pqa basics crash course

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PROGRAM QUALITY

The agenda that appears on the next several pages is designed for those who have completed the PQA Basics live training and wish to share the PQA and Self Assessment process with their staff or colleagues. Typically, this means you have completed the training yourself and now you are going back to facilitate the self assessment process with your team.

We recommend you adopt three goals for this introduction to the PQA and self assessment:
After participating in this meeting, team members will:
• understand the team-based, non-punitive nature of self assessment
• have a working understanding of the PQA instrument and what it measures
• grasp the importance of objective observations to drive scoring decisions

If you have ideas for ways to meet these goals that go beyond this agenda, we encourage you to use them!

We estimate that this agenda will take about an hour, maybe more, depending on the size of your group.

Preparation
Make sure you have all the materials listed below. Also, we recommend that you *ask your staff to read the first 2 pages of the PQA handbook before the meeting*.

• Web access and a projector
• PQA Crash Course Slides (download at www.cypq.org/takeitback)
• Copies of the following from the Handbook or www.cypq.org/takeitback: Introduction, Youth Program Quality Intervention, Implementation Plan
• PQA Playing Cards
• Index Cards

Agenda Overview
1.   Welcome (5 minutes)
2.   Introduction to the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) (10 minutes)
3.   Card Sort (10-20 minutes)
4.   Observation & Note Taking (10-20 minutes)
5.   Planning for Data Collection & Scoring (10-20 minutes)
6.   Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Introduce yourself, **welcome** participants to the workshop and **overview** the agenda for today's workshop.

Say, "This meeting will help you to understand the purpose of self assessment and your role in the process." **Review** the goals.

Researchers Agree

on what it takes to support positive youth development.

The National Research Council & Institute for Medicine list the following <u>key features</u> of positive youth development settings:

- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive relationships
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill-building
- Integration of family, school and community efforts

- Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, 2002

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Say, "A 2002 report by the National Research Council reviewed the combined results of many research studies and synthesized those findings into this list of key features of programming that work best to support youth development. I'll give you a minute to read the list.

{wait 1 minute}

There aren't many surprises in here, but these are the things that research has shown will positively impact youth development…."

The Pyramid of Program Quality
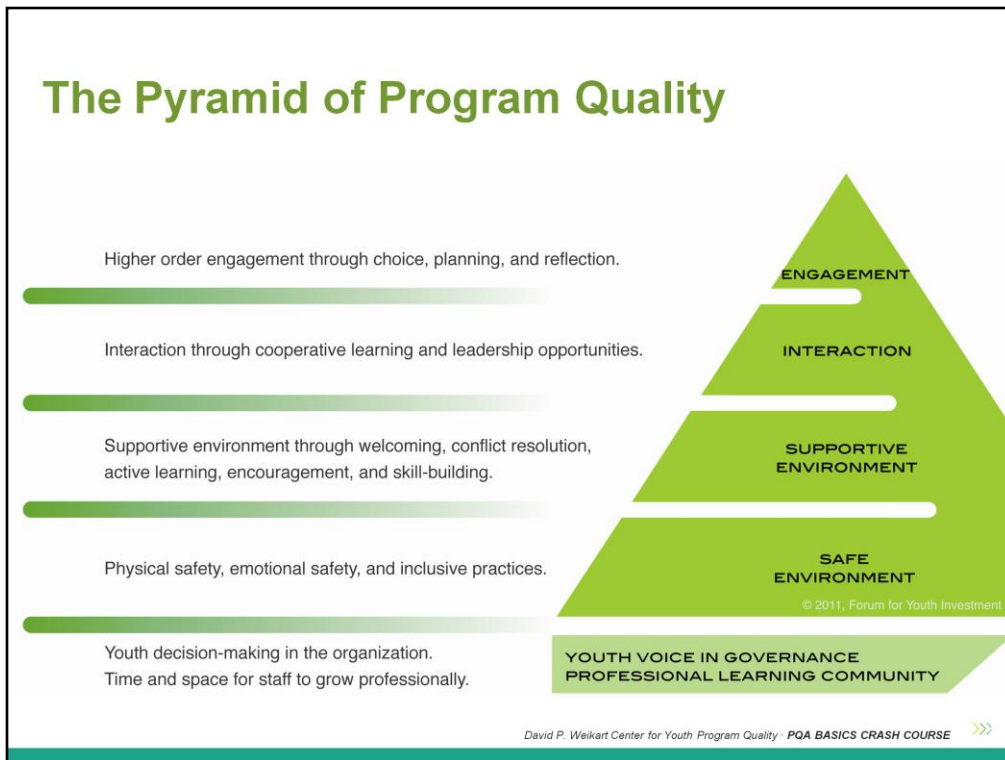
Say, "… and this research is in support of what is measured in the Youth PQA.

The Youth PQA is designed to measure key developmental experiences within an afterschool setting.

It is based around Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where the bottom of the pyramid needs to be in place before the top can be reached.

