust us and will willingly and enthusiastically go the extra mile for us.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice Indicators: Management		1	2	3	4	5
1	We spend more time with people than with things.					
2	We insist upon personal responsibility and accountability for ourselves and for others in all areas.					
3	We focus on removing obstacles that make it easier for our staff to do the best work they can.					
4	We know what is going on in our program at all levels through direct, ongoing first-hand experiences and personal observations.					
5	Our staff willingly and enthusiastically supports our requests.					
6	We have developed tools that enable us to understand how diversity, inclusion and equity issues impact our staff, our primary constituents and the internal functions of our program.					
7	We use regular performance reviews to reward and improve staff attitudes, behavior and skills.					
8	We really maintain open, frank, positive communication with all staff members and stakeholders.					
9	Our staff fully understands and shares our expectations.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators: Management		1	2	3	4	5
10	We regularly collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data that is disaggregated to account for the dynamics of race, gender and language to improve our program and assess our progress.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #3: Supporting Ongoing Staff Development and Training

Our staff development and training are ongoing. It includes a combination of workshops, training, mentoring and coaching that results in personal and professional growth.

Exemplary programs recognize and act on the importance of ongoing staff development and training. They allocate a significant percentage of their budget to ensuring that staff has the knowledge, skills and support they need to be successful. They use a combination of workshops and direct mentoring and coaching to be certain that what is learned is translated into everyday practice. Emphasis is placed on both personal and professional growth, which builds the capacity of staff to acquire lifelong skills as well as competencies that are directly relevant to their work. Staff feel valued because they *are* valued. There is an observable team spirit and energy. The program's staff retention rate is exceptionally high.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertain to your program at the end of the form.

Assessment Key for Program Indicators:

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5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our staff is supported through ongoing staff development and training.					
2	Our approach to staff development and training includes a combination of workshops, coaching and mentoring.					
3	Our budget allocates at least 20 percent of our funding to support staff development and training.					
4	Our staff is paid at their regular rate to participate in ongoing training.					
5	We include both internal and outside experts in our training process.					

Program Name: _____
Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
6	Our staff are trained and supported in ways that strengthen skills and competencies.					
7	Our staff development goals focus on personal as well as professional growth.					
8	Our staff is trained in ways that ensure they are knowledgeable about our organizational, youth development and academic goals.					
9	Our staff is able to translate what they have learned in workshops into practice with students.					
10	Our staff development and training is clearly connected to and builds on our program's vision, purpose and goals.					
11	Our staff has access to the resources they need to develop outcome-based programming.					
12	Our staff is enthusiastic about our staff development and training and willingly participates.					
13	We have a system in place for training and developing new staff when they are hired during the year.					
14	We are clearly aware of and build on the skills, talents, interests and competencies of our staff members.					
15	We intentionally focus on inclusion, equity and diversity as an integral part of our staff development and training.					
16	Our staff has ongoing opportunities to strengthen and deepen their knowledge and implementation of youth development principles and practices.					
17	We have a system in place for regularly assessing staff performance that focuses on continual improvement.					
18	Our staff feels valued, appreciated and competent.					
19	Our staff can easily explain why and how their approaches and activities reinforce our program's goals and strengthen youth development and learning skills.					
20	We are able to retain a high percent of staff from one year to the next.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #4: Positive Youth Development

Our program activities are directly linked to youth development outcomes. In our program, children and young people learn to successfully navigate through different settings, situations and challenges, develop life skills and make healthy choices.

A quality afterschool program is a *youth development program*. This means that, at the program level, activities are intentionally designed to offer students the support and opportunities that, according to research, are necessary to promote their future success. These opportunities include an afterschool program where young people feel physically and emotionally safe and can experience the support of positive adults and peers. In quality youth development programs, young people have opportunities to participate in ways they find meaningful and challenging, to learn new skills that they consider interesting and relevant and to contribute to the betterment of their own communities.

