Rochester After-School Academy
21st Century Community Learning Centers
2009-2010 Program Quality Assessment

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Introduction

Children's Institute contracted with the City of Rochester Department of Recreation and Youth Services to conduct an evaluation of the Rochester After-School Academy (RASA) 21st Century Community Learning Center program.

This report provides results of the program quality evaluation, which involved these elements:

o Data collection using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA), which measures the quality of after-school youth programs, identifies training needs of staff, defines levels of program quality, and prescribes standards-based steps for program quality improvement. A sample of 15 program offerings was assessed by trained master observers using the Youth PQA during the months of March through May 2010.

o Provision of introductory Youth PQA training to program staff to support their understanding of program quality standards, observation results, and use of this information for program planning.

o Distribution of individual reports from the Youth PQA observations to program staff within 10 business days, allowing real-time data-based decisions affecting program quality. Provision of aggregate analyses and report of results after completion of data collection in support of overall reporting and decision-making by program leadership.

Program Observations

Program observations were conducted at four high schools. Each school had a community-based organization responsible for providing the after-school programs. The Center for Youth provided the programs at East High School; Puerto Rican Youth Development provided the programs at Edison High School; the Community Place of Greater Rochester provided the programs at Freddie Thomas High School; and Edgerton Community Center of the City Recreation Bureau provided the programs at Thomas Jefferson High School.

Program observations occurred in the months of March through May 2010. Program offerings were observed one time using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA, HighScope Educational Research Foundation). The observations were completed in approximately two hours and were followed by a brief interview with the program staff in order to score indicators that were not observed. Scoring of the measure was completed off-site and required approximately one additional hour. The Master Observers submitted the observation score sheets to Children's Institute within two business days. Within five days, the score sheet was reviewed for accuracy and processed. A report was generated and returned to the program staff members who were observed, along with a photocopy of the score sheet. Staff members were able to immediately access observation feedback and use the information to affirm and promote good practice, and to identify areas for improvement and goal setting.

Program Observation Process

- The Master Observer contacts the program staff member to schedule an observation date.

- The program observation occurs (2 hours).

- The observer(s) conducts an interview (10-15 minutes) with program staff member(s) immediately after the observation to obtain information not evident during observation.

- The observer(s) completes the score sheet and submits it to Children's Institute for processing.

- The project coordinator reviews the score sheet for accuracy, following up with the observer as necessary.

- The score sheet is checked again for accuracy by a data clerk, and the information is entered into the database. A summary report is produced.

- A photocopy of the original score sheet and summary report are mailed directly to the program staff member.

- The program staff member reviews the information and shares it with his or her supervisor (optional).

- If a program staff member disagrees with any item(s) in the report and wants to address this formally, he or she may initiate a collaborative review process (outlined below).

Collaborative Review Process

As part of the classroom observation process using the Youth PQA, Children's Institute provides a review opportunity, so that if any program staff member believes that the report does not accurately represent the program, there is a formal method to address the issue. Program staff members are welcome and encouraged to raise questions they have about the score of any of the quality indicators.

1. After an observation is complete, the independent observer returns the completed score sheet to Children's Institute for processing. Copies of the score sheet and summary report are returned directly to the program staff member, accompanied by a cover letter that serves as a guide in reviewing the report. Included in this letter is an invitation to contact the project coordinator if the program staff member feels a score does not accurately represent the program.

2. If a program staff member disagrees with the scoring of any item(s) and wishes to address this formally, he or she contacts the project coordinator to obtain a Collaborative Review Request Form. Using this form, the staff member outlines the details of the item(s) in question and provides additional supporting information. This must be submitted within 15 days of receipt of the original score sheet.

3. Upon receipt of the Collaborative Review Request, the project coordinator reviews the information provided by the staff member, consults the independent observer who completed the observation, and conducts a detailed re-examination of each quality indicator score. After consideration of these references, a determination is made as to whether any items are to be scored differently.

4. In a detailed letter to the program staff member, the project coordinator formally addresses each questioned indicator and whether the indicator score has been changed. A revised copy of the score sheet is returned with any applicable adjusted scores as well as a new summary report.

5. If scores are revised, they are entered into the database.

6. If the staff member remains dissatisfied with the results of the process thus far, the project coordinator will arrange for a second independent observer to conduct a complete observation and submit a formal report.

There was one formal collaborative review request from program staff during the observation period.

Partner Development

Introductory Youth PQA Training

All program and administrative staff members were invited to attend an Introductory Training session where they were introduced to the Youth PQA. The session provided an in-depth overview of the scale and the observation process. Participants learned observation and scoring techniques, discussed the benefits of using the scale in program assessment and quality improvement processes, and reviewed the observation process and overall logistics. Program staff members were encouraged to complete a self-assessment on their program as part of their familiarization with the scale. *Ten program staff members and administrators participated in the introductory training session.*

Master Observer Training

Master observers were selected based on their experience in youth programming, program observation, and interest in participating. The training included a fifteen-hour program in the first year of participation. Knowledge of the scale, refinement of observation skills, inter-rater reliability standards, logistics of the observation process, observation guidelines, and protocol were studied in depth.

