



ANDY RODDICK
FOUNDATION

LEARN ALL THE TIME QUALITY PRACTICES GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

Creating high-quality afterschool and summer programs is essential for the holistic development of youth.

A high-quality experience in an afterschool or summer program makes a measurable difference in youth and can help close the opportunity gap between low-income youth and their higher-income peers. While the Learn All the Time Network program partners have various program activities and goals, the following research-based areas support developing high-quality programs that, combined with regular attendance from youth, will help produce strong outcomes. This is not an exhaustive list of meaningful program practices but it does provide a basis for the Learn All the Time Network to support youth development collectively and collaboratively across Central Texas.

The Learn All the Time Network quality practices can be divided into two categories—quality program practices that occur during the program session with youth and staff and quality management practices that happen behind the scenes when programs are planned and evaluated. By addressing these elements of OST programs, we create spaces that fully cultivate the potential of young people, empower them in their passions, and equip them to learn and grow.

The Learn All the Time partner network is an initiative of the Andy Roddick Foundation which aims to keep kids learning so they can succeed. For more information about Learn All the Time, please visit andyroddickfoundation.org/latt. For questions or comments about the Quality Practices Guide, please email latt@arfoundation.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	Page 2
Table of Contents.....	Page 3
Quality Program Practices	
Physically safe environment for youth programming.....	Page 4
Opportunities for safe and supportive relationships and connections between and among youth, staff and families.....	Page 8
Positive, inclusive environment that fosters learning and growth opportunities academically and developmentally for youth and staff.....	Page 15
Opportunities for youth engagement through voice, choice, reflection and leadership.....	Page 22
Program Quality Goal Setting.....	Page 26
Acknowledgments.....	Page 28
References.....	Page 29

PHYSICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT for YOUTH PROGRAMMING



Physical safety is a foundational need of people everywhere.

All learning depends upon one's ability to feel safe. Therefore, an environment that offers a safe space benefits both youth and staff and will positively impact overall program outcomes.

PHYSICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT for YOUTH PROGRAMMING

THE PROGRAM PROVIDES A SAFE ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENTAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS OF YOUTH AND STAFF.

- Access to youth is guarded. Entrances are locked and/or supervised. If outdoors, staff have procedures to keep the area confined, supervised and secure.**

When outside, staff spread out to monitor the youth and activities. If there is only one staff member, they circulate the outdoor space throughout the activity.

- Safety and security procedures are understood by staff and written policies are available to them.**

Emergency procedures are posted in plain sight and staff immediately respond to any unexpected threats that may arise during the program time such as an unidentified person or a wild animal in the program space.

- Safety equipment like first aid kits and fire extinguishers are visible, accessible and in good working condition.**

Staff know where to find and how to use safety equipment.

- There is an arrival and dismissal process for youth and adults, including staff and volunteers.**

The program starts and ends on time, ensuring youth are welcomed and supervised as they arrive and leave the program.

Youth are signed in and out each program session and an accurate count of youth on site always maintained.

- The physical environment is barrier-free and accessible to individuals with disabilities.**

Floor is clear of obstacles that might make it difficult to navigate the space and the environment is free of distractions such as flickering lights or background noise and adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

PHYSICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT for YOUTH PROGRAMMING

THE PROGRAM PROVIDES A HEALTHY AND ACCOMMODATING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH AND STAFF.

- The level of staff supervision is appropriate for the age group, size of the group, and the activity.**

Staff watch the youth, scan the space and step in before or immediately when behavior or situations become unsafe.

- The physical environment is clean. It has adequate facilities for basic needs (water, restrooms, etc.) and for program activities.**

The space has appropriate furniture for the youth's age, and youth have ready access to drinking water.

- Equipment and supplies for activities are in safe and working condition and there are enough available for all youth.**

All youth have easy access to the equipment and/or materials, including adaptive equipment.

- Healthy and balanced meals and/or snacks with culturally appropriate, youth-friendly foods are served.**

Healthy food and drinks are available and drinking water accessible.

PHYSICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT for YOUTH PROGRAMMING

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | PREPARATION OF SPACE AND STAFF MUST OCCUR PRIOR TO A PROGRAM'S LAUNCH.

Conduct risk assessments.

Staff should take a full tour of the program space, both indoor and outdoor.

