Promising Practices Rating System

Observation Manual

Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., Brown, B. B., Dadisman, K., Pierce, K. M., Lee, D., Pechman, E. M., Liu, D., & Simzar, R.

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The Promising Practices Rating System (PPRS) was developed for use in the Study of Promising After-School Programs, a national study of high-quality programs serving disadvantaged children and youth. It is used by observers to make qualitative ratings of seven research-based promising practices in after-school programs. These practices include:

* supportive relations with adults
* negative relations with adults
* supportive relations with peers
* negative relations with peers
* student engagement in activities
* opportunities for cognitive growth
* skill building (mastery orientation)
* materials
* appropriate structure

Multiple activities (at least six) are observed across one or two afternoons, depending on the time needed to observe a range of activities. To the extent possible, the observations should capture the range of program activities that youth typically experience (sports, academic, homework, arts, etc.) as participants in the after-school program. Each activity should be observed for 15 minutes in order to get a good sense of the practices as they are implemented during the activity.

The PPRS has two components:

1. description of the context of the observed activity
2. qualitative ratings of promising practices in individual observed activities and in the program as a whole

**Activity Context Coding**

For each observed activity, the observer captures information about the activity context: type of activity, knowledge and skill areas addressed, space and materials used, numbers of adults and youth participants, and grade levels of activity participants. This information is recorded on the Activity Context Coding Form. Definitions to be used in scoring the items on the form also are provided.

As the activity observation begins, the observer should complete all the information requested at the top of the form:

* **Program Name & ID:** the ID number designated for the program being observed
* **Observation Date:** the date that the observation is conducted
* **Activity** #**:** the number of the particular observation being coded. The first activity observed at a given program is #1; the second activity observed at that program is #2; and so on, through #6. If activities are observed on the second day of the program, the observation should follow the first day’s activity numbers consecutively; that is, do not start numbering with 1 on the second day. Also, if there are two observers, observers should simply assign numbers consecutively as they begin their observations (e.g., Observer #1 conducts observation 1, 2, 3 and Observer #2 conducts observation #4, 5, 6).
* **Total Minutes Observed**
* **Observer Initials & ID:** the site visitor’s initials and his/her assigned ID ***number*** (if applicable)

Record the **Start time** at the beginning of the observation. At this point, the observer can begin to code items on the Activity Context Coding form. Some indicators may be coded immediately, whereas others likely cannot be coded until later in the 15-minute period or at its conclusion. The general rule is that indicators will be coded when the information that is needed to understand the context becomes clear to the observer. At the conclusion of the activity, record the **End time** and the **Total Minutes Observed.**

If an activity concludes before the end of the observation period, stop the observation, record the end time and the total minutes observed, along with any other outstanding information such as number of staff and students at the end, and proceed to the next activity.

**Promising Practices Qualitative Ratings**

Seven promising practices are rated on a 4-point scale (4 = highly characteristic, 1 = highly uncharacteristic). Specific ratings definitions and exemplars of each practice (high and low) are used in combination with clinical judgment to rate each practice. In general, the rating scales are defined as follows:

4 = **highly characteristic**

The construct is highly evident. Exemplars are observed more than one time, and for more than one student. The program is viewed as “the very definition of” the construct.

3 = **somewhat characteristic**

There is good evidence that the construct is present, but it is not pervasive.

2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic**

The construct was not characteristic of the program; exemplars were observed infrequently or with only one staff or student.

1 = **highly uncharacteristic**

Little or no evidence of the construct is observed.

Ratings are made for each individual observed activity and for the program as a whole.

Individual Activity Ratings

Ratings of the promising practices in individual activities are made on the **Promising Practices Rating Form**. After completing the Activity Context Coding Form at the start of each individual activity, the observer should write in the name or type of activity being observed on the Promising Practices Rating Form, in the space provided at the top of each column (under “Activity 1” for the first activity, under “Activity 2” for the second activity, and so on).