Being a *youth development program* means that adult program staff are able to create partnerships with students to support their learning and broader development—a partnership based less on authority and more on skillfully engaging young people around their individual strengths and interests.

While the program staff is responsible for implementing youth development practices in their work with children, the support to ensure that this happens with consistency across time and program sites is the responsibility of their organizational leaders. Being a *youth development organization* means that program administrators and leaders ensure that staff has professional development opportunities to build the knowledge and core skills they need. The organization gathers ongoing data to gauge their effectiveness and dedicates time for program staff to discuss the needs of individual students. Administrators and program leaders also ensure that all program activities and spaces are safe and accessible, that adult/child ratios are consistently at 1/20 or below, and that young people and their families have a voice and feeling of ownership in the design and implementation of the program. In quality youth development programs, the organizational leaders are “champions” who promote the importance of a youth development approach, and they involve key stakeholders to ensure that youth development principles are reflected in the program goals, staff practices, documentation and evaluations.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of the form.

Assessment Key for Program Indicators:

1. Our program is just beginning to work in this area, has an urgent need to address this practice, and needs significant support to move to the next level.
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Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our program is designed to create a positive learning environment based on the principles of youth development.					
2	Our program offers a range of diverse skill building activities that take into account the expressed interests of young people.					
3	Our program staff identifies and builds on the assets and strengths of young people.					
4	Our program seeks to involve and engage community stakeholders in implementing and supporting our youth programs.					
5	Our program, in partnership with youth, establishes and upholds consistent, clear and fair expectations of adults and youth.					
6	Our program staff actively seeks opportunities to be partners with young people and to welcome the youth voice in program decision-making.					
7	Our staff receives training in both the theory and practical applications of youth development principles.					
8	Our staff receives training in the key skills needed to promote learning and healthy development for young people such as group management, facilitation and team building.					
9	Our staff receives ongoing hands-on feedback and support from a youth development coach to ensure improved practice with young people.					
10	Our organizational leadership, stakeholders, partners and staff can all share and articulate a vision of integrating core practices of youth development into the programs.					
11	Our organizational leaders perceive themselves as “champions” responsible for upholding and sustaining the practices of youth development as central to the program’s mission and allocate resources accordingly.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
12	Our organization conducts a staff development plan that incorporates ongoing training followed by coaching from an in-house youth development specialist or coach.					
13	Our organization maintains low staff/volunteer to youth ratios of 1 to 20.					
14	Our organization ensures that there is continuity across programs and that the care of young people is consistent.					
15	Our organization ensures that program spaces are safe, reliable and accessible.					
16	Our organization ensures flexibility in the allocation of some financial and in-kind resources to allow staff and youth to build on interests and activities that engage them.					
17	The integration of youth development concepts is found in the organization's marketing, outreach and informational literature.					
18	Our organization intentionally measures the degree to which young people have the following key experiences necessary for their healthy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and emotional safety • Supportive relationships • Meaningful involvement • Neighborhood and community connection • Engaging and challenging skill building opportunities 					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #5: Achieving Positive Academic Results

Our academic approaches are clearly aligned with the school day, resulting in an increased enthusiasm for learning and improvement in academic achievement.

Exemplary programs have clear systems in place to produce positive academic outcomes for students. The principal, certificated teachers and classified staff have ownership in the program and its vision, and provide active and enthusiastic support. Educational approaches are aligned with the school day, address multiple learning styles and inspire an enthusiasm for learning. Staff is trained in providing homework assistance and offer ongoing opportunities for students to *reinforce* learning and experience success. Practicing what is learned during the school day takes place through hands-on approaches in which learning is relevant to the school day *and* to students' personal experiences, cultures and interests. Academic enrichment activities are aligned with state content standards *and* the school's curriculum. Progress is continually measured and managed, resulting in a documented improvement in academic performance.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of the form.

