indianaafterschool.org

Indiana Afterschool Specialty Standards

A Guide for High Quality Programs Serving Youth in Out-of-School Time

Literacy

INDIANA Afterschool NETWORK

IN Afterschool Standards and Specialty Standards

Purpose

The purpose of the Indiana Afterschool Standards is to outline the path and steps that lead to high quality youth programs that take place outside the school day. The afterschool standards are based on national research and best practices in the youth development and education fields. Standards revisions last occurred in 2021.

The IN Afterschool Standards and Specialty Standards are voluntary statewide standards that may serve as:

- A framework of clear expectations for all stakeholders.
- A guide to inform statewide decision-making, for example, professional development focus areas, funding support and advocacy.
- A guide for program providers to assess their own program site and organizations to help determine what they are doing well and what needs improvement.
- A guide for parents and youth to identify quality programming.
- A guide for school principals and district superintendents to reinforce and advance educational priorities.

Structure

1. Category
- Priority areas that helps organize all 38 standards
- Answers: What topics are needed for assessing program quality?

2. Standards
- Broad researched-based best practices in quality out-of-school programs
- Answers: What do we need to do?

3. Indicators
- Specific and detailed descriptions of the standard or best practice in quality out-of-school program
- Answers: How do we do that?

4. Standards-based Practices
- Evidence that can be observed in a high quality out-of-school program
- Answers: What does it look, sound, and feel like?

Introduction/Rationale for IN-QPSA Literacy Standards

Existing afterschool programs are expected to continually improve and new programs are expected to implement evidence-based practices from their inception. Given these demands, and the important role literacy plays in a child's future, literacy standards are an important addition to Indiana's Afterschool Standards.

The long term negative impacts of poor literacy skills on individuals and society are well known. For example, 70% of students with literacy problems in third grade will experience literacy problems in the ninth grade. Students who are poor readers in third grade are far more likely to drop out of high school than their peers. Moreover, it is estimated that low literacy levels cost $80 billion a year in lost worker productivity in America and $225 billion in unemployment benefits, lost taxes and crime. Additionally, research shows that reading score averages have not improved considerably over the past twenty years and there are achievement gaps related to both race and socio-economic status. Further, there are large discrepancies in access to books and reading materials among children of different races and socio-economic status levels. Struggling students need more time to read in order to improve their skills. Too often, the only extra time available to them is during afterschool programs. Many school-age children spend up to one-third of their waking hours in before-school and/or afterschool programs on weekdays.

Although afterschool programs alone are not the solution for addressing the above issues, there is evidence that suggest that afterschool programs can make a difference in improving literacy skills. It is also clear that programs must be intentional if they expect to make a difference. Afterschool programs that have positive effects on reading and language arts achievement share many of the following elements:

- Using sequenced activities;
- Employing active forms of learning;
- Focusing appropriate time on skill development;
- Creating inviting physical and social environments for reading and writing;
- Facilitating shared reading experiences;
- Reading aloud to and with participants;
- Conducting book discussions;
- Modeling and providing opportunities for story and literature dramatizations;
- Dedicating attention to language and vocabulary across all activities; and
- Ensuring that content and activities are aligned with the interests and experiences of children/youth;

As afterschool programs strive to include the program elements listed above, they should not attempt to simply replicate school-day literacy activities. Instead, afterschool programs should provide complementary experiences to those of the school day. For example, many students spend 30-60 minutes each day engaged in independent reading activities or using online reading programs while they are in school. Because students who attend afterschool programs often struggle with reading skills, these school-day activities can be challenging for them and make it hard for them to stay engaged for long periods of time. Afterschool programs, with creative programming and activity structure, can often provide opportunities for participants to read, discuss content, and identify new or challenging words with other children or small groups facilitated by adults. As one example of this, afterschool programs can recruit volunteers (e.g., high school or college students) and train them to read in pairs or small groups of students in order to build enthusiasm and provide positive reinforcement.

The Council of Chief State School Officers recognizes the role of afterschool programs in enhancing educational opportunities for children/youth and that state leaders can take steps to develop high quality programs that enhance linkages to state educational standards. States should outline the path to high-quality programs by stating the goals they expect their programs to meet and by developing standards tied to those goals. Because literacy is an important life-skill, literacy is also an important measure of student and afterschool program achievement.