The observer should take running notes during each activity observation and, immediately after the observation, record promising practices ratings for the activity on the Promising Practices Rating Form. Review the **Promising Practices Exemplars** for each practice and the ratings definitions in order to make the ratings. Note that the ratings may take into account both what was and was not observed. For example, an absence of “high” exemplars may push a rating downward.

Some of the promising practices will not seem to apply to all activities and a low rating on some indicators will not necessarily mean the activity is of poor quality. For example, a pick-up game of basketball that does not involve skill instruction may be rated on the low end of the scale for *Opportunities for Cognitive Growth* and *Mastery Orientation*, but on the high end in other areas.

Many programs include homework time in their daily activity schedule. The *Productive Homework Time* rating is made only when the activity being observed is homework.

Overall Program Ratings

When all individual activity observations are completed, a single set of ratings is made of the promising practices observed across all activities. The observer refers to his or her notes and ratings for the individual activities to create an **integrated** rating of the practices in the program as a whole. The ratings are recorded in the column labeled “OVERALL RATING” on the Promising Practices Rating Form.

**Activity Context Coding Form**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program ID:** | **Date:** | **Activity #:** | | | **Start time:**  **End time:** | **Total Minutes**  **Observed:** | | | | **Observer Initials & ID:** | | | | | |
| *ACTIVITY TYPE* | | |  | *KNOWLEDGE/SKILL AREAS (intentional)* | | |  | *TOTAL ADULTS / STAFF* | | | | #  Start | | #  End | |
| 1. Homework assistance | | |  | 1. Interpersonal | | |  | 1. Number of adults | | | |  | |  | |
| 2. Tutoring | | |  | 2. Physical/athletic | | |  | 2. Number of teens | | | |  | |  | |
| 3. Study skills/test preparation | | |  | 3. Artistic | | |  |  | | | |  | |  | |
| 4. Reading/language arts enrichment | | |  | 4. Reading/language arts | | |  |  | | | |  | |  | |
| 5. Math/science enrichment | | |  | 5. Math/numeracy | | |  | *GRADE LEVELS* | | | | | | | |
| 6. Science enrichment | | |  | 6. Science | | |  | K | 1 | | 2 | | | | |
| 7. Recreational reading/ listening to  story/book | | |  | 7. Problem solving/  decision making | | |  | 3 | 4 | | 5 | | | | |
| 8. Computer skill building | | |  | 8. Other academic (e.g.,  foreign language) | | |  | 6 | 7 | | 8 | | | | |
| 9. Computer games | | |  | 9. Other nonacademic | | |  |  |  | |  | | | | |
| 10. Sports: competitive and non-  competitive games; tournaments | | |  | 10. None | | |  |  |  | |  | | | | |
| 11. Sports: practice/drills/skill building | | |  | *TYPE OF SPACE* | | |  | Other: |  | |  | | | | |
| 12. Fitness/exercise class (including  martial arts) | | |  | 1. Classroom | | |  | *NUMBER OF YOUTH* | | | | | #  Start | | #  End |
| 13. Arts and/or crafts | | |  | 2. Specialized studio/lab | | |  | 1. Total number of youth | | | | |  | |  |
| 14. Performing arts rehearsal/  instruction | | |  | 3. Games/club room | | |  | 2. Number of boys | | | | |  | |  |
| 15. Cultural awareness clubs/projects | | |  | 4. Gym | | |  | 3. Number of girls | | | | |  | |  |
| 16. Board/table/card games or puzzles | | |  | 5. Auditorium | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |
| 17. Health/well-being | | |  | 6. Cafeteria | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |
| 18. Service/civic (in community or  program) | | |  | 7. Library | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |
| 19. Snack | | |  | 8. Computer room | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |
| 20. Other | | |  | 9. Outside playground or field | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | 10. Other | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | *MATERIALS USED* | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | |  | 1. Computers | | |  | 7. Musical instruments | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | 2. Art supplies | | |  | 8. Games | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | 3. Sports equipment | | |  | 9. Electronic media | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | 4. Trade, reference, research books | | |  | 10. Other | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | 5. Textbooks and workbooks | | |  | 11. None | | | | |  | | |
|  | | |  | 6. Writing materials | | |  |  | | | | |  | | |