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5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our Principal, certificated teachers and classified staff understand and share our vision for our program.					
2	Our Principal, certificated teachers and classified staff actively and enthusiastically support our program.					
3	Our Principal and Site Directors meet regularly to keep each other informed about and strengthen our program.					
4	Our Site Director attends faculty meetings and is a member of the School Site Council.					
5	A formal process provides regular communication among program staff and certificated teachers.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
6	Our staff has access to homework packets and clearly understands how to provide assistance in ways that support the school day curriculum.					
7	Our staff is supported by teachers in the use of classrooms and computer labs.					
8	A certificated teacher serves as an academic coach for our staff and an advocate for our program.					
9	Staff development occurs through workshops and follow-up coaching, resulting in the effective translation of knowledge into practice.					
10	Our staff is knowledgeable about the curricula used during the school day.					
11	Our staff has been trained in and approaches academic support from a culturally aware and sensitive perspective.					
12	Our staff is familiar with state content standards and are able to effectively align activities with these.					
13	Our staff is knowledgeable about the academic levels and needs of the students with whom they work.					
14	Our staff has a system in place for tracking student progress in meeting academic goals.					
15	We work closely with certificated teachers, parents and students to assess student progress and make changes as appropriate.					
16	Our staff focuses on disguised learning approaches that are exciting and engaging to students, strengthen their skills and increase their enthusiasm for learning.					
17	Our School Board Members and Superintendent are knowledgeable about and actively support our program.					
18	Our District provides us with objective measures of student academic improvement.					
19	Improvement in academic performance is documented and widely disseminated in progress reports to our staff, stakeholders and funders.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #6: Diversity, Access, Inclusion and Equity

We embrace and value diversity, access, inclusion and equity. Our staff reflects and promotes the racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender and other diversities of our student population.

Exemplary programs have a conscious commitment to support the healthy social, cultural and cross-cultural development of all participants, to teach values of respect and inclusion of all people and to offer programming that helps reduce social disparities and inequities. This is reflected in their vision, values and leadership, and in their relationships with their staff and with children and young people and their families. It is ingrained in their staff development and training, integrated into their program’s content and curriculum, and apparent in their everyday environment. High quality programs reach out to the community in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and recruit and hire staff that reflects the characteristics of their student population and the population of the neighborhoods they serve.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of this form.

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Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our program has a conscious commitment to support the healthy social, cultural and cross-cultural development of all participants, to teach values of respect and inclusion of all people and to offer programming that helps reduce social disparities and inequities.					
2	Our partners, stakeholders and staff are clear about what we mean by diversity, access, inclusion and equity and can explain their importance in the context of our program.					
3	We have a mission statement that includes goals relating to our equity and diversity values.					

