



VERMONT
STARS

Afterschool Licensed Programs
STARS Application

STARS is Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System for Child Care, Early Education, and Afterschool Programs, and is a quality initiative of the Child Development Division, the Department of Children and Families, the Agency of Human Services, and the Agency of Education.

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Understanding the application process

PLEASE NOTE: This application is **ONLY** for Afterschool Licensed Programs. Organizations that operate multiple licensed sites or programs will need to submit an application for *each* licensed site or program.

This form should be used to renew your STARS status upon the expiration of your certificate. It may also be used to apply for additional points and a higher star level.

The STARS process is meant to be ongoing. Planning program improvements and implementing them over time as well as keeping records of current activities and practices will make the process most effective.

Applying for additional points/stars

Programs have the opportunity to apply for an increase in points/stars twice per year: once when their annual report or application is due, and one other time during the year. There is a waiting period of 90 days in between submitting STARS applications.

STARS Certificate

Programs with two or more stars must reapply to STARS every three years. After a program's application is approved, they will receive a STARS certificate that is valid for three years. Should a program's star level change during this three year period, a new certificate will be issued but the certificate expiration date will remain the same.

Programs are required to complete a STARS Annual Report to maintain their STARS status in the interim years before the STARS Certificate expires.

Tips for submitting the application

- Group application materials by arena.
- Clearly identify the documents supporting each arena. Use the boxes in the application to check what has been achieved and to indicate that appropriate documentation is included.
- Binders or special presentation materials are not needed or recommended.
- Applications should be signed and submitted with all supporting documents and mailed to: **STARS - MJCC, 81 Water Street, Middlebury, VT 05753**
- Please keep a copy of your application for your records.

How star levels are earned

There are four arenas in which points can be earned. The points from these arenas are then added together to determine the star level.

ARENAS

Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development.....	1 to 3 possible points
Families and Community	1 to 3 possible points
Program Practices	1 to 5 possible points
Administration	1 to 3 possible points

STAR LEVEL

1 Star Program	Regulated program in good standing*
2 Star Program	1 to 4 points total
3 Star Program	5 to 8 points total
4 Star Program	9 to 11 points total
5 Star Program	12 to 14 points total

* A program is in good standing when its license status is "licensed." The following license statuses are not in good standing: Denied or Withdrawn, Provisional, Intent to Suspend or Suspended, Intent to Revoke or Revoked.

Need assistance or have questions?

Call the STARS Coordinators at **(802) 398-2037** or email stars@mjcvt.org

To learn more about STARS please visit:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/stars>



Application Cover Pages for Afterschool Licensed Programs

Affirmation

I certify that the information contained in this full application is true and correct. I understand that if any information contained in this application for the STARS program is found to be incorrect, that this application shall be voided and any certificate awarded shall be rescinded.

Signature of program representative

Date

Contact Information

Program Name *(as it appears on CDD license)*

License #

Contact Name

Position *(director, coordinator, principal, etc.)*

Director, owner or principal name *(if not above)*

Street/P.O. Box *(Mailing Address)*

City

Zip Code

Town where facility is located *(if different from above)*

County

Phone number(s)

Email *(for STARS correspondence)*

Points Requested

The points requested should reflect the information supplied in the following pages. To earn points in a particular arena, you must complete that section of the application and submit it along with the appropriate documentation.

Arena	Number of Points Requested
Staff Qualifications and Professional Dev. 1–3 points	
Families and Community 1–3 points	
Program Practices 1–5 points	
Administration 1–3 points	
TOTAL POINTS	

Star Level Requested

Based on the total points above, please use the information below to determine the appropriate star level to request.

STAR LEVEL REQUESTED:

STAR LEVEL

- 1 Star Program Regulated program in good standing*
- 2 Star Program 1 to 4 points total
- 3 Star Program 5 to 8 points total
- 4 Star Program 9 to 11 points total
- 5 Star Program 12 to 14 points total

* A program is in good standing when its license status is "licensed." The following license statuses are not in good standing: Denied or Withdrawn, Provisional, Intent to Suspend or Suspended, Intent to Revoke or Revoked.