Activity Context Coding Definitions

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| **ACTIVITY TYPE: Mark all relevant activity types that occur during the observation period.** | |
| Homework help | Youth work on homework assignments. If youth participate in academic activities that are not homework, do not mark this category. |
| Tutoring | Youth work individually or in small groups with a tutor, who helps them work on a particular skill such as reading, math, or English language skills. |
| Study skills/test preparation | Instruction and activities designed expressly to prepare students for standardized achievement tests or to teach them study skills. Activities may include practicing different types of test questions, or taking practice tests. |
| Reading/language arts enrichment | Enriched supplementary instructional content in reading/language arts, math, or science that goes beyond homework, develops broad-based conceptual/cognitive learning. It may or may not be directly related to school content/assignments, but is not a homework assignment. |
| Math enrichment |
| Science enrichment |
| Recreational reading/listening to story/book | Reading or listening to a story or book not assigned for homework; reading to accomplish a goal (e.g. functional literacy skills, reading a play for pleasure/practice) |
| Computer skill building | This category refers to activities involving learning to use the computer, NOT to the use of the computer to complete home work, to build academic skills, or to search the web (unless instruction focuses on *teaching* youth to use the web). |
| Computer games | Youth play games on the computer. They are not learning to use the computer, or using the computer to complete homework, practice test-taking skills, practice academic skills, or for an academic enrichment activity. Not that using computer games to learn (e.g. math game) counts as (math) enrichment. |
| Sports—competitive or non-competitive games; tournaments | Supervised or non-supervised games using athletic skill, indoors or outdoors. |
| Sports—practice/drills/skill building | Preparation and training in a sport. |
| Fitness/exercise class (including martial arts) | Activities targeting general physical fitness/strength, including aerobics, martial arts, weight lifting, yoga. |
| Arts and/or crafts | Visual arts-based activities (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, videography) and crafts (knitting, pottery). |
| Performing arts rehearsal/instruction (including dance/music/drama) | Lessons, practices/rehearsals, recreational performances or performance arts that are for the purpose of self-expression. This area includes hip-hop, step, drill team. It does NOT include fitness-oriented types of movement. |
| Cultural awareness clubs/projects | Activities/projects that develop cultural, religious, or ethnic awareness, understanding, or identity. |
| Board/table/card games or puzzles | These may include games of luck, strategy games, jigsaw puzzles, puzzle games; board games (e.g., chess, Monopoly), table games (e.g., pool, air hockey), card games (e.g., Hearts, Crazy 8s). |
| Health/well-being | Health education, conflict resolution, life skills education activities. |
| Service/civic (in community or program) | Planning or assisting with projects that support the quality of community life or foster program-school or community-school linkages. |
| Snack | Eating or preparing for snack. |
| Other | Describe here content areas/activities observed that cannot be categorized or grouped above. |

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| KNOWLEDGE/SKILL AREAS: Mark these knowledge/skill areas when instruction and/or skill development are intentional. This can include presentations/lectures on a substantive topic or practice of specific skills, but does not include informal “pick-up” activities initiated by youth for “fun.” These areas should be marked only when there is evidence that the knowledge/skill development is focused and intentional. Either students or staff may initiate/lead the activity.  **NOTE: If a homework activity is observed, circulate to determine which subjects the students are working on, and be sure to indicate each subject in the Knowledge/Skills area of the form.** | |
| Interpersonal | Negotiation, conflict resolution, and/or other communication skills; do not mark for purely social interactions |
| Physical/athletic | Physical skills related to sports, fitness, or physical games (including martial arts, yoga, step, cheerleading, gymnastics, etc.) |
| Artistic | Artistic skills, working in any medium (visual, musical, dance, dramatic, photographic, video, etc.) |
| Reading/language arts | Reading, writing, literacy skill development/practice |
| Math/numeracy | Mathematics learning, computational skill development/practice |
| Science | Science learning |
| Problem solving/decision making | Developing skills in making practical decisions or solving practical or conceptual problems (e.g., life skills decision making around healthy choices or planning a project or performance--deciding music, parts, actions) |
| Other academic | Academic activities other than math or reading, such as learning a foreign language, social studies, geography, ecology, history skills development or practice |
| Other nonacademic | Check this category AND DESCRIBE here specific other types of skills not listed above (e.g., research, critical thinking) |
| None | Check if no discernable skill building is occurring during the activity; describe what is happening to support this conclusion |