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
4	The staff and leaders of our program actively model what it looks like to put our inclusion and equity values and principles into practice.					
5	Our program staff understand, value and respect the various backgrounds and experiences of participants and their families.					
6	Our site staff and program leadership reflect the racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender and community characteristics of our students.					
7	Our staff is knowledgeable about the different learning styles and special needs of our children and young people.					
8	Our staff is trained and supported in bilingual and ESL instructional strategies (for programs in communities with English Language Learners).					
9	Our leadership and staff teams universally hold high and equitable expectations for all students in our program.					
10	Our leadership and site staff consciously work to build respect and trust in our program across boundaries of race, culture, gender, class and other areas of diversity.					
11	Staff members' efforts on issues of diversity and equity are regularly assessed as part of their performance evaluations.					
12	Our program provides time, resources and support for ongoing staff development to strengthen our work on issues related to diversity equity.					
13	Site staff and program leaders are committed to building their knowledge and capacity to work with the specific populations we serve and to support the diversity in our program and community.					
14	Our program provides activities and experiences that increase young people's knowledge of and sense of connection to their respective cultural, language, gender and other identity groups.					
15	Our curriculum includes activities that introduce young people to groups with backgrounds and experiences that are different from their own.					
16	We help young people learn to recognize and challenge stereotypes, stereotypical images, bias and discrimination.					
17	Our program provides opportunities for youth to contribute to the strengthening of positive relationships between groups through service, leadership and action.					
18	Our program's academic support components draw on specific strategies for supporting learning among underachieving students – including the use of culturally relevant instruction, attention to language issues, attention to different learning styles, etc.					
19	Our content and curriculum is fully accessible to young people of all cultural and language backgrounds and to youth with physical or learning disabilities.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
20	Our program's environment (e.g. space, decorations, materials) is affirming and inclusive, reflecting a variety of cultures, languages, gender and sexual identities, abilities/disabilities and family backgrounds.					
21	Our site is physically accessible to children, youth and family members with disabilities.					
22	Our program's outreach and communication with families and the public is accessible, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and inclusive.					
23	We intentionally and consistently engage diverse parents and community members as vital resources in our efforts to enrich program components and activities.					
24	Our evaluation process assists with strengthening the program's ability to serve young people of all backgrounds and experiences.					
25	We use our attendance data to assess how effective our program is in attracting and engaging students from the different cultures, communities and experiences reflected in our broader school population.					
26	To assess how well different children and youth with different backgrounds are served, our program collects outcome data that is broken down by culture, language, economic level, gender and/or special needs status.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #7: Promoting a Sense of Physical and Emotional Safety

Our program consistently promotes a sense of physical and emotional safety. Students know that they can depend on safe interactions among peers and with adults and are secure in knowing that program expectations will be upheld with fairness and consistency.

Exemplary after school programs effectively impact the well-being and development of children and youth. Programs focus on ensuring that young people feel emotionally and physically safe. This includes creating a positive environment and healthy relationships in which youth feel secure that adults will protect them from harm and will assist them if they are feeling threatened by peers or other adults. Children and young people know that they are protected by a set of fair and consistently applied rules. Exemplary after school programs embrace racial, cultural, linguistic, gender and other differences between individuals. This can support children in feeling sure that they will be valued and accepted by the group and in knowing adults and peers will treat them with respect. Students know that mistakes are embraced as an essential part of learning and that learning through positive risk-taking is supported. They are clear that they can participate fully without fear of teasing, harassment, or ostracism.

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3. Our program has made significant progress in this area, and needs additional support to reach the next level.
4. Our program has achieved a high level of proficiency, and additional work is needed before our staff and partners are fully prepared to work with other programs in this area.
5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our programs conduct regular small group “check-ins” as well as site level community meetings of youth participants to address their issues and build a sense of community.					
2	Youth and staff are involved in developing and upholding rules and agreements for how people should treat each other.					

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
3	Our program partners with young people to learn about and celebrate the diversity represented by the participants and works to create a culture of respect among the program community.					
4	Policies and procedures are posted, well known and consistently upheld by young people and staff under all circumstances.					
5	Our youth have been trained in conflict resolution skills and have the ability to resolve differences effectively.					
6	Activity space, equipment and materials are appropriate, accessible and safe for all ages and ability levels.					
7	Our staff is trained to help children and young people learn to appreciate, respect and build on diversity as an asset and to address bias and intolerance when it is evident.					
8	Our staff receives ongoing training on safety policies and procedures as well as their ethical and legal responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children.					
9	Our staff is trained in positive group and behavior management, including conflict resolution, and can effectively translate what they have learned into practice.					
10	Our organization invests the resources required to build the capacity of all staff to embrace and honor diversity and promote the belief that diversity is an asset to our society and our program.					
11	Our organization promotes a work environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all staff members.					
12	Our organization involves youth, families, schools and community members in establishing safe environments for youth.					
13	Our organization has done a safety assessment of our physical space and program activities with staff to ensure accessibility and worked to align procedures with those used during the school day.					
14	Staffing is planned to ensure consistent and adequate coverage, taking into account periodic staff absences.					
15	The organization regularly gathers and acts on input from participating youth on whether they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel physically safe at the program site; • feel accepted by staff and youth in the program; • feel that ground rules are fairly and consistently upheld. 					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #8: Building Supportive Relationships

The program is intentionally structured to build positive and supportive relationships based on mutual caring and respect among young people as well as between children and adults. Adults are knowledgeable about program participants, and children and young people feel secure in seeking guidance and support from staff.