Background and Statistical Information

Program Affiliation

- NAEYC YMCA Waldorf Montessori Religious
 Other _____ No affiliation

Business Entity

- Independent/sole proprietor C Corporation, S Corporation or LLC
 Not for profit corporation: 501 (c)(3) Partnership or LLP
 Public school Other (explain) _____

Type of program offered during regular operation

- Full day only (over 5 hours) Full and part day
 Part day only Other (explain) _____

Days and Hours of Operation

Days regularly open: MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

Hours of operation: _____ to _____ (please indicate AM/PM)

Do you offer more than one session per day? YES NO

Do you offer additional hours on school vacations? YES NO

This program is best described as:

- Open year round Open during school year only
 Open in summer only Other (explain) _____

Enrollment and Funding Information

_____ Total number of children enrolled in program

_____ Typical number of children attending on a given day

In the chart below, enter the number of children enrolled, both full and part time, in the indicated categories. Some children will fall in more than one category.

	Kindergarten	School Age (1 st grade – 15 years)
TOTAL # OF ENROLLED CHILDREN IN EACH AGE GROUP		
Current number of children with families paying regular tuition/fees (receiving no other support)		
Current number of children funded through scholarships		
Current number of children receiving Child Care Financial Assistance (subsidy)		

Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development Arena for Afterschool Licensed Programs

**1–3
POSSIBLE POINTS**

Check *one* of the statements below and, if the second statement is checked, indicate the number of points requested.

NO POINTS REQUESTED

_____ (#) **POINTS REQUESTED.** Documentation submitted meets the criteria for the requested number of points.

FOR 1 POINT, 2 POINTS or 3 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Staff Qualifications Standards

- Teaching staff members and/or the registrant have an updated IPDP* or a statement of annual professional development goals. *Exception:* Staff with a Vermont Educator’s License are not required to have an IPDP for STARS.
- Documentation of degrees/professional development must be submitted with the application *except* when it is in BFIS.
- Staff Qualifications Worksheet on pages 10–11 documenting a program score of:
0.31 to 1.3 = 1 POINT | 1.31 to 2.3 = 2 POINTS | 2.31 to 3.0 = 3 POINTS

What to submit for verification

- Current (updated within a year) IPDPs* for all staff, except those with Vermont Educator’s Licenses.
- Documentation of degrees/professional development for all staff unless it is in BFIS.
- Completed Staff Qualifications Worksheet documenting a program score of:
0.31 to 1.3 = 1 POINT | 1.31 to 2.3 = 2 POINTS | 2.31 to 3.0 = 3 POINTS

** An IPDP means a current (updated within a year), personalized plan for increasing one’s knowledge and improving skills in the field of early care and education or afterschool services. It includes assessing current knowledge and skills in each of the core knowledge areas required to work in the field; identifying areas for growth and learning; stating specific measurable professional goals based on these areas of growth, with related strategies, resources, and a timeline to meet each goal. Sample IPDP format and information can be found at: northernlightscv.org*

Staff Qualifications Worksheet

This worksheet assigns a numerical value to educational level, experience in the field and hours of participation in relevant professional development.

Staff members to be included are those individuals responsible for planning, implementing and/or evaluating the program’s curriculum (e.g. teachers and program administrators).

1. Use Charts A, B and C on pages 12–14 to determine a score for all teaching and/or program staff. Additional copies of this chart may be added to your application as needed.
2. Add the scores in columns A, B and C for each staff member listed.
3. Convert the score(s) using chart D on page 14.
4. To calculate the point level in this arena, add all of the converted staff scores together from Column D, and then divide by the number of staff (see bottom of page 11). Refer to chart E on page 14 to determine the point level.

