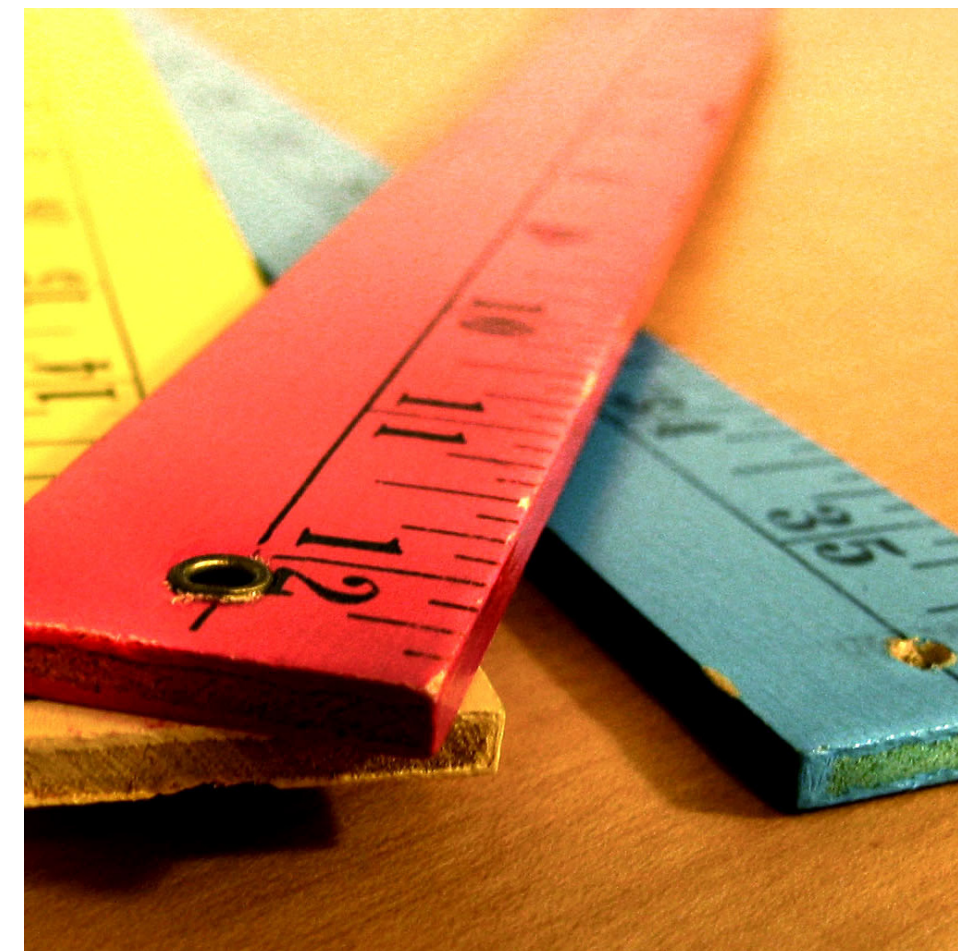


Target Age and Purpose

Most of the tools included in this review were developed primarily for self-assessment and program improvement purposes. Some, however, were developed with program monitoring or accreditation as a key goal and several were developed exclusively for use in research. Many have their roots in early childhood assessment (SACERS, POT, PQO) while others draw more heavily on youth development and/or education literature (APT, CORAL, OST, PPRS, QAS, QSA, YPQA). While the majority of tools were designed to assess programs serving a broad range of children (often K–12 or K–8), some are tailored for more specific age ranges.

	Program Target Age	Primary Purpose		
		Improvement	Monitoring/ Accreditation	Research/ Evaluation
<i>APT</i>	Grades K–8	✓	✓	
<i>CORAL</i>	Grades K–5		✓	✓
<i>OST</i>	Grades K–12			✓
<i>POT</i>	Grades K–8	✓	✓	
<i>PQO</i>	Grades 1–5			✓
<i>QSA</i>	Grades K–12	✓		
<i>PPRS</i>	Grades K–8			✓
<i>QAS</i>	Grades K–12	✓		
<i>SACERS</i>	Grades K–6	✓	✓	✓
<i>YPQA</i>	Grades 4–12	✓	✓	✓



Measuring Youth Program Quality

A Guide to Assessment Tools, Second Edition

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With the after-school and youth development fields expanding and maturing over the past several years, program quality assessment has emerged as a central theme. This interest in program quality is shared by practitioners, policy makers and researchers in the youth-serving sector.

From a research perspective, more evaluations are including an assessment of program quality and many have incorporated setting-level measures (where the object of measurement is the program, not the participants) in their designs. At the policy level, decision-makers are looking for ways to ensure that resources are allocated to programs likely to have an impact and are increasingly building quality assessment and improvement expectations into requests for proposals and program regulations. At the practice level, programs, organizations and systems are looking for tools that help concretize what effective practice looks like and allow practitioners to assess, reflect on and improve their programs.