Indiana Quality Program Self-Assessment (IN-QPSA)

Purpose

Indiana Quality Program Self-Assessment (IN-QPSA) is an online strengths-based self-assessment tool that enables youth programs to rate their performance based on the Indiana Afterschool Standards and Specialty Standards.

Function

- Choose which standards you want to assess.
- Rate how well your program meets each standard.
- Start the assessment and complete over time.
- Use online or print stakeholder surveys.
- Generate automated reports for organization and/or program site(s).
- Generate an automated action plan.
- Track your program results over time and compare progress.

Benefit

The IN-QPSA can help OST programs:

1. Identify and understand the factors that support or inhibit top performance.
2. Use data to drive decisions.
3. Take action and make positive changes.
4. Continue to grow, learn and improve.
5. Maximize positive impact for staff, youth, families and community partners.

Infrastructure

Online System Functionality

- 2 Self-Assessments
  - Indiana Afterschool Standards
  - Specialty Standards
    - College & Career Readiness
    - Family Engagement
    - Literacy
    - Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
    - STEM
    - Summer Learning
    - Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- 4 Stakeholder Surveys and more to come!
  - Parent, Youth, Community Partner and Staff
- Multiple Automated Reports
  - Program Site & Organization Aggregate
  - Comparison Reports
- Program Quality Improvement Action Plan

Recognition of Pledge To Quality

Each program site and/or organization that successfully completes the Indiana Quality Program Self-Assessment (IN-QPSA) will receive:

1. Indiana Afterschool Quality Leader Digital Badge
2. Specialty Standards Badges, as applicable, which serve to recognize some learning or accomplishment. This is not a credential—it is a symbol of accomplishment that can be used for communicating or marketing quality efforts. These special badges communicate that your program/organization has aligned your practices and programs to the IN Afterschool Standards or Specialty Standards

Pledge to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

At the core of quality programs is the ability to effectively serve diverse children and youth. As such, the Indiana Quality Program Self-Assessment (IN-QPSA) includes elements to assess and help programs reflect on their ability to create environments where all children/youth and families feel valued and welcomed. For a deeper dive into assessing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in your program, please refer to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Specialty Standards.

To Get Started: https://myian.indianaafterschool.org

Specialty Standard Badge

The Rating Scale

The Indiana Quality Program Self-Assessment Tool uses the following rating scale to help you and your team assess the degree to which each quality indicator is evident in the program. The definitions outlined below are to help guide the reviewers' understanding of the numeric ratings.

4 = Excellent/ Exceeds Standard

EXCEEDS STANDARD means that the program is exceptional or outstanding in this area because it implements nearly all or all of the Standards-Based Practices for this indicator. The relevant Standards-Based Practices are demonstrated in clearly observable ways.

3 = Good/Meets Standards

MEETS STANDARD means that the program executes many of the Standards-Based Practices. The rater can generate examples of how and when the program executes these specific practices. This is an area the program executes well.

2 = Some Progress Made/Approaching Standard

APPROACHING STANDARD means that the program is working toward executing Standards-Based Practices, but is currently only implementing a few of them. The program may benefit from targeted assistance in order to implement more of the Standards-Based Practices.

1 = Must Address and Improve/Standard Not Met

STANDARD NOT MET means that the program is not currently implementing any of the Standards-Based Practices and requires significant support in this area. There is a need for significant support to get on track to address this indicator.

NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

This rating indicates that the program is not familiar enough with this indicator to rate performance or is just not sure how to rate it at this time. This rating could also mean that the indicator simply does not apply to the site or program.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

PROGRAM CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

STANDARD 1: THE PROGRAM CREATES LITERACY RICH ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL YOUTH

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

1a. Comfortable spaces are designed for youth to participate in group and independent reading/writing activities.

- Literacy space is accessible to all youth, including youth with disabilities.
- Staff encourage students to identify a personal space to read independently.
- Literacy space allows groups to read together.
- Staff efficiently supervise to ensure all youth have an appropriate environment for focused reading.

1b. Visual displays encourage reading and writing and reflect the cultures of the youth in the program.

- Youth are encouraged to design displays to celebrate favored books and writing.
- Staff post notices that encourage youth to read.
- Staff post notices of diverse books that have been added to the literacy collection.
- Noteworthy magazine articles, news clipping and book jackets, etc. are displayed and discussed.
- Staff encourage youth to discuss and question the displays

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

PROGRAM CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT:

STANDARD 2: THE PROGRAM REGULARLY AND INTENTIONALLY COLLABORATES WITH FAMILIES AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT LITERACY

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

2a. The program engages families in a variety of ways.

