

Building Quality in Afterschool



# Improving the Quality of Afterschool Programs: A Practical Guide to Evaluation

Soaring Beyond Expectations Conference

May 19, 2011

# Today's Workshop

## ➤ Purpose of data collection

- Evaluation
- Continuous Program Improvement, particularly in the area of *engagement*

## ➤ Using and analyzing data

- Emphasis on improving *point of service* quality
- What types of data can we collect?
- How can data be used for continuous program improvement?



# Hopes and Challenges

- What are your HOPES about collecting, analyzing, and using data for afterschool programming?
- What are some CHALLENGES you face in collecting, analyzing, and using data for afterschool programming?

# Importance of Evaluation

- What gets measured gets done.
- If you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure.
- If you don't recognize failure, you can't correct it.
- If you can't see success, you can't reward it.
- If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.

# Purpose of Evaluation

## ➤ Outcomes

- Support claims of program effectiveness
- Demonstrate elements of a **quality** program

## ➤ Continuous program improvement

- Provide information that can improve program
- Engage staff

## ➤ Sustainability/Advocacy

- Condition of funding
- Use to show progress of program to increase funding

# Where do we start?

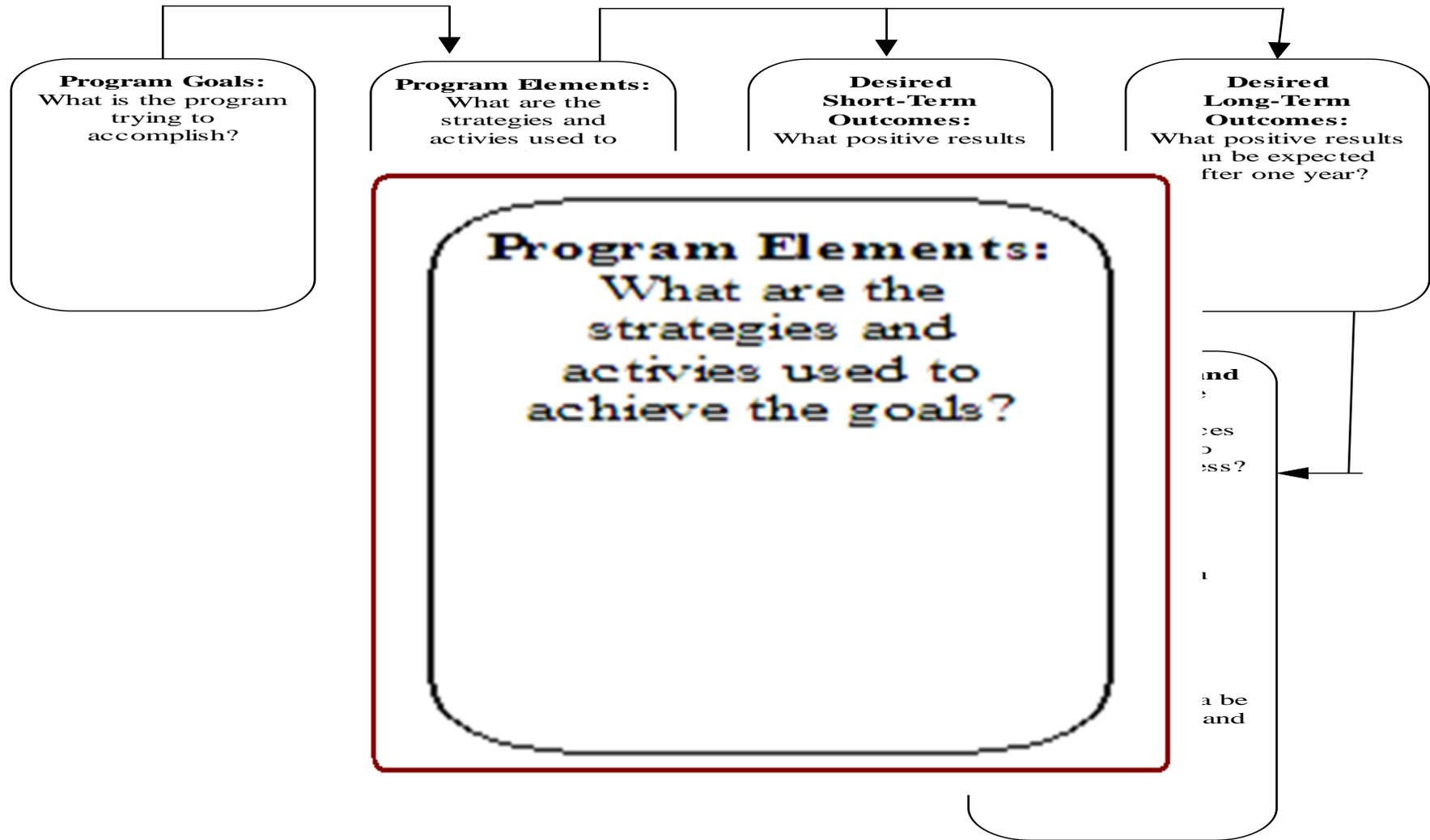
## The Logic Model

- Summarizes key elements of a program
- Identifies the rationale behind the elements
- Articulates the short- and long-term outcomes and how they can be measured
- Shows the cause-and-effect relationships between a program and its outcomes