One of the most important factors in influencing young people’s school success and broader development is the presence of supportive relationships with adults and peers. Quality afterschool programs represent caring communities where every young person feels known and accepted by others. Young people learn how to communicate effectively, work together in groups and depend upon the support of their peers. Adults are seen as having the time and the interest to provide practical guidance and emotional support when needed.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of the form.

Assessment Key for Program Indicators:

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2. Our program has done some work in this area, and will need targeted support.
3. Our program has made significant progress in this area, and needs additional support to reach the next level.
4. Our program has achieved a high level of proficiency, and additional work is needed before our staff and partners are fully prepared to work with other programs in this area.
5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our program works intentionally to build a sense of positive community within the program through team-building activities and community events.					
2	Our program teaches young people the skills they need to build healthy relationships with peers and adults such as active listening, expressing needs, conflict resolution and cooperation skills.					
3	Young people have ongoing opportunities to reflect on and be recognized publicly for their accomplishments and contributions to the larger group.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
4	Our program acknowledges and is effective in addressing changes and transitions that impact the group, such as the entry and departure of staff and youth participants.					
5	The program schedule provides young people with opportunities for positive, informal social interactions with adults and peers.					
6	Our staff receives training in group development, facilitation and communication skills, and strategies that promote team building and cooperation.					
7	Our staff interacts in ways that model caring and respectful communication.					
8	Our staff has the knowledge to refer families and youth to appropriate community resources when youth present issues that are beyond the scope of the program.					
9	Our organization ensures a staffing plan with a ratio of one staff to 20 youth maximum, and works toward involving volunteers to achieve a 1 to 15 ratio during the program.					
10	Our organization provides site staff with task-free time to personally engage with youth participants and to respond to requests for guidance and support.					
11	Our organization encourages Program Leaders to set aside time in staff meetings to identify the needs, strengths and contributions of individual participants, ensuring that every child is known by the staff.					
12	Our organization minimizes staff absences and turnover to ensure the continuity of relationships between adults and students.					
13	The organization expects and promotes positive and respectful relationships between all adults.					
14	Staff hiring reflects a priority on staff members who are representative of the community in which the young people live and who relate positively to the youth culture within the program.					
15	The organization regularly gathers and acts on input from participating youth on whether they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel respected by peers and adults • Feel safe to draw on adults for guidance and support • Feel known by their peers and program staff 					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #9: Creating Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences

We provide challenging and relevant learning experiences that engage young people as active learners and provide opportunities for them to learn new skills that are aligned with their personal interests.

Engaging and challenging skill building means that young people participate in a learning environment where they are motivated to learn because the available activities interest them and encourage their active involvement. They have opportunities to feel appropriately challenged, to expand their knowledge and understanding, and to learn new and relevant skills. They also have opportunities to internalize a sense of mastery and competence and a sense of their own progress.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of the form.

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5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our program assesses the interests, needs, and learning styles of program participants and designs program activities accordingly.					
2	Our program offers activities that are “hands-on” and experiential and designed to reflect the many ways in which young people learn such as visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, intra- and interpersonal.					
3	Our program intentionally links learning activities to skills and subject areas being addressed during the classroom day.					
4	Our program offers ongoing opportunities for young people to learn diverse skills and explore new subjects and disciplines they might not otherwise experience.					
5	Young people have ongoing opportunities to establish their personal goals, assess their progress over time, and are recognized by staff for their efforts and achievements.					