- There is evidence of regular communication between the program and home regarding varied at-home literacy activities
- There is evidence that families are informed of upcoming family-focused community activities related to literacy.
- Themes, activities and suggestions for home and community activities are posted at the program site.

2b. The program engages with school staff and the broader community to promote literacy among youth.

- Staff interacts regularly with classroom teachers or district literacy leaders to gain knowledge of student growth and needs.
- The program collaborates with school teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to share resources.
- The program collaborates with school teachers and administrators to learn current trends and best practices around how to build literacy skills in youth.
- The program partners with literacy rich institutions (e.g. Museums, Libraries, Arts, and community organizations) to enhance youth's literacy experiences.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND EXPECTATIONS

STANDARD 3: THE PROGRAM PROVIDES ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT LITERACY

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

3a. The program integrates literacy development into staff trainings and broader program goals.

- Staff meeting agendas regularly include literacy development content.
- Staff receive training about age appropriate, interest-based, diverse text sources using different learning modalities.
- Staff have opportunities to observe and to practice ways to integrate age and interest appropriate literacy enriching activities.
- Indiana Academic Standards for Literacy are embedded in professional development activities.
- Opportunities to collaborate with external partners to gain additional skills are regularly provided.

3b. The program provides varied text sources.

- Staff provide grade-level appropriate literacy text options that are diverse and reflect the cultures of the youth in the program.
- Staff have opportunities to review varied text sources to determine appropriate fit for youth.
- Dedicated funding ensures new literacy resources are provided annually and are replaced as needed.

3c. The program provides staff development focused on strategies to engage reluctant readers.

- Staff understand the difference between reluctant readers and struggling readers.
- Staff talk to children/youth about their interests to help them match interest to text.
- Staff provide varied sources of text from which students can choose.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

PROGRAM FOCUS

STANDARD 4: THE PROGRAM PROVIDES FICTION AND INFORMATIONAL TEXT ACROSS GRADE LEVELS.

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

4a. The program provides a variety of grade level appropriate fiction and informational text.

- Varied texts are clearly organized by reading levels and are easily accessible to youth.
- The program utilizes varied text sources to encourage exploration.
- The program utilizes varied text sources that reflect current events and content that is relevant and of interest to youth.
- Staff utilize information from teachers, families, and interest inventories to provide choice of text options to youth.
- Staff provide grade-level, multicultural options that reflect the diversity of society.
- Staff meet regularly with youth for quick book talks to determine if the text is a good fit.

4b. Youth know the routines for choosing and returning text.

- Staff demonstrate and/or review expectations for choosing/returning text.
- Staff effectively support youth who require reminders about the procedures.
- Staff recognize and appreciate youth for meeting expectations.

4c. Staff engage with children/youth to determine varied text sources of interest.

- Staff provide multiple examples of text sources such as online newspapers and magazines, themed text sets, bibliographies, predictable text, wordless books, and poetry.
- Staff share information on text sources they enjoy in order to establish a literacy dialogue with children and youth.

4d. Staff use varied sources to learn more about youth's reading preferences in order to provide appropriate text.

- Staff regularly talk to youth to identify additional interest-based text sources.
- Family surveys include questions related to youth's reading interests and the frequency with which families read with/to their child.
- Staff seek out school librarians as sources of information.
- Youth complete interest surveys at least twice a year.
- Staff redirect youth to other text options if their interest in their current text is waning.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

PROGRAM FOCUS

STANDARD 5: STAFF USE EFFECTIVE READ ALOUD STRATEGIES TO GAIN AND MAINTAIN ATTENTION.

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

5a. Staff prepare in advance for read alouds with beginning readers.

- Staff practice fluency and voice (intonation).
- Staff identify and are prepared to define unfamiliar words.
- Staff mark places in the text to demonstrate "think out louds".
- Staff mark places in the text to make connections to self or to former readings.
- Staff model questioning (e.g., "I wonder why…? ").
- Staff offer opportunities for youth to "think, pair, share."

5b. Staff support youth in making predictions prior to read-aloud.

- Staff define and model predicting skills.
- Staff engage youth in discussions of what title and pictures might mean.
- Staff lead picture walks to help youth to begin to construct meaning.
- Staff introduce and define unfamiliar words

5c. Staff reads aloud fluently, pausing frequently to check for understanding and questioning.