Staff should identify any potential safety concerns such as emergency exits, electrical hazards, fire safety, trip and fall hazards, etc.

Staff should conduct regular inspections of facilities should continue to occur throughout programming.

Ensure staff are adequately trained and equipped.

Staff are certified in first aid, CPR, and AED and emergency response and have had the opportunity to run through role play scenarios.

Staff are offered training and have a clear understanding of program specific safety measures such as safe handling of materials, water safety, sun protection, and other relevant safety guidelines.

Staff know how to manage specific allergies, medical conditions, or special needs of youth participants.

OPPORTUNITIES for **SAFE** and **SUPPORTIVE** **RELATIONSHIPS** and **CONNECTIONS BETWEEN** and **AMONG YOUTH, STAFF** and **FAMILIES.**



Having positive relationships with non-parental adults is proven to impact youth's lives in a positive manner.

These positive relationships support youth in increased academic motivation, resilience to trauma and stress, well-being and belonging, sense of responsibility, and feelings of affirmation as well as decreased engagement in risky behaviors.

OPPORTUNITIES for SAFE and SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS and CONNECTIONS BETWEEN and AMONG YOUTH, STAFF and FAMILIES.

STAFF CONNECT WITH YOUTH AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

- Youth are welcomed individually as they arrive and are acknowledged as they leave the program each session.**

Each youth is greeted by name as they arrive, and acknowledged by staff when they leave, “See you later.”

- Staff are responsive to the needs of individual youth.**

Staff pay attention and try to help youth as needed; this includes social and emotional support.

- Staff, volunteers and youth know each other’s names and there are intentional efforts to build strong relationships and teamwork during the program, especially at the start of the program cycle.**

Adults actively listen to youth and are accessible and interested, while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

- The program promotes open communication, active listening, mutual respect, and trust between and among youth, staff and families.**

Staff make eye contact, focus on what youth are saying, give youth time to express themselves, and repeat back or summarize what they heard the youth say.

- Staff can connect with youth in their home language.**

Staff learn how to say common words or phrases in a students’ home language and encourage youth to use their home language when appropriate. Incorporate books, pictures, stories, music, and more, that involve a variety of cultures.

- Staff engage in activities with youth—youth and adults have fun together in the program!**

Staff members join in the activity alongside the youth participants. For instance, during a game of soccer, the staff members actively play alongside the youth, demonstrating their enthusiasm and involvement.

OPPORTUNITIES for **SAFE** and **SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS** and **CONNECTIONS BETWEEN** and **AMONG YOUTH, STAFF** and **FAMILIES.**

RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS ARE ENCOURAGED AMONG EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM.

- Youth are given opportunities to positively interact and build relationships among each other.**

Ice breakers, welcoming rituals, or other strategies are regularly incorporated into program practices so youth get to know each other better.

- Staff engage with each other during program time and collaborate and support each other when youth are not present.**

Program leaders engage in active listening during conversations with each other. They maintain eye contact, nod in acknowledgment, and respond attentively to each other's ideas and concerns.

- Staff model positive adult relationships and communication with each other.**

Regular staff meetings occur; collaborative planning time is encouraged, and programs offer team building opportunities for staff to connect with each other.



OPPORTUNITIES for **SAFE** and **SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS** and **CONNECTIONS BETWEEN** and **AMONG YOUTH, STAFF** and **FAMILIES.**

FAMILIES ARE INFORMED, INVOLVED AND SUPPORTED.

Family orientation is provided to learn about the program.

Families are invited into a welcoming and comfortable setting and are provided detailed information about program goals, activities, schedules, and necessary policies or procedures. They explain the program's mission, values and the benefits it offers to youth participants.

Families are invited into the program as appropriate and kept informed of activities.

Staff connect with families on the "good stuff" via preferred and consistent communication channels not just calls home about behavioral challenges.

Families have access to staff who can communicate in their home language.

Resources are shared with families in their preferred/first language whenever possible and translators are offered when available.

Youth and families are offered connections to resources as needed.

The program proactively establishes partnerships with local organizations, agencies and businesses that offer relevant services to youth and families.

OPPORTUNITIES for SAFE and SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS and CONNECTIONS BETWEEN and AMONG YOUTH, STAFF and FAMILIES.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | ORGANIZATIONS ENSURE STAFF ARE WELL-SUITED TO AND APPROPRIATELY SUPPORTED IN THEIR ROLES.

Staff are a strong fit for the program.

Staff have a passion for the mission and vision of the program.

The program hires staff who have the appropriate education, work and/or personal experiences and commitment to inclusivity to support youth's development and learning.

Staff are developed and supported.

Staff are paid a living wage and offered appropriate benefits.

There is a staff orientation, training, and ongoing professional development plan in place that supports staff in using positive youth development strategies and other best practices. Staff are paid for training and professional development hours.

If necessary, staff are paid for planning time.

The program has a culture of ongoing communication among staff to share ideas and foster professional growth and development.

The staff schedule and working conditions are appropriate for the role.

Individualized training or a coaching plan is offered with potential career advancement.

OPPORTUNITIES for SAFE and SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS and CONNECTIONS BETWEEN and AMONG YOUTH, STAFF and FAMILIES.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY ARE ENGAGED IN THE PROGRAM.

Program schedules, activities and policies support the needs of families.

The program hours are designed to meet the needs of families and accommodate schedules. Programs seek input from families when setting program hours.

Staff members ask for feedback and/or involve them in program decision-making and evaluation activities (e.g. ask for their input on what activities to offer, program schedule, and program policies).

Families are involved in program planning, decision making, and/or evaluation activities.

The program regularly collects feedback from families through surveys, questionnaires, or feedback forms.

The program staff members have regular and open communication with families.

Staff members establish rapport with families and openly communicate to support youth. Multiple communication methods are used (e.g., newsletters, phone calls, texts, meetings) in appropriate languages. Staff members have informal, friendly conversations with families during drop-off and pick-up times.

Staff members provide information to families regarding program activities (e.g., upcoming events, ongoing activities, youth projects).

The program provides appropriate support to families and offers opportunities for them to be involved in the program.

As appropriate, staff members work as a liaison connecting families to appropriate school personnel or other support services.

There are opportunities for family members to engage in volunteering or in interactive activities.

OPPORTUNITIES for **SAFE** and **SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS** and **CONNECTIONS BETWEEN** and **AMONG YOUTH, STAFF** and **FAMILIES.**

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY ARE ENGAGED IN THE PROGRAM.

The program is connected to the school and/or school day as appropriate.

Staff members communicate with classroom teachers and/or school specialists to support youth learning.

Staff members communicate with school or district personnel about aligning program goals to school learning objectives.

The program is connected to the larger community.

Incorporate opportunities to invite community members to get involved as guest speakers, mentors, or even helping with program logistics when possible.

Maintain an active social media presence to share program highlights or student achievements.



A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF.**



Youth benefit when the program provides a safe and nurturing environment that supports the developmental, emotional, physical health, and mental well-being of all students.

Youth benefit when the program design and activities reflect active, meaningful, and engaging learning methods that expand student horizons, and serve the physical, cognitive, social, emotional and creative development of all participants. Program offerings respond to youth's interests and build real skills for success in school, work and life.

A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF**.

THE PROGRAM HAS A POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE.

- The climate is friendly, supportive, collaborative and non-judgmental. It feels organized but relaxed, flowing smoothly during the program session.**

Program spaces feel welcoming and it is clear active learning and collaboration is happening.

- There are clear expectations and guidelines that are co-designed by youth.**

Through an open dialogue, participants share their perspectives on behaviors and actions that contribute to a positive atmosphere.

- Youth are encouraged to try new things and learn from mistakes.**

Program staff and activities emphasize the importance of perseverance and growth mindset, highlighting examples of how mistakes have led to valuable insights and improvements.

- Staff effectively use social and emotional learning signature practices to build a positive climate - welcoming rituals, engaging strategies, and optimistic closures.**

Program activities may start with a check-in activity, where each participant shares one positive thing that happened since the last session.

- Staff support youth's individual needs and help them thrive.**

Program structures create an opportunity for staff to regularly check in with youth throughout activities, providing encouragement and reassurance.

- The program uses hands-on learning with relevant, developmentally appropriate activities designed to meet specific objectives. Staff serve as enthusiastic, encouraging guides and facilitators for the work.**

Youth engage through a series of hands-on experiences. They could set up stations with different materials and tasks related to the learning goals.