	A	B	C	A+B+C	D
Names of teaching staff	Score for Educational Attainment	Score for Professional Development	Score for Experience	Total Individual Score	Converted Score
Total from Column D (Add all of the converted staff scores and carry over to following page) →					

Chart A: Educational Attainment

Score	Education
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level I Certificate <i>OR</i> Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals course (or NL approved equivalent) <i>OR</i> On-the-Job Training Certificate (for afterschool staff) <i>OR</i> Afterschool Essentials Certificate
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level II Certificate <i>OR</i> Current CDA credential <i>OR</i> 12 related college credits <i>OR</i> Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level IIIA Certificate <i>OR</i> Certificate of Completion of Registered Child Care Apprenticeship <i>OR</i> 21 related credits in at least two of the VT core knowledge areas <i>OR</i> CCV Child Care Certificate
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level IIIB Certificate <i>OR</i> Early Childhood Family Mental Health Credential <i>OR</i> Program Director Credential Step 3 <i>OR</i> Associates degree in a related field, or associates degree with 21 related credits in at least 3 VT core knowledge areas
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Level IVA Certificate <i>OR</i> Bachelor degree in related field <i>OR</i> Bachelor degree with 30 related college credits in at least three of the VT core knowledge areas
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Level IVB Certificate <i>OR</i> Educator license with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education or Early Childhood Special Education or Elementary Education <i>OR</i> For afterschool programs only: an educator license in any area of endorsement
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Level V or VI certificate <i>OR</i> Master's Degree or PhD in related field

Northern Lights Levels

Descriptions of the Early Childhood Career Ladder levels can be found on the Northern Lights at CCV website: <http://northernlightscv.org> under "Career Development"

College Degrees and Related Fields

To be eligible, the degree earned must reflect a major or concentration in one of the following fields:

- Early Childhood Education
- Child or Human Development
- Child and Family Studies (including home economics)
- Elementary Education
- Special Education

Related Credits

Related credits are college courses that must earn a grade of C- or higher and directly relate to one or more of the Early Childhood or Afterschool Core Knowledge Areas:

- Child and Youth Development
- Curriculum/Teaching and Learning
- Healthy and Safe Environments
- Partnering with Families and Communities
- Professionalism and Program Organization

Important note: All degrees and college coursework must be from an approved and accredited higher education institution. If you have any questions about this contact Northern Lights.

Chart B: Professional Development in the past year*

**The past year is defined as the year prior to receipt of your STARS application. For example, if your application is received in December 2019, we will consider professional development for the period December 2018–December 2019.*

Score	Professional Development Hours
1	11–13 hours
2	14–16 hours
3	17–19 hours
4	20–23 hours
5	3 credit college course

Required criteria for professional development:

- Training approved by Northern Lights at CCV, including online trainings.*
- Relevant to the person’s position or individual professional development plan (IPDP)
- Delivered by a qualified instructor who has demonstrated competence in the subject by being in the Northern Lights Instructor Registry, who has national recognition as an instructor, or whose position and qualifications are deemed appropriate by the STARS Coordinators.
- Documented. (Verified professional development and degree information in the individual’s BFIS account is strongly encouraged.)

**Possible exceptions:* Public school sponsored or affiliation-based trainings that meet these criteria as determined by the STARS Coordinators. If you have questions about whether a particular training qualifies, please contact the STARS Office.

Professional development formats accepted:

Workshops, classes, conference sessions, college coursework and formal mentoring relationships (*no more than one-third of the total annual hours counted may be mentor meetings or other individualized instruction.*)

Typical sponsors of professional development include:

Community Child Care Support Agencies, the Agency of Education, Head Start and Vermont Birth to Five. These and other approved trainings are listed in the Bright Futures Information System BFIS-Course Calendar.

Chart C: Experience working in Early Childhood Education or another related field

Length of Experience (does not have to be continuous)	Score
12 to 23 months	1
2 to 5 years	2
5 years or more	3

Related Fields

- Child or Human Development
- Child and Family Studies (including home economics)
- Elementary Education
- Special Education

Chart D: Conversion Table

If the staff member's total individual score is:	Their converted score is:
0–4	0
5–11	1
12–20	2
21–33	3

Chart E: Program Points

If the staff's average converted score is:	The program's point level in the arena is:
0–0.3	Not Rated
.31–1.3	1
1.31–2.3	2
2.31–3.0	3

Families and Community Arena for Afterschool Licensed Programs

1–3
POSSIBLE POINTS

Check *one* of the statements below and, if the second statement is checked, indicate the number of points requested. Clearly label all Families and Community documentation and attach to this section of the application.