Program Name: _____
Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
6	Our program teaches collaborative learning skills and provides opportunities for young people to work and learn together in small groups and with peers of different backgrounds and abilities.					
7	Our program offers activities that build decision-making, problem solving and critical thinking skills.					
8	Our program offers project-based activities that include culminating experiences that promote a sense of completion and accomplishment.					
9	Our program intentionally embeds learning opportunities into program activities that strengthen academic skills, as well as important social and life skills.					
10	Our program staff participates in ongoing training in strategies to assess the participants' interests, needs and individual learning styles and to assist young people in establishing their own relevant learning goals.					
11	Our staff is trained in group facilitation and knows how to develop core social and communication skills among participants.					
12	Our staff offers activities that are linked to young people's personal experiences, identities, histories, cultures and communities.					
13	Our organization provides staff with the same positive learning environment that it seeks to provide for young people—one that is responsive to staff's interests and needs, provides opportunities for new and challenging learning, and recognizes important accomplishments.					
14	Our organization regularly gathers and acts on input from participating youth on whether they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are learning new things that are fun and interesting; • are learning in ways they find challenging and engaging; • able to set personal goals and chart their own progress. 					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #10: Meaningful Participation of Young People

Our program promotes the sense of belonging and meaningful participation of students by providing opportunities for input on program design, group decision-making and the learning and practice of leadership skills.

Exemplary after school programs work to engage the participation of young people in ways they find meaningful and that promote a sense of responsibility, belonging and program ownership. By having opportunities to make individual choices on how to use their time, participate in group decision-making, and have influence on the design of the program, young people learn the important skills of citizenship. After school programs are perfectly positioned to promote leadership skills and provide opportunities for young people to make a difference in their program or larger community.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertain to your program at the end of the form.

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5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Young people have opportunities to take responsibility for program space and equipment.					
2	Young people are able to choose activities that are attractive to them and reflect their interests.					
3	Our program offers young people opportunities to make meaningful decisions regarding program goals, design and direction.					
4	Our program provides young people with a range of opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills from assisting in simple tasks to designing or leading exercises.					

Program Name: _____
Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
5	Our staff receives training and ongoing support in facilitation, group decision-making and developing youth as leaders.					
6	Our staff takes time to identify the leadership potential of individual participants of different ages, styles, talents and personalities.					
7	Our staff demonstrates flexibility in its leadership and coaching roles enabling young people to increase their independence and group responsibilities.					
8	Our organization offers meaningful participation at all levels of the organization thereby enabling both youth and staff members to have ownership of their programs and opportunities for decision-making and leadership.					
9	Our program maintains some flexible resources to support staff and youth in creating activities or events that reflect their current projects and interests.					
10	Our program involves young people in the design and implementation of ongoing program assessment and evaluation.					
11	Our organization regularly gathers and acts on input from participating youth on whether they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel like they belong; • feel like their ideas count; • have opportunities for leadership; • have a chance to make choices. 					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #11: Neighborhood and Community Connections

Our program promotes strong connections between our students and the surrounding neighborhood and community and works to engage the larger community in support of our program.

Exemplary programs have strong connections with their neighborhoods and communities. They draw on community resources to develop and strengthen the opportunities available to children and young people. They provide avenues and support systems for students to feel a sense of belonging to their communities. Young people have a chance to take on useful roles, to give back and to be seen as positive, constructive members of the community. Exemplary programs also establish positive relationships with parents, local residents, community organizations and civic leaders. They understand and honor the diversity of the neighborhoods in which their programs are located and are able to communicate effectively with local residents and parents. They build bridges between neighborhoods and schools in ways that may not otherwise be possible. These programs are recognized as being integral, important and valued members of the community and they receive strong community support.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of this form.