At the bottom of the Pyramid of Program Quality is safe environment. This includes both physical and emotional safety.

Above that we have a supportive environment, which is mostly provided by the staff – do they plan sessions so that they're at the right pace for youth? Do youth have an opportunity to build skills, and are they encouraged to do so despite mistakes? Are adults providing support for learning?

Interaction looks at the relationships between youth and other youth and between the adults and youth.

Engagement is different than what we typically think of when we hear the word engagement. Youth being involved in an activity, listening, participating – those are all wonderful things, and they are measured in the interaction and supportive environment domains of the pyramid. In the Youth PQA, there are 3 things that define engagement: Youth having opportunities to Plan what they're doing, make choices about what they're doing, and Reflect on what they're doing. They're at the top of the pyramid because all of the other domains below it set the stage for these to happen."

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Quality Construct: What is the Youth PQA?

1. A **validated** instrument designed to assess the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs.

2. A set of items that measures youth access to **key developmental experiences**.

3. A tool which produces scores that can be used for comparison and assessment of **progress over time**.

ENGAGEMENT

INTERACTION

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

SAFE ENVIRONMENT
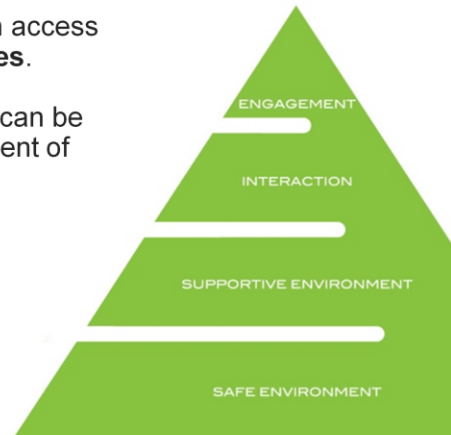
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Say, "The Youth PQA is a validated tool, which means that there was a huge research study that checked to make sure that it measures what we think it measures.

And what is measures is key developmental experiences – things adults and kids do that make a difference for youth.

The Youth PQA can also be used over time – you can score your program this fall and next spring and see if your practices have improved."
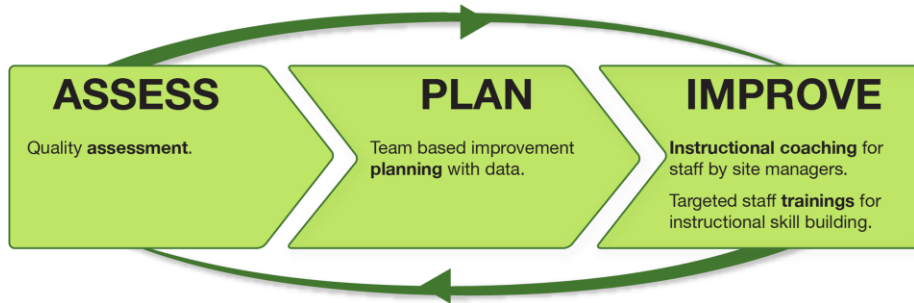
Say, "The PQA is just the first step in a larger cycle of improvement, which is called the Youth Program Quality Intervention. After you conduct your assessment, the next step is to develop a plan for improvement based on the data, and then to carry out that plan to improve the quality of your program for kids.

It's important to remember that this process is all about program improvement. It's not about evaluating staff or catching someone doing something wrong. It's about taking an honest look at your program, talking about it with your team, and answering the question, 'Are we providing the best possible experiences for our young people?'"
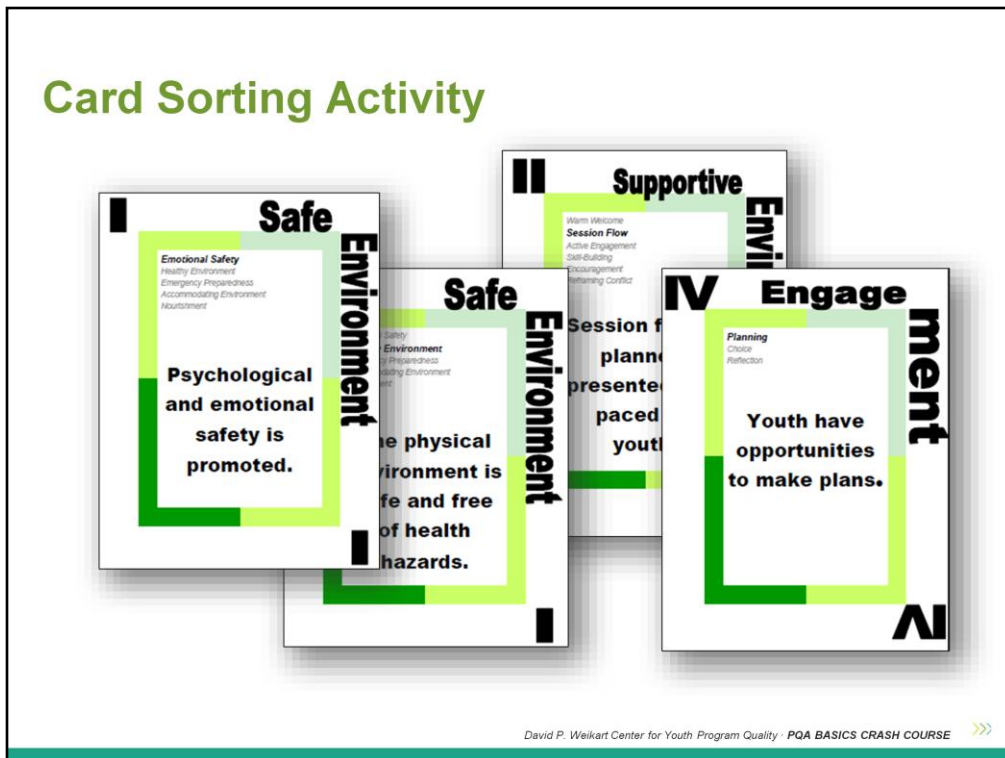
Facilitate the card-sorting activity. Say, "For the next ten minutes, we will be assessing different aspects of our program. Each card represents one item on the PQA. For each card, decide if the program is low, medium, or high quality. As we rate each item, one person should share an example or anecdote that supports the rating." If there are more than five people in the group, they can be divided into pairs or smaller groups, otherwise everyone can work together. Cards can be chosen randomly.

