

## TEN WAYS FOR COACHING TOWARD YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY



By Margo Herman, Extension Educator at University at Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development

Quality is certainly on the forefront of afterschool/youth development programs across the country. Whether you are using a formal assessment tool for measuring Youth Program Quality or not, I believe all youth workers should have a concept of what quality looks like and ways to build quality into our programs. You can be an important coach to support your staff in growing their capacity towards recognizing and incorporating youth program quality. **Here are ten sequential and tangible ways to support your staff by coaching them toward integrating youth program quality:**

**1 TRAIN YOUR STAFF.** Show them what youth program quality IS, why it matters, and share how it is measurable and can improve youth programs. There is an abundance of information available.

**2 ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE STAFF STRENGTHS.** Build connections with your staff by recognizing the strengths they offer for improving program quality.

**3 ESTABLISH TRUST.** Quality measures should not be used as a performance tool to measure staff performance. Keep this focused on program improvement!

**4 OBSERVE STAFF.** delivering youth programming at point of service with youth. Take objective and factual notes about what was observed, using quotes, and objective descriptions of interactions between youth and staff.

**5 PROVIDE REFLECTIVE FEEDBACK.** Schedule a time and lead a discussion where you serve as a mirror about the observation by sharing factual and objective notes taken

during the observation. Take turns talking and listening during the feedback session.

**6 ACTIVE LISTENING IS ESSENTIAL.** You want a sense of shared control during a feedback session. Give staff space to reflect on what THEY thought went well and what didn't go well during the program observation.

**7 ASK DIVERGENT QUESTIONS.** Assure the feedback session is a discussion not a judgment. Use open ended questions to guide the discussion, not "Yes or No" questions.

**8 LET STAFF LEAD.** Ask them what they think can be improved for youth program quality. Build on their suggestions to begin crafting an improvement plan.

**9 AGREE UPON A PLAN.** Choose a few things to focus on for improving youth programming.

**10 MAKE A COMMITMENT.** Observe the program again to support the plan and to recognize improvements.

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**SEE MORE AT:** <http://naaweb.org/tip-of-the-week/item/133-10-ways-for-coaching-toward-youth-program-quality#sthash.gJwKNc3A.dpuf>

### **OPENING DISCUSSION**

As you look over the ways to support staff in integrating youth program quality, what do you see as similarities among the techniques?

What seems easy? What seems more challenging? Why?

What questions or other thoughts do you have about the article?

### **APPLICATION ACTIVITY**

You conducted an observation in Mr. Josh's school age program and noticed the children seem bored and uninterested in the lesson Josh is presenting. How will you approach this with Mr. Josh? How can you be specific without discouraging him?

You are facilitating a session with your staff on a new tool the site will be using to improve program quality. One long term staff member comments under her breath, "We've been doing it the same way for years and now all of a sudden it's not OK and we have to change? I disagree!" How will you approach this during your session? What else needs to happen?

While participating in a class project, you notice how responsive and specific Ms. Annie is while interacting with the school age children. You have other classrooms where the teachers give lots of directives. What can you do to improve overall program quality? Is there a way to create a win/win situation for your team and ultimately the children?

### **CLOSING REFLECTION**

Based on today's conversation, what is one additional thing you will do with your staff to help the grow in recognizing and incorporating youth program quality?

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If applicable, provide participants with the corresponding certificate of participation and if required ask them to complete the questions included on the certificate.

# **CERTIFICATE** of PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## TEN WAYS FOR COACHING TOWARD **YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY**

\_\_\_\_\_ **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HOURS, EARNED BY:**

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### **CONTENT INCLUDED:**

Provide Training • Take a Strengths Based Approach • Establish Trust • Observe Staff  
Provide Reflective Feedback • Active Listening • Divergent Questioning • Allow Staff to Lead  
Agree Upon a Plan of Continuous Improvement • Make A Commitment

**FACILITATOR:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

| How does coaching help drive program quality?

| Why are divergent questions important?

| Describe reflective feedback.

| How can using factual narrative notes help during a coaching session?

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*Supports Content Areas 7, 8, and 9, Levels 1-4 of the NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals*