

Tools and Resources for Out-of-School Time Providers

Ensuring Program Quality & Equity in OST

Foundational framework

Quality out-of-school time (OST) programming centers on **Positive Youth Development Theory (PYD)**, a framework for preparing youth for their lives by building on their assets while also supporting them through challenges.

PYD includes safety, belonging, skill-building, and youth voice. Quality OST programs are responsive to the cultural, social, and developmental needs of all youth that they serve.

Key characteristics of quality OST programs



Clear established goals



Higher educated staff and program directors



Link to learning in school



Lower staff turnover



Good connections with schools



Lower staff/child ratios



Variety of content delivery strategies



Continuous program evaluation

Outcomes of quality OST programs

- ✓ Improved academic achievement
- ✓ Better work habits
- ✓ Improved social skills

- ✓ Feelings of self-confidence
- ✓ Improved attitude towards school

✗ Reduced problem behaviors

Strategies for OST providers



Use data to drive improvement.

- Collect feedback from youth, families, and staff to inform continuous improvement.
- Regularly use evaluation tools like the Assessment of Program Practices Tool (APT), Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), or Dimensions of Success (DOS) to assess program quality over time.



Center youth voice and choice.

- Create leadership opportunities and co-design activities with youth.
- Move beyond participation to shared decision-making.
- Build staff capacity.
- Encourage reflection, collaboration, and culturally responsive practices.
- Train staff on facilitation vs. supervision.

Resources

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework: www.casel.org
- National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) Tools & Publications: <https://niost.org>

This content was informed by MAEC's "Complementing the School Day: Tools and Resources for OST Providers" webinar series.

The first session was titled "Keeping the Momentum: Ensuring Program Quality & Equity in OST," facilitated by Georgia Hall from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST). This session focused on defining and measuring quality in OST programs through a lens of positive youth development.