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| Type of space | Classroom  Specialized studio/lab  Games/club room  Gym  Auditorium  Cafeteria  Library  Computer room  Outside playground or field  Other | Check the one location in this category that best applies to the setting in which the activity takes place. If “other” is marked, specify the type of space used. |
| Materials used | Computers  Art supplies  Sports equipment  Trade, reference, research books  Textbooks and workbooks  Writing materials  Musical instruments  Games  Electronic media  Other  None | Check all the types of technology used during each observation segment. More than one box may be checked in each observation. |
| Total adults/staff | Adults | At the start of the observation period and again at the end of the 15-minute observation, count and RECORD the NUMBER of adults and the number (if any) of teen staff in the room. |
| Teen staff |
| Grade levels observed | Circle all the grades that are represented in the classroom or activity space. More than one category can be checked, if appropriate. You may use prior knowledge about what grade levels are supposed to be in the room if it is difficult to determine on sight, or check with staff later and circle based on their response. | |
| Total number of youth (girls and boys) | At the start of the observation period and again at the end of the 15-minute observation, count the total number of youth, the number of girls, and the number of boys observed. If in doubt about gender, make an educated guess rather than disrupt the class. Check tally of boys and girls against total number of youth. | |

Promising Practices Rating Form

Observer ID \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Program ID \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Activity 1** | **Activity 2** | **Activity 3** | **Activity 4** | **Activity 5** | **Activity 6** | **OVERALL RATING** |
| **Supportive relations with adults** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Negative relations with adults** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Supportive relations with peers** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Negative relations with peers** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Student engagement** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Opportunities for Cognitive Growth** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Skill Building (Mastery orientation)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Appropriate structure** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Materials** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Promising Practices Exemplars

Exemplars for the nine promising practices are provided on the pages that follow. For each rating, “high” and “low” indicators are provided. “High” indicators are examples of specific practices that are part of a 4 rating. “Low” indicators are examples of specific practices that are part of a 1 rating. The pages are located in the Exemplar spreadsheet.

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| SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS WITH ADULTS This rating captures positive staff engagement with students. Measures whether the staff care about the students and whether the students were validated.  *Note: this is not an overall behavior or classroom management measure but instead, seeks to assess the ways the staff socially executes behavior and/or classroom management issues through their interactions with students.* |
|  |
| * Staff engagement: Staff are engaged with students   + Focused and interested in what youth are doing or how youth are working together   + Provides individualized attention to students   + Enthusiastic tone, body language |
| * Interactions: Staff interact with students in a supportive manner   + Use positive tone of voice   + Evidence respect for students   + Student-staff conversations are frequent and reciprocal   + Adults respond to students’ initiation of dialogue, comments or questions by showing interest and extending conversation, asking questions   + Adults initiate conversations with students and vice versa   + Adults look at students when they are speaking and vice versa   + Students appear comfortable in interacting and speaking with adults |
| * Acknowledgement: Staff acknowledge students’ efforts, accomplishments, or progress   + Offer genuine encouragement, especially to students who are frustrated (e.g., “You’re doing great” or “Keep trying, I know you can get it”) |
| * Behavior management: Staff use positive behavior management techniques to resolve behavior problems (or no evidence of behavior issues)   + Communicate expectations and intervene constructively and calmly to address disruptive behavior by redirecting students and/or explaining why the behavior is unacceptable   + Aware of and address teasing, bullying, or other conflicts in an effective, calm, and kind manner |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** little or no evidence of supportive relations  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** minimal or a few indicators of supportive relations  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** multiple indicators of supportive relations  4 = **highly characteristic:** strong and consistent evidence of supportive relations |