NO POINTS REQUESTED

_____ **(#) POINTS REQUESTED.** Documentation submitted meets the criteria for the requested number of points.

1 POINT

Evidence to meet the Families and Communities Standards

- The program surveys families at least once a year, and uses information from the survey to improve the program. The survey includes questions on daily routines, curriculum, and program policies.
- A written philosophy regarding the relationship between the program and families, including the role of families in a child’s development and how programs support that role.
- The program has strategies to communicate with families, which they evaluate for efficacy.
- The program staff engages in professional networking activities. These are defined as activities where program staff has the opportunity to engage with other professionals in the field to share ideas, information, and professional knowledge.

What to submit for verification

- A blank sample of the family survey and a summary of the results of the survey.
- A written philosophy on parent/family relationships with the program.
- A description of three communication strategies and a summary of their effectiveness.
- A list of four networking activities (see Table A on page 17) including the date, activity, name of the activity organizer or contact, and staff attendee.

2 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Families and Communities Standards

- The program has met the criteria for one point.
- The program encourages families to be involved in the program.
- The program provides at least three events for families to meet program staff and other families each year. Two events can be social in nature, and one of the three events must address topics related to children and families.
- The program maintains connections with the community to support and advocate for children, families or the profession.

What to submit for verification

- The documentation for one point is submitted.
- A copy of the program policy describing how families are encouraged to be involved in the program. Typically this is addressed in the program handbook for families.
- The name, date and a brief description of each of the family events. Suggested documentation includes an event announcement, a family sign-up sheet, a photograph of the event, or an article describing the event.
- A list of at least three activities (see Table B on page 18) in which the program participated that supported maintaining connections with the community in support of families, children or the profession (see page 18 for example activities and evidence)

3 POINTS WITH A LEADERSHIP FOCUS

Evidence to meet the Families and Communities Standards

- The program has met the criteria for two points.
- The program has a written leadership philosophy that includes a description of leadership activities and how they are aligned with the leadership philosophy.
- The staff engages in leadership activities that support the childcare system and profession.

What to submit for verification

- The documentation for one and two points is submitted.
- A written leadership philosophy that includes a description of leadership activities and how they are aligned with the leadership philosophy.
- Documentation of six activities (Table C on page 19) where staff persons have engaged in leadership activities (see page 19 for examples).

3 POINTS WITH A STRENGTHENING FAMILIES FOCUS (instructions are on page 20)

Evidence to meet the Families and Communities Standards

- The program has met the criteria for two points.
- The program annually assesses their family strengthening practices using the Center for the Study of Social Policy Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment. *See page 20 for detailed instructions on completing this assessment.*
- The program creates an Action Plan that identifies and supports areas of strength and outlines an approach to addressing areas that need improvement.

What to submit for verification

- The documentation for one and two points is submitted.
- Completion of the Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment tool and a detailed description of the process used.
- A copy of the program's most-recent Action Plan.

Table A: Professional Networking

Date	Professional Networking Activity	Contact Person for Activity	Name of staff attendee(s)

Professional Networking Examples

Professional networking activities are defined as activities where program staff had the opportunity to engage face-to-face with other professionals in the field to share ideas, information, and knowledge.

- Provider or director network meetings
- Meetings with expert consultants, such as health consultants
- Families and Community related training
- Face-to-face mentoring (may count for up to two of the four activities)
- IEP Meetings, CIS Meetings
- Conference attendance
- Professional Development Training (as long as it is not being used to earn points on the Staff Qualifications Worksheet)

Table B: Community Support and Advocacy Activities

Date	Activity	Example	Evidence

Community Support and Advocacy Activities Examples

This list of examples is not exhaustive. If you have a question about an event or evidence to document your participation, call or email the STARS office for clarification at stars@mjcvt.org or (802) 398-2037.

