

School's Out, Make it Count

Arizona Quality Standards for Out-of-School
Time Programs



Developed by a statewide committee convened
by Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence and
Valley of the Sun United Way

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Out-of-School Time Quality Standards

The Quality Standards foster continuous improvement in out-of-school time programs by setting and aligning high expectations for meeting the needs of all youth between schools, families, and out-of-school time providers.



Standard I. Safe and Healthy Environments

Key Principle: Youth experience physically and emotionally safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate learning environments.

1. All staff and volunteers submit to background checks and fingerprint clearance.
2. Staff implements policies, procedures and supervision to maintain safety for all youth.
3. Written health and safety policies are provided to families and understood by youth.
4. Healthy lifestyles and behaviors are promoted.
5. Snacks and meals provided are well balanced and nutritious.
6. Youth, families and staff experience a welcoming and supporting environment.
7. The indoor and outdoor space provides an environment of comfort, ownership and respect for youth and their families.
8. The physical space reflects the interests of and displays the work of youth.



Quality Out-of-School Matters

Quality out-of-school time programs tap into the individual learning styles and interests of youth while engaging them in relevant, hands-on activities that develop their resiliency and teach youth about themselves and the world around them.

Standard II. Positive Relationships

Key Principle: Youth benefit from the positive relationships and interactions that are promoted, developed, nurtured and maintained by the program staff and volunteers.

1. All interactions reflect a culture of mutual respect, support and belonging.
2. Verbal and physical interactions amongst youth are positive and respectful.
3. Youth work together and support one another's success.
4. Staff and volunteers model cooperation, conflict resolution and positive relationships with each other.
5. The relationships between staff, volunteers, youth and families are consistent, supportive, nurturing and recognize individual needs.
6. Staff and volunteers treat youth with respect and listen to what they say.

Standard III. Intentional Programming and Activities

Key Principle: Youth experience a variety of fun and stimulating opportunities for engagement and learning that support positive physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

1. Youth actively engage in learning activities that promote critical and creative thinking skills.
2. Youth assume leadership roles and contribute to program planning, development, implementation and evaluation.
3. Activities are intentional and are aligned with the program's mission.
4. Youth interests and strengths are reflected in program activities.
5. Program is explicit about the specific physical, social and emotional skills it seeks to develop and what program activities support these goals.
6. Materials and activities are developmentally appropriate and accessible to all youth.

Standard IV. Equity and Inclusion

Key Principle: Youth thrive in the program regardless of their background, including but not limited to race, color, religion, sex, income level, national origin, physical, mental and learning ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression.

1. Youth represent the full diversity of the community, as it applies to the mission of the program.
2. Youth are exposed to culturally responsive programming, and the program promotes the development of positive identities, respect for differences and cross-cultural understanding among all youth.
3. Program commits to understand, value and respect the backgrounds and experiences of program youth and their families.
4. The needs of diverse youth that come from varying family experiences and backgrounds are included and emphasized in the professional development of staff, helping staff become culturally competent and responsive.

Out-of-school time programs are the key to keeping Arizona youth positively engaged

Standard V. Family, School and Community

Key Principle: Youth benefit when families, schools and communities are actively engaged in program development and implementation.

1. Program develops and nurtures family, school and community partnerships to leverage resources and support for the youth and families served.
2. Program engages in family, school and community collaborations to plan and implement intentionally designed activities based on youth needs and interests.
3. Out-of-school time academic components and activities compliment and enrich school standards and curriculum.
4. Family relationships and involvement are fostered by the program's meaningful communication with families.
5. The involvement and support of families, community organizations and schools are sought as a means to enhance diverse and engaging programming and activities.



These quality standards are intended to foster continuous improvement

Standard VI. Program Management

Key Principle: Youth benefit from effective leadership, strong program management and sound fiscal management.

1. Program embraces a clear mission statement and philosophy that is widely understood and shared among youth, staff, families and the community.
2. Program policies and procedures are reflective and responsive to the needs of all youth and families.
3. Program policies and practices meet ethical and legal standards.
4. Program administrators ensure effective fiscal management of the program's budget and available resources.
5. Staff and volunteer qualifications and roles are clearly defined.
6. Program administrators recruit, hire, and develop staff and volunteers that reflect the diversity and culture(s) of the community.
7. Program administrators hold regular staff meetings and opportunities for formal and informal communication among staff and volunteers.
8. Program administrators, staff and volunteers participate in relevant and ongoing professional development that supports their own growth and builds more effective program practice.
9. Program administrators conduct frequent and consistent evaluations of program staff, and volunteers.

Standard VII. Program Evaluation and Data

Key Principle: Youth benefit from for continuous quality improvement systems that include measurable goals aligned with children, youth and family needs.

1. Written measurable goals are aligned to the program's mission statement and purpose.
2. Regular assessments of program activities, staff performance, and youth and family satisfaction are relied upon for program planning and continuous improvement.
3. Quality improvement is an established part of the organizational culture, engaging youth, staff, volunteers, families and leadership in the process.
4. Program uses assessment tools that are valid, reliable and aligned with quality and desired youth outcomes.

Examples of the Standards in Practice:

- Physical health and nutrition activities are a part of daily programming for all youth.
- Staff, volunteers, and families routinely share information about how to support individual youth development.
- Staff intentionally plans activities that build upon the specific interests of youth in their program.
- The program has a written strategy to reach underserved youth, and implements this strategy as capacity allows.
- There are established mechanisms for communication with school day administrators and staff regarding academic and behavioral progress of youth.
- Staff is formally evaluated by administrators at least annually.
- Every program activity is written with clear goals and objectives.



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Quality Out-of-School Time Program

Check List

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Provides Safe and Healthy Environments

- What is the staff to child/youth ratio?
- Does the facility appear clean, safe and organized?
- Are there quiet, soft spaces for reading, homework, quiet games and those times when a child or youth might want to be away from the larger group?
- Is the outdoor space safe and large enough to host a range of recreation and physical activities?
- What is the procedure for handling emergencies?

Fosters Positive Relationships

- Does the staff greet each child's arrival in a warm and friendly manner?
- Is staff actively engaged in activities and conversations with the children and youth?
- How are children and youth encouraged to resolve differences among themselves?
- Is staff respectful to each other, the children, youth and the parents?

Provides Intentional Programming and Activities

- Is there adequate space and materials for a variety of activities?
- Are children and youth encouraged to **try new activities and build new skills** that may be unfamiliar to them and out of their comfort zone?
- Do the children and youth have a **role in planning program activities**, content and schedule?
- Is **creativity fostered** and encouraged through music, art, dance, theatre?
- Is **problem solving and critical thinking** fostered and encouraged through hands-on experiments, Lego's, blocks, Keva planks, gardens, etc.?

- Are the children and youth happy, having fun and actively engaged in the program?
- Is **physical activity** an important component of the program?
- Is **technology available** and what meaningful role does it play (beyond the playing of video games)?
- Is the **programming sufficiently varied** or change with some frequency so as not to become boring and repetitive?

Endorses Equity and Inclusion

- Does the program serve children and youth with special needs?
- What is the program fee? Is there financial assistance available?

Engages Family, School and Community

- How are families involved in the program?
- Does the program provide a rich, **informal** learning atmosphere that expands on and reinforces concepts learned in the classroom?
- Does the program have an orientation and policy manual for new families?
- Is **homework assistance** provided?
- Does the staff give meaningful and frequent feedback to parents about their child's growth and development?

Ask About Program Management

- What is the program's mission and philosophy?

Ask About Program Evaluation and Data

- Is the program licensed? Is it license-exempt?



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