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| NEGATIVE RELATIONS WITH ADULTS This rating captures negative staff engagement with students. Measures whether the staff care about the students and whether the students were validated.  *Note: this is not an overall behavior or classroom management measure but instead, seeks to assess the ways the staff socially executes behavior and/or classroom management issues through their interactions with students.* |
|  |
| * Staff engagement: Staff are not engaged with students or appear “flat”   + Appear bored, tired, or distant   + Disinterested in students and/or activities   + Ignore youth who are bored, wandering, or inactive   + Disinterested tone |
| * Interactions: Staff interact with students in a negative manner   + Use negative tone of voice   + Disapprove or criticize, disrespect students   + Student-staff conversations are infrequent or one-sided   + Students do not converse or interact with adults   + Students are not assisted by adults   + Adults are directive in interaction with/towards students   + Students do not appear comfortable in interacting and speaking with adults |
| * Acknowledgement: Staff do not acknowledge students’ efforts, accomplishments, or progress   + Encouragement is insincere or nonexistent |
| * Behavior management: Staff do not use positive behavior management techniques (if evidence of behavior issues)   + Ignore behavior issues or conflicts   + Yell at, shame, or disparage youth   + Correct students publicly in a way that embarrasses or belittles them   + Use harsh or rough punishment |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** little or no evidence of negative relations  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** minimal or a few indicators of negative relations  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** multiple indicators of negative relations  4 = **highly characteristic:** strong and consistent evidence of negative relations |

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| SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS WITH PEERS This rating captures the affective quality of peer interactions and how well students get along and work with each other. Note that some activities may not offer an opportunity for students to interact or interactions may not be appropriate to the activity, in which case the “no opportunity” rating should be used. |
|  |
| * Peer interactions:   + Peer interactions have a positive affective tone (tones of voice and body language are friendly and positive)   + Have conversations that are either social or task-oriented   + Listen to each other   + Speak to one another respectfully   + Play or work well together   + Share materials and space   + Help and accept help from one another |
| * Conflict resolution (if observed): Students negotiate solutions in conflict situations with peers   + Make compromises with each other   + Jointly work out how to approach an activity or situation |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** little or no evidence of supportive relations  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** minimal or a few indicators of supportive relations  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** multiple indicators of supportive relations  4 = **highly characteristic:** strong and consistent evidence of supportive relations  NO = **no peers available to interact with** (example: one child and one adult working together without anyone else in the room) |

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| NEGATIVE RELATIONS WITH PEERS This rating captures the affective quality of peer interactions and how well students get along and work with each other. Note that some activities may not offer an opportunity for students to interact or interactions may not be appropriate to the activity, in which case the “no opportunity” rating should be used. |
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| * Peer interactions:   + Peer interactions have a negative affective tone (tones of voice are unpleasant and body language shows discomfort)   + Pick on or belittle each other   + Harass, intimidate, or threaten each other   + Show disrespect for each other   + Argue over materials   + Exclude one another from activities |
| * Conflict resolution (if observed): Students are not able to constructively manage conflicts * Conflicts escalate * Staff intervention is needed to resolve conflicts |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** little or no evidence of negative relations  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** minimal or a few indicators of negative relations  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** multiple indicators of negative relations  4 = **highly characteristic:** strong and consistent evidence of negative relations  NO = **no peers available to interact with** (example: one child and one adult working together without anyone else in the room) |