Master observers were trained to attain and maintain a high level of inter-rater reliability (a/a+d>.85). For observers beginning a second year of training and in each subsequent year, an additional training of four to five hours was required. *Nine master observers conducted the 15 observations, five of which were co-observed.*

Quality of RASA 21st Century After-School Programs

Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA)

The Youth PQA was developed by HighScope Educational Research Foundation (2005). The tool is a landmark in the emerging field of youth program quality assessment, in terms of both its validity and reliability. The measure is scored through program observations and focuses on the experiences of youth, using rubrics for scoring. Each of the four subscales contains three to six items for a total of 18 items. Each item contains two to six indicator rows for a total of 60 indicator rows. Each indicator row is scored 1, 3, or 5 with 1 representing low quality and 5 representing high quality. The indicator row scores are averaged to determine the item's score. The item scores are then averaged to find the subscale score. Independent, well-trained master observers rated the quality of RASA programs measuring four subscales, consisting of the following items:

I. Safe Environment

    A. Psychological and emotional safety is promoted.
    B. The physical environment is safe and free of health hazards.
    C. Appropriate emergency procedures and supplies are present.
    D. Program space and furniture accommodate the activities offered.
    E. Healthy food and drinks are provided.

II. Supportive Environment

    F. Staff provide a welcoming atmosphere.
    G. Session flow is planned, presented, and paced for youth.
    H. Activities support active engagement.
    I. Staff support youth in building new skills.
    J. Staff support youth with encouragement.
    K. Staff use youth-centered approaches to reframe conflict.

III. Interaction

    L. Youth have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging.
    M. Youth have opportunities to participate in small groups.
    N. Youth have opportunities to act as group facilitators and mentors.
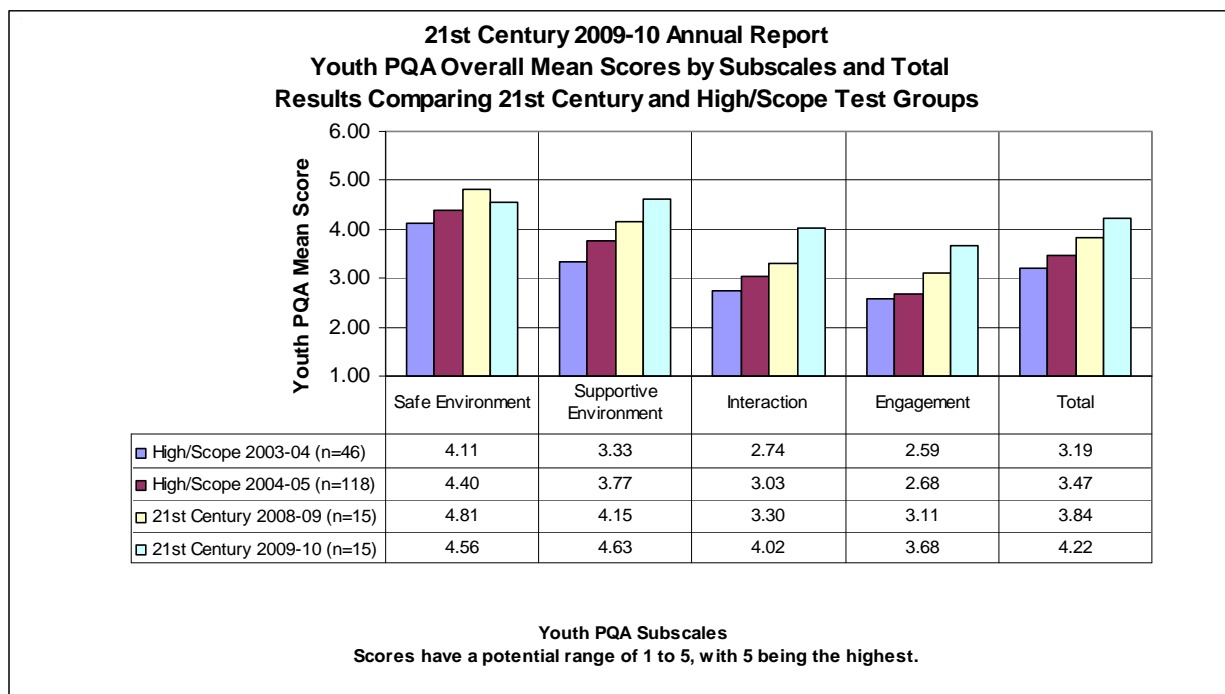   O. Youth have opportunities to partner with adults.

IV. Engagement

    P. Youth have opportunities to set goals and make plans.
    Q. Youth have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.
    R. Youth have opportunities to reflect.

Scores by Subscale

Youth PQA scores from 2009-10 RASA 21st Century programs, and, for comparison purposes, HighScope's reported results for two test groups, are shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, below.

Table 1					
2009-10 21st Century and 2003-05 HighScope Reported Results[1] **Overall Youth PQA Scores[2]**					
Subscale	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
2009-10 21st Century					
Safe Environment	15	4.56	0.33	3.67	4.90
Supportive Environment	15	4.63	0.38	3.56	5.00
Interaction	15	4.02	0.93	2.12	5.00
Engagement	15	3.68	0.96	1.83	5.00
Total – 4 Subscales	15	4.22	0.50	3.33	4.81
2003-04 H/S Test Group					
Safe Environment	46	4.11	0.92	1.00	5.00
Supportive Environment	46	3.33	0.85	1.87	4.78
Interaction	46	2.74	1.03	1.00	5.00
Engagement	46	2.59	0.99	1.00	4.67
Total – 4 Subscales	46	3.19	0.79	1.63	4.49
2004-05 H/S Test Group					
Safe Environment	118	4.4	0.62	1.00	5.00
Supportive Environment	118	3.77	0.83	1.68	5.00
Interaction	118	3.03	0.9	1.00	4.83
Engagement	118	2.68	1.11	1.00	5.00
Total – 4 Subscales	118	3.47	0.66	2.05	4.77
[1]The HighScope Educational Research Foundation is the author of the Youth PQA measure. The HighScope Test group's results were reported in the Youth PQA Administration Manual, published by HighScope Press 2005. [2]Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest.					