*Moving Towards Success: A Framework for After-School Programs* (Collaborative Communications Group, 2005, p. 3).

# Where do we start? The Logic Model



# Point of Service Quality

- In order for youth to witness benefits from their participation in afterschool programming:
  - Instructional practices must be of a certain quality
  - Youth must *engage* with the content of the activity

# Defining Engagement

- The simultaneous experience of *concentration*, *enjoyment*, and *interest* - Represents the optimal learning point (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007)
- Activities that achieve *Flow* - linked to *Learning*, *Talent Development*, and *Creativity* (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1993)
- Experiences that combine both concentration in challenging activities and enjoyment in interesting ones
- A state of complete interest in an activity that there is no energy left for distractions (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007)

# Developmental Hierarchy



Note the developmental hierarchy:

Engagement cannot be easily achieved until lower order developmental stages are highly functioning

From Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality YPQA Training

# Practice Supportive of Youth Engagement

- Youth Choice
- Youth Voice
- Youth Ownership
- Reflection on learning and experiences
- Recognition of youth skills and behaviors
- *The key is to be intentional about providing these opportunities to youth*

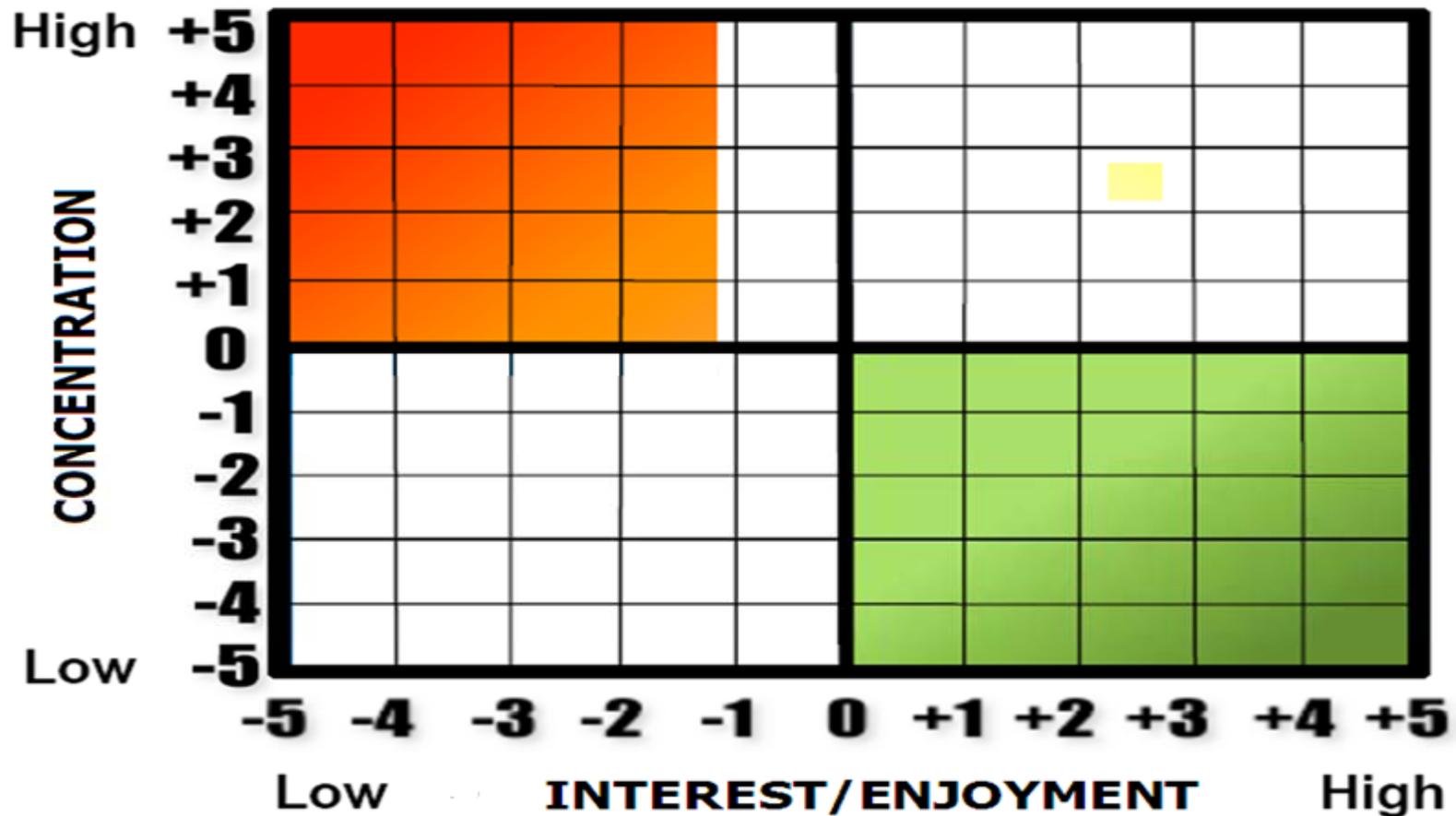
# Engagement and Youth Outcomes

- New Jersey 21st CCLCs that did a better job of *Creating Interactive and Engaging Settings for Youth* were more likely to have teachers report student improvement in:
  - Homework completion and quality
  - Motivation and attentiveness
  - Pro-social behaviors

# Monitoring Engagement

- Engaging in strategies to monitor youth engagement should be a key component of your evaluation plan
  - Look for signs of youth *concentration*, *enjoyment*, and *interest*
- Conduct observations as the program administrator and share feedback with staff
- Structure staff planning time to discuss Youth Engagement
- Encourage staff to share ideas

# Monitoring Engagement



# Activities Structured to Support Engagement

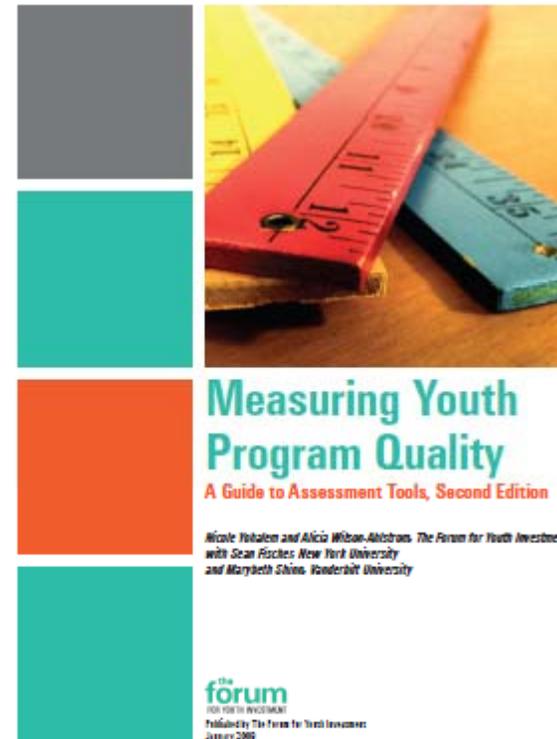