A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF**.

THE PROGRAM HAS A POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE.

Staff support youth through positive conflict resolution and problem solving.

Through the facilitation process, staff members help the participants reach a resolution that addresses their needs and maintains a positive group dynamic.

YOUTH ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN LEARNING.

Youth are busy, engaged and excited to learn.

Youth may participate in hands-on science experiments, collaborate on creative art projects, or engage in interactive discussions on current events.

Youth are cognitively engaged and/or focused on solving problems.

Youth are presented a real-life challenge and work in teams to provide a solution.

Program activities support different learning styles and provide challenging but achievable tasks.

During a program activity, youth may have the option to engage in reading, writing, or creative expression based on their preferences.

Program activities have clear learning objectives and the different objectives build upon each other.

If the program focuses on environmental sustainability, one activity may involve understanding the concept of recycling, while another activity may involve creating a project to raise awareness about reducing plastic waste-with each activity clearly defining the learning goal.

A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF**.

STAFF HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS.

- There is a staff orientation, training, and ongoing professional development plan in place that supports staff in using positive youth development strategies and other best practices.**

Organizations offer ongoing professional development through regular training sessions, workshops, and resources to support staff in enhancing their skills and knowledge.

- The program has a culture of ongoing communication among staff for sharing ideas and fostering professional growth and development.**

The program may establish online forums or platforms where staff can engage in ongoing discussions, share resources, and learn from each other.

EQUITY IS CENTERED, INTENTIONAL, AND AUTHENTIC.

- Adults model inclusive behavior and promote open dialogue with youth about diversity, access, and inclusion.**

During group discussions or activities, adults facilitate conversations that explore different perspectives and experiences related to diversity and encourage youth to share with one.

- Staff and volunteers have cultural knowledge and highlight differences and celebrate them, rather than ignoring race and diversity.**

Programs may invite guest presenters from different cultural backgrounds to share their traditions, stories, or artistic expressions with the youth.

- Youth from different backgrounds are included and their unique needs are served.**

Program recruitment, enrollment materials, and outreach efforts are designed to reach a diverse range of youth, including those from underrepresented communities.

A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF**.

EQUITY IS CENTERED, INTENTIONAL, AND AUTHENTIC.

Activities highlight various cultures and experiences, offer diverse presenters, and build knowledge of the multicultural community. Youth have opportunities to go to other communities to experience diverse cultures, races, etc.

The program may organize field trips or community visits to expose youth to diverse communities and cultural events.

Activities and program spaces are adapted to allow participation by youth with varying physical, intellectual and social abilities. When necessary, staff-to-youth ratios are increased to support youth with special needs.

Program staff may provide alternative formats or materials for youth with visual impairments or adapt activities to support youth with limited mobility.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | INTENTIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN CENTERED ON YOUTH AND EQUITY.

Program design is intentional.

Youth contribute to the program design.

The program is designed with a sequence of activities that work for youth to achieve its set learning objectives and evaluation goals.

The program uses established and researched curricula and/or best practices.

Activities celebrate and build on the ethnic or cultural background of participating youth and allow youth opportunities to learn about other cultures.

A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF**.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | EMBEDDED CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND EVALUATION PRACTICES.

Program goals are measurable and program improvement is embedded.

The program has a clear outline of the goals it wants to achieve. Goals follow the SMARTIE framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable).

Youth and staff know what positive results to expect from the program.

Activities have built in time for reflection with youth.

Evaluation tools are used to design and improve programs and measure youth's skill level and/or growth in behavior, skills and knowledge as well as satisfaction.

Staff meet regularly to plan and improve the program, engaging families and youth as appropriate.



A **POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT** that **FOSTERS LEARNING** and **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** **ACADEMICALLY** and **DEVELOPMENTALLY** for **YOUTH** and **STAFF**.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION.

Program and organizational policies and practices show a commitment to diversity, access and inclusion.

Staff and volunteers reflect the youth and community being served. Bilingual literature and staff (or interpreters) are provided to meet the needs of youth and families.

Staff materials are available in multiple languages as needed.

Free programming with transportation is made available for youth who otherwise could not participate.

Policies are in place to determine what accommodations the program can safely meet using the Americans with Disabilities Act and local regulation requirements as a framework.