Figure 1. Comparing RASA 21st Century and HighScope Scores by Subscale

21st Century 2009-10 Annual Report
Youth PQA Overall Mean Scores by Subscales and Total
Results Comparing 21st Century and High/Scope Test Groups

	Safe Environment	Supportive Environment	Interaction	Engagement	Total
High/Scope 2003-04 (n=46)	4.11	3.33	2.74	2.59	3.19
High/Scope 2004-05 (n=118)	4.40	3.77	3.03	2.68	3.47
21st Century 2008-09 (n=15)	4.81	4.15	3.30	3.11	3.84
21st Century 2009-10 (n=15)	4.56	4.63	4.02	3.68	4.22

Youth PQA Subscales
Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.

When comparing the RASA 21st Century scores to the HighScope Study scores in Figure 1 above, the RASA scores for all of the subscales were notably greater than the HighScope 2003-04 and the 2004-05 study results. However, in comparing RASA 21st Century scores this year to those reported last year, there was a slight decrease of .25 in scoring on the Safe Environment subscale. The 2009-10 RASA 21st Century data show higher scores across the other subscales compared to the prior year.

Scores by Agency

Figures 2 through 7 present Youth PQA results disaggregated by location.

Figure 2. Overall Score for all Subscales Combined
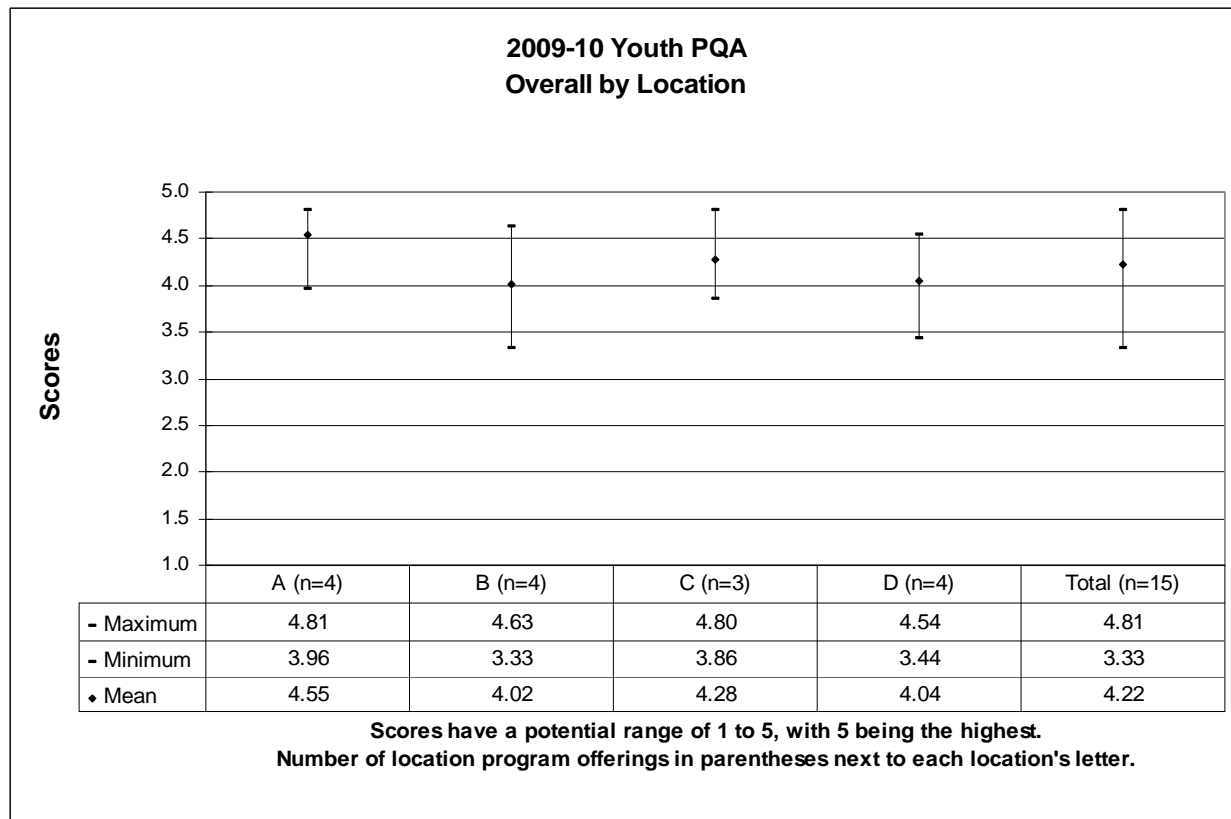
2009-10 Youth PQA
Overall by Location