Activity	Example	Evidence
Children in the program are involved in community service	Fundraise for charitable organization, donate to food shelf, participate in Green Up Day	Photo, written description, or article
Program participates in the CACFP		Copy of Day Care Home Application or online program agreement with AOE
Program staff receive formal mentoring	Apprenticeship, Vermont Birth to Five or VAEYC Quality Project mentoring	Copy of mentoring agreement or other verification from mentor agency
Children receive special services while attending the program	Service providers or special educators provide services to children while in attendance at the program	Meeting notes, description of services provided, sample dates and time of service
Participation in community activities on behalf of the program	Program participates in the community events like parades or Dabble Day.	Sign-up lists, planning meeting notes, photographs, narrative description, contact person
Attend recognition or advocacy events	Week of the Young Child, Let’s Grow Kids events or Alliance events, attend a conference	Copy of announcement, narrative description, photo

Table C: Leadership Documentation

Please list six activities and provide documentation. This is in addition to activities already noted for two points.

Date	Activity	Example	Evidence

Leadership Documentation Examples

The list of examples is not exhaustive. If you have a question about an event or evidence to document your participation, call or email the STARS office for clarification at stars@mjcvt.org or (802) 398-2037.

Activity	Example	Evidence
Attending meetings of statewide or national organization.	Attending VAEYC, VCCPA or other statewide meetings, NAEYC, NAFCC or other national conferences	Copy of conference registration confirmation or receipt of registration payment
Supporting the Profession	Presenting at a statewide or regional meeting, keynote or workshop training	Copy of agenda or workshop schedule
	Teaching a college level course	Copy of course syllabus or course description
	Participating in the Instructor Registry	Copy of Instructor certificate
	Providing formal mentoring, participating in the MATCH registry	Copy of mentor agreement or MATCH certificate
Participate in statewide committees reviewing state policies/practices/grants	STARS Oversight, Evaluation, Blue Ribbon Commission	Copy of meeting notes or agenda
Legislative Advocacy	Testifying before a committee, representing Let's Grow Kids at a community or legislative event	Description of activity, photo, article
Author a professional article		Copy of table of contents for publication, or first page of article
Organize or host a community event, collaboration or initiative	Starting points or directors network leader, host professional conference or community event	Copy of event announcement, meeting notes, description of activities, photo

These instructions should be used to complete the Strengthening Families Focus for three points in the Families and Community Arena. *Your report to STARS will include a detailed description of the self-assessment process you used and a copy of the action plan.*

Locating the program self-assessment tools

Visit the Center for the Study of Social Policy website at:

<https://cssp.org/resource/strengthening-families-self-assessment-for-center-based-early-care-and-education-programs/>

Completing the Self-Assessment

1. Create a self-assessment team that represents a number of different perspectives at your program. You will include parents, direct service staff and administrative staff, depending on the type of program that is conducting the self-assessment. Home providers need only include yourself and parents as instructed on the self-assessment form.
2. Each member of the team should fill out the self-assessment form individually.
3. The team convenes to share and compare assessments. Each team member should have the chance to explain why they gave the rating they did. The team will make a final decision based on broad input.

Completing the Action Plan

1. The team will identify areas where the program scored highly.
2. Create a sustainability plan to make sure those areas stay strong. Specify key reasons for success, what needs to be done to ensure continued strength and who will be responsible for maintaining successful outcomes in the area.
3. Highlight the areas that a majority of the team rated as needing improvement.
4. Decide whether the practices needing improvement should be addressed immediately, over time, or not at all.
5. For the items that the team decides should be addressed immediately, teams should brainstorm plans to improve associated area outcomes, specifying the expected results, all resources, a timeline, who is responsible, check-in points and how and when longer term action steps will be addressed/implemented.

We encourage participants to spend time learning about Strengthening Families by accessing information from the website, which is a rich resource for providers. The STARS office also provides technical assistance with this process and can be reached at stars@mjcvt.org or (802) 398-2037.

Program Practices Arena for Afterschool Licensed Programs

**1–5
POSSIBLE POINTS**

Check *one* of the statements below and, if the second statement is checked, indicate the number of points requested. Clearly label all Program Practices documentation and attach to this section of the application.

NO POINTS REQUESTED

_____ **(#) POINTS REQUESTED.** Documentation submitted meets the criteria for the requested number of points.

1 POINT

Evidence to meet the Program Practices Standards

The program completes a self-assessment using the appropriate tool below and writes a continuous quality improvement plan based on the findings. Staff members provide input for and receive feedback on the assessment and related plan.