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| **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**  This rating captures students’ level of sustained, focused, or directed attention to the focal activity or intended experiences. | |
| HIGH | **LOW** |
| * Overall engagement: Students appear engaged in focal activity(ies) * Focused and interested * Follow staff directions for the activity * If no focal activity, use free time appropriately | * Overall engagement: Students are disengaged * Appear bored or distracted * Ignore staff who are talking to them or “pretend” to listen * Wander aimlessly * Read or write text messages, talk to peers instead of doing activity |
| * Activity-related engagement: Markers of engagement are appropriate to activity * Intense concentration during computer activity * High levels of affect during sports activities * Engaged in social talk during informal activities such as snack | * Activity-related engagement: Students are engaged in a different activity (other than the focal activity) * Doing homework, playing cards * Sitting out during sport instruction or game |
| * Evidence of engagement: Students contribute to discussions if the opportunity arises or remain focused on the activity independently otherwise. * Discuss back and forth and offer comments * Ask ‘on-task’ questions * Initiate discussion points | * Evidence of engagement: Students do not contribute to discussions * Do not participate * Do not ask questions |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** most students are not engaged in focal activity(ies)  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** students are participating in focal activity(ies) but many do not evidence interest or concentration  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** students are focused on activity(ies), most show evidence of interest or concentration  4 = **highly characteristic:** all or nearly all students are concentrating on activity(ies), focused, and interested | |

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| **OPPORTUNITIES FOR COGNITIVE GROWTH**  This rating captures the extent to which activities or homework help foster the development of cognitive skills (e.g., higher level thinking, problem solving, planning). Activities may directly promote cognitive growth or opportunities may occur within activities. “Cognitive growth” is something more than just rote learning (memorization) or learning facts (e.g., flashcards). | |
| **HIGH** | **LOW** |
| **NON-HOMEWORK ACTIVITY ONLY** | |
| * Activities directly promote higher level thinking and problem solving (if implemented correctly) * Gather and/or synthesize information in order to complete a task or make a decision (e.g., plan a project or field trip) * Develop a plan or think ahead several steps and anticipate others’ responses * Inquiry, experimentation, problem solving, discussion * Examples include creative writing class, book club with analysis and discussion of book themes, chess, science experiment, learning a new language | * Activities do not promote higher level thinking and problem solving * No opportunities for inquiry, experimentation, problem solving, discussion * Students do not participate in planning or decision making * Staff lecture about topic, no opportunity for students to actively participate |
| * Opportunities to promote cognitive growth within activities (planned or not) * Staff ask students “why, how, what if” questions that require complex or extended responses (not factual, rote, or yes/no) * Ask youth to explain their answers, respond to counter arguments and attempt to answer their own questions * Reciprocal discussion in which staff take students’ ideas seriously | * No opportunities to promote cognitive growth within activities, or opportunities are missed * Staff do not ask questions that require complex answers * Staff do not challenge students to explain answers or position * Staff want/expect only brief, correct responses |
| * Age-appropriate active learning experiences * Activity-based, hands-on approach * Projects that students carry out * Props, visual aids, and concrete examples used to illustrate complex concepts or steps * Where appropriate, encourage collaborative problem solving such as working in small groups to accomplish complex tasks | * No active learning experiences, or activities are not age appropriate * Staff carry out project, students are passive observers * Concepts are presented abstractly, no concrete examples * Activity is too advanced or too simple for age group |
| **HIGH** | **LOW** |
| **HOMEWORK HELP MEASURES ONLY** | |
| * Opportunities to promote cognitive growth within homework help (planned or not) * Staff ask students “why, how, what if” questions that require complex or extended responses (not factual, rote, or yes/no) * Ask youth to explain their answers, respond to counter arguments and attempt to answer their own questions * Reciprocal discussion in which staff take students’ ideas seriously * Staff help students figure out how to solve a problem, do not just give students the answers * Staff give correct information to students | * No opportunities to promote cognitive growth within homework help, or opportunities are missed * Staff do not ask questions that require complex answers * Staff do not challenge students to explain answers or position * Staff want/expect only brief, correct responses   Staff give students incorrect information (e.g., define a word or describe a math equation incorrectly, give faulty definitions or instructions for how to solve a problem |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** little or no opportunity for cognitive growth  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** limited or inappropriate opportunities for cognitive growth (e.g., staff may ask occasional questions requiring  complex answers; high-level abstract thinking required of young students)  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** opportunities for cognitive growth but they may not be optimal (e.g., students are engaged in  extended discussion but staff cut them off to move to the next step in the activity)  4 = **highly characteristic:** rich opportunities for cognitive growth, staff are highly effective in facilitating students’ learning experiences | |