- Group projects that take more than one day to complete can be supportive of many engagement elements:
  - Youth-driven topics
  - Ability to choose role in group
  - A need to engage in the planning and execution of tasks
  - Authentic choice in terms of both *content* and *process*
  - Opportunities to practice leadership skills and engage in cooperative learning
  - Culmination in a final product that can be publicly recognized and celebrated

# Video: Building a Trebuchet

- Watch a 9-minute video
- Try to pick out evidence of the following?
  - Do youth seem to enjoy their time?
  - Do youth seem be interested in the activity content?
  - Do youth seem to be concentrating on what their doing?
- How does this activity contrast with typical academic activities?
  - Consider the level of concentration
  - Consider the level of enjoyment and interest

# Consider Using Formal Self-Assessment Tools to Assess Student Engagement

- The Forum for Youth Investment has published a guide to various assessment tools oriented toward assessing youth program quality - <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/content/measuring-youth-program-quality-guide-assessment-tools-2nd-edition>



# An Example: The Youth Program Quality Assessment

*“subscale”*

## III. Interaction

### III-M. Children have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging.

Note: Structured refers to the quality of being intentional, planned, and/or named; it does not refer to informal conversation.

*“item”*

*“evidence”*

#### Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes

1 Children have no opportunities to get to know each other (beyond self-selected pairs or small cliques).

3 Children have informal opportunities to get to know each other (e.g., children engage in informal conversations before, during, or after session).

5 Children have structured opportunities to get to know each other (e.g., greeting circle, family book, sharing time, introductions/welcomes, personal updates, ice breakers).

How do children get to know each other? Are there any games or activities designed for this?  
n/o = 1

1 Children exhibit predominantly exclusive relationships, limited to a few individuals or a small clique within the program offering.