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Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Young people build knowledge of their community when they have a variety of opportunities to explore the areas in which youth and their families live, work and play.					
2	Youth develop relationships with people from their neighborhood as our program invites members of the community into the program to mentor and connect with youth.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
3	Young people engage in meaningful projects that offer positive solutions and impact the larger community, and promote a sense of self-efficacy.					
4	Our staff includes a variety of people with diverse talents, experiences and socioeconomic characteristics and reflects a cross-section of our community.					
5	Our staff and stakeholders are knowledgeable about the characteristics, opportunities and challenges of the neighborhood and community in which our sites are located.					
6	Our staff knows the primary caregivers of children and young people with whom they work and frequently talk with them about their children's successes and areas in need of improvement. (For example: during pick-up or at program events)					
7	Our program provides primary caregivers with avenues to participate in our program.					
8	Our program gathers ongoing input and feedback from the neighborhood.					
9	Our program has developed and implemented a community-wide public relations strategy.					
10	Our program keeps community partners well informed about highlights of our program and its impact on students, families and the community as a whole.					
11	Our program actively works with community leaders (including the media, city council, county supervisors, school board members and businesses) to ensure their public support of our program.					
12	Our local community provides in-kind support and financial investments in our program.					
13	Our program has strong parental support.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #12: Consistently High Student Attendance

Student attendance in our program is consistently high. Waiting lists attest to the quality of our program and the positive experiences children and young people have as participants.

No matter what the content of programs may be, in the final analysis students must be there for anything to happen. One of the most telling indicators of a high quality program is that attendance is consistently high and students not yet enrolled are eager to participate -- as evidenced in formal waiting lists. Children want to participate when they are excited, engaged and appropriately challenged. They come every day when they have friends, trust in and appreciate positive relationships with adults, and realize that they have opportunities for learning that would not otherwise be available. High attendance and waiting lists are signals to stakeholders, funders and community members that the program is offering something very valuable. Equally important, consistent attendance results in greater improvements in academic achievement, more opportunities for youth development to move in positive directions and a feeling of increased security and recognition for staff.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of the form.

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Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our student attendance is consistently at the level we have set based on funding for our program.					
2	Students attend every day unless they are ill or have an excused absence from their parents.					
3	Students are eager to take advantage of the full opportunities our programs offer and enthusiastically participate until 6:00pm.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
4	Parents recognize the value of the program and gladly make arrangements for their children to stay through the entire time and be picked up at 6:00pm.					
5	We have an attendance policy that our staff consistently enforces.					
6	Parents are aware of our attendance policy and support it.					
7	Students tell us that they would rather be in our program than anywhere else during the afternoon hours.					
8	Parents and primary caregivers realize the monetary value of our program as well as the experiences we provide for their children and express their appreciation.					
9	We are able to directly correlate and document improvement in academic achievement with consistent attendance.					
10	We are able to directly correlate and document improvement in social behavior with consistent attendance.					
11	We carefully and thoroughly track attendance and respond quickly when a student has missed one or more days of our program.					
12	We recognize that participation in our program is a privilege.					
13	We maintain an active waiting list, keep parents informed and are able to fill an opening within three days of it becoming available.					
14	If attendance falls off, we move quickly to discover why this has happened and rectify the situation.					
15	We work closely with potential funders to secure the financial support needed to include children and young people on the waiting list in our program.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #13: Measuring and Managing Outcomes

We systematically measure and manage outcomes to assess what is working well and what needs to be addressed, resulting in continuous quality improvement.

Successful after school programs are distinguished by their commitment to measuring and managing outcomes. They determine target objectives or goals in advance. They establish baselines that identify individual student learning levels and benchmarks to track progress. They focus on what has changed, how much change has occurred, for whom it has occurred, and what difference this change makes. Some measures of student progress can be determined through tests that are easy to administer and assess. Others are more complex. These draw on a variety of sources of information that are both quantitative and anecdotal, including classroom teacher, staff and parent evaluations, student self-assessments, student grades and standardized tests. Exemplary programs include indicators that evaluate enthusiasm for learning, youth development and academic achievement. They use this information to make appropriate changes and build on strengths. Continual quality improvement is demonstrated in a true partnership between the school, the district, the program’s staff members, parents and students.