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| SKILL BUILDING (MASTERY ORIENTATION) This rating captures the extent to which activities provide opportunities for practice and skill development. A skill is defined as an ability that is required to build mastery in a particular area and requires perseverance. In skill building, students are encouraged to become proficient by practicing in something to the best of their ability. | |
| HIGH | **LOW** |
| NON-HOMEWORK ACTIVITY MEASURES | |
| * Skill building: Students engage in skill-building activities * New skill is learned and built upon through perseverance and sustained attention (e.g., karate, dance class, music lessons, language learning) * Activity may build to a product or event designed to showcase student work/skills (art show, drama production, recital, service project) | * Skill building: Activities do not build skills * No new skill learning * No practice to encourage proficiency * Do not require perseverance and sustained attention |
| * Challenge: Activities challenge students intellectually, creatively, and/or physically in developmentally appropriate ways * Involve a graded progression of skills, accommodating multiple skill levels, and allowing students to successfully participate at their own level * Appropriate for students’ skill levels—not so difficult that they have trouble participating successfully and not so easy that students master skills quickly and become bored * Facilitate: Staff facilitate students’ skill building   + Encourage mastery by providing assistance and encouragement   + Explain concepts, provide information, coach, direct instruction necessary for students’ progress   + Model concepts or skills; show how to do something (e.g., demonstrate a dance step or drawing technique) | * Challenge Activities do not challenge students in developmentally appropriate ways * Activities are not set up to meet varying individual skill levels * Activities are too easy or too difficult * Facilitate: Staff do not facilitate students’ skill building * Do not assist when needed * Do not encourage students to challenge themselves * Do not offer instruction and feedback * Criticize youth work without offering appropriate guidance |
| **HIGH** | **LOW** |
| **HOMEWORK HELP MEASURES ONLY** | |
| * Facilitate: Staff facilitate students’ skill building   + Encourage mastery by providing assistance and encouragement   + Explain concepts, provide information, coach, direct instruction necessary for students’ progress   + Model concepts or skills; show how to do something (e.g., demonstrate a dance step or drawing technique)   + Staff help students think about how to approach or solve a problem   + If staff do not know how to do something they provide other resources to support the student in figuring out a solution   + Opportunities are given to students to ask peers questions to solve a problem | * Facilitate: Staff do not facilitate students’ skill building   + Do not assist when needed   + Do not encourage students to challenge themselves   + Do not offer instruction and feedback   + Criticize youth work without offering appropriate guidance   + Staff do not help students think about how to approach or solve a problem   + Staff do not provide additional resources to support students struggling with a concept or problem.   + Staff do not provide opportunities for or encourage students to work with peers to solve a problem. |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** little orno evidence of skill building or mastery orientation  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** limited focus on skill building or mastery, or activities intended to build skills are not well implemented (e.g., staff  demonstrates skills that students have already achieved; activities challenge or involve only some students)  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** activities encourage skill building or mastery but are not implemented optimally (e.g., staff encouragement is lacking,  not quite enough instruction and coaching, spend too much time on a particular step that students have already mastered)  4 = **highly characteristic:** activities strongly encourage skill building or mastery; perseverance and sustained attention are required in order to master  skills; staff demonstrate and explain techniques; staff assist and encourage students | |

