

**Camp Program Quality Assessment Short Form Checklist**

**C-PQA Staff Best Practices**

Staff friendliness and Circulation

- Staff mainly use a warm tone of voice and respectful language
- Staff generally smile, use friendly gestures, and make eye contact
- When campers approach them, staff are attentive and responsive to campers
- Staff circulate (and spread out if multiple staff) to interact with every camper (in groups or individually) at some point during every activity.
- Staff interact one-on-one at least once with every (or almost every) camper during every activity.
- Staff are actively involved with campers (e.g., they provide directions, answer questions, work as partners or team members, check in with individuals or small groups).

Emotional Safety

- Staff show respect for all campers and insists that campers show respect for each other (e.g., use kind words, take turns, help each other).
- Staff address any incidents in which a camper or campers are made fun of.
- Campers seem like they feel free to be themselves.
- When there is a conflict or an incident involving strong feelings, staff ask about and/or acknowledge the feelings of the campers involved. Adults ask campers what happened.
- When strong feelings are involved, staff consistently help campers respond appropriately (e.g., staff encourage campers to brainstorm possible solutions, take time to “cool off,” find an appropriate physical outlet, etc.)

Support for Belonging

Throughout their camp experience, youth take part in many activities designed to help them feel a sense of belonging. These activities may include (should have a minimum of 3 in every activity):

- Individual welcomes
- Group welcomes
- Introductions
- Verbal icebreakers
- Physical icebreakers
- Challenge/problem-solving games
- Communication games
- Trust games
- Get-to-know-you games
- Self-awareness activities
- Name games
- Reflection/planning activities
- Partner activities

High Expectations and Good Challenge

- All campers are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance
- Staff provide intentional opportunities for development of specific skills (as opposed to activities with just a recreation or ‘having fun’ focus) for all campers in the session
- Campers seem challenged (in a good way) by the activities.
- Activities are appropriately challenging (not too easy, not too hard) for all or nearly all of the campers; there is little or no evidence of boredom or frustration on the part of campers.
- There is sufficient time for all of the activities (e.g., campers do not appear rushed, frustrated, bored, or distracted; most campers finish activities).
- Staff members use questions effectively with campers

- Staff frequently ask challenging questions (i.e., questions that make campers think, require more than a quick answer, etc.)

#### Active and Cooperative Learning

- Campers have opportunities for their brains to be active. This may or may not include hands-on or physical activities—but should include cognitive activities. This may include:
  - Hands-on activities
  - Problem-solving
  - Tangible products
  - Simulations
  - Games with a purpose
  - Abstract ideas and concrete experiences
  - Deliberate practice on a skill
  - Opportunities to express creatively
  - Opportunities to build with materials
- Campers have the experience of collaborating with others. Activities include opportunities for campers to work toward shared goals and to have interdependent tasks (i.e., campers have different tasks or roles that come together for a task or project).

#### Camper Voice

- Campers have a say in how they spend their time at camp and during activities
- All campers have the opportunity to make at least one open-ended choice within activities (e.g., campers decide roles, tools or materials, topics within a given subject area, subtopics, or aspects of a given topic)
- Staff actively encourage campers to take an activity in a new or unplanned direction (e.g., staff says, “Can you guys think of a better way to do this or how we might change this activity to make it more interesting or challenging?”; Staff supports campers’ suggestions/responses).
- Staff share control of most activities with campers, providing guidance and facilitation while retaining overall responsibility (e.g., staff use youth leaders, semiautonomous small groups, or individually guided activities.)

#### Planning and Reflection

- Campers have multiple opportunities to make individual or group plans for projects and activities (e.g., Written or sketched plan for a building project, verbal plans about an art project, staff asks, “What is your plan?”).
- There is a specific time or times for planning during the session routine.
- Campers have opportunities to look back on things they are doing and make learning connections
- All campers are engaged in an intentional process of reflecting on what they are doing or have done (e.g., writing in journals; reviewing minutes; sharing progress, accomplishments, or feelings about the experience).
- Activities involve structured times in which staff ask campers debrief questions (e.g., questions that ask campers about the experiences they had in the activity).

#### Nature (may be optional)

- Campers have multiple opportunities to experience and explore outdoor areas.
- Camp activities utilize natural and outdoor settings
- Campers have fun in nature.
- Staff are enthusiastic when outdoors with campers.
- Staff informally discuss and explore natural topics with campers. Staff encourage campers to experience nature with their senses—to touch, see, taste, smell, and hear nature.

(From ACA CPQA website: <http://www.acacamps.org/camp2grow/camp-quality-assessment>)