Staff and administration make reasonable accommodations to serve youth with varying abilities.

The program has an anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policy.



OPPORTUNITIES for YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH VOICE, CHOICE, REFLECTION and LEADERSHIP



Effective youth engagement occurs when adults act in partnership with youth.

Youth benefit when the program creates intentional opportunities for youth to play a meaningful role in program design and implementation, to exercise choice, and to access authentic leadership roles

OPPORTUNITIES for YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH VOICE, CHOICE, REFLECTION and LEADERSHIP

YOUTH HAVE VOICE AND CHOICE IN THE PROGRAM.

Youth are involved in planning, leading and evaluating activities.

Youth may be involved in selecting activity themes, designing project plans, or suggesting guest speakers or field trip destinations.

Staff offer youth developmentally appropriate choices based on their interests.

Staff actively listen to youth, observe their interests, and provide options that align with their developmental needs.

Youth have developmentally appropriate jobs and responsibilities in the program.

Younger youth may be responsible for setting up equipment or organizing supplies. Older youth may plan and lead entire sessions.

Staff survey youth and give them ongoing opportunities for feedback on the program. Staff are receptive to youth's ideas and their opinions are highly regarded. Youth feel comfortable voicing new ideas, as well as what is not working well at the program, and are asked to help come up with solutions.

Staff regularly administer surveys or conduct individual or group discussions to gather feedback from youth about their experiences, interests and suggestions for program improvement.

Youth feel ownership of the program.

Youth may be involved in selecting program themes or designing program schedules.

Youth have opportunities to lead activities and/or support other youth.

Programs create spaces for youth to showcase their talents, skills and knowledge by leading workshops, demonstrations, or performances

OPPORTUNITIES for YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH VOICE, CHOICE, REFLECTION and LEADERSHIP

ADULTS SERVE AS MENTORS AND GUIDES.

- Adults mentor youth and allow them to take the lead on projects, facilitating learning through open-ended questions and sparking curiosity.**

Youth are seen as partners in program activities and are given autonomy to make decisions and drive solutions.

- Adults create a space for debriefing and self-reflecting on program activities and learning. Adults ask open-ended questions to encourage reflection.**

Staff facilitate discussions where youth can share their thoughts, feelings, and insights about their experiences.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | STAFF ARE PROVIDED AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO INCORPORATE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INTO PROGRAMMING.

- Program expectations match or align to the resources, professional development, and planning time offered to staff.**

Staff are given paid planning time to plan and prepare for active and engaged learning opportunities.

Staff are offered autonomy to incorporate practices that are youth requested with the flexibility to make changes in real time.

OPPORTUNITIES for YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH VOICE, CHOICE, REFLECTION and LEADERSHIP

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS | ESTABLISH YOUTH LEADERSHIP.

Programs include structural or systemic opportunities for youth to share and express their voice in program activities.

Ensure surveys or other feedback strategies are developed and administered on a consistent basis.

Create roles or positions for youth to take ownership of an area of programming.

Consider a youth board position or an invitation for youth to be part of the organizational leadership team.

There is an intentional effort to diversify the youth voice, and programs make considerations such as paying youth for their time to ensure youth participation is not restricted.



PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Goals: Set two goals for program improvement and define what success looks like for each.

GOAL ONE:

What aspect(s) of quality does this goal address?

Program Quality Practices

- Physically safe environment for youth programming
- Opportunities for safe and supportive relationships and connections between and among youth, staff and families
- Positive, inclusive environment that fosters learning and growth opportunities academically and developmentally for youth and staff
- Opportunities for youth engagement through voice, choice, reflection and leadership

Leaders: Who's responsible?

Resources: What is needed for success?

Timeline: When will this be completed?

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Goals: Set two goals for program improvement and define what success looks like for each.

GOAL TWO:

What aspect(s) of quality does this goal address?

Program Quality Practices

- Physically safe environment for youth programming
- Opportunities for safe and supportive relationships and connections between and among youth, staff and families
- Positive, inclusive environment that fosters learning and growth opportunities academically and developmentally for youth and staff
- Opportunities for youth engagement through voice, choice, reflection and leadership

Leaders: Who's responsible?

Resources: What is needed for success?

Timeline: When will this be completed?

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