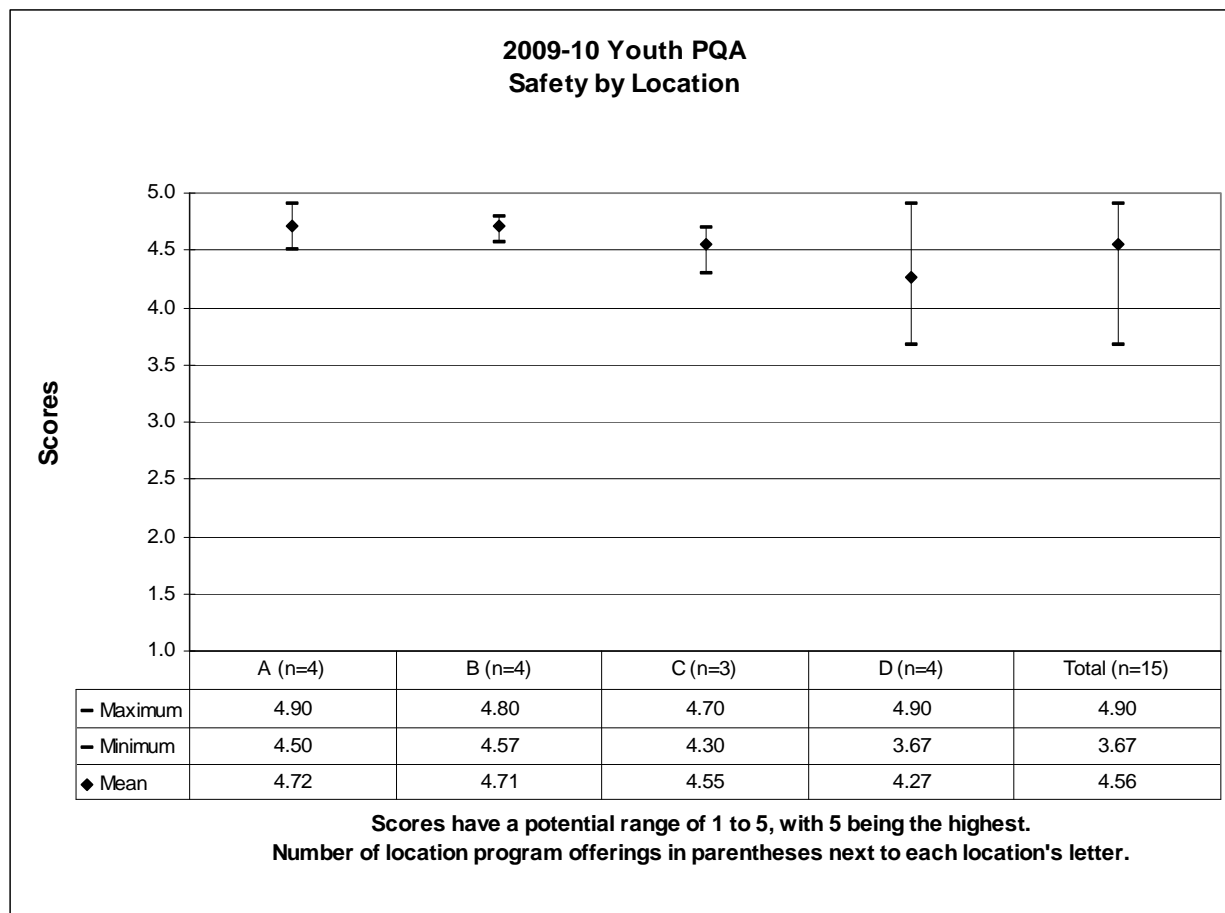|	A (n=4)	B (n=4)	C (n=3)	D (n=4)	Total (n=15)
- Maximum	4.81	4.63	4.80	4.54	4.81
- Minimum	3.96	3.33	3.86	3.44	3.33
♦ Mean	4.55	4.02	4.28	4.04	4.22

Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.
Number of location program offerings in parentheses next to each location's letter.