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5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	We are clear about the importance of measuring and managing outcomes for our program.					
2	We are clear about the importance of measuring and managing outcomes for our students.					
3	Our program has clearly articulated goals.					
4	We have a system in place for measuring and managing our progress toward the achievement of our goals.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
5	Our staff, partners, stakeholders, parents and students are aware of and support our goals and have been involved in their development.					
6	Our goals clearly support bringing our vision into reality.					
7	Our goals are appropriate, realistic and meaningful and would make a real difference if achieved.					
8	Our staff works closely with the principal, academic coach and certificated teachers to measure and manage student progress.					
9	We have developed tools for assessing student progress in developing and strengthening social and emotional skills.					
10	We have access to the information we need to continually improve the quality of our program.					
11	We measure results and make changes or adjustments in what we are doing on a regular basis.					
12	We routinely assess the skills, competencies and effectiveness of our staff and develop mutually agreed upon plans for ongoing improvement.					
13	We track student progress through a variety of tools including standardized test scores, grades, principal reports, parent comments and student self-assessments.					
14	We formalize our findings in progress reports and executive summaries and widely disseminate these to staff, stakeholders, partners, funders and parents.					
15	We produce annual reports that document the results we have achieved and widely disseminate these to staff, stakeholders, partners, funders and parents.					
16	We collect and analyze data that will help strengthen our program's capacity to work well with students of all backgrounds.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					

Exemplary Practice #14: Sustainability

We have secured ongoing, balanced and diversified funding resulting in financial sustainability.

In the final analysis, creating and implementing a strategic approach to ensure the sustainability of quality programs matters more than anything else. As a practice, sustainability means not only securing adequate support to maintain programs over time, but also to do this in a way that allows for managed growth, continual quality improvement and solid, ongoing stakeholder investments. Ultimately, this means that funding must be balanced and diversified. It must include a combination of local, state and federal financial resources – in cash, and reserve in-kind contributions for program enhancements.

Directions: Please complete the following assessment to determine where your program stands at this time for this exemplary practice. Please feel free to add other indicators not listed that pertains to your program at the end of this form.

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5. We are clearly proficient in this practice, can demonstrate this in observable ways and are prepared to work with other programs to build their skills in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	We have secured adequate financial investments to ensure that our program will be sustainable.					
2	Funding for our program operations is diversified. We have a broad range of federal, state and local government and private foundation support.					
3	We have secured a solid base of local funding for our program that amounts to at least 50 percent of our total revenue from state and federal sources.					
4	Financial investors in our program include the federal government, the state, the school district(s), the City, the County and private foundations.					
5	Primary investments are made in the form of cash.					
6	Our sustainability plan is developed and implemented by our leadership team in concert with key stakeholders.					

Program Name: _____
 Date: _____

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
7	Our program has adequate cash reserves and commitments to allow us to maintain our current level of quality should one of our funding partners no longer provide support or one of our grants end.					
8	Our program has been successful in attracting in-kind contributions.					
9	We restrict the use of in-kind contributions to providing program enhancements.					
10	We have developed an effective Executive Summary of our program, which we modify to target the interests of specific funders.					
11	Our stakeholders, partners and staff are effective in communicating our vision, purpose and goals in a variety of settings and in ways that yield positive results.					
12	We regularly arrange opportunities for actual and potential investors to visit our sites and experience the quality of our program first-hand.					
13	We provide updates to all of our stakeholders and funders through written Quarterly Progress Reports.					
14	We continually develop and nurture positive relationships with potential investors.					
15	We are committed to managing growth in a way that ensures that expansion will not outpace quality.					
Other						
Other						
Total	<i>Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.</i>					