Assessment Tool	Program Type
School Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA)	For programs with grades K–6
Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)	For programs with grades 4–12
Social Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA)	For programs that are already well-versed in the SAPQA or YPQA, the SEL PQA builds on those tools and is used to assess practices that support social and emotional learning

What to submit for verification

A continuous quality improvement plan based on findings from the self-assessment.

**For more information about using the PQA, see pages 27–29.*

2 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Program Practices Standards

The program completes a PQA self-assessment (see chart above) and writes a continuous quality improvement plan based on the findings. The program then works with an approved consultant who supports and guides the program in the implementation of its continuous

quality improvement plan. Staff members provide input for and receive feedback on the assessment and related plan. *Contact the STARS office to request a consultation with an approved consultant.*

What to submit for verification

- A continuous quality improvement plan based on findings from the self-assessment.
- A verification form from the approved consultant who worked with the program. (This is submitted to the STARS office by the consultant).

3 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Program Practices Standards

- The program has completed a continuous quality improvement plan using a Program Quality Assessment tool and works with an approved consultant to further refine and implement that plan. Staff members provide input during the evaluation process and receive feedback. *Contact the STARS office to request a consultation with an approved consultant.*
- The program creates a continuous quality improvement plan that includes three goals. One goal must address the Safe Environment domain and another must address the Supportive Environment domain. For each goal listed there should be 3 to 5 action steps, a timeline, and the name(s) of the staff responsible for the action steps.

What to submit for verification

- A written continuous quality improvement plan that includes three goals. One goal must address the Safe Environment domain and another must address the Supportive Environment domain. For each goal listed there should be 3 to 5 action steps, a timeline, and the name(s) of the staff responsible for those actions. (Documentation of the continuous quality improvement plan will be required annually to maintain the three point level in this arena.)
- A verification form from the approved consultant who worked with the program. (This is submitted to the STARS office by the consultant).

****For more information about using the PQA, see pages 27–29.***

4 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Program Practices Standards

- The program has completed a continuous quality improvement plan using a Program Quality Assessment tool and works with an approved consultant to further refine and implement that plan. Staff members provide input during the evaluation process and

receive feedback. *Contact the STARS office to request a consultation with an approved consultant.*

- The program creates a continuous quality improvement plan that includes three goals. One goal must address the Interaction domain and another must address the Engagement domain. For each goal listed there should be 3 to 5 action steps, a timeline, and the name(s) of the staff responsible for the action steps.

What to submit for verification

- A written continuous quality improvement plan that includes three goals. One goal must address the Interaction domain and another must address the Engagement domain. For each goal listed there should be 3 to 5 action steps, a timeline, and the name(s) of the staff responsible for those actions. (Documentation of the continuous quality improvement plan will be required annually to maintain the three point level in this arena.)
- A verification form from the approved consultant who worked with the program. (This is submitted to the STARS office by the consultant).

****For more information about using the PQA, see pages 27–29.***

5 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Program Practices Standards

- The program holds Council on Accreditation (COA) accreditation.

What to submit for verification

- A copy of Council on Accreditation (COA) accreditation.

Administration Arena for Afterschool Licensed Programs

**1–3
POSSIBLE POINTS**

Check *one* of the statements below and, if the second statement is checked, indicate the number of points requested. Clearly label all Administration documentation and attach to this section of the application.

NO POINTS REQUESTED

_____ **(#) POINTS REQUESTED.** Documentation submitted meets the criteria for the requested number of points.

1 POINT

Evidence to meet the Administration Standards

The program has an employee handbook detailing how professional development is supported and how IPDPs are incorporated into staff supervision. Staff members have opportunities to refine their skills through a system of regular feedback and guidance. The program's employee handbook details policies on hiring and firing, benefits, advancement, grievance, sexual harassment and reporting of child abuse or neglect.

What to submit for verification

- A policy demonstrating administrative support for development and implementation of IPDPs.
- A copy of a contract verifying benefits and salary scale.

2 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Administration Standards

- The program has met the criteria for one point.
- Staff members working five hours or more per shift have paid work breaks within the scheduled work day.
- Staff members responsible for planning curriculum are given at least one hour per week of paid planning time.
- Staff members receive at least two of the following benefits: paid vacation, paid sick days, paid personal time, paid professional time.