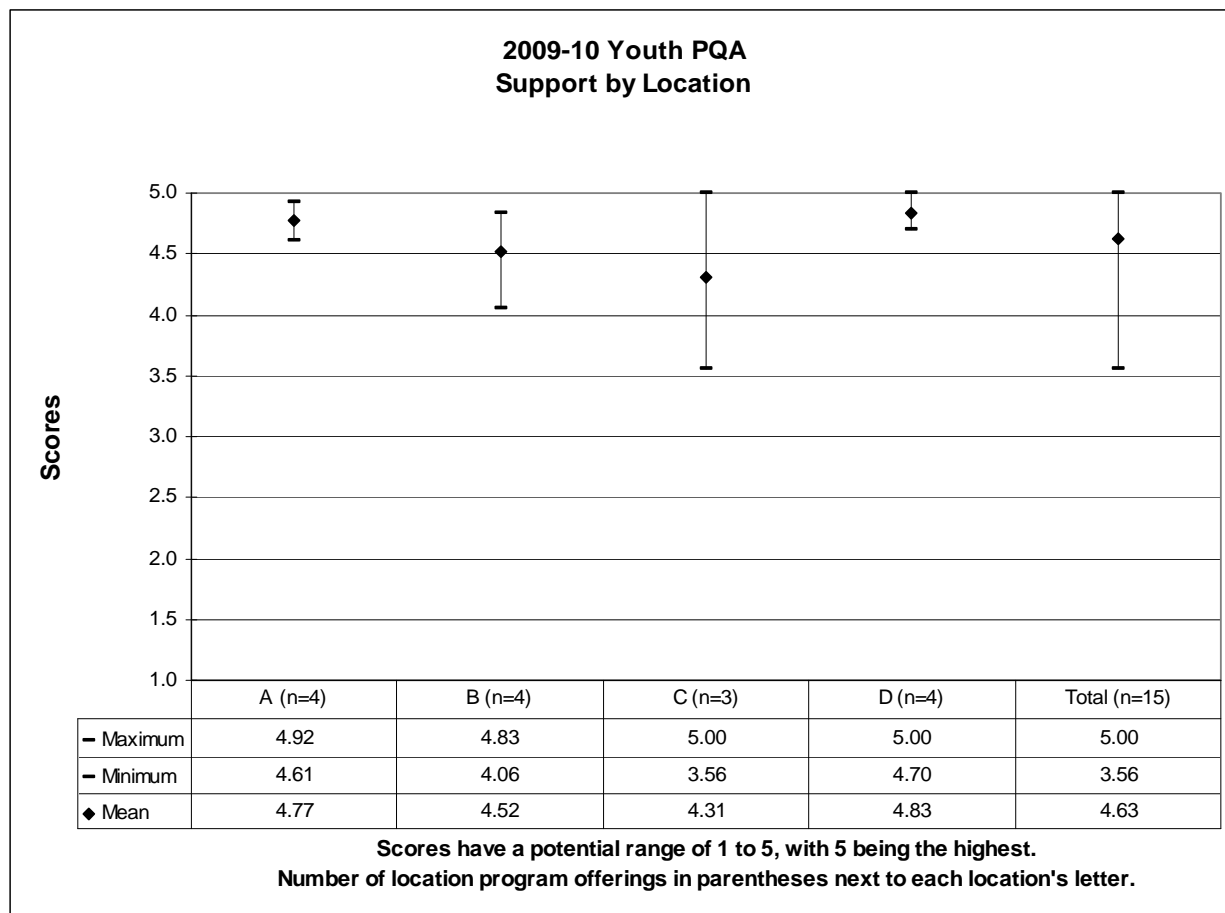| Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Location						
Score Range	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**Total**	**Percent**
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
3-3.9	1	1	1	2	5	33.3%
4-4.9	3	3	2	2	10	66.7%
5.0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	4	4	3	4	15	100.0%

Note: In order to maintain the confidentiality of individual programs, agencies are identified in this report with letters (e.g. "A"). RASA program administration receives program identifiers under separate cover for effective decision-making in support of maintaining program strengths and planning relevant program improvements based on Youth PQA quality indicators.

Figure 3. Safe Environment Subscale

2009-10 Youth PQA
Safety by Location

	A (n=4)	B (n=4)	C (n=3)	D (n=4)	Total (n=15)
– Maximum	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.90	4.90
– Minimum	4.50	4.57	4.30	3.67	3.67
◆ Mean	4.72	4.71	4.55	4.27	4.56

Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.
Number of location program offerings in parentheses next to each location's letter.

Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Location						
Score Range	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**Total**	**Percent**
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
3-3.9	0	0	0	1	1	6.7%
4-4.9	4	4	3	3	14	93.3%
5.0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	4	4	3	4	15	100.0%

Figure 4. Supportive Environment Subscale

2009-10 Youth PQA
Support by Location

	A (n=4)	B (n=4)	C (n=3)	D (n=4)	Total (n=15)
▬ Maximum	4.92	4.83	5.00	5.00	5.00
▬ Minimum	4.61	4.06	3.56	4.70	3.56
◆ Mean	4.77	4.52	4.31	4.83	4.63

Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.
Number of location program offerings in parentheses next to each location's letter.

Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Location						
Score Range	A	B	C	D	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
3-3.9	0	0	1	0	1	6.7%
4-4.9	4	4	1	3	12	80.0%
5.0	0	0	1	1	2	13.3%
Total	4	4	3	4	15	100.0%

