

How to Talk to Boards and Administrators About Quality Standards

Why Quality Is Important

- Research shows that quality afterschool programs increase positive outcomes for youth. High-quality afterschool programs are linked to significant gains in test scores, improved work habits, and fewer behavior problems.
- It is not enough for communities to just have access to afterschool programs. Communities need access to consistent and high-quality programs that benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically.

How Quality Standards Can Help

- The Standards capture what has been demonstrated, through research, to lead to positive outcomes for children.
- The Standards help programs to highlight high quality aspects of their program to funders and policymakers.
- The Standards assist programs in creating plans to improve and develop professional development priorities which will improve youth outcomes.
- The Standards also help programs develop a process to ensure quality in their programs.

What To Do About Other Quality Tools

- The Quality Standards provide afterschool programs with a common language for describing quality, as well as a “high bar” for individual programs to hold themselves accountable. The Standards are not intended to dictate policy and practices, but instead are intended to suggest and encourage a strong baseline of quality.
- The Standards were created with input from the field in Illinois; and, thus, are compatible with many other quality tools.
- The Standards can be used by providers that don't have a quality tool or in conjunction with other assessments.

What is the Context Statewide

- Programs and organizations statewide have already begun endorsing the Standards like the United Way of Illinois, the Illinois Collaboration on Youth, the Illinois Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, and many others.
- These Standards were developed in partnership with providers around the state with the Illinois State Board of Education and the Department of Human Services.

Implementing Quality Standards

- As an initial step, use ACT Now's Reflection and Planning Guide to reflect on how your programs are already complying with the Standards. The Guide also includes templates for creating an implementation action plan. ACT Now also had a robust Resource Guide in to assist providers in implementing the Standards. (For these resources and more visit: <http://www.actnowillinois.org/quality-standards/>)
- ACT Now offers free trainings around the State on the Standards. Programs' Boards, Directors, and Instructors are invited to attend the trainings to learn more!