3 Relationships to others in the group are not fully inclusive, but children know and use one another's names.

5 Children exhibit predominately inclusive relationships with all in the program offering, including newcomers.

n/o = 1

*“indicator rows”*

From Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality YPQA Training

# Additional Approaches to Measuring Engagement

- Examine attendance trends and levels of retention
  - How would you describe the level of student engagement in activities with high attendance? High retention?
  - Are there elements of programming with high attendance and high retention related to student engagement that can be replicated elsewhere?

# Additional Approaches to Measuring Engagement

- Consider youth surveys, focus groups, and reflection strategies to get a sense from youth on their degree of engagement with activities provided in the program
  - Look for opportunities for youth to provide feedback on activities
  - Use this information in intentional ways to drive activity and session planning
  - Where possible include youth in the planning process

# Additional Approaches to Measuring Engagement

- Formally define program improvement efforts based on findings
  - How do these efforts relate to new staff orientation and induction strategies?
  - How do these efforts relate to planning for internal and external staff development efforts?
  
- Use pre-post measures to examine the effectiveness of program improvement efforts in relation to creating more interactive and engaging settings for youth

# Indicators of Program Goals

## ➤ Let's Practice...

- Think about a goal for your program in relation to improving student engagement
- Fill out the indicator sheet
- What types of support and resources do staff need to accomplish this goal

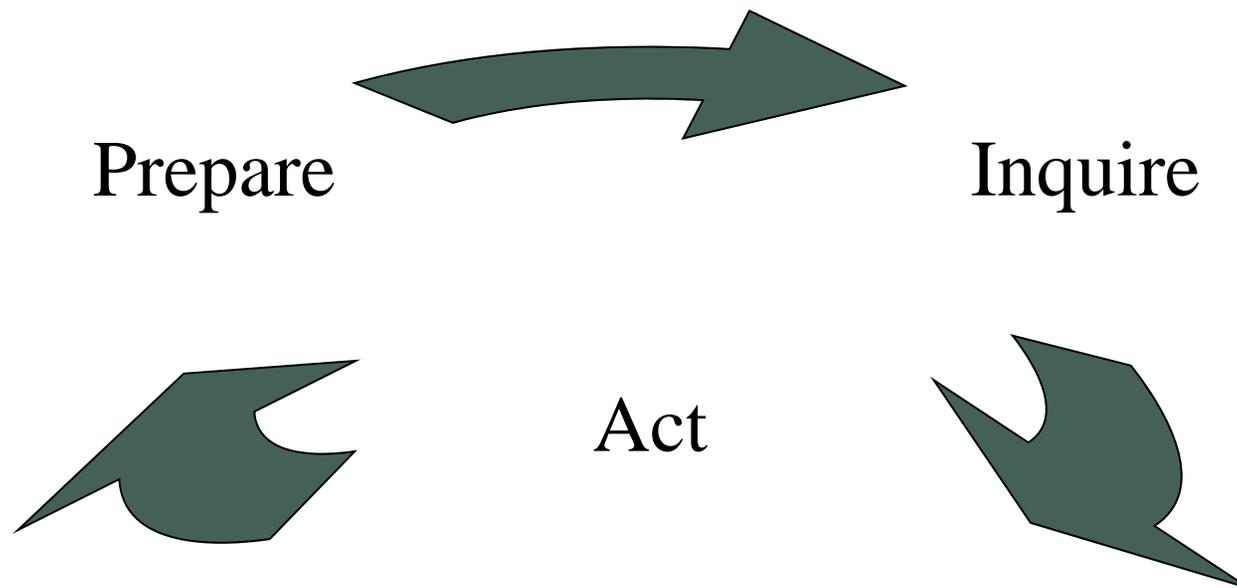
# Continuous Program Improvement

- How do we set up a process for our entire staff to become engaged in looking at data to improve *youth engagement* in our program?



# The “Data Wise” Framework

Boudett, K.P., City, E.A., and Murnane, R.J. (2005). *Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Harvard Education Press: Cambridge.



# The Data Wise Improvement Process

- Prepare
  - Organize for Collaborative Work
  - Build Assessment Literacy
- Inquire
  - Create Data Overview
  - Dig into Engagement Data
  - Examine Instructional Practice
- Act
  - Develop Action Plan
  - Plan to Assess Progress
  - Act and Assess



# Filling in the Gaps: Next Steps and Action Plan

- What pieces are missing for me?
- What actions need to be put into place to fill in the gaps?
- Tips
  - What can be accomplished in the timeframe?
  - What are reasonable milestones to set for myself and my team?
  - How can I recruit active and engaged team members to assist with this?

# Contact Information



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