Figure 5. Interaction Subscale
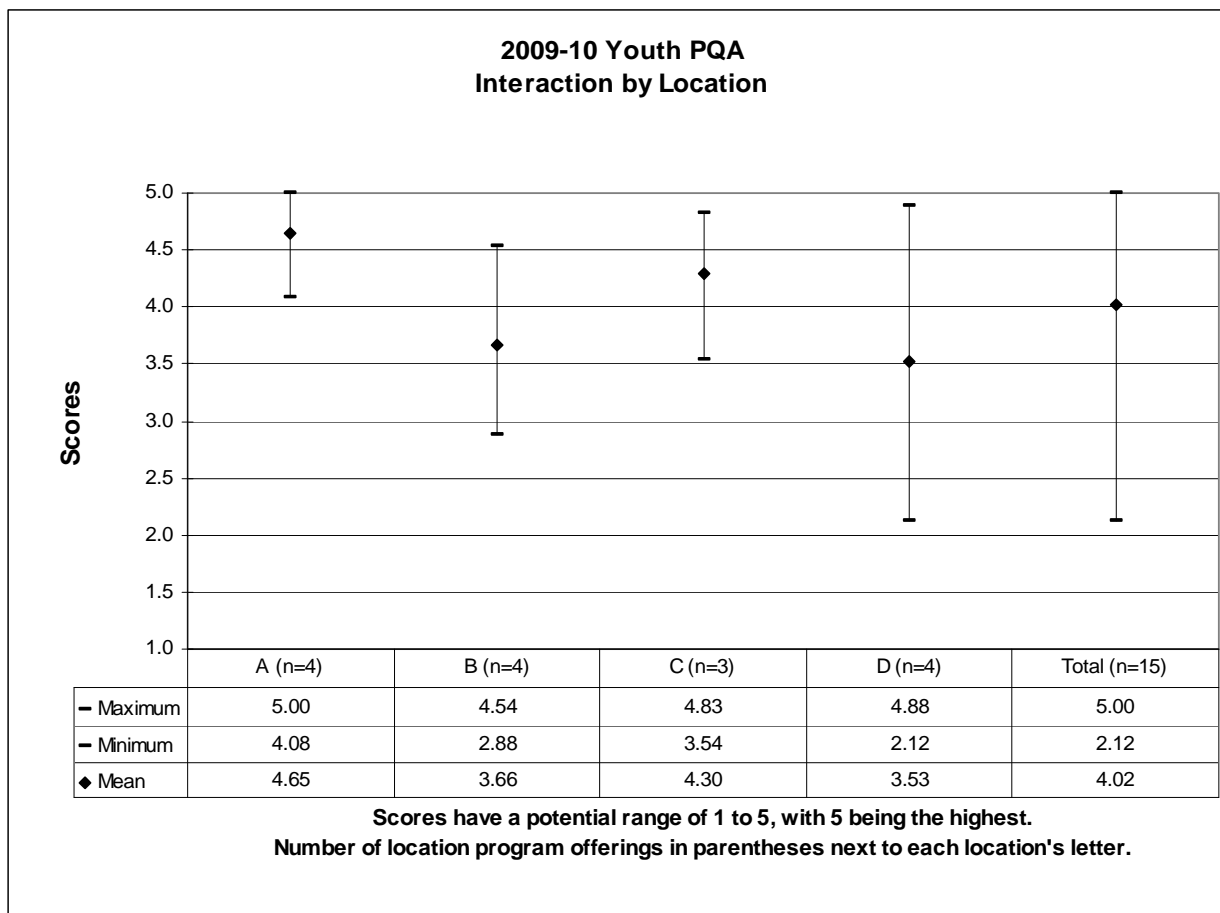
2009-10 Youth PQA
Interaction by Location

	A (n=4)	B (n=4)	C (n=3)	D (n=4)	Total (n=15)
▬ Maximum	5.00	4.54	4.83	4.88	5.00
▬ Minimum	4.08	2.88	3.54	2.12	2.12
◆ Mean	4.65	3.66	4.30	3.53	4.02

Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.
Number of location program offerings in parentheses next to each location's letter.

Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Location						
Score Range	A	B	C	D	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	1	0	2	3	20.0%
3-3.9	0	2	1	0	3	20.0%
4-4.9	3	1	2	2	8	53.3%
5.0	1	0	0	0	1	6.7%
Total	4	4	3	4	15	100.0%

Figure 6. Engagement Subscale
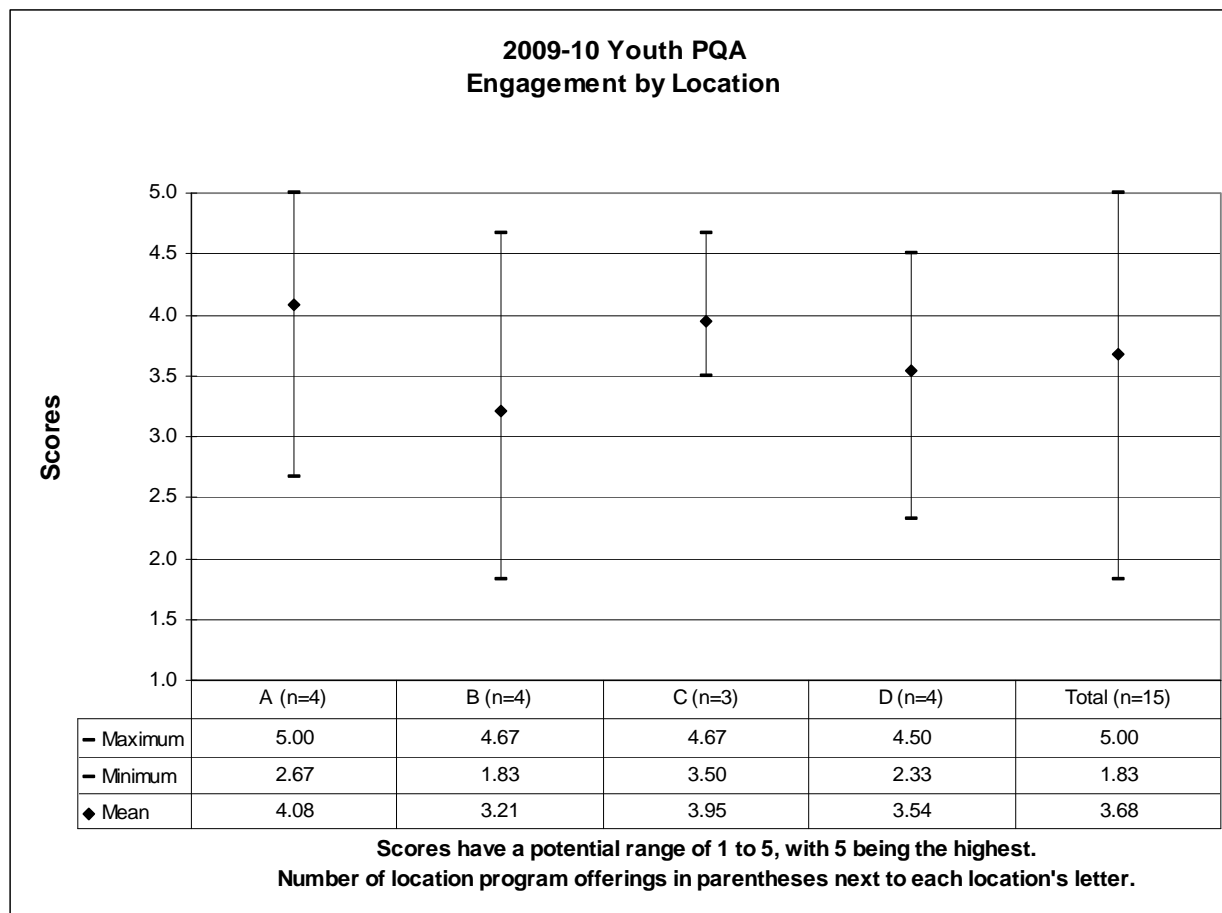
2009-10 Youth PQA
Engagement by Location