Facilitate a reflection on the card sorting activity:

"How did it feel to self-assess in this way?"

"How did you know how to rate each item?"

"Were you surprised by any of the scores or did you disagree with any?"

"What were some of the limitations of this process?"

Say, "Here's a sample item. The written evidence goes in the white space on the right, then the score goes in the box – 1, 3, or 5 (no 2s or 4s!).

This sample demonstrates how the tool addresses a common positive youth development topic. It's generally agreed that youth do better when they feel a sense of belonging. This slide shows one item we use to get at that idea. Notice how this converts an inner state (whether youth feel like they belong) to a measurable behavior (whether staff provide get to know you activities).

Each booklet is a Form. To see how Form A breaks down, look at the last page (titled "Youth PQA Summary Sheet"). The boldface words are the Domains and the words at the top of each page are Scales. A scale is usually a single page. A scale contains 2 to 6 items like the one on this slide. To determine the score, you rely on the level or item descriptor that best fits your anecdotal evidence."

Show "People on the train slide". Ask, What do you see here? Guide participants to the concept of subjective and objective observation.

Divide large group into three smaller groups (you may have people working individually or going up more than once.) **Assign** one group a freeze-frame scene, one a silent picture, and one a "talkie."

Give each group two minutes to plan their skit, then 30 seconds to present. Instruct observers to take notes while their peers present.

Debrief. What did the audience get right? What did they miss? What does this mean for how we observe?

Note Taking

MORE EFFECTIVE NOTES

- Are factual and objective
- Offer rich detail in snapshot form
- Focus on the interactions
- Contain quotes
- Can *stand alone*
  - someone who was not there should be able to read the notes and know what happened

LESS EFFECTIVE NOTES

- Use subjective terms such as good or bad
- State opinions
- Make assumptions
- Are too vague, lack detail
- Summarize discussions instead of using quotes

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Explain effective and ineffective notes.

Discuss the principles and logistics of observing and taking notes

**Planning for Data Collection and Scoring**

- How many observations will we conduct?
- Which offerings will we observe?
- Who will observe whom?
- What day and what time?
- What coverage is needed?
- When will our scoring meeting be? (Remember to budget 3 hours)
- Any other concerns?

As a group, determine the logistics for data collection and agree upon dates. Use the questions provided as a guide.

Refer to your Handbook for more information.
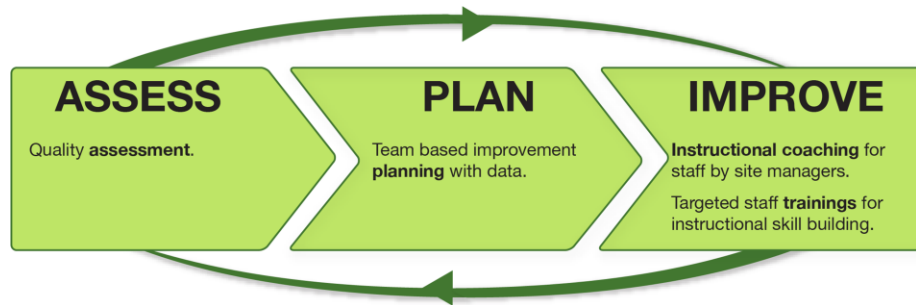
Facilitate a reflection. Distribute 3x5 cards to each participant. Instruct everyone to write one Hope that they have for the self assessment process, and on the other side, one Fear that they have. Have volunteers share.