With this growing interest in program quality has come an increase in the number of tools available to help programs and systems assess and improve quality. Given the size and diversity of the youth-serving sector, it is unrealistic to expect that any one quality assessment tool will fit all programs or circumstances. While diversity in available resources is positive and reflects the evolution of the field, it also makes it important that potential users have access to good information to help guide their decision-making.

This guide was designed to compare the purpose, structure, content and technical properties of several youth program quality assessment tools. For each tool, we provide both a one page “at-a-glance” summary as well as a longer description. We also provide cross-instrument comparison charts and tables for those who want to get a sense of what the landscape of program quality assessment tools looks like. Should you decide to use one of these instruments or want to take a closer look at two or three, you could share this information with key stakeholders. For the latest edition of “Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools,” please visit www.forumfyi.org.

The following tools are included in the guide at this time:

Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT)

National Institute on Out-of-School Time and Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Observation Tool (CORAL)

Public/Private Ventures

Out-of-School Time Observation Tool (OST)

Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

Program Observation Tool (POT)

National AfterSchool Association

Program Quality Observation Scale (PQO)

Deborah Lowe Vandell & Kim Pierce

Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA)

New York State Afterschool Network

Promising Practices Rating Scale (PPRS)

Wisconsin Center for Education Research & Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

Quality Assurance System® (QAS)

Foundations, Inc.

School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute & Concordia University, Montreal

Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Criteria for Inclusion

With any compendium comes the challenge of determining what to include. Our first caveat is that we plan to continue revising this guide over time, in part because in its current form it is not inclusive of the universe of relevant tools and in part because a great deal of innovation is currently underway. Many of the tools included in the review will be revised or will undergo further field testing in the next 1-2 years.

Our criteria for inclusion in the guide were as follows:

- **Tools that are or that include setting-level observational measures of quality.**
- **Tools which are applicable in a range of school and community-based program settings.**
- **Tools that include a focus on social processes within programs.**
- **Tools which are research-based.**

Purpose and Contents of the Guide

We hope this compendium will provide useful guidance to practitioners, policy makers, researchers and evaluators in the field as to what options are available and what issues to consider when selecting and using a quality assessment tool. It focuses on the purpose and history, content, structure and methodology, technical properties and user considerations for each of the instruments included, as well as a brief description of how they are being used in the field. For each tool, we aim to address the following key questions:

Purpose and History. Why was the instrument developed – for whom and in what context? Is its primary purpose program improvement? Accreditation? Evaluation? For what kinds of programs, serving what age groups, is it appropriate for?

Content. What kinds of things are measured by the tool? Is the primary focus on the activity, program or organization level? What components of the settings are emphasized – social processes, program resources, or the arrangement of those resources (Seidman, Tseng & Weisner, 2006)? How does it align with the National Research Council’s positive developmental settings framework¹ (2002)?

Structure and Methodology. How is the tool organized and how do you use it? How are data collected and by whom? How do the rating scales work and how are ratings determined? Can the tool be used to generate an overall program quality score?

Technical Properties. Is there any evidence that different observers interpret questions in similar ways (reliability)? Is there any evidence that the tool measures what it is supposed to measure (validity)?

User Considerations. How easy is the tool to access and use? Does it come with instructions that are understandable for practitioners as well as researchers? Is training available on the instrument itself or on the content covered by it? Are data collection, management and reporting services available? What costs are associated with using the tool?

In the Field. How is the tool being applied in specific programs or systems?

Methodology

Many of the tools included in this review follow a similar structure. They tend to be organized around a core set of topics or constructs, each of which is divided into several items, which are then described by a handful of more detailed indicators. Some variation does exist, however. For example, the PQO includes a unique time sampling component.² While most tools are organized around features of quality, some are not. For example, while the APT addresses a core set of quality features, the tool itself is organized around the program’s daily routine (e.g., arrival, transitions, pick-up). Observation is the primary data collection method for each of the instruments in this review, although several rely upon interview, questionnaire or document review as additional data sources.

	Target Users		Data Collection Methods			
	Program Staff	External Observers	Observation	Interview	Questionnaire	Document Review
APT	✓	✓	✓		✓	
CORAL		✓	✓			
OST		✓	✓			
POT	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PQO		✓	✓			
QSA	✓		✓			✓
PPRS		✓	✓			
QAS	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
SACERS	✓	✓	✓	✓		
YPQA	✓	✓	✓	✓		

² The time sampling method has observers go through a cycle of selecting individual participants (ideally at random) to observe for brief periods of time and document their experiences.

¹ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Eccles, J. and Gootman, J., eds. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.