	A (n=4)	B (n=4)	C (n=3)	D (n=4)	Total (n=15)
━ Maximum	5.00	4.67	4.67	4.50	5.00
━ Minimum	2.67	1.83	3.50	2.33	1.83
◆ Mean	4.08	3.21	3.95	3.54	3.68

Scores have a potential range of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.
Number of location program offerings in parentheses next to each location's letter.

Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Location						
Score Range	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**Total**	**Percent**
1-1.9	0	1	0	0	1	6.7%
2-2.9	1	1	0	1	3	20.0%
3-3.9	1	1	2	1	5	33.3%
4-4.9	1	1	1	2	5	33.3%
5.0	1	0	0	0	1	6.7%
Total	4	4	3	4	15	100.0%

Overall Averages by Agency

Figure 7. Overall Youth PQA Average by Location

2009-10 Annual Report
Youth PQA Overall Average by Location
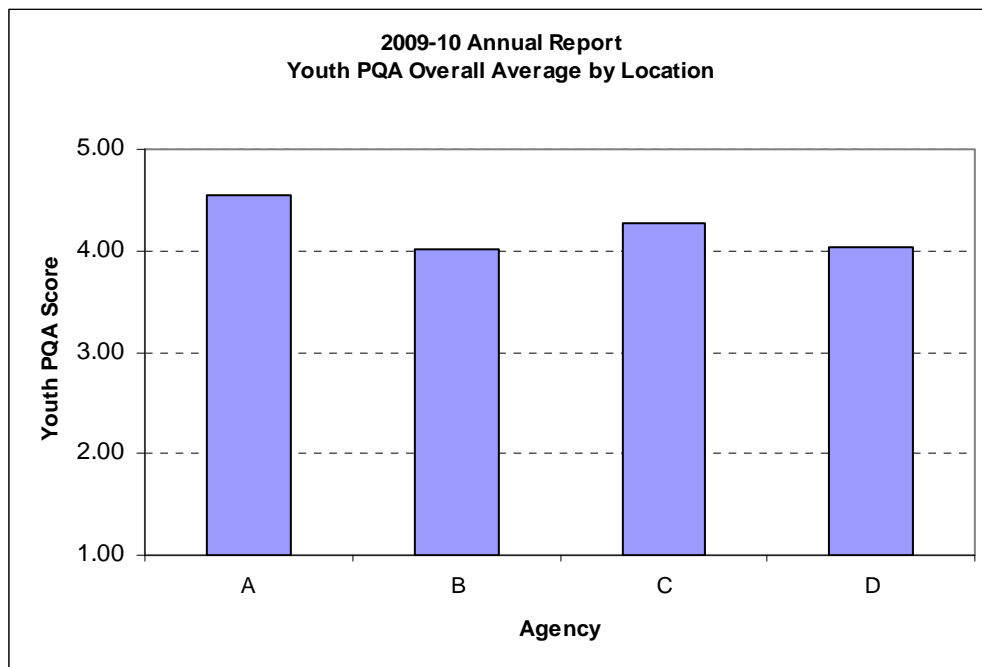
Youth PQA Overall Average by Location						
			Agency			
School Year	**Average Overall**	**n**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
2009-10	4.22	15	4.55	4.02	4.28	4.04

Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A

Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a test of a measure's internal consistency. It is sometimes called a "scale-reliability coefficient." For any assessment process, it is important to know whether the same set of questions measures a similar construct. Measures are declared to be reliable only when they provide consistent responses.

Cronbach's alpha assesses the internal reliability of a measure's answers. By measuring and reporting Cronbach alpha values, we have what is considered a numerical coefficient of reliability. Table 2 below displays the Cronbach's alpha values for this year's 21st Century Youth PQA measure results. For comparison purposes, the HighScope reported results from their testing are also included in Table 2.