What to submit for verification

- The documentation for one point is submitted.
- A written policy on staff breaks, paid planning time, and paid vacation/sick days/personal time/professional time.

3 POINTS

Evidence to meet the Administration Standards

- The program has met the criteria for two points.
- Staff members are provided with written policies addressing a salary system that recognizes professional achievement.
- The median adjusted pay for all employees is at least 85% of Vermont’s livable wage for a “single person without employer paid health benefits.” This means that at least 50% of staff must make \$14.23 per hour or more.

What to submit for verification

- The documentation for one and two points is submitted.
- A copy of salary system.
- The completed Hourly Adjusted Wages Worksheet on page 26 or other documentation that at least 50% of staff earns an hourly adjusted wage that is equal to or greater than \$14.23 per hour. If the program meets the wage standard with salary alone, the worksheet is unnecessary.

APPENDIX

Implementing the Program Quality Improvement Process (YPQA and SAPQA)

What is the Program Quality Assessment (PQA)?

- The PQA is a validated instrument designed to assess the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. For more information, visit www.cypq.org
- The PQA is rooted in over 40 years of youth development practice and research.
- There are two versions of the tool: The Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) for grades 4–12 and the School Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) for grades K–6.
- The PQA focuses on the point of practice — how staff interact with children and youth.
- When using the PQA it is important to involve staff in all aspects of the assessment and planning process: doing observations, scoring the program, analyzing the data, and setting improvement goals.
- In order to best support authentic learning, growth, and program improvement, the PQA is meant to be used in a low-stakes process. It is important that staff feel safe in exploring their program practices together so that they can take an honest look at the program and have meaningful conversations about change and improvement.
- The correct way to use the PQA is to gather observations from different parts, times and days of the program and then bring all the evidence together to create one overall set of scores for the program as a whole.
- Before starting the assessment process, meet with staff to explain about the tool and the process. Be sure to share copies of the assessment tool with staff. If given time to look at and discuss what’s in the tool in a safe and supportive environment, staff often start to think about changes in program practices even before you start the assessment process. This is good!

Selecting Your Assessment Team

- Select 3–5 people to be on the assessment team and one team leader.
- Assessment leaders can be site managers, administrators, directors or site staff members.
- Assessment team members should include at least two program staff. This is a critical point. If only administrative staff are on the assessment team, it changes the nature of the process and makes it more high-stakes for staff.
- Other members of the assessment team could include: additional program staff, parents, volunteers, local evaluator, advisory board members, youth.
- Meet with your assessment team beforehand to review the tool, your process, and the observation schedule.

Doing Observations

- Have team members take turns observing programs in action.
- Try to schedule a total of at least 1 hour of observation, divided among team members in 15–20 minute chunks. Ideally, you will observe the elements of an entire program offering.
- The purpose of the observations is to gather evidence about the program. Observation notes should be objective and record only what observers see and hear in the program. Judgement and conjecture should be left out. Capturing direct quotes from both staff and students is extremely helpful when you get to the scoring process.
- Schedule observations of enrichment activities. Because the tool is looking at the point of practice, it is important to observe the program when staff are interacting with the children or youth. Do not schedule observations of homework help, recess, snack time, etc.
- Notify frontline staff of the observation. Do not make the observation time a surprise. Explain to the children or youth that there will be visitors in their programs.
- Be flexible in scheduling observations so that staff can take time out to observe each other.
- Plan a time for discussion and scoring as soon as possible following the observations.