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| **MATERIALS**  This rating captures the extent to which the materials for the activity are accessible and interesting to students and are aligned with youth development.. | |
| HIGH | **LOW** |
| * Availability and accessibility: * Both basic and supplementary materials are available for students to use to facilitate and enhance their learning * Materials are readily accessible and are efficiently distributed in an organized and timely manner * Materials are in a condition that allows them to be used as required (e.g., sports equipment is functional, games have all required pieces, computers work) | * Availability and accessibility: * Basic materials necessary to do activity or homework are unavailable to students (e.g. music for a dance or paper and pencils for homework for students who forgot them) * Supplementary materials to enhance the learning are not available to students (e.g video demonstrations, pictures, music, reference materials like the internet or a dictionary, or quiet activities such as books or educational games are not available for students who finish their homework early) * Materials are not readily accessible, distributing them takes longer than it should, once distributed materials are handled in an unorganized manner * Materials are in poor condition and/or are not functional (e.g., materials have been worn down, broken, or are outdated) |
| * Aligned with learning goals: * The materials used are aligned with the intended learning goals and/or activities observed * Materials are matched to students’ abilities, it is not the case that students are unable to use or operate materials | * Aligned with learning goals: * The materials used are not aligned with the intended learning goals and/or activities observed (e.g., students use math manipulative to play independent games that are not math related) * Materials are not matched with students’ abilities |
| * Interesting to students: * Students show interest in using and/or working with the materials * Students are observed engaging with materials * Materials are used as intended | * Interesting to students: * Students do not show interest in using and/or working with the materials (e.g., the materials are too young or advanced for the students) * Some students opt out of using the materials (are unengaged) and/or, * Materials are not used as intended |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** only low indicators of materials are observed.  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** mostly low indicators observed; minimal high indicators observed  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** mostly high indicators are observed, minimal low indicators observed  4 = **highly characteristic:** only high indicators are observed (no low indicators) | |

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| **APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE**  This rating captures the extent to which activities are implemented effectively and efficiently. | |
| HIGH | **LOW** |
| Instructions and Guidance:   * Staff understand and are prepared to support students in the activity OR homework * Instructions given by staff are easily understandable and easy to follow * If multiple staff leaders, they work well together and communicate effectively * Youth are redirected or refocused when needed * Sufficient staff are present that students do not have long waits for help | Instructions and Guidance:   * Staff do not understand the activity OR homework * Instructions given by staff are not understandable nor easy to follow * Students may not know what they are supposed to be doing * If multiple staff leaders, they work at cross-purposes, give conflicting information, or communicate poorly * Insufficient staff are present and students have long waits for help |
| Management:   * Classroom management techniques are effective * Staff are aware of all situations in the room and intervene when appropriate and necessary * Little evidence of disorder, students out of control, or extreme disorganization * Transitions are orderly and efficient (e.g., transition times are minimal and students do not need to wait a long time for an activity to start) | Management:   * Moderate or heavy amounts of ineffectual classroom management tactics * Staff allow situation to get out of hand * Staff control techniques are unsuccessful * Students are engaged in inappropriate, and often disruptive or rude behavior * Students misbehave and/or misuse materials * Transitions are chaotic or inefficient (e.g., long waits for activities to start, or between activities) |
| Physical Environment:   * Appropriate levels of noise, talking, and movement that are not disruptive or distracting to other students * External distractions are minimized for both students and staff * No obvious safely hazards (e.g., activity area is not too cluttered, no dangerous or broken material) * Space and furnishings are conducive to activity or homework (e.g. space is set up for independent and/or collaborative group work) * Appropriate furniture or seating is available (e.g., desks, lunch tables) | Physical Environment:   * Noise levels are high and disruptive or distracting to students * Distractions outside the activity interfere with students’ participation or experience and staff attention * Obvious safety hazards (e.g., excessive clutter in activity area poses hazards or dangerous or broken materials) * Outdoor areas are not secure (e.g., strangers off the street wander the grounds) * Space is poorly lit, not enough light for students to work by * Space is not appropriate to the activity or homework (e.g. limited or no space for independent and/or group work) * Furniture or seating are not appropriate (e.g., students sit on floor or on chairs without access to a table top to write on) |
| 1 = **highly uncharacteristic:** very little or no evidence of appropriate structure (activity instructions are unclear; staff do not work well together; long transition times), multiple and frequent indicators of inappropriate structure  2 = **somewhat uncharacteristic:** few or minimal indicators of appropriate structure with few or minimal instances of inappropriate structure (equal amounts of appropriate and inappropriate structure observed)  3 = **somewhat characteristic:** frequent indicators of appropriate structure with few or minimal instances of inappropriate structure (more evidence for appropriate structure than inappropriate)  4 = **highly characteristic:** multiple indicators of appropriate structure (activity instructions are clear; staff work well together; smooth transitions), no indicators of inappropriate structure | |