

*Link your work to research and best practices with the*  
**CASE for Kids Program Quality Framework**

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**Element One: Safe and Inclusive Environments**

Quality programs provide safe and structured environments that are secure, nurturing and inclusive for all to learn and explore. Programs:

- Promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of youth.
- Provide an inclusive environment where all youth, family and members of the community feel welcome.
- Implement policies and procedures that protect the health and safety of youth.
- Foster supportive staff-youth relationships, positive peer relationships and connections with families.
- Ensure that policies and procedures recognize the diversity of the community and are responsive to the needs of staff, youth and families.

**Element Two: Diverse Learning Opportunities**

Quality programs provide a balanced variety of activities that support the growth and development of program participants. Programs:

- Offer age-appropriate activities at a relaxed, flexible pace.
- Align learning environment with educational standards and integrate engaging hands-on learning techniques.
- Offer opportunities to learn and build new skills focused on social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.
- Gear instructional approaches toward encouraging youth to push beyond initial level of competence.
- Assess student interest and foster opportunities for youth voice and choice.

**Element Three: Effective Administrative Strategies**

Quality programs have solid administrative systems that invest in human capital and utilize sound fiscal management and business practices. Programs:

- Share program's vision or mission with community and maintain an internal communication plan.
- Align budgets with vision and or mission statements and ensure they are appropriate for organizational size and monitored routinely.
- Measure and analyze information systematically for staff assessment, intentional program planning
- Provide professional development opportunities to ensure staff are properly qualified and equipped with the academic and experiential knowledge needed.
- Monitor evolving trends in order to make strategic decisions and develop sustainability strategies.

**Element Four: Collaborative Relationships**

Quality programs create and maintain linkages in the community to broaden availability of services and build relationships that can lead to program sustainability. Programs:

- Encourage diverse community and volunteer involvement based on student need and in accordance with best practices.
- Sustain multiple partnerships that garner resources to support participants and staff.
- Monitor relationships and interactions among participants, staff, families, volunteers, service providers and community partners.
- Invite partners to engage in planning processes and other efforts to support quality services and program sustainability.
- Encourage parental involvement and provide opportunities to serve and engage parents.

**Element Five: Program Sustainability**

Quality programs market the success of their innovative programming and raise awareness of positive contributions to the community. Programs:

- Institute marketing/communication plans that highlight the benefits of services provided to youth and the community.
- Collaborate with leadership, staff, participants and other internal and external audiences to further unified messages.
- Arrange regular meetings between leadership and existing or potential stakeholders to foster positive relationships and work toward sustainability.
- Share messages based on vision and mission statements and promote activities throughout the community
- Document evidence of program impact on youth outcomes, supported by evidence based research and best practices.

*For more information, call 713-696-1331 or go to [www.afterschoolzone.org](http://www.afterschoolzone.org).*