Team-based Scoring Meeting

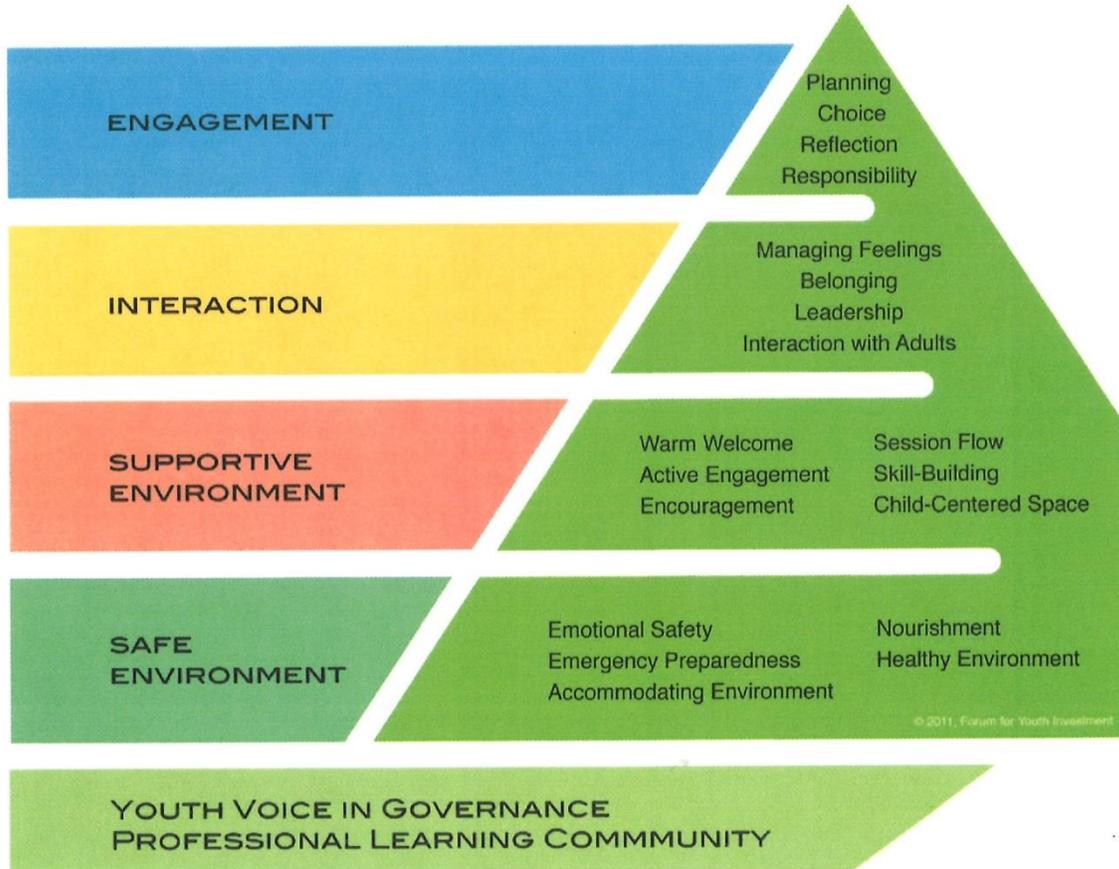
- Working through each section of the tool, discuss each item and row as a team.
- Have each team member present evidence from their observation notes. Start by asking if anyone has evidence that would support a “5” for that item. Then see if anyone has evidence that would support a “3” or a “1”.
- Together, select the best score for each item.
- Note contentious items as potential areas to focus on in your Improvement Plan.
- Plan at least 2–3 hours for this process (remember, the conversation is the most important part!)

Creating a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

- Set aside 1–2 hours to review your final scored assessment with the assessment team and staff.
- Create the story of your data:
 - What is the message or story of your data? What do the numbers tell you?
 - What’s missing from the data? What important things about the program quality do not come through?
 - Where are the gaps between what you want to provide and what the data says you’re providing?
- Set three improvement goals based on your data. If you purchased a Planning With Data Handbook from the Weikart Center, you can use their planning forms. Make sure your goals are specific and connected to items in the assessment.

- Develop action steps and timelines for each goal and assign who is responsible.
- Determine how you will monitor progress and outline any desired support.

Pyramid of Program Quality



Resources from the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

- Introduction Video (FREE): Overview of the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) and self-assessment process.
<http://cypq.org/introypgi>
- PQA Crash Course (90 minutes, FREE): You lead your staff through an overview of the instrument and process. Download agenda and slides at:
www.cypq.org/takeitback
- PQA and Planning with Data Handbooks: Information on every step of the process.
<https://store.cypq.org/collections/assess>
- Online PQA Basics and Planning with Data Courses (2-4 hours each/\$\$): Step-by-step training
<https://store.cypq.org/collections/online-courses>