Table 2						
2009-10 21st Century Annual Report **Internal Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A Measure** **Sample Size and Cronbach Alpha Values**						
	21st Century		**HighScope**			
	2009-10		**Test Group #1 2003-04**		**Test Group #2 2004-05**	
Youth PQA Form A	**N**	**Alpha**	**N**	**Alpha**	**N**	**Alpha**
Total for 4 all Subscales	15	0.78	22	0.84	118	0.74
Safe Environment (5 Items)	15	*	22	0.38	118	0.43
Supportive Environment (6 Items)	15	0.53	22	0.85	118	0.84
Interaction (4 items)	15	0.85	22	0.72	118	0.64
Engagement (3 items)	15	0.44	22	0.71	118	0.7
* Signifies it cannot be meaningfully calculated due to lack of variability in some items and the fact that items in this subscale are not positively correlated with each other.						

Note: The HighScope Educational Research Foundation is the author of the Youth PQA measure. The HighScope Test group's results were reported in the Youth PQA Administration Manual, published by HighScope Press 2005.

Inter-Rater Reliability of Youth PQA Form A

As part of an ongoing effort to assure the accuracy of the measures used, approximately 25% of program offerings are observed by two observers in order to calculate the level of agreement or inter-rater reliability between different observers.

Table 3 below shows the inter-rater reliability of Youth PQA total score and subscales using a simple correlation (r) and the median inter-rater reliability for exact matches, a/a+d, where a indicates the number of agreements and d represents the number of disagreements. The RASA 21st Century inter-rater reliability for exact matches was found to be 0.92 for five observations. For comparison, the developers of the Youth PQA reported an inter-rater reliability 0.65 (N=48). HighScope's test findings are also included in Table 3 for comparison.

Table 3		
2009-10 21st Century Annual Report **Inter-Rater Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A Measure**		
	21st Century	**HighScope**
	2009-10	**Test Group 1 2003-04**
Sample size N	5	48
Median Inter-rater Reliability for Exact Matches[1]	0.92	0.65
Safe Environment (r)	0.81	0.48
Supportive Environment (r)	0.99*	0.69
Interaction (r)	0.48	0.83
Engagement (r)	0.93*	0.72
Total Youth PQA Form A (r)	0.95*	0.66
Notes: 1 Signifies that inter-rater reliability for exact matches is equal to a/a+d, where a=agreement and d=disagreement. * Signifies that GRASA inter-rater reliability values are significant at p<.05. (r) Signifies that these values are Pearson Correlation Coefficients.		

Note: The HighScope Educational Research Foundation is the author of the Youth PQA measure. The HighScope test group's results were reported in the Youth PQA Administration Manual, published by HighScope Press 2005.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) measure comes from a reputable source and is used across the nation by other organizations that find it to be useful for program quality measurement and planning. Grounded in positive youth development philosophy, the Youth PQA provides research-based criteria upon which program staff can identify strengths and opportunities for improvement of practice. From the completed Youth PQA observations and reports, RASA 21st Century program can identify its assets and goals for improvement while making informed decisions for activities to support program quality including professional development, resource allocation, and strategic planning.

With consistently high scores, the Safe Environment area attained a high overall average score both across and within the four program agencies. There was a narrow distribution of scores among programs. Although there was a reported drop of .25 on this subscale this year, in comparison to last year's 2008-09 reporting, the outcome continues to reflect high quality in comparison to the HighScope data. From the policy perspective, this represents the assurance of consistently safe practices among programs. With continued confidence, RASA may report to families and the community that its programs provide a safe after-school environment for its youth. For this program area, it is recommended that existing safety processes be further developed and maintained. Overall, the consistency of high quality scores illustrates that good practices and policies are in place.

In the Supportive Environment area, some programs attained the highest possible score. Overall, this area average score is within the high quality range, though there is a small amount of variability of individual scores among programs. With a closer examination within program units and their individual Youth PQA reports, program leadership can identify successful program practices and others that would benefit from some improvement efforts.

Within the Interaction and Engagement subscales, there is a broad range of quality scores among and within programs. Some program units attained very high scores, some mid-range, and others attained very low scores. RASA may choose to engage program staff to share successful strategies with other staff whose programs will benefit from targeted program improvement support. By evidence of those successful program units with high scores in these areas and others, there are internal resources to increase the quality of lower performing programs. This is a valuable strength within the RASA program.

For all RASA 21st Century programs assessed, the overall program quality average of 4.22 and individual program overall averages ranging from 4.02 to 4.55 provide evidence of good practice in place. For two areas, specifically, Safe Environment and Supportive Environment, there is consistently high practice. In the remaining two areas of Interaction and Engagement, there is greater variability of practice. Program improvement efforts targeted within these Youth PQA indicators may result in positive changes that can be documented in subsequent years of program observations and reports.

An overall quality improvement is documented between the 2008-09 (3.84) and 2009-2010 (4.22) assessments. We suggest that program leadership review program improvement practices that were put in place during the 2009-2010 school year to illustrate any impact of their targeted efforts in light of this quality rating increase. This will also inform relevant decision-making for the upcoming 2010-2011 program year.

On a final note, the Youth PQA measure and the Children's Institute program assessment was reported by program leadership to be of value for program documentation and improvement based on reliable and valid information obtained from the data collection, analyses, and reporting.