- Staff use effective intonation to maintain youths' interest.
- Staff demonstrate think-out-loud and questioning the text.
- Staff pause and encourage children to make connections to the text.
- Staff pause and encourage children to ask questions.
- Staff recognize when youth are restless and use alternative activities to re-engage.

5d. Staff utilize read aloud books that reflect the diversity of the youth and community.

- Staff choose text that have protagonists that reflect diverse race, genders, ethnicities, backgrounds and abilities
- Staff avoid text with a tokenizing portrayal of characters.
- Staff introduce youth to text that has messaging around acceptance and embracing difference.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

PROGRAM FOCUS:

STANDARD 6: STAFF PROVIDE ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO WRITE THROUGH A VARIETY OF STRATEGIES.

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

6a. Staff effectively demonstrate fluency in writing.

- Staff demonstrate how to use pictures for storytelling for beginning writers.
- Staff demonstrate how to use picture prompts for writing stories.
- Staff demonstrates how and when to reply to varied writing prompts.

6b. Staff encourage youth to become thoughtful writers.

- Staff encourage youth to summarize text.
- Staff encourage youth to write for varied purposes: persuasive, descriptive, narrative, response.
- Staff encourage youth to share their writing with one another.
- Staff provide ongoing opportunities for youth to write.

6c. Staff provide positive feedback on writing by youth.

- Staff read writing produced by youth on a regular basis.
- Staff talk with youth about their writing periodically, focusing on successes.
- Staff post the writing products of youth at the program site.
- Periodically, staff provide written feedback for youth.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

PROGRAM FOCUS:

STANDARD 7: STAFF USE A VARIETY OF STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH TO DEMONSTRATE COMPREHENSION OF TEXT.

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

7a. Staff effectively model varied strategies that readers can use to demonstrate understanding of informational and fictional texts.

Beginning Readers:

- Staff "set the stage" by previewing the text and asking youth to make predictions.
- Staff read with small groups, pausing frequently to question the text.
- Staff lead small group discussions to identify main ideas and key details.
- Staff encourage turn-taking reading: i.e. staff reads a portion, youth read a portion.
- Staff support youth when they get stuck on unknown words
- Staff encourage participation in "turn and talk" opportunities for youth to share their thinking.
- Staff offer choices for youth to demonstrate their understanding of text: i.e. draw it, talking stick groups, Know, Wonder, Learn (KWL) group work charts.

Independent Readers:

- Staff encourage youth to identify text of interest.
- Staff encourage youth to form book groups to discuss text to text, and text to self-connections.
- Staff encourage readers to question the text.
- Staff encourage readers to identify and discuss questions they have about the text.
- Staff lead small group discussions, encouraging youth to share thoughts, ideas, and/or facts from their reading.
- Staff encourage youth to make text to self, text to text, and/or text to world connections

7b. Staff support youths' active participation in literacy discussions.

- During activities, youth are actively engaged in discussions and seem excited about the topics.
- Staff monitor discussions to ensure all voices are heard and respected in large group, small group or pair discussions.
- Staff demonstrate respectful ways to question peers about their thinking.
- Staff use known signals to regain youths' attention.

Rating	4	3	2	1	NA
Scale Description	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Standard Not Met	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
Program might say:	*"We are a leader in this."*	*"We demonstrate this in observable ways."*	*"We could use some support here."*	*"We need significant support in this."*	*"We're not sure." or "This doesn't pertain to our program."*

DATA COLLECTION AND IMPACT

STANDARD 8: THE PROGRAM UTILIZES DATA TO PLAN AND MEASURE THE IMPACT OF LITERACY PROGRAMMING.

AVERAGE INDICATOR RATING

INDICATOR RATING

8a. The program has a written plan for literacy programming that includes established goals.

- An annual literacy action plan, describing program goals for the year, is designed in collaboration with staff, board, families, and youth; or literacy goals are included in program-wide action plan.
- Milestones included in the action plan are time-focused and aligned with measurement strategies.
- Measurement of progress toward goals is conducted at least annually and progress is shared with stakeholders.

8b. Program administrators assist with evaluation of literacy programming, with a focus on continual improvement.

- Evaluation data are collected at least annually, including input from participants, families, teachers, and program staff.
- Results of the evaluation are shared with all stakeholders, including the board, at least annually.
- An annual improvement plan is developed, based on the evaluation results; the improvement plan includes goals, timelines, action steps, and persons responsible

Indiana Afterschool Literacy